COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Tuesday, May 17, 2016 10:29 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILMAN CHERELLE L. PARKER
COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE L. PARKER
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

BILLS: 160170, 160171, 160172, 160173,

160174, 160175, 160176

RESOLUTIONS: 160180

- 1 - -
- 2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning,
- 3 everyone. Hearing called to order. I
- 4 recognize the presence of a quorum that
- 5 continues.
- 6 This is the Public Hearing of the
- 7 Committee of the Whole on Bills No. 160170,
- 8 160171, 160172, 160173, 160174 and 160175,
- 9 160176 and Resolution 160180.
- 10 Today I am joined by Councilwoman Jannie
- 11 Blackwell who is the Chair of the Education
- 12 Committee. This is our annual joint sharing
- 13 of the School District budget hearings. I
- 14 wouldn't know what to do if she was not
- 15 here.
- 16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 17 Thank you.
- 18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Mr. Stitt,
- 19 please read the titles of the bills and
- 20 resolutions.
- 21 THE CLERK: Bill No. 160170: An
- 22 Ordinance to adopt a Capital Program for the
- 23 six Fiscal Years 2017-2022 inclusive.
- Bill No. 160171: An Ordinance to adopt

- 1 a Fiscal 2017 Capital Budget.
- Bill No. 160172: An Ordinance adopting
- 3 the Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2017.
- 4 Bill No. 160173: An Ordinance amending
- 5 Section 19-1806 of The Philadelphia Code,
- 6 entitled "Authorization of Realty Use and
- 7 Occupancy Tax, " to further authorize the
- 8 Board of Education of the School District of
- 9 Philadelphia to impose a tax on the use or
- 10 occupancy of real estate within the School
- 11 District of Philadelphia, under certain
- 12 terms and conditions.
- Bill No. 160174: An Ordinance amending
- 14 Section 19-1801 of The Philadelphia Code,
- 15 entitled "Authorization of Tax," to further
- 16 authorize the Board of Education of the
- 17 School District of Philadelphia to impose a
- 18 tax on real estate within the City of
- 19 Philadelphia, all under certain terms and
- 20 conditions.
- 21 Bill No. 160175: An Ordinance amending
- 22 Chapter 19-1500 of The Philadelphia Code,
- 23 entitled "Wage and Net Profits Tax," by
- 24 revising certain tax rates under certain

- 1 terms and conditions.
- Bill No. 160176: An Ordinance amending
- 3 Title 19 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
- 4 "Finance, Taxes and Collections," by adding
- 5 a new Chapter 19-4100, entitled
- 6 "Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Tax," under
- 7 certain terms and conditions.
- 8 Resolution No. 160180: Resolution
- 9 providing for the approval by the Council of
- 10 the City of Philadelphia of a Revised Five
- 11 Year Financial Plan for the City of
- 12 Philadelphia covering Fiscal Years
- 13 2017-2021, and incorporating proposed
- 14 changes with respect to Fiscal Year 2016,
- which is to be submitted by the Mayor to the
- 16 Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation
- 17 Authority (the "Authority") pursuant to the
- 18 Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement,
- 19 authorized by an Ordinance of this Council
- 20 approved by the Mayor on January 3, 1992
- 21 (Bill No. 1563-A), by and between the City
- 22 and the Authority.
- 23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you,
- 24 Mr. Stitt. Today we continue the Public

- 1 Hearing of the Committee of the Whole to
- 2 consider the bills read by the Clerk that
- 3 constitute the proposed operating and
- 4 capital spending measures for Fiscal 2017, a
- 5 Capital Program and a forward looking
- 6 Capital Plan for Fiscal Year 2017 through
- 7 Fiscal 2022.
- 8 Mr. Stitt, today we will hear testimony
- 9 from the School District which will start at
- 10 10:00 a.m. And we will have the break
- 11 depending on the level of questioning.
- 12 For the record, we may have listed on
- 13 some of the Councilmembers' schedules
- 14 callbacks. We do not have department
- 15 callbacks today.
- Mr. Stitt, who is testifying on behalf
- 17 of the School District today?
- 18 THE CLERK: Dr. Hite.
- 19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Dr. Hite and
- 20 Chair.
- 21 THE CLERK: Chair Ms. Neff, sir.
- 22 (Witnesses approach Table.)
- 23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning.
- DR. HITE: Good morning.

- 1 MS. NEFF: Morning.
- 2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I must say
- 3 this is somewhat abnormal. I don't think I
- 4 see a single sign in the audience. We got
- 5 it?
- 6 (Laughter)
- 7 There you go. I was getting ready to
- 8 say, what's going on? We're not used to
- 9 this calm before the storm.
- 10 Thank you. Good morning.
- 11 MS. NEFF: Good morning.
- 12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Please
- 13 proceed.
- MS. NEFF: Thank you.
- 15 Good morning, Council President and
- 16 Members of City Council. Thank you for the
- 17 opportunity to testify before you this
- 18 morning. My name is Marjorie Neff. I'm the
- 19 Chair of the School Reform Commission of the
- 20 School District of Philadelphia. Before I
- 21 begin, I would like to acknowledge and thank
- 22 my fellow Commissioners Feather Houston,
- 23 Sylvia Simms, Bill Green and Farah Jiminez
- 24 for the service to the Philadelphia

- 1 students.
- I am excited to be here this morning to
- 3 share my enthusiasm for the work that is
- 4 happening in Philadelphia schools. We on
- 5 the SRC make weekly visits to schools across
- 6 Philadelphia. And I learned about the
- 7 successes and common challenges facing our
- 8 schools. On these informal visits, we tour
- 9 classrooms and hear from students, staff and
- 10 family members about their experiences at
- 11 the school. These visits allow us to
- 12 experience first hand the diversity of our
- 13 schools and the wide range of programs
- 14 operating in service to the students of --
- 15 200,000 students of Philadelphia.
- 16 To respond to this various array of
- 17 needs, Dr. Hite and his team have built
- 18 Action Plan 3.0 which arranges the District
- 19 into five networks of similar school
- 20 communities in order to provide targeted
- 21 educational services to our students.
- In the Opportunity Network, schools and
- 23 programs focus on serving approximately
- 24 5,000 of our most vulnerable students, those

- 1 who are at risk or who already detached from
- 2 schooling. We have visited a range of
- 3 program options including Camelot Academy, a
- 4 transitional program, the Juvenile Justice
- 5 Center, and One Bright Ray, an accelerated
- 6 high school. We have seen students in these
- 7 programs find success through individualized
- 8 support, strong adult/youth relationships
- 9 and access to social, emotional and
- 10 behavioral supports.
- In the Neighborhood Networks, our
- 12 traditional District-run schools are grouped
- 13 into nine networks with the goal of ensuring
- 14 that every student has a quality opportunity
- 15 close to where they live. Each of these
- 16 networks representing the diversity of their
- 17 community and neighborhood. These schools
- 18 work with community partners to bring
- 19 innovative strategies and resources to
- 20 support those students.
- In the fall, we attended South
- 22 Philadelphia High School's monthly partner
- 23 meeting. We sat with more than ten
- 24 community partner organizations to analyze

- 1 the school's achievement data and strategize
- 2 ways to increase their collective impact.
- 3 At James Blaine Elementary School, we met
- 4 family members who were engaged in building
- 5 a School Advisory Council. And we observed
- 6 City year members providing student tutoring
- 7 and mentorship support. Similarly at Tanner
- 8 G. Duckrey Elementary School, we met with
- 9 many of the school's partners including
- 10 Temple University, Stepping Stone Scholars,
- 11 Education Works and more.
- 12 Along with these networks, we have had
- 13 the opportunity to see schools in the
- 14 Turnaround Network where strategic
- 15 investments are being made to dramatically
- 16 accelerate improvement in some of our lowest
- 17 performing schools. The Innovation Network,
- 18 where we have seen school communities making
- 19 exciting advances in the implementation of
- 20 inquiry-based learning models.
- 21 And finally, we visited schools like
- 22 Motivation High School in the Autonomy
- 23 Network, a network of high performing
- 24 city-wide admissions and magnate schools

- 1 that are being given an increased autonomy
- 2 to manage their curriculum and affairs in a
- 3 way that serves distinctive student
- 4 population they serve.
- 5 Through these networks and with our 83
- 6 charter schools, Dr. Hite has created a
- 7 framework for fostering and growing an array
- 8 of school options in Philadelphia broad
- 9 enough to meet the diversity needs of our
- 10 students. While each network is uniquely
- 11 built to serve the needs of its students,
- 12 they also face many similar challenges and
- 13 successes. Most common among these is the
- 14 challenge of years of budget cuts.
- 15 At the school level, our communities
- 16 have come together to manage those cuts and
- 17 continue providing students with the best
- 18 opportunities available. As we witnessed on
- 19 each of our school visits, schools have
- 20 built strong partnerships that are advancing
- 21 opportunities for students in Philadelphia
- 22 despite our challenges. These partnerships,
- 23 along with the dedicated work of our staff,
- 24 students and families have allowed

- 1 communities to make progress even in
- 2 difficult times. As a City, we have worked
- 3 together to keep our schools open in support
- 4 of Dr. Hite as he had built a culture of
- 5 fiscal accountability.
- 6 Through the leadership of the Council
- 7 President and fellow City Councilmembers,
- 8 the City of Philadelphia has increased it's
- 9 recurring annual investments to the School
- 10 District by more than \$400 million since
- 11 FY11. These local funds have enabled us to
- 12 avoid making further cuts to programs and
- 13 services that impact our students and
- 14 family.
- 15 Thank you to the Council President and
- 16 all of the Councilmembers for your continued
- 17 partnership and support for our schools.
- 18 Thank you for the opportunity to share the
- 19 achievements of many of our schools and
- 20 their strong communities. I look forward to
- 21 sharing future examples of successes in our
- 22 schools as Dr. Hite furthers the work of
- 23 Action Plan 3.0 with targeted investments
- 24 this upcoming year.

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As a side note, I'd like to invite all
 1
     Councilmembers -- I know that you all visit
 2
     schools, but I would like to invite you if
 3
 4
     you are interested at any time in joining us
     on our school visits.
         And with that, I'd like to introduce
 6
     Dr. Hite, Superintendent of the School
 7
     District of Philadelphia, to make his
 8
 9
     remarks.
                    Thank you, Chair Neff.
10
         DR. HITE:
11
         Good morning, President Clarke and City
12
     Councilmembers. Thank you for your
     opportunity to testify before you today.
13
     would like to start my presentation a little
14
     differently this year with a brief video
15
16
     that will be part of our teacher recruitment
     efforts and highlight the impacts of recent
17
     investments in our schools and our plan for
18
     new investments in the future.
19
20
              (Video begins playing.)
21
22
               (Video ends playing.)
23
         DR. HITE:
                    Thank you.
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24

As you can see from the video, we have

- 1 many places where children are benefitting
- 2 from our efforts to improve student
- 3 outcomes. We have fought through years of
- 4 deficits and tough choices, and we have
- 5 asked for tremendous sacrifices by students,
- 6 teachers, families, parents.
- 7 I want to thank City Council. You
- 8 fought for and delivered on behalf of
- 9 Philadelphia schools and children when we
- 10 needed your help the most. It wasn't always
- 11 easy, but you supported over \$400 million in
- 12 additional revenues to our public schools
- over the past five years. These monies have
- 14 allowed us to reinvest in our schools and
- 15 build towards long term sustainability.
- 16 Without you, we would not be in a position
- 17 where we can now focus on investments and
- 18 long term sustainability instead of devising
- 19 emergency contingency plans to deal with
- 20 funding deficits.
- 21 However, short term stability should not
- 22 be confused with adequacy or equity. No
- 23 School District in the Commonwealth has made
- 24 the deep and difficult cuts we have endured

- 1 over the last several years, and our schools
- 2 still feel the effects of the actions we had
- 3 to take to achieve fiscal balance. That is
- 4 why I am eager to speak with you today about
- 5 the tremendous optimism I have for the
- 6 future of our schools and the important and
- 7 much needed investments we must make in our
- 8 schools over the next several years.
- 9 Students are never shy when it comes to
- 10 expressing what they want or what they need.
- 11 Every time I walk into a school, I hear a
- 12 recurring theme. While we have more, we do
- 13 not have enough. Children's voices have
- 14 shaped the budget priorities I will share
- 15 with you now.
- Since the 2013/2014 school year, I have
- 17 met regularly with group of students as a
- 18 part of my Student Advisory Council to
- 19 discuss what they experience every day.
- 20 There are students from more than 40 schools
- 21 city-wide on the council, including charter
- 22 schools. They have my cell phone number,
- 23 and they don't hesitate to call me or text
- 24 or email when they have issues.

- 1 Our meetings are built around a single
- 2 topic on which I receive a broad range of
- 3 views. I have heard their perspectives on
- 4 the elements of a high quality school. We
- 5 have discussed student safety at
- 6 transportation hubs, how the district can be
- 7 more eco friendly, college prep, online
- 8 tools and our policy on cell phones in
- 9 school. Students provide an input on our
- 10 academic calendar, budget priorities and our
- 11 Action Plan 3.0, the District's strategic
- 12 plan.
- 13 Last year -- last school year the
- 14 Student Advisory Council requested more art,
- 15 music and sports programs and more
- 16 counselors and nurses. I am proud to say we
- 17 listened and we acted. And not only have we
- 18 put in more music teachers; but in the
- 19 coming school year, we will have a counselor
- 20 in every school and a nurse in every school
- 21 building.
- 22 At our last meeting, the Student
- 23 Advisory Council specifically expressed
- 24 their gratitude for our responsiveness to

- 1 their feedback. As superintendent, it is
- 2 not enough to put student feedback in action
- 3 when they bring basic requests. We must
- 4 commit to creating the long term financial
- 5 conditions where they no longer feel the
- 6 need to ask for the basics. With
- 7 substantial financial circumstances we can
- 8 develop long term strategic investments that
- 9 provide opportunities for all children in
- 10 the City.
- 11 For the upcoming fiscal year, the School
- 12 District is not requesting additional
- 13 funding from the City and State above the
- 14 currently proposed amounts. Let me be
- 15 clear, our budget cannot be a set of yo-yo
- 16 investments spending one year and cutting
- 17 back the next. We need year over year
- 18 investments to succeed. And our investments
- 19 can only be sustained through recurring
- 20 revenues.
- 21 A Five Year Plan for Fiscal Years 2017
- 22 through 2021 puts funds towards our Action
- 23 Plan anchor goals around college and career
- 24 readiness, grade level literacy, effective

- 1 instruction and strong leadership while
- 2 practicing good fiscal management. We have
- 3 specific targets for accomplishments over
- 4 the next five years. We want to increase
- 5 and improve student outcomes, not just
- 6 produce more outputs.
- 7 Over the next five years, we plan to
- 8 invest more than 440 million to create a
- 9 grade school in every neighborhood in the
- 10 City. Our college and career readiness
- 11 investments include updated textbooks and
- 12 expand digital library, upgraded classroom
- 13 and labs, free PSATs, more advanced
- 14 placement classes. And all of these things
- 15 will support students to successful high
- 16 school completion and beyond.
- 17 Literacy investments, more literacy
- 18 specialists and reading coaches, additional
- 19 read by fourth, summer camps and the
- 20 classroom books and materials children need
- 21 will prepare students for success from the
- 22 earliest grades. Our increased investments
- 23 in turnaround some of the most challenge
- 24 schools will accelerate student progress.

- 1 And we are giving our principals the
- 2 flexibility necessary to create and enact
- 3 their school visions. And we are equipping
- 4 our teachers with the tools they need to
- 5 create modern engaging classrooms. As part
- 6 of our investments, we will partner around
- 7 fair labor agreements that allow for 21st
- 8 Century learning environments.
- 9 Recruiting and maintaining great
- 10 teachers is vital to achieving great schools
- 11 that serve all Philadelphia students. Today
- 12 I can update you on our multi-tier
- 13 recruitment effort to fill what we
- 14 anticipate to be 1,400 teacher vacancies.
- Right now, we have over 1,200
- 16 applications from external candidates with
- 17 still more coming in. We are on pace to
- 18 have over 1,000 vacancies filled both
- 19 through external hires and internal
- 20 transfers, leaving another 400 vacancies yet
- 21 to be filled. While we are making good
- 22 progress, there is still work to do and we
- 23 can use your help.
- 24 There are subjects that have fewer

- 1 candidates like Special Education, Language,
- 2 Math and Science. We can use your support
- 3 in getting the word out and referring
- 4 interested teachers to us. We are also
- 5 taking action with regard to the problem of
- 6 substitute teaching.
- 7 For years, we have fallen short at
- 8 recruiting substitute teachers. We sought a
- 9 solution by partnering with a company that
- 10 specializes in staffing services. And
- 11 unfortunately, that partnership failed.
- 12 While the arrangement fail, we still believe
- 13 that the best way to provide substitutes to
- 14 all schools is through a partner.
- 15 For the upcoming 2016/2017 school years,
- 16 we are moving to the largest and most
- 17 experienced provider of substitute staff in
- 18 the industry and educational staffing one
- 19 with over two decades of experience in the
- 20 field. Just yesterday, in an effort to be
- 21 more transparent about how we do our work
- 22 and challenges -- and the challenges we
- 23 face, we delivered our second quarterly
- 24 report to City Council under the terms of

- 1 the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement.
- 2 We have held numerous briefings outside of
- 3 the budget season to allow for more in-depth
- 4 discussions around important issues to
- 5 schools and to you, the Councilmembers, and
- 6 your constituents. We appreciate your
- 7 involvement, your support, your ideas and
- 8 your continued willingness to be part of the
- 9 solution.
- 10 We need to work with you and our state
- 11 legislature to develop a long term reliable
- 12 and sustained funding model for the School
- 13 District. Our Five Year Plan is based on
- 14 reasonable assumptions. These assumptions
- 15 include, however, a loss of revenue when the
- 16 City's AVI market value adjustments
- 17 accounted in the state's reimbursement
- 18 formula, and when the Cigarette Tax sunsets
- 19 at the end of Fiscal Year 2019.
- 20 This fiscally responsible budget shows
- 21 positive fund balances through Fiscal Year
- 22 2018 following by a negative fund balances
- 23 beginning in 2019. This is due to the
- 24 simple fact that our projected expenditures

- 1 are nearly double the rate of our revenue
- 2 growth. Working together we have an
- 3 opportunity to develop a road map to head
- 4 off these challenges. We are committed to
- 5 getting ahead of the problem and want to
- 6 work with the City and State now while we
- 7 have time provided by modest fund balance to
- 8 find recurrent sources of revenue. We must
- 9 act now to ensure a stable future for our
- 10 children and for the City.
- 11 Every time I walk into a Philadelphia
- 12 school, meet with a student, see a teacher
- in action, hear the product of parent or
- 14 family member or feel the promise of a
- 15 principal, I am reminded of our potential to
- 16 be one of the nation's greatest public
- 17 school systems. The future of the children,
- 18 our schools and our City depends on how we
- 19 serve our children.
- I appreciate your time, and all that you
- 21 have done already. And I'd like to take
- 22 this moment to also offer particular thanks
- 23 to Councilman Domb for donating your Council
- 24 salary to support ten of our high need

- 1 schools.
- 2 I am happy to answer any of the
- 3 questions from you, Council President, and
- 4 from Members of City Council. Thank you.
- 5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you,
- 6 sir. I want to thank Councilman Domb also
- 7 because he's -- I understand one of the next
- 8 ones tee'd up in my councilmatic district.
- 9 Thank you, sir.
- 10 Yeah. Dr. Hite, you had actually warmed
- 11 me pretty much with the video. And I was
- 12 like, okay, whatever you want. Then you
- 13 gave me your testimony, and I was like all
- 14 right. Sometimes you got to quit while
- 15 you're ahead.
- 16 DR. HITE: That's right. Stop the
- 17 video.
- 18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Real quick,
- 19 though, thank you for your testimony. Real
- 20 quick.
- 21 So union negotiations with PFT and
- 22 Workforce, and I understand to some degree
- 23 you can't really talk about the specifics.
- 24 But we have been going through this for

- 1 quite some time. I've always said and a
- 2 number of members have said until you
- 3 stabilize your expenditures, which the
- 4 personnel is probably the largest, can't
- 5 really get a sense of how much revenue you
- 6 need to run the ship.
- 7 So one, does it look like in the
- 8 foreseeable future that we are going to get
- 9 where we need to get with respects to the
- 10 contract?
- 11 And two, in your budget projections,
- 12 disregarding what the State will ultimately
- 13 give, is there revenues built into your
- 14 proposed budget that can accommodate a
- 15 reasonable contract with the PFT?
- DR. HITE: Yes. I will respond to the
- 17 first part. And then I'm joined today in
- 18 addition to the Chair of the SRC, by Uri
- 19 Monson, the Chief Financial Officer.
- 20 For the first part, I do want to thank
- 21 you for the question, Council President. We
- 22 have some ongoing negotiations with two
- 23 other units, as well. With CASA who made
- 24 some significant sacrifices in the past. We

- 1 are in active negotiations with them. With
- 2 32BJ, as you know, who made some pretty
- 3 significant sacrifices in the past, as well.
- 4 Those two are going on. And we are working
- 5 under the auspices of a state-appointed
- 6 mediator with the -- with the negotiations
- 7 with PFT. And those talks are occurring,
- 8 and occurring with a level of frequency now
- 9 that -- that give us the ability to continue
- 10 those conversations. But that is through
- 11 the auspices of the state-appointed
- 12 mediator.
- We have included some monies in the
- 14 budget for all labor negotiations. And
- 15 Mr. Monson, if you want to add any piece to
- 16 that.
- 17 MR. MONSON: Good morning, Council
- 18 President. Uri Monson, Chief Financial
- 19 Officer for the District.
- Just to follow up, included in the
- 21 \$440 million of investments which Dr. Hite
- 22 referred to, is investment in talent and
- 23 workforce which includes the supplemental
- 24 teacher hiring we are doing now. The

- 1 counsel in every school nurse and every
- 2 school building and funding for what we
- 3 believe would be fair workforce agreements
- 4 that allow for the 21st century learning
- 5 environments. We do have funds in there
- 6 that we believe will allow us to reach
- 7 agreements with all of our bargaining units.
- 8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay. Page 3
- 9 of testimony talks about Five Year Plan is
- 10 based on reasonable assumptions including
- 11 loss of revenue attributed to the City's
- 12 move to AVI and the market value adjustments
- 13 accounted in the State's reimbursement
- 14 formula, and the sunsetting of the Cigarette
- 15 Tax at the end of FY19. That sunset
- 16 provision is a significant loss of revenue.
- 17 How are we going to address these
- 18 shortfalls? Or do we have a plan yet that
- 19 you can talk about publicly?
- 20 Since this is a public hearing, I
- 21 shouldn't --
- MR. MONSON: Our plan actually is to
- 23 let -- the goal of the Five Year Plan the
- 24 way we laid it out is to put before you what

- 1 is, what the current law is, what current
- 2 trends are, what we expect. If everything
- 3 we know today were to play forward, this is
- 4 what would be. As you can see, as a result
- 5 in our Five Year Plan, we end Fiscal Year 21
- 6 with a \$600 million fund balance deficit,
- 7 negative fund balance. Half of that is
- 8 directly attributable to those two issues.
- 9 Our goal that we laid out for you again,
- 10 is there is no monetary ask. It's an ask
- 11 for the opportunity to sit down with the
- 12 City, with the State and all of our funders
- 13 to identify we have a problem down the road
- 14 and not wait for down the road to get there
- 15 and figure out the solution to that problem
- 16 as we have no control over our revenues. We
- 17 have limited control over our expenditures.
- But we wanted to have a discussion now,
- 19 ideally not under the pressure of a budget
- 20 hearing, and when you are all dealing with
- 21 your own budget, State with its budget, to
- 22 discuss what the long term plan is to close
- 23 that gap so that we can maintain the
- 24 investment levels we want to maintain in our

- 1 schools.
- 2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.
- 3 One last question.
- 4 In terms of your budget proposal, how
- 5 does it align with the advent of community
- 6 schools? And to what degree are you
- 7 interacting with the City of Philadelphia's
- 8 Office of Education as it relates to
- 9 community schools?
- 10 I know we have talked about it
- 11 personally, but is there strategic plan?
- DR. HITE: Yes. Absolutely. We have
- 13 two individuals on staff who are working
- 14 directly with the Mayor's Office of
- 15 Education and working through that. And
- 16 there are weekly meetings, I believe, if not
- 17 twice a week. But there is a lot of --
- 18 there is a lot of integration and alignment
- in terms of that work moving forward.
- 20 And so -- and we have two members of our
- 21 senior team who are also a part of that
- 22 planning task force.
- 23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay. Thank
- 24 you. Want to turn this over to Councilwoman

- 1 Blackwell at this moment.
- 2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
- 3 much. Thank you, Mr. President.
- 4 I got the taller chair.
- 5 Good morning. Thank you for being here.
- 6 There are many rumors around even about
- 7 split classes and where we will be in that
- 8 area in the fall.
- 9 Do you have any information about that?
- 10 DR. HITE: I do have some information
- 11 about that, Councilwoman Blackwell. We have
- 12 now at the moment because of some
- investments we made in the past, we started
- 14 to focus on schools that have had split
- 15 classes for a number of reasons. And those
- 16 reasons are things like the lack of funding,
- 17 leveling which is a process that is done in
- 18 the fall, and space in some cases.
- 19 And so, one of the investments that we
- 20 have begun is the elimination of many of the
- 21 split classes that are not designed for
- 22 instructional purposes. At the moment, we
- 23 have fewer than 30 split classes. And one
- 24 of the things that we are trying to

- 1 determine are which ones are split because
- 2 of instructional -- because of an
- 3 instructional design or work that a
- 4 principal and his or her teachers are trying
- 5 to accomplish.
- 6 But it is our goal to eliminate all
- 7 split classes except those that are part of
- 8 the instructional program.
- 9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 10 That is so important. We spent nearly a
- 11 year with a parent worried about her child
- 12 graduating because a child was put in a
- 13 split class at a lower level. And she
- 14 called us over and over and came to every
- 15 meeting in the community. We heard. That's
- 16 very important and that's good news.
- 17 We are glad to hear about the
- 18 counselors. We are very happy to hear about
- 19 teachers. And those have been major issues
- 20 that we've tried to deal with this year.
- 21 Having said that, I will come back and I
- 22 will call on some of my colleagues for
- 23 questions, as well.
- 24 Councilwoman Gym.

- 1 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you very much,
- 2 Madam Chair.
- 3 Good morning.
- 4 DR. HITE: Morning.
- 5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I want to thank the
- 6 School District for its decision to put a
- 7 full-time nurse and counselor back in every
- 8 school. I think it's an important move
- 9 forward. It's not sufficient, but it's an
- 10 important step to do something that to me is
- 11 an essential aspect of the School District's
- 12 mission at this particular stage of its
- 13 existence. That is, it's important for us
- 14 to make our schools, schools again.
- In 2013 when the most severe budget cuts
- 16 happened, Dr. Hite, you were on Radio Times
- 17 and did a pretty stunning interview when you
- 18 talked about when students return to schools
- 19 back in 2013, they may not recognize schools
- 20 because the typical resources that were
- 21 there were not going to be there any longer.
- 22 I think that after years of shortfalls, we
- 23 are back in a situation where we can talk
- 24 about investments and what it means to --

- 1 what we need to do to reinvest back in core
- 2 services that are fundamentally about the
- 3 mission of schools that uphold your
- 4 curricular mandates by the state code, that
- 5 rebuild confidence in our schools for new
- 6 families and parents who are currently here.
- 7 And either bring our families back into our
- 8 district or convince them not to leave.
- 9 This budget to me then, because we don't
- 10 have the constrictions of asking for
- 11 additional money, is fundamentally about the
- 12 School District's choices. It's about the
- 13 choices you are make to invest in certain
- 14 things over others. And the big reason we
- 15 are able to talk about these new investments
- 16 is that the District did not spend funds
- 17 that were currently budgeted this year. In
- 18 fact, a huge portion of it is about talking
- 19 about the, you know, making reference to
- 20 what you now say are a thousand vacancies in
- 21 our system. And the District has
- 22 acknowledged that there are good savings and
- 23 there are bad savings. And that the savings
- 24 that have resulted in the current fund

- 1 balance are fundamentally bad savings to a
- 2 large portion.
- 3 I really wanted to go through some of
- 4 the numbers from the consolidated budget
- 5 that I think are extremely staggering to
- 6 talk about. Because they give a picture of
- 7 what the School District has looked like for
- 8 the past year.
- 9 \$20 million was saved due to vacancies
- 10 among K to 8 teachers; and \$2.5 million was
- 11 saved due to vacancies among middle school
- 12 teachers; over \$6.5 million was saved due to
- 13 vacancies among secondary education
- 14 teachers; \$17.2 million out of \$140 million
- 15 was not delivered to low incident special
- 16 education staff. We missed \$1.9 million
- 17 among high incident special ed staff; almost
- 18 \$2 million amongst counseling staff;
- 19 \$1.3 million in vacancies due to our nurses;
- 20 \$9.5 million due to vacancies among
- 21 custodians and building engineers;
- 22 \$4 million saved due to vacancies among
- 23 maintenance and repair staff; and \$2 million
- 24 saved due to vacancies among special

- 1 education bus attendants.
- 2 In combination, that's over \$65 million
- 3 that was expected to be spent on effective
- 4 staffing and effectively wasn't spent or
- 5 used. And this means that there is
- 6 across-the-board problem around filling
- 7 vacancies. It's not just teacher vacancies
- 8 that we are talking about. We have a
- 9 problem that goes beyond the 180 teacher
- 10 vacancies that exist in the District.
- 11 And as Councilwoman Blackwell mentioned
- 12 and the Chairwoman mentioned is that the
- 13 problems have become evident around things
- 14 like these split grades which had been
- 15 abolished in previous administrations as
- 16 being pedagogically inappropriate when done
- 17 due to financial reasons. It's overcrowding
- 18 on a massive level within our elementary and
- 19 our high schools including core subject
- 20 areas that are gone missing.
- 21 And I guess, you know, I want to raise
- 22 three challenges to the District and ask you
- 23 to respond back to those. Because I think
- this question of how we're going to make our

- 1 schools actually schools again is essential
- 2 challenge. It requires us to take and pay
- 3 attention to not only staffing, but making
- 4 sure that curricular mandates are filled.
- 5 That we are doing audits and paying
- 6 attention to what's going on. It means we
- 7 are looking at basic needs of schools
- 8 including something as basic as water
- 9 access.
- 10 So my three questions or challenges to
- 11 the District that I'm hoping you can respond
- 12 to are the following. You made mention to
- 13 the Councilwoman about the split grades and
- 14 the overcrowding that has existed. But can
- 15 you assure us that you will abolish this
- 16 practice of split grade classrooms for
- 17 financial reasons and commit that schools
- 18 will not be impacted in the coming
- 19 September, but that it's a commitment that
- 20 you're making?
- 21 The second question has a lot to do with
- 22 human resources. Everybody in this Council
- 23 is fully on board with you hiring for these
- 24 staffing positions. And I think the Council

- 1 President made a great point about
- 2 contracts, but we are really concerned about
- 3 the lack of a permanent strong leadership in
- 4 your Office of Talent and getting that
- 5 capacity in place. And how you are actually
- 6 going to be able to hire teachers and nurses
- 7 and counselors and building engineers and
- 8 physical therapists when we haven't had a
- 9 permanent talent officer since July of 2015.
- 10 And the last question is about water
- 11 access. Water access has been a major and
- 12 repeated concern by and for students and
- 13 families in the School District. Last week
- 14 our office introduced legislation that
- 15 wanted to bring in water fountains, one per
- 16 every 100 students. But more than just
- 17 access to water, students have complained
- 18 about quality of water.
- 19 So, there have been some research around
- 20 hydration stations. You have mentioned that
- 21 you are looking for short term investments.
- 22 And the Food Trust has done some number
- 23 crunching in this area, estimating about
- 24 \$1,500 per water hydration station. And we

- 1 are talking about investments of less than a
- 2 million dollars if you added in three per
- 3 school to quarantee cold, fresh and safe
- 4 water access to young people.
- 5 And could you talk about committing to
- 6 working on this issue to install either
- 7 these hydration stations and work with us on
- 8 the water access issue for the coming year.
- 9 DR. HITE: So, I will take your
- 10 questions in order, Councilwoman Gym.
- 11 The -- to the first question, yes. As
- 12 included in my testimony and my response to
- 13 the Council President, I am willing to go on
- 14 the record to say that except for
- 15 instructional decisions by principals, we --
- 16 it is our goal to eliminate all split
- 17 classes. And while those have been
- 18 eliminated by prior administrators, prior
- 19 administration, some teachers -- some
- 20 schools have used those as an instructional
- 21 approach.
- 22 And so, we are trying to discern of the
- 23 30 remaining split classes who is doing that
- 24 out of need, and who is doing that out of

- 1 design. Some of our school redesign
- 2 initiatives are actually using that approach
- 3 as an instructional model. So yes, we
- 4 commit to that except where it is the
- 5 instructional practice of the school to do
- 6 otherwise.
- 7 To the second point on the hiring, you
- 8 are right. And nobody sitting at this table
- 9 or behind me is -- it's not for a lack of
- 10 effort in terms of trying to fill many of
- 11 the vacancies that we currently have. And
- 12 we are trying to get ahead of this for next
- 13 year. But I think part of the solution to
- 14 this is also changing the message and the
- 15 brand.
- And it doesn't help us in recruiting if
- 17 over the last several years we had massive
- 18 school closings and then massive layoffs and
- 19 then we didn't know if we were going to open
- 20 the following year because of State budgets.
- 21 And then this current year because of a
- 22 State budget, we sent letters out in
- 23 December that said we don't know if we will
- 24 be able to pay people in January if there is

- 1 no State budget. And so, part of this is
- 2 also changing the brand of Philadelphia so
- 3 that it becomes a more attractive place for
- 4 individuals.
- 5 And the other part of that is having a
- 6 systems in place. And to your point, we are
- 7 finalizing a selection for, we hope, a
- 8 leader of Talent or HR that we hope will
- 9 happen over the next week or so. And so,
- 10 that work is going on in earnest. And we
- 11 feel like we are moving towards opening
- 12 schools without the significant number of
- 13 vacancies that we have had this year.
- I will add, though, I am anticipating
- 15 hiring for -- we are going to be able to
- 16 hire prior to the end of June for all of the
- 17 vacancy numbers we have. As I indicated to
- 18 you in a different conversation, we are
- 19 still going to be challenged in areas like
- 20 Special Education, Language, Math, Science.
- 21 We know that already. And we're going to
- 22 need additional help and support. So if in
- 23 fact there are interest of any
- 24 Councilmembers who can host job fairs or

- 1 career fairs or interest or meet and greets
- 2 for individuals who are candidates, we will
- 3 gladly accept that support and that
- 4 collaboration.
- With respect to the water and the
- 6 dehydration stations, Fran Burns has been
- 7 working, Chief Operation Officer, has been
- 8 working on this issue in a pretty
- 9 significant way. And so, I am going to
- 10 invite her up to respond to the third
- 11 question. Yes, we are interested in
- 12 resolving this issue. But because Fran has
- 13 been working on this, I want to invite her
- 14 up to respond.
- MS. BURNS: Good morning. Fran Burns,
- 16 Chief Operating Officer.
- 17 Councilwoman, yesterday we issued the
- 18 District's first ever Sustainability
- 19 Program. And thank Councilman Taubenberger
- 20 and Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown for
- 21 joining us during the release.
- 22 On page 26 of the report, Action Item
- 23 Number 56, we actually speak to providing
- 24 bottled water and accessible hydration

- 1 stations throughout the District. So a
- 2 couple things are currently underway.
- One, is that some schools are already on
- 4 their own initiative and the school-based
- 5 leadership through the principal and
- 6 teachers have some hydration stations and
- 7 actually did them through fundraising. The
- 8 others we have a healthy schools committee
- 9 that is spearheaded by our Environmental
- 10 Director Francine Locke. The Food Trust is
- 11 an active participant in that committee.
- 12 And we have extended an outreach through
- 13 Council President Clarke to have
- 14 Councilmembers and their staff participate
- 15 in that committee.
- 16 And so, a few things are happening
- 17 around that. Yes, we have the same quote of
- 18 about \$1,500 per hydration station. But
- 19 it's mixture of right now very positive
- 20 momentum of places where, one, there could
- 21 be grants to provide for the hydration
- 22 stations; second, where there is again
- 23 already some momentum towards some other
- 24 outside funding for the program; and then

- 1 third, we are committing through our Food
- 2 Services Division to installing hydration
- 3 stations in a certain number of schools.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.
- 5 Thank you very much, Council --
- 6 Chairwoman. But Ms. Burns, you know, the
- 7 issue is not fundraising for water. It's
- 8 about will the District commit to putting
- 9 forward, you know, what could range between
- 10 a half a million to a million dollars to
- 11 ensure that Action Item Number 56 is
- 12 actually a priority for September 2016.
- Will you commit to making this water
- 14 access issue a priority for schools?
- MS. BURNS: Oh, it's absolutely a
- 16 priority. But in terms of the funding, we
- 17 are committing to a certain amount of
- 18 schools through the Food Services -- through
- 19 our Food Services Fund to fund. And while
- 20 we look at potential funding through other
- 21 sources. In addition, we still have, I
- 22 think, some investment decisions through the
- 23 CFO's office that have yet to be made.
- In terms of priority, it's absolutely a

- 1 priority. We are working on it. We have
- 2 got great partnerships that have gotten us
- 3 to this point.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you very much,
- 5 Madam Chair. I just wanted to thank and
- 6 I'll have other questions on the go around.
- Just a really quick statement, Dr. Hite,
- 8 that I do hope the District does understand
- 9 the current crisis within it as just being
- 10 an issue of branding and messaging. That
- 11 there is no teachers' contract that has
- 12 existed for three years. We have -- you
- 13 know, the School Reform Commission has been
- 14 explicit about what it would like to do. It
- is in court currently to talk about this.
- 16 There is constant outsourcing. We have made
- 17 conscious decision about nurses, substitutes
- 18 and other types of things.
- 19 There is -- it's not just a messaging
- 20 issue. There is a clear direction, and it's
- 21 about choices. And I definitely hope that,
- 22 you know, you will work with us to try and
- 23 not just change a message, but change an
- 24 approach to how we're looking at this

- 1 situation.
- DR. HITE: Yeah. We're absolutely
- 3 changing the approach, Councilwoman. And we
- 4 are changing the approach by starting much
- 5 earlier, by trying to resolve all of our
- 6 labor agreements not just with the PFT but
- 7 with everyone else. And providing those
- 8 individuals with the tools and environments
- 9 they need in order to be successful.
- 10 I appreciate your questions.
- 11 Thank you.
- 12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 13 Thank you very much.
- 14 Councilman Oh.
- 15 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much
- 16 Chairwoman.
- 17 Good morning.
- DR. HITE: Good morning.
- 19 COUNCILMAN OH: I do appreciate your
- 20 coming by the other day as you have been
- 21 making your rounds and talking about a lot
- 22 of these issues. So, I do have a few
- 23 questions.
- 24 The first is about the funding. As

- 1 you've indicated, by -- well, right now we
- 2 have a fund balance because monies that you
- 3 wanted to spend to provide for the important
- 4 personnel and education was not spent. So
- 5 therefore, there's a fund balance. It's not
- 6 that we have, you know, properly funded our
- 7 school and there's extra money. We have
- 8 actually done the opposite.
- 9 And so, as you begin to spend this money
- 10 to correct the situation to try to improve
- 11 education, you indicate that by 2019, you're
- 12 going to have a shortfall of about
- 13 140 million; by 2020, 375 million shortfall;
- 14 and by 2021, \$603 million shortfall. Which
- 15 combined is like close to a billion dollars
- 16 just in your operating and, I suppose,
- 17 capital budget; is that correct?
- 18 MR. MONSON: It's actually not. It
- 19 rolls one into the other, so it builds.
- 20 COUNCILMAN OH: It builds.
- 21 MR. MONSON: You really shouldn't add
- 22 them. By the end of the five years, we
- 23 would be at \$600 million. Is the best way
- 24 to look at it.

- 1 COUNCILMAN OH: Is that operating and
- 2 capital or just operating?
- 3 MR. MONSON: That's just operating.
- 4 COUNCILMAN OH: Just operating. Capital
- 5 expenditures for building and securities
- 6 would be another additional amount of money;
- 7 is that correct?
- 8 MR. MONSON: Correct.
- 9 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. So that being the
- 10 situation, I am concerned that the City, it
- 11 appears, is going to be asked to provide a
- 12 portion of that money. If not, you know, a
- 13 very large portion depending on what happens
- 14 with the State which we never know what
- 15 happens with the State. But the City is
- 16 going to be asked to provide these revenues.
- 17 Is that a fair assumption?
- 18 MR. MONSON: I think our goal at this
- 19 point as we've stated is to have all of the
- 20 funders come together to have a discussion
- 21 with us about how to achieve a sustainable
- 22 structurally balanced budget.
- 23 COUNCILMAN OH: Kind of in light of
- 24 that, I am concerned as you are that as you

- 1 mentioned with the conclusion of the
- 2 Cigarette Tax in 2019 and then the
- 3 sunsetting of the PICA portion of the Wage
- 4 Tax in 2023, that according to our
- 5 representatives, will put us in a
- 6 \$350 million hole on an annual basis unless
- 7 something is done, which I don't know when
- 8 that's going to be addressed.
- 9 We are also looking at Sales Taxes which
- 10 we expect to decline over a period of time.
- 11 You know, we have a 2 percent sales tax
- 12 higher than the surrounding counties, and we
- 13 are looking at a Soda Tax. My issue is that
- 14 while we have this issue of PreK, which is a
- 15 new program that needs new administration
- 16 and about \$60 million per year from the
- 17 City, we are going to be asked to provide
- 18 money to the schools.
- 19 Is there some, you know, kind of broad
- 20 or forward thinking plan that you have to
- 21 look at the ability of the City to provide
- 22 that money?
- 23 In other words, if we start using up
- 24 money -- like we don't have endless pots of

- 1 money. If we start using up money that you
- 2 are going to want to use in the future, it
- 3 won't be there.
- 4 Have you kind of coordinated with the
- 5 Mayor over these issues?
- 6 DR. HITE: I will speak to the PreK
- 7 issue. Naturally, we are for universal
- 8 PreK. And we think that it's really
- 9 important. One of the things that -- and
- 10 that's part of the Mayor's Office along with
- 11 community schools. That's an initiative
- 12 that they are working through.
- 13 And is it -- it's my understanding that
- 14 that initiative is to develop high quality
- 15 providers in that space. The District does
- 16 now contract with PreK providers and we have
- 17 our own PreK program. But that -- we have
- 18 limited capacity inside of our structure to
- 19 do that work. And we have no capacity to
- 20 develop providers which is a large part of
- 21 the Mayor's approach to PreK.
- 22 The -- one of the reasons we are doing
- 23 the Five Year Plan is, as Mr. Monson stated
- 24 earlier, to ensure that there is a clear

- 1 understanding of what our current situation
- 2 looks like. But in addition, what the long
- 3 term situation will look like over the next
- 4 five years.
- 5 And so, it is -- so our request is as
- 6 you've heard before is how do we think about
- 7 this in terms of the things that we can do
- 8 right now to address these issues. If there
- 9 is a solution to the AVI wage reimbursement
- 10 problem? Is there a solution to the
- 11 Cigarette Tax expiration? Can we think of
- 12 other ways to generate revenue for the
- 13 District in the long run.
- But it wasn't -- we are coordinating
- 15 with the Mayor in so much as we are a part
- 16 of that team. We just cannot do the type of
- 17 work that the Mayor's Office is attempting
- 18 to do around PreK.
- 19 COUNCILMAN OH: Right. Can I say in
- 20 response, two issues arise. One, is that
- 21 you are a School District with building
- 22 situated throughout the City, with certified
- 23 teachers, with the infrastructure with all
- 24 kinds of supports that you have been doing

- 1 for a long time. Yet, you don't have the
- 2 capacity or ability to implement an
- 3 additional universal PreK.
- 4 DR. HITE: Yeah. We don't have the
- 5 capacity to develop providers.
- 6 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay.
- 7 DR. HITE: That's a big distinction.
- 8 COUNCILMAN OH: Right.
- 9 DR. HITE: And we do have -- and we do
- 10 have the ability if, in fact, we were to --
- 11 we could use -- we could probably host
- 12 another 500 children using our current set
- 13 of providers --
- 14 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay.
- DR. HITE: -- and be ready for the fall.
- 16 Beyond that, we will run into space issues
- 17 because there are some mandates as the
- 18 School District.
- 19 COUNCILMAN OH: Right.
- DR. HITE: We are mandated to serve
- 21 children who are learning English. We are
- 22 mandated to serve children who have special
- 23 needs particularly at the early ages. And
- 24 so, those young people we have mandates to

- 1 serve them first. And then that is
- 2 utilizing a lot of the space that would
- 3 otherwise be available for some of the PreK
- 4 spaces.
- 5 COUNCILMAN OH: The City does not have
- 6 such a mandate. We don't have to deal with
- 7 non-English speakers, persons with
- 8 disabilities, children with autism, learning
- 9 disabilities.
- 10 DR. HITE: No. We would have to do that
- 11 as the School District. We have to support
- 12 that first.
- 13 COUNCILMAN OH: The City doesn't.
- DR. HITE: The City would then develop
- 15 providers. This is my understanding. The
- 16 City would then develop providers who are
- 17 also, who are already offering some
- 18 childcare at the early years and develop
- 19 those providers as PreK providers. And
- 20 that's what the District does not have the
- 21 capacity to do. We don't develop current
- 22 providers. We just contract with
- 23 providers --
- 24 COUNCILMAN OH: Right.

- 1 DR. HITE: -- once they are deemed high
- 2 quality. The development of that group
- 3 would require different type of work that is
- 4 very different than -- than just teaching a
- 5 PreK class.
- 6 COUNCILMAN OH: Right. I am going to
- 7 ask the Chairwoman, I understand the bell
- 8 has rung Madam Chair. But I think that, you
- 9 know, kind of these discussions might
- 10 warrant a little longer conversation.
- 11 Otherwise, we just go around in a circle,
- 12 kind of pick up where we left off in a very
- 13 disjointed incoherent matter.
- Would that be okay, Chairwoman?
- 15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
- 16 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much.
- 17 So if the School District then says the
- 18 City which has never done PreK before, go
- 19 ahead and do PreK, we need an infrastructure
- 20 and what not. We are going to use the
- 21 money. We're going to develop the
- 22 providers, and we are going to do this on a
- 23 declining base of revenues which is the Soda
- 24 Tax, if that's how it's funded. Could be

- 1 funded some other way. I think the issue is
- 2 what is sustainable funding.
- 3 But I got to be a little concerned if
- 4 while you don't have the ability to develop
- 5 new providers and the City starts this whole
- 6 project, but yet in a few years you are
- 7 going to need more money. And the City has
- 8 committed itself to maintaining a program on
- 9 declining revenues that we are going to have
- 10 to look for revenues ourselves. And I'm not
- 11 saying there aren't maybe perhaps revenues
- 12 out there.
- 13 But then in the area of sustainable
- 14 funding, you know, I think about the fact
- 15 that, for example, we have Uber and Lift
- 16 operating in our City. They are a business
- 17 making money, making a lot of money. They
- 18 have -- they pay no taxes. They are
- 19 licensed. They don't -- they're not
- 20 regulated. We don't know if they have drunk
- 21 drivers, people have suspended licenses or
- 22 whatever.
- 23 And then all the folks who are part-time
- 24 drivers as most cabbies are part time, that

- 1 we don't know what the -- I don't think
- 2 we're getting their wage tax either. I just
- 3 think that, for example, we have some
- 4 entities in our City that the revenues used
- 5 to go to the City, and they no longer go to
- 6 the City. I think that -- those are the
- 7 issues.
- 8 You know, when I go to Harrisburg and
- 9 talk to the folks there, the issue is we're
- 10 not getting more money from them. But the
- 11 question is, can we keep more of the
- 12 revenues that we generate in our City to use
- 13 for our City and for our schools? And as we
- 14 fight for these different sources of money,
- 15 I have to ask this question.
- 16 The -- the issue one of the SRC board
- 17 members now being the President and CEO of
- 18 Philadelphia Education Fund, how is that not
- 19 a conflict?
- 20 MS. NEFF: I guess that question is for
- 21 me.
- 22 COUNCILMAN OH: It's for whoever wants
- 23 to answer it including the General Counsel.
- 24 Anyone who would like to answer.

- 1 MS. NEFF: Unfortunately, our General
- 2 Counsel is not here.
- 3 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay.
- 4 MS. NEFF: But the opinion of our
- 5 General Counsel, the legal opinion of our
- 6 General Counsel is it does not constitute a
- 7 broad conflict. And happy to have the
- 8 General Counsel speak to you directly or to
- 9 provide you with that legal opinion in
- 10 writing.
- 11 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. I mean, I respect
- 12 the General Counsel. I don't actually know
- 13 who it is personally, but I have no reason
- 14 not to respect their legal abilities at this
- 15 point in time.
- I will say that when I go on the
- 17 website, it says specifically that their
- 18 goals and objectives are to establish and
- 19 coordinate high quality educator development
- 20 and support for Philadelphia public schools.
- 21 Specifically, Philadelphia public schools,
- 22 not private schools, not outside of the
- 23 City. And they have an entire agenda of
- 24 what they think is best. And they advocate

- 1 for these things, and they influence the
- 2 School District. And I don't understand how
- 3 it would not be a conflict. But I am going
- 4 to certainly receive the legal opinion of
- 5 General Counsel.
- 6 I will say that I know that when SRC
- 7 Member Councilman Bill Green was a member of
- 8 City Council, whenever his law firm was
- 9 handling something, he would submit a letter
- 10 and he would recuse himself from the vote.
- 11 But his law firm handles many, many issues
- 12 not simply with the School District or with
- 13 the City. Whereas, the Philadelphia
- 14 Education Fund seems to be particularly --
- 15 it's particularly -- it only exists to
- 16 influence what the School District does,
- 17 okay?
- 18 MS. NEFF: I hear you.
- 19 COUNCILMAN OH: I look forward to
- 20 getting that. Thank you.
- 21 MS. NEFF: Thank you.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: If this is
- 23 submitted in writing, we ask that you submit
- 24 it to the Chair. And we will distribute it.

- 1 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much.
- 2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 3 You're welcome.
- 4 Councilman Domb.
- 5 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you, Madam
- 6 Chairwoman and good morning.
- 7 DR. HITE: Good morning.
- 8 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Just a few comments,
- 9 and I have some questions.
- 10 First of all, I want to congratulate you
- 11 all on hiring Uri Monson. Great hire.
- 12 Great hire. And I felt very comfortable
- 13 when I heard he was being hired because I
- 14 felt we were in good hands, so that's a good
- 15 thing.
- I want to go in your report. You have
- 17 the 3.0 status. I want to ask you on the
- 18 report card for the School District, are we
- 19 achieving the four goals that you set out?
- 20 Are we on track? Are we ahead? Are we
- 21 behind? Where are we for those four goals?
- DR. HITE: We are on track. And we are
- 23 a little behind in terms of -- naturally, we
- 24 are behind on the talent this year because

- 1 we had some unfilled positions. And by the
- 2 way, we are behind on the children reading
- 3 at grade level by the time they are eight
- 4 years old. And so, those are the areas
- 5 where we are behind.
- 6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: How about graduation
- 7 on the rates?
- 8 DR. HITE: We are on track in terms of
- 9 our graduation rate. And we are trying to
- 10 achieve a five year target of 80 percent.
- 11 So while our current target is 65 percent,
- 12 we are on track to a five year rate of
- 13 80 percent. And our -- and one of the
- 14 things we are also on track to do is have --
- 15 go from one out of the every three children
- 16 reading on grade level to two out of every
- 17 three children reading on grade level by the
- 18 time. But we think that all of the efforts
- 19 that we are doing, particularly in the early
- 20 years, will help us with that.
- 21 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Can you also come back
- 22 to us, you don't have to do it today, with
- 23 what you need to do to get some of those --
- 24 two of those goals back on track. I think

- 1 your goals are good. I'd love to see that
- 2 in four years we have 80 percent high school
- 3 graduation rate. And I wasn't clear about
- 4 students who attended college the year after
- 5 graduating. Says in the book 55 percent.
- 6 Was that the current rate today or is
- 7 that the goal?
- 8 DR. HITE: That's the goal.
- 9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: That's the goal.
- 10 DR. HITE: Yes.
- 11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: What is the current
- 12 rate today?
- DR. HITE: I will get that for you.
- 14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Those kind of
- 15 statistics if we are on track, I mean, I
- 16 think there is a good story. If those goals
- 17 are being achieved, we should tell that
- 18 story.
- 19 DR. HITE: I will get that for you.
- 20 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. I want to make
- 21 sure I understand on the financial side of
- 22 things, because you gave a good
- 23 presentation. That down the road we are
- 24 going to be \$600 million in the hole

- 1 basically. Looking at the budget, you
- 2 pointed this out, the changes of AVI and the
- 3 Cigarette Tax and looks like the charter
- 4 schools is a big piece of that.
- 5 Is there a recommendation that you all
- 6 can make to us as to how to deal with those
- 7 three issues and what you'd like to see
- 8 happen?
- 9 MR. MONSON: We have laid out regarding
- 10 the Cigarette Tax and the AVI change. They
- 11 are both in the hands of the State. We have
- 12 spoken to state legislatures throughout
- 13 the -- across the general assembly, made
- 14 them aware of these concerns when we did the
- 15 presentation before the SRC before
- 16 Councilmembers of the budget. We have also
- 17 done it for various delegations in
- 18 Harrisburg. It's not an issue we can solve.
- 19 The Cigarette Tax, in fact, when the
- 20 City approved it, they approved it ongoing.
- 21 The SRC's approval is also ongoing. It's
- 22 the state that has the Sunset Provision.
- 23 It's the state that would need to unwind
- 24 that. Similarly with the AVI, it's a state

- 1 ratio formula. They would need to come up
- 2 with solution. Our goal here was to point
- 3 out to them exactly what the impact of that,
- 4 the current law is. And that is an issue we
- 5 need to have addressed. Those pieces, as I
- 6 mentioned before, make up about half of
- 7 \$600 million problem we have over five year
- 8 period.
- 9 In terms of the charter school expenses,
- 10 I think we have all spoken about it at
- 11 various points, the fact that -- I will use
- 12 the Auditor General when he was in here the
- 13 past couple weeks, that it's a funding
- 14 system that doesn't really work for anybody.
- 15 It's not reliable. It's not predictable.
- 16 In fact, we have meetings with some of the
- 17 charter schools. It doesn't really work for
- 18 them either in the way it's set up.
- 19 And there are a lot of issues with it
- 20 not just in terms of the amount of dollars
- 21 going into the system, which we've all
- 22 spoken about since the dollars were reduced
- 23 four years ago. But the system overall
- 24 needs to be overhauled again. That's

- 1 ultimately a state -- it's a common theme
- 2 unfortunately with all three of these. All
- 3 of them are in the hands of state. There
- 4 are a lot of issues surrounding charter
- 5 school law both in terms of oversight and
- 6 financing that all of us would like to see
- 7 addressed.
- 8 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Financially, just want
- 9 to make sure I'm clear. The charter school
- 10 increase in the budget that you gave us is
- 11 about \$380 million over the next four, five
- 12 years?
- 13 MR. MONSON: Yes. And it's a
- 14 combination of the number of seats. I mean,
- 15 dollars go by seat, not by school. And
- 16 they're per pupil rate. I can actually
- 17 illustrate that best with next year's
- 18 investment. So charter school expenditures
- 19 next year are going up \$121 million.
- 20 60 million of that is related to the number
- 21 of -- they increase the number of seats.
- 22 \$61 million of it is related to the required
- 23 additional investment on a per pupil basis.
- Every dollar we put in, so Dr. Hite

- 1 mentioned the \$440 million of investments.
- 2 And in particular, the investments we are
- 3 making in the current fiscal year around
- 4 increase in the technology in the high
- 5 schools, all of our teaching materials both
- 6 reading materials and math, that's
- 7 \$60 million, I think, those areas alone.
- 8 Every dollar we put into the schools,
- 9 33 percent of that then must be added the
- 10 follow year into the charter school. And 33
- 11 percent of that following year and
- 12 33 percent of that.
- 13 The net impact that is essentially every
- 14 dollar the District puts into the District
- 15 schools actually cost \$1.50. We can't
- 16 control that. It does not mean we shouldn't
- 17 invest in the schools and are committed to
- 18 investing in the schools, but it has an
- 19 impact over time.
- 20 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Is there anything we
- 21 can do to help you with this problem?
- DR. HITE: We all have to. One of the
- 23 things that we have been advocating for is
- 24 different charter school legislation. And

- 1 we have to have the charter school
- 2 legislation revised, which has not been
- 3 revised since its inception in '97. And
- 4 the -- as a point of clarification,
- 5 Councilman, I want to -- the 55 percent
- 6 are -- that is the current number of
- 7 children who are attending college the year
- 8 after graduation.
- 9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Thank you very
- 10 much. Thank you.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. I
- 12 assume that we have no plans to close
- 13 schools again. We won't have to go through
- 14 that, will we?
- DR. HITE: We have in the budget in the
- 16 Five Year Plan, Madam Chair, we have plans
- 17 to -- at the current rate starting in 2018
- 18 to close three schools a year. That's so we
- 19 do not get back to a situation where we have
- 20 large numbers of schools to close. But if,
- 21 in fact, the trend stays the same in terms
- 22 of children migrating to different types of
- 23 schools, if we stay on that course, we would
- 24 have to close -- we are predicting to close

- 1 three schools a year because of low
- 2 utilization at those school. And I will add
- 3 that this year was the first time in many
- 4 years where we saw increase in the number of
- 5 children who were enrolling in District
- 6 schools. And so if that continues, it also
- 7 changes that projection.
- 8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Do we have
- 9 plans for new schools?
- 10 DR. HITE: We have a -- in the -- we
- 11 have made a recommendation in October about
- 12 some schools. We have one school that is a
- 13 partnership school and would be a
- 14 District-run partnership. It would be a
- 15 high school in North Philadelphia with
- 16 internship and apprentice approach. And
- 17 that's a partnership with an organization
- 18 called Big Picture. That's the only new
- 19 school that we are talking about now.
- We have some expansion of some new
- 21 schools that were created some years ago,
- 22 but that's because the grades are
- 23 increasing. They started in ninth grade,
- 24 tenth. And next year they will be in

- 1 eleventh.
- 2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: What about
- 3 schools like community schools and other
- 4 special schools that we feed more materials,
- 5 teachers, et cetera?
- 6 DR. HITE: Yeah. With the -- we are
- 7 working with the community schools to look
- 8 at -- we are doing an analysis of schools
- 9 that will have space, the resources, the
- 10 community-based resources, the City
- 11 resources that are going into those schools
- 12 now and really determining by need and by
- 13 space what our candidates for community
- 14 schools.
- 15 Those would not be -- those would not
- 16 necessarily be new schools, but they would
- 17 be existing schools that would then have
- 18 additional support services and resources
- 19 that are responsive to what those children
- 20 and those families need in those
- 21 communities.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 23 Councilwoman Parker.
- 24 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank you, Madam

- 1 Chair. And good morning to each of you.
- 2 DR. HITE: Good morning.
- 3 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Let me start by
- 4 thanking you, Dr. Hite, for acknowledging in
- 5 your testimony the difficult choices that
- 6 this City Council had to make over the past
- 7 five years in the generating of revenue via
- 8 vehicles and taxes that they did not want to
- 9 increase but they had to do it because the
- 10 state was, in essence, derelict in its
- 11 responsibility to fund public education not
- 12 just in the City of Philadelphia but
- 13 throughout the Commonwealth.
- 14 And with that being said, I have always
- 15 appreciated the role of our advocates on the
- 16 outside of this process, groups like PCCY,
- 17 Parents United, other advocacy groups
- 18 because they work on the outside to sort of
- 19 raise the alarm. But when we get into this
- 20 body, I've been accustomed to being a part
- 21 of what I call delivering solutions. Right.
- 22 And so to Chairwoman Blackwell, Council
- 23 President Clarke, Councilwoman Reynolds
- 24 Brown and all Members of Council who were

- 1 part of this body who actually had to work
- 2 to deliver the solutions, I say kudos.
- 3 Because when we didn't get it done right,
- 4 you did. I want to say thank you.
- 5 So with that being said --
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 7 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: -- I want to go
- 8 back to something that really alarmed me
- 9 when you talked about the Cigarette Tax
- 10 revenue. Because while we didn't get it all
- 11 right in Harrisburg, I am proud that some of
- 12 the solutions when Council acted, the
- 13 permanency of that 1 percent sales tax, the
- 14 Cigarette Tax, doesn't occur without the
- 15 enabling authority that we get from the
- 16 Commonwealth. So while we were derelict in
- 17 many other areas, you know, we got a few
- 18 things done while we were there.
- 19 With that being said, let me ask you
- 20 from a very technical and process-oriented
- 21 perspective, one of the things that we
- 22 established when we were there, we started
- 23 this at the beginning of the Nutter
- 24 Administration was that when any issue arose

- 1 for the City of Philadelphia, and blame it
- 2 on me being frazzled when I have to talk to
- 3 twelve different people about an issue. I
- 4 made sure that we worked very, very hard to
- 5 ensure that the Administration, the Mayor,
- 6 the Council President, the SRC, the School
- 7 District, the PFT, charter providers, State
- 8 House, State Senate, that all of us were at
- 9 the table together. So that if we were
- 10 trying to hammer out a compromise, like we
- 11 should about when we go full force ahead
- 12 about attempting to get the Cigarette Tax to
- 13 make it become permanent if that would be
- 14 the ultimate strategy, if it's about the
- 15 fix, the ratio fix as it relates to AVI,
- 16 that there is a united ask from all parties
- 17 on one letter.
- Now, I know it was an annoying process
- 19 for some people. Some people hated all of
- 20 us in the room. We don't even like each
- 21 other, right? But putting everybody at the
- 22 table and making them sign correspondence,
- 23 again advocates advocate, sound the alarm,
- 24 raise their voices on the outside and we

- 1 need them. But our job is to deliver.
- 2 Has that process started, Dr. Hite? And
- 3 I hope you didn't find it annoying.
- 4 DR. HITE: I did not. And not since you
- 5 left has it started. So but we do -- to
- 6 your point, we do have to -- we have to
- 7 think of ways to be in at -- in the state
- 8 capitol with one voice. And that was the
- 9 last opportunity we had around being in one
- 10 voice.
- 11 So one of the opportunities is the
- 12 Charter School Legislation. And we have
- 13 charter schools that have difficulty with
- 14 some of that legislation. And so, it would
- 15 be an opportunity, in my opinion, for the
- 16 School District, our legislatives, our City
- 17 leaders, advocacy groups and our charter
- 18 schools to go and talk about what's wrong
- 19 with that legislation and advocate on behalf
- 20 of getting some different type of
- 21 legislation that will work better for the
- 22 City of Philadelphia.
- 23 So, we are attempting to get back to
- 24 that place where we have a coordinated

- 1 effort to do that. But we have not had the
- 2 opportunity since you left, City
- 3 Councilwoman. And we are looking forward to
- 4 doing that once again.
- 5 And I do think that if we show strength
- 6 when it is the same message and it's not
- 7 always in agreement, but it's the message
- 8 around the general principle.
- 9 Is there new legislation that's
- 10 required? Yes. Then we should all be there
- 11 making that statement.
- 12 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Chairwoman Neff,
- 13 any comments? Any thoughts?
- MS. NEFF: Actually, yes. I was going
- 15 to add that what we need -- are you
- 16 volunteering? We need someone to get
- 17 everyone in the room together. And I think
- 18 that because we hold a particular
- 19 perspective, that's not always the School
- 20 District or the SRC. But in fact, what was
- 21 so powerful about that is you had
- 22 relationships in all of those areas and were
- 23 able to pull people together.
- So, I am hoping that you are

- 1 volunteering to help us pull that effort
- 2 together. Because we need someone who
- 3 speaks to all of those groups and can help
- 4 us come together and work together on where
- 5 we have common ground.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: I am sure our
- 7 Chair lady of Education who has been on the
- 8 ground and our Council President who has a
- 9 track record of delivering the solutions
- 10 that we need, and we will work and ask and
- 11 see if we can work together to put that room
- 12 together so that we can have a united ask.
- 13 And Chairwoman Blackwell, I will call on
- 14 President Clarke and you because we can't
- 15 get it done without you and your leadership.
- 16 The second question is an issue that's
- 17 come up a million times with regards to the
- 18 City contracts, but I haven't heard it
- 19 discussed about teachers. When I was a
- 20 student in the School District of
- 21 Philadelphia growing up from elementary
- 22 through high school, the diversity of the
- 23 actual teachers in the classroom looked
- 24 different. And with that being said, we

- 1 have, you know, seen that change. We have
- 2 wonderful programs like Teach For America,
- 3 all of those kind of things that have very
- 4 good goals.
- 5 But what are we doing within that pool,
- 6 Dr. Hite, that you mentioned to increase
- 7 diversity so that the student population in
- 8 the City of Philadelphia will have a higher
- 9 probability of seeing people like them in
- 10 front of their classroom as a leader and
- 11 particularly in the areas as it relates to
- 12 African-American men?
- DR. HITE: Absolutely. Thank you.
- 14 That's a very important point. And one of
- 15 our primary strategies, in addition to all
- 16 of the meet-and-greet sessions and the
- 17 engagement that we have done with colleges
- 18 and universities, we have also been very
- 19 specific around black male educators and
- 20 doing job fairs for them, for bilingual
- 21 Latino and diversity career fairs. We have
- 22 been very specific around that.
- 23 And recently, the President of the PFT
- 24 and I joined together as a tribune to call

- 1 for and to call attention to the need to be
- 2 a lot more aggressive in this area. Even
- 3 including starting pathways in our schools
- 4 that get young people from the City into
- 5 colleges and universities with a goal to
- 6 come back and teach in Philadelphia. And
- 7 that's one thing that we are also talking
- 8 about and beginning to work on.
- 9 As I indicated before, this is going to
- 10 take the efforts of multiple individuals,
- 11 not just the School District. Where we are
- 12 recruiting as a part of the BMEC work,
- 13 that's the Black Male Educators Coalition,
- 14 that's being convened in this region and the
- 15 work that we are doing with bilingual Latino
- 16 and diversity, in those recruiting efforts
- 17 that's very important. And we are being
- 18 very strategic and intentional in our
- 19 efforts around recruiting -- the recruitment
- 20 of minorites.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Chairwoman
- 22 Blackwell, I want to thank you for your
- 23 latitude. I will come back for the next
- 24 round. And Dr. Hite will get it tee'd up.

- 1 The issue for me is career technical
- 2 education and any ongoing communication with
- 3 trades, the Administration as it relates to
- 4 the framework of this budget. But we will
- 5 get to that during the next round.
- 6 Madam Chair, thank you so very much for
- 7 your latitude.
- 8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. And
- 9 thank you for your kind remarks.
- 10 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Good
- 12 morning.
- DR. HITE: Good morning.
- 14 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Let me
- 15 start off also first by acknowledging the
- 16 mammoth job that you all do every day on
- 17 behalf of our kids. This is the first year,
- 18 I believe unless my memory is failing, that
- 19 we have actually had a video to open and
- 20 share with us in a real visual way what
- 21 you're doing. So, you can keep that going
- 22 because it works.
- 23 Let me also acknowledge, because I think
- 24 we are so often -- it's easy for us to look

- 1 at what's not well. But we need to lift up
- 2 people when things are well. And I need to
- 3 put on the record that I for one and I'm
- 4 sure a number of my colleagues appreciate
- 5 both the presence and the attentiveness, but
- 6 more importantly, the follow through of
- 7 Evelyn Sample. So, this is the only chance
- 8 I get to say it. I need to do that.
- 9 And lastly, you should know that
- 10 Governor Wolf actually commented on the
- 11 recent May Primary that he, too, misses
- 12 State Representative, now Councilwoman
- 13 Cherelle Parker being in Harrisburg because
- 14 he needed someone to be the glue for those
- 15 multiple audiences up there. That work up
- 16 there is very, very important.
- 17 So, let's start with what's working. If
- 18 you can pick three achievements from the
- 19 past fiscal year, what would they be?
- DR. HITE: Just I would start with the
- 21 fact that we have once again no persistently
- 22 dangerous schools.
- 23 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: We have
- 24 no?

- 1 DR. HITE: Persistently dangerous
- 2 schools. At one point, Philadelphia led the
- 3 state in the number of persistently
- 4 dangerous schools with, I think, 25 at the
- 5 time. We have zero. And we have had zero
- for the last two years, and so that's one.
- We have also seen an increase in student
- 8 attendance. We saw 15,000 children attend
- 9 more regularly because of the efforts that
- 10 we initiated. And that was some tremendous
- 11 work by Karen Lynch and her team around
- 12 addressing student attendance.
- 13 And in addition, one of the things that
- 14 we have found is that there are two programs
- 15 that I want to mention. They were on the
- 16 video. One is the advent of the Advance
- 17 Manufacturing Program that is now at Ben
- 18 Franklin High School that is unlike other
- 19 career and technical education programs
- 20 where every child at Benjamin Franklin has
- 21 the opportunity to go through that program.
- 22 They don't have to sign up or meet criteria,
- 23 but they are going to work through that
- 24 program.

- 1 And the other one is a dental -- is a
- 2 dental program at Kensington Health Sciences
- 3 that is run by a licensed optometrist -- not
- 4 optometrist, but a licensed dentist. I am
- 5 missing the medical term. But those are
- 6 some of the success that we have seen.
- 7 And I know you asked for three, but the
- 8 other is we are, once again, doing a survey.
- 9 And now we have over 30,000 respondents to
- 10 the survey about our schools.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.
- DR. HITE: Those respondents are
- 13 parents, they are teachers and they are
- 14 students. And the large participation of
- 15 individuals who are returning the surveys,
- 16 good, bad or indifferent, the fact that they
- 17 are participating is an opportunity to be
- 18 informed by the voices of individuals who
- 19 are -- that we are trying to serve.
- 20 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Well, I
- 21 know Councilman Jones and Councilman
- 22 Kenyatta Johnson would be thrilled to hear
- 23 about the progress around zero -- dangerous
- 24 schools. And we all know that Councilman

- 1 Henon has been a real leader when it comes
- 2 to manufacturing and getting that --
- 3 drilling that down in our schools.
- 4 Let's move to partnerships. I am
- 5 embarrassed to say I don't remember the
- 6 staff for it. I see that she left -- no,
- 7 she's still here -- that worked very closely
- 8 with our office. If I step into college
- 9 effort that we have done for the third
- 10 consecutive year with University of
- 11 Sciences, I want to say thank you very much.
- 12 And what I'm curious to know and want
- 13 you to comment on are other partnerships --
- 14 let's deal with one around the issue of
- 15 truancy.
- 16 What is the current partnership with the
- 17 District Attorney's Office or DHS when it
- 18 comes to capturing those young people who
- 19 are consistently truant when we know that
- 20 that leads potentially to getting a ninth
- 21 grade and not seeing them 48 months later in
- 22 twelfth grade?
- DR. HITE: I am going to ask -- I'm
- 24 going to ask the Chief of Student Services

- 1 Karen Lynch who's been doing and leading
- 2 that work in a pretty aggressive way, to
- 3 come forward and respond to that.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Thank you.
- 5 And it was Karen who worked very closely
- 6 with my office and Step Into College. So
- 7 know that we appreciate that.
- 8 MS. LYNCH: Thank you so much for the
- 9 opportunity. For the record, I am Karen
- 10 Lynch, Chief of Student Support Services.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Pull the
- 12 mic closer to you.
- 13 MS. LYNCH: Thank you for the kind
- 14 words.
- 15 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: You're
- 16 welcome.
- 17 MS. LYNCH: Greatly appreciate it. For
- 18 the record, Karen Lynch, Chief of Student
- 19 Support Services. I think the last time we
- 20 were here, Councilwoman, we talked with
- 21 members of the District Attorney's Office.
- 22 At that point, they were going to reach out
- 23 to the courts to see whether or not there
- 24 was opportunity for the courts to engage in

- 1 court order for the effort. We have shared
- 2 the information with the Members of the
- 3 Council that we were -- City Council that we
- 4 were asked to share. And the most recent in
- 5 the last few days information that I
- 6 received is that the District Attorney's
- 7 Office is working on truancy initiatives.
- 8 Has now partnered with and are sending
- 9 members of the charter school community
- 10 families to the Truancy Court --
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.
- 12 MS. LYNCH: -- that is operated by the
- 13 courts. And so, I highlight this to point
- 14 out that new two processes are completely
- 15 aligned. And the School District of
- 16 Philadelphia, when students are truant, we
- 17 engage them with services from DHS, from the
- 18 Department of Human Services as does the
- 19 District Attorney's Office. Very same group
- 20 at DHS.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.
- 22 MS. LYNCH: The next step for the School
- 23 District of Philadelphia is that we make
- 24 referrals when parents are -- when truancy

- 1 continues even after DHS intervention is the
- 2 referral to Truancy Court. And now the
- 3 District Attorney's Office is following suit
- 4 and doing the same.
- 5 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: That's
- 6 been progress since last year. Given what I
- 7 heard last year and what I am now hearing
- 8 today, I would give that a great progress
- 9 report.
- 10 Now where is DHS in this equation?
- 11 MS. LYNCH: Which?
- 12 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Where is
- 13 DHS in that equation?
- MS. LYNCH: So DHS is the entity in the
- 15 equation that is providing supportive
- 16 services to families. Actually, going
- inside of households where there is truancy
- 18 and trying to address the issues, working
- 19 with families to absolve the issues of
- 20 truancy and put students back on track for
- 21 good attendance.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay. The
- 23 bell has rung. Is it fair to say then that
- 24 partners are aligned, so the preventive

- 1 measures are in place to sort of arrest --
- 2 I'm saying that figuratively -- but get
- 3 young people before they drop out? Because
- 4 we know that truancy leads to drop out,
- 5 agreed? Those numbers that Dr. Hite just
- 6 spoke of getting to this 80 percent
- 7 graduation rate, this effort should get us
- 8 closer to achieving that goal.
- 9 Would you agree now that the systems are
- 10 aligned?
- 11 MS. LYNCH: With the systems that are
- 12 aligned, yes. It gets us closer to reaching
- 13 the goals and also shows that both processes
- 14 are working together for the same outcome.
- 15 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay. All
- 16 right then. Thank you very much.
- 17 MS. LYNCH: Thank you.
- 18 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: I will get
- 19 you on the next round.
- Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- Next we will hear from Councilman Green.
- 23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you, Madam
- 24 Chair.

- 1 Good morning. We will start with a few
- 2 questions.
- What is the average student population
- 4 in the School District?
- 5 DR. HITE: The total population or
- 6 the --
- 7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Let's say on a
- 8 monthly basis, what's the total population
- 9 in the School District of students?
- 10 DR. HITE: We are 132,000.
- 11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: 132,000.
- 12 DR. HITE: Yes.
- 13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: As you discussed, how
- 14 will that population decrease over the next
- 15 five years?
- MR. MONSON: We have it budgeted to go
- 17 down by a few thousand. It's roughly a
- 18 thousand a year, more or less, over the next
- 19 five years.
- 20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. And then on --
- 21 based on the 132,000 population -- what is
- 22 the number of students you need to have
- 23 enrolled in the School District basically to
- 24 break even?

- 1 MR. MONSON: I'm not even sure how to
- 2 answer the question, to be honest.
- 3 COUNCILMAN GREEN: What's the number?
- 4 Give me a range.
- 5 MR. MONSON: It's almost an impossible
- 6 question if you're still assuming the monies
- 7 that have to go out to the charter schools
- 8 in the charter school formula. Because the
- 9 more you are investing in the District
- 10 schools, the more that goes out. It's not a
- 11 simple calculation in that regard.
- 12 There is a whole series of interactive
- interrelated formulas that would have to be
- 14 run through a system. I wouldn't even begin
- 15 to hazard a guess as to what that would look
- 16 like.
- 17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: There is no way you
- 18 can say that on a monthly annual basis, we
- 19 need to have X-number of students in the
- 20 School District in order for us to have a
- 21 positive fund balance?
- 22 MR. MONSON: Correct. Because it
- 23 determines -- doesn't necessarily bring more
- 24 funding with it. Depending on how many more

- 1 students you have, you might need to put
- 2 even more money into schools for space. It
- 3 extends your capital needs. There are a
- 4 whole host of issues that would go into
- 5 that -- that calculation. It's not a -- the
- 6 funding we have is more of a zero sum game.
- We have a certain of amount of funding.
- If we got more money on a per student
- 9 basis, we might be able to do a calculation
- 10 like that, but we don't. We have a certain
- 11 amount of money set by the state. We get
- 12 our share. We have the local tax revenues.
- 13 None of those are based on a per student
- 14 basis.
- 15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Doctor, I was
- 16 encouraged in your testimony when you talked
- 17 about wanting to negotiate Fair Labor
- 18 Contract. And from our conversation
- 19 yesterday, I introduced a resolution last
- 20 week calling on various parties to work with
- 21 PFT to negotiate a fair contract. And I
- 22 guess my question is, you're talking about
- 23 bringing a number of -- number of new
- 24 teachers this year. And it seemed like you

- 1 are making good progress in that regard.
- 2 However, you've also over the past year used
- 3 Source4Teachers. Now you are working with
- 4 Kelly Services in reference to filling, I
- 5 guess, on the substitute teacher basis. I
- 6 think that's where you have your biggest
- 7 challenge substitute teachers?
- 8 DR. HITE: Yes.
- 9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: When I introduced a
- 10 resolution, I also spoke about my mother
- 11 being a former Philadelphia school teacher.
- 12 But also, she served as a substitute for a
- 13 numbers of years, as well.
- I my quess my question is, what steps
- 15 are you engaging with in retired school
- 16 teachers to work with substitute teachers.
- 17 And also when you had the situation with
- 18 Source4Teachers and now Kelly Services, how
- 19 will that impact your negotiations with PFT?
- 20 DR. HITE: I can't answer the second
- 21 question because it's -- I don't know the
- 22 answer of how that would impact. And if I
- 23 may, Councilman Green, if I can go back to
- 24 your first question about the number of

- 1 children needed to break even. It's one
- 2 reason why we have been advocating, and so
- 3 was Councilwoman Parker when she was in
- 4 Harrisburg for a funding formula. Because
- 5 what you are suggesting was a byproduct of a
- 6 funding formula.
- We have no such formula in Pennsylvania,
- 8 one of three states that doesn't operate
- 9 that way. We get monies in a block grant.
- 10 And it almost doesn't matter if you get more
- 11 or less students. And so, that's why that
- 12 calculation is so hard.
- 13 To the second question on the -- on the
- 14 retired teachers who are available to
- 15 substitute, one of the issues that we ran
- 16 into two years ago was an issue related to
- 17 the state retirement system, PSERS. And
- 18 where the PSERS was going after individuals
- 19 who were substituting in non-high need areas
- 20 and causing them to have to pay back some of
- 21 the retirement monies that they collected,
- 22 and it made -- it created -- it was part of
- 23 the problem that was created because it
- 24 eliminated a group of individuals who were

- 1 available to substitute.
- 2 You removed that obstacle when you use
- 3 an external provider because they are
- 4 working for a noneducational -- they are
- 5 working for a non-state entity. And so, we
- 6 lose that opportunity. So, individuals
- 7 could be employed by Kelly Services or
- 8 Source4Teachers in that record.
- 9 With respect to the pay, we are looking
- 10 at individuals to come in who are retired
- 11 who can come back and do that work. And
- 12 Kelly Services has indicated a de -- they
- indicated a practice of paying those,
- 14 compensating those individuals at the rate
- 15 to which they were compensated several years
- 16 ago. And so, we think that will help us
- 17 resolve the problem.
- 18 To the last question you asked, do I
- 19 think that will impact? We are working with
- 20 the -- we are working on the auspices of the
- 21 state-appointed mediator to get back and to
- 22 have talks now as it relates to the PFT. As
- 23 I indicated earlier, we are also in active
- 24 negotiations with 32BJ and CASA. And it's

- 1 really important for us to solve all of
- 2 those, bring conclusion to all of those
- 3 labor agreements as we move forward.
- 4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: To echo the comments
- 5 of some of the Members of this Body, there
- 6 are some teachers, principals,
- 7 administrators doing some really phenomenal
- 8 work in schools throughout the City of
- 9 Philadelphia. Too often they are not
- 10 highlighted for all the great work they do.
- 11 Every day I walk my son to Houston
- 12 Elementary School and seeing the phenomenal
- 13 work that Principal Hall and the staff there
- 14 are trying to do. And I know that they are
- 15 actually increasing number of children that
- 16 are on the autism spectrum that will be at
- 17 Houston. Actually, go up to four autism
- 18 support classes.
- 19 But my concern is that sometimes
- 20 depending on where you live in the City of
- 21 Philadelphia is a tale of two cities. For
- 22 all the phenomenal things I have seen at
- 23 Houston or other schools like at Hill
- 24 Freedman World Academy where children have

- 1 learning differences or physical
- 2 differences, there are other schools where
- 3 you have a complete different perspective.
- 4 Because I'm such an advocate in reference to
- 5 autism and issues dealing with learning or
- 6 physical differences, I have had various
- 7 parents reach out to me regarding concerns
- 8 they have had.
- 9 In particular, I know one parent who had
- 10 a son who had severe physical differences.
- 11 And the issue is that I think it's the Route
- 12 2391 bus is supposed to pick the child up
- every day and drop them off, but the bus is
- 14 frequently late. And I think reliant
- 15 transportation is the outside vendor that
- 16 provides transportation. That's caused such
- 17 a challenge for this family because the
- 18 child not even meeting the IEP because of
- 19 the fact that this transportation company is
- 20 not doing what it's supposed to do as a
- 21 vendor.
- 22 In addition, there is also issues for
- 23 parents and caregivers who language
- 24 differences in reference to their child who

- 1 has an IEP. And one issue in particular at
- 2 the McCall School where a parent has been
- 3 dealing with an issue with a teacher and the
- 4 child has a difference like autism and also
- 5 has a language difference. As opposed to
- 6 meeting the IEP of the child, you know, the
- 7 principal's been involved in a way that's
- 8 not been the most favorable.
- 9 I guess my question is, what's the
- 10 commitment of the School District to get
- 11 away from this tale of two cities
- 12 perspective from the Houston versus a McCall
- 13 versus a child that is not able to even meet
- 14 the IEP perspective because the
- 15 transportation. And so, what is the goal to
- 16 bridge this gap and get away from this tale
- 17 of two cities when it comes to children with
- 18 autism and other type of differences when it
- 19 comes to the IEPs?
- 20 DR. HITE: Yeah. One of the things and
- 21 part of why we have the action in the Action
- 22 Plan is to end with a situation where we
- 23 have good schools closer to where children
- 24 live and good schools in neighborhood. It

- 1 shouldn't matter where children live, but we
- 2 want them to have access to those
- 3 opportunities that you just described. And
- 4 those opportunities are clean, safe, warm
- 5 buildings, warm and dry buildings,
- 6 transportation that is reliable that gets
- 7 them to and from school in the time they are
- 8 supposed to be to and from school, and the
- 9 types of environments that you described
- 10 where individuals are -- they feel
- 11 comfortable with their interactions with
- 12 many of the principals and the teachers.
- I will add that while just as you
- 14 acknowledged, Councilman Green, that there
- are a lot of great things that are happening
- 16 with schools every day, and I will agree
- 17 with you there, I would also add that even
- 18 in some of the schools where there are
- 19 reported incidents that there are problems
- 20 either with building leader or teacher, it's
- 21 really important for us to get all sides of
- 22 those stories to understand what the school
- 23 has attempted to do to resolve those issues.
- 24 But we are very committed to resolving

- 1 all of those issues that you just described.
- 2 And it's another reason why we are -- we
- 3 have a survey out now to families, to
- 4 teachers, to students that gives us
- 5 information both by from a District's
- 6 perspective but from every single school.
- 7 And also children and families in charter
- 8 schools also have an opportunity to submit
- 9 those surveys. We just don't know about
- 10 District schools and neighborhoods, but we
- 11 can also learn more about charter schools.
- 12 But this is the work of our assistant
- 13 superintendents working with principals
- 14 every day. And there are certain things
- 15 that should and must be in place. And it's
- 16 really important that we continue to know
- 17 when those incidents happen so that we can
- 18 get in and address and problem solve through
- 19 those.
- 20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you, Madam
- 21 Chair.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
- 23 much. Let me refer back to Councilwoman
- 24 Reynolds Brown when she stated that she

- 1 wanted to thank Evelyn Sample-Oates. Can't
- 2 let you outdo me because we work her too
- 3 hard, and we are grateful.
- 4 The other thing I wanted to mention was
- 5 that, as you know, we have a dental program
- 6 for years under the former President of Penn
- 7 at schools in the 3rd District. So, we
- 8 wanted to note that.
- 9 The next speaker will be Councilwoman
- 10 Bass.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you. Thank
- 12 you, Madam Chair.
- 13 Good afternoon.
- DR. HITE: Good afternoon.
- 15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: How are you? I just
- 16 wanted to first start off by joining the
- 17 chorus of those who have thanked you for the
- 18 work that you have done so far, recognizing
- 19 that it's incredibly challenging. I have
- 20 been to every school in my District, and I
- 21 know the challenges. I have seen them up
- 22 front. You don't always get the support,
- 23 you know, and the recognition that you
- 24 deserve. And so, I do want to say that

- 1 first before I go in.
- 2 That being said, you know, I have a
- 3 concern and a couple of concerns. The first
- 4 concern that I have is something that you
- 5 stated earlier, Dr. Hite, in terms of school
- 6 closures.
- 7 In 2018, which is little more than 18th
- 8 months from now, that you expect to close
- 9 three schools per year for how many years?
- 10 Indefinitely?
- 11 DR. HITE: Yeah. As long as those
- 12 trends persists.
- 13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: As long as the
- 14 trends persist.
- DR. HITE: We are losing -- if in fact,
- 16 as you heard from Mr. Monson, we are losing
- 17 a thousand children a year --
- 18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Right.
- 19 DR. HITE: -- that creates utilization
- 20 issues for us.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Certainly. And we
- 22 get it. Philadelphia is a City built for
- 23 5 million people. We don't have 5 million
- 24 people here anymore.

- 1 But at the same time, some of the
- 2 challenges that occur when we close schools,
- 3 you know, can really cripple entire
- 4 neighborhoods. And so, one of the things I
- 5 wanted to talk about was Germantown High
- 6 School which was closed a couple years ago
- 7 and also Ada Lewis which was closed many
- 8 years ago before my tenure in Council, and
- 9 the fact that these properties are still
- 10 sitting.
- 11 The School District cannot close schools
- 12 even with the trends that exist without
- 13 having a plan for these buildings in
- 14 advance. It is absolutely unacceptable to
- 15 close a school and to leave a neighborhood
- 16 without any plan, any sort of formulation.
- 17 And even I have found it has not been easy
- 18 trying to move a school. You know, when you
- 19 come up with a developer or someone with a
- 20 great idea, I guess in some neighborhoods it
- 21 works -- seems to work a whole lot faster if
- 22 the neighborhood is hot, if the housing
- 23 stock is hot, people want to buy in and
- 24 create new housing out of these old school

- 1 buildings, then the buildings go right away.
- 2 In other areas it seems as if they just
- 3 languish. There is no reason, in my
- 4 opinion, that Ada Lewis should be sitting
- 5 for all of these years. It should have been
- 6 sold a long time ago. I would like to hear
- 7 you -- your comments on what we can do to
- 8 make that happen because the people who live
- 9 near that site and Germantown High School.
- 10 The only reason I'm not focusing on
- 11 Germantown just yet, because Ada Lewis has
- 12 been vacant how many years? You tell me.
- DR. HITE: At least since I've been
- 14 here. So I know it's long before I arrived.
- 15 It is -- I am going to ask that Fran Burns
- 16 comes up and talk about this.
- 17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay, sure. Come
- 18 on, Fran.
- 19 DR. HITE: Because we just talked about
- 20 this, Ada Lewis the other day, I mean, and
- 21 this issue.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Great update I hope.
- 23 Good news.
- 24 MS. NEFF: Ada Lewis was my first

- 1 assignment as a teacher.
- 2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is that right?
- 3 MS. NEFF: Yes.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So you want to see
- 5 something happen with that facility.
- 6 MS. NEFF: Absolutely. I am not sure --
- 7 I am sure Fran will talk about the condition
- 8 of the building and other things.
- 9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.
- 10 Fran, I would like to hear your thoughts
- 11 on it. I've been in that building. And I
- 12 know the District say that there was about
- \$25,000,000 worth of damage at one point to
- 14 that structure. I got to tell you, I walked
- in and I couldn't see. I am no building
- 16 engineer. I understand that, but I could
- 17 not see the level of damage that was
- 18 suggested by the District as to why that
- 19 school had to be closed and as to why it
- 20 couldn't be opened as a charter school or
- 21 another type of facility, educational
- 22 facility, other than what looked to me like
- 23 simple vandalism that had occurred at that
- 24 location.

- 1 MS. BURNS: So, I will just start with
- 2 the -- our total sales which you recognized.
- 3 We have over the past two years sold 20
- 4 buildings for approximately \$64.1 million.
- 5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Twenty buildings.
- 6 MS. BURNS: Twenty buildings.
- 7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: For how much?
- 8 MS. BURNS: The total sale price was
- 9 \$64.1 million. The net income to the
- 10 District is lower than that after the fees.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: What is the net
- 12 income to the District?
- MS. BURNS: I have to get that number.
- 14 I think probably around --
- 15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I think you know it.
- 16 You have an idea.
- MS. BURNS: It's probably around about
- 18 40 million.
- 19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Forty?
- MS. BURNS: Yes. But I wanted to be
- 21 specific there.
- In any event, we also have eight schools
- 23 that we're currently marketing. And we have
- 24 five schools that includes Germantown High

- 1 School that isn't in agreement of sale.
- 2 And also as you referred to in your
- 3 comments, that agreement of sale has kind of
- 4 lingered longer than we had hoped in
- 5 particular because we had in the Court of
- 6 Common Pleas, we had some folks that
- 7 protested against the sale. And the Court
- 8 of Common Pleas denied without any opinion
- 9 the sale of those schools. We are actually
- 10 under appeal right now in the Commonwealth
- 11 Court.
- 12 Ada Lewis, we were holding Ada Lewis.
- 13 We held three schools because we were
- 14 looking at the potential movement and growth
- of school districts with schools within that
- 16 area. So based on enrollment trends, on
- 17 growth, on potential future, just issues you
- 18 recognize kind of the movement across the
- 19 City, we also have movement across the City
- 20 in some areas of the City where we have --
- 21 we need more space because of the physical
- 22 proximity. So Ada Lewis was one that we had
- 23 held particularly around some decisions of
- 24 Hill Freedman.

- 1 So now that we have a relocation
- 2 decision for Hill Freedman School, we
- 3 probably will likely be putting Ada Lewis up
- 4 for sale. We just want to make sure looking
- 5 at some demographics that we won't, in fact,
- 6 from a District perspective need that
- 7 building.
- 8 Just the last comment on the cost of
- 9 repair on the building, it's now two and a
- 10 half years old. But at the time the School
- 11 District, we had estimated \$15 million. And
- 12 then a third party came in and actually
- 13 provided the same exact estimate as us
- 14 without any involvement of the School
- 15 District staff or personnel. So it actually
- 16 confirmed and validated our internal cost
- 17 assessments.
- 18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. So, let me
- 19 start with Ada Lewis. So, we were working
- 20 fast and furiously to find them a location
- 21 because they had outgrown the space that
- 22 they were in. They did move to another
- 23 location, but we were hoping to move them
- 24 into Ada Lewis. And I felt that we were --

- 1 there was an incredible amount of pushback
- 2 from the District in terms of moving into
- 3 that location.
- 4 We went out. We did a tour. Principal
- 5 Majewski went with us. And we just really
- 6 could not get any level of support
- 7 whatsoever from the District. So, I am just
- 8 shocked and surprised to hear you say that
- 9 it was being held in any attempt to be
- 10 helpful to Hill Freedman.
- 11 MS. BURNS: Actually, we met on a
- 12 monthly basis with Hill Freedman parents.
- 13 And we were holding it because we were
- 14 trying to cobble together a few different
- 15 funding options for that 15 million.
- 16 For instance, we had looked very
- 17 seriously at a grant, we looked at new
- 18 market tax credits. While we -- and we
- 19 committed a minimum, but we committed --
- 20 depends on the eye of the beholder. We
- 21 committed \$3 million as a start up to try to
- 22 get to that 15. And so over time, the
- 23 inability to get to the 15 was really what
- led us to the decisions where we are today.

- 1 While it's -- while we didn't commit the
- 2 \$15 million for the renovation and rehab of
- 3 Ada Lewis, we actually were holding the
- 4 property in order to see if we could through
- 5 a combination of ways actually get to that
- 6 funding amount.
- 7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Again,
- 8 shocking. Because the idea that the
- 9 District was doing this just incredible
- 10 amount of work to try to make this deal fit
- 11 does not fit with my experience around this
- 12 particular school building.
- We did not have the level of support.
- 14 We did not get the interest from the
- 15 District. And to hear that there were
- 16 meetings with Hill Freedman parents
- 17 specifically about Ada Lewis, you know,
- 18 again is just shocking to me. You know,
- 19 maybe if there had been some involvement
- 20 from the local elected officials including
- 21 myself, maybe we could have been a little
- 22 bit more helpful in finding you, you know,
- 23 helping out with the outcome. Again, this
- 24 is all news to me. Very much so.

- 1 One other thing I just wanted to
- 2 mention, the eight schools that you are
- 3 marketing, which -- what schools are those
- 4 that you are currently marketing?
- 5 MS. BURNS: Beeber, Wynnefield, Old
- 6 Willard, Sheridan West, Thomas FitzSimons.
- 7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Start that
- 8 again. We didn't hear.
- 9 MS. BURNS: Sure. Beeber Wynnefield,
- 10 Old Willard, Sheridan West, Thomas
- 11 FitzSimons, Fairhill, John Whittier, George
- 12 Pepper, ComTech and MH Stanton. And
- 13 actually of those, the reason why I said
- 14 eight, we have an agreement of sale with
- 15 Sheridan West and Old Willard.
- 16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And for the
- 17 five schools that are under the agreement of
- 18 sale, they are all -- they're not under
- 19 individual agreements of sale. That is one
- 20 bundled package that was sold, or that's
- 21 being attempted to be sold.
- MS. BURNS: That's right.
- 23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And so, we
- 24 don't know at this point if that sale is

- 1 going to proceed or not because it's been
- 2 going on for almost two years now. Is that
- 3 about right?
- 4 MS. BURNS: It's about a year and a
- 5 half, yes.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: About a year and a
- 7 half? Okay. It's been a very long time and
- 8 it's being held up in Common Pleas Court as
- 9 I understand it?
- 10 MS. BURNS: I wouldn't say it's being
- 11 held up in Common Pleas. It was denied in
- 12 Common Pleas, and now it's in the Court of
- 13 Commonwealth.
- 14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And so, I'd
- 15 like to know what the rationale was for
- 16 bundling those five schools in different
- 17 parts of the City, different neighborhoods?
- 18 Why did that make any sense whatsoever?
- 19 Because, you know, there's another section
- 20 of town that, you know, where the folks were
- 21 upset and didn't want the sale to go
- 22 through. But meanwhile, Germantown is a
- 23 part of that bundle. And so, nothing can
- 24 happen on my commercial corridor with

- 1 Germantown because it's caught up in this
- 2 sale.
- 3 There was no -- it seems to me there was
- 4 no thought process or, you know, maybe just
- 5 again a quick call, Councilwoman, what do
- 6 you think about, you know -- do you think
- 7 Germantown should be included in this
- 8 bundle? Or what do you think the effects
- 9 would be to your commercial corridor or to
- 10 the neighborhood in general?
- 11 Can you give us an idea what the
- 12 rationale was?
- 13 MS. BURNS: Sure. At the time that we
- 14 marketed those properties, particularly the
- ones we are talking about, we did it in
- 16 working with the Philadelphia Industrial
- 17 Development Corporation. And through that
- 18 process, had a series of recommendations
- 19 from PIDC as well as internal kind of
- 20 consultation around an evaluation around the
- 21 proposed sales.
- 22 And so, the -- when we looked at the
- 23 portfolio of those schools, they were the
- 24 sale to the potential agreement of sale to

- 1 Concordia was the highest price for those
- 2 properties. And we certainly did not
- 3 envision that we would have any problem in
- 4 terms of the sale.
- 5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Did you -- did you
- 6 recognize or realize that Concordia did not
- 7 have any plans for Germantown? I should
- 8 also clarify and say that the Fulton School
- 9 was also a part of that transaction. It's
- 10 another of the five schools, so Germantown
- 11 and Fulton are two out of the five.
- But there was a plan for the development
- of Fulton in Germantown, but not a plan for
- 14 Germantown High School. That when
- 15 Concordia, when it was presented in this
- 16 bundle, that there was no plan for what they
- 17 were going to do for it. And the idea was
- 18 it could be flipped and flipped to any
- 19 number of things.
- 20 MS. BURNS: Yes. When they responded,
- 21 they did talk about Germantown as not having
- 22 an immediate plan, but that they would work
- 23 with the community and that they would look
- 24 at the reuse after they purchased.

- 1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. So, I say all
- 2 that to say that as we move forward and are
- 3 talking about closing three schools per
- 4 year -- and this isn't just me, but I would
- say to my colleagues, don't let this happen
- 6 to you and happen in your districts as well
- 7 where we allow the District to close schools
- 8 and then not have any sort of plan
- 9 whatsoever in terms of what's going to
- 10 happen with those schools and how they will
- 11 affect those surrounding communities.
- 12 There is a huge effect. And for the
- 13 District to not take that into account,
- 14 reach out to the appropriate stakeholders in
- 15 the community, work with us, I think is just
- 16 a bit of a disservice. So, I certainly hope
- 17 that as you move forward and think about
- 18 those closures, that there is a process in
- 19 place that we can work with you on to make
- 20 sure that these kinds of things don't happen
- 21 again.
- Thank you, Madam Chair.
- 23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- Let me note that I hope the School

- 1 District will consider also in their
- 2 regulations or law that once a building is
- 3 sold, that the new owner has to move forward
- 4 with their plan quickly.
- I mean, you know, I saw last week the
- 6 new owner West Philly High School. And he
- 7 said we are moving out. We are ready. We
- 8 have so many meetings with the community
- 9 every year. Everybody knows the New West
- 10 Philly High has been open for years now, but
- 11 the old one is still very dangerous. You
- 12 know, a block long building without lights
- is dangerous. It's just become a problem.
- I hope that you all will consider in
- 15 your agreement with people who say they are
- 16 ready to do a project, his was a housing
- 17 project, put some timeline or something
- 18 where people have to move on or be in
- 19 violation because it's just not fair. You
- 20 are sitting as Councilwoman Bass says, and
- 21 when people said they are ready to go.
- 22 So thank you very much.
- 23 Councilman Taubenberger.
- 24 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Madam Chair,

- 1 thank you very, very much.
- 2 Dr. Hite, to you and your staff, I want
- 3 to say thank you for your service on a job
- 4 that is very difficult to say the least.
- 5 And I appreciate your availability and your
- 6 working with this Chamber and my Colleagues.
- 7 It's my understanding in your testimony,
- 8 you're talking about 700 new teachers. Has
- 9 anyone in your staff possibly reached out to
- 10 Philly Works which is sort of the
- 11 unemployment arm of the City of Philadelphia
- 12 to see if there's some folks there that may
- 13 want to teach?
- Because the guy that is speaking to you
- 15 now really wanted to be a teacher. And
- 16 things didn't work out that way. Of course,
- 17 now I applied for a new position and was
- 18 granted that by the people in City Council.
- 19 But it was always something that I was
- 20 thinking about doing later in life and may
- 21 still do it, but I like this position here.
- 22 I am running for reelection in 2019.
- 23 With that being said -- I just want to
- 24 make that very clear that I am running.

- 1 Is there any work that you are doing
- 2 with Philly Works to see if there are people
- 3 like that out there?
- 4 DR. HITE: Yeah. Councilman, I don't
- 5 know the answer to that question. At the
- 6 moment, I am not aware of any work that we
- 7 are doing. And so, I'm taking doing your
- 8 suggestion to also work with Philly Works.
- 9 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: You may have
- 10 some very talented people there, as well.
- 11 The other question I have would be in
- 12 helping to attract new teachers and
- 13 particularly special ed teachers.
- What is the possibility of having a
- 15 program of loan forgiveness for attraction
- 16 for new teachers in the City of
- 17 Philadelphia?
- DR. HITE: That is -- that is something
- 19 that I've been able to do in other districts
- 20 where I have worked. And it does take a --
- 21 an investment. And so, part of creating
- 22 that investment is setting a set of
- 23 priorities about what we will be able to do
- 24 for teachers, particularly those with loans,

- 1 educational loans to help to forgive those.
- 2 And I do think that, in fact, Jerry Jordan
- 3 and I were talking about this at the
- 4 Tribune. This question came up when we were
- 5 talking. Both of us were talking about this
- 6 years ago as funding dried up. But with
- 7 some source of revenue, we could restart
- 8 that program. And not just Loan Forgiveness
- 9 but Affordable Housing and other access to
- 10 certain amenities throughout the City.
- 11 I think all of those then become a
- 12 mechanism to help us attract individuals
- 13 into this area to teach.
- 14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I mean, I
- 15 believe the City has enough resources plus
- 16 its location and its historic value and
- 17 everything else to attract young teachers
- 18 really maybe from all across the country. I
- 19 think that would help in many ways in
- 20 diversity and the opportunity to educate.
- 21 I will tell you this. I'm a strong
- 22 believer when you go into any school, we are
- 23 looking at the future. We want the future
- 24 to be very bright and very strong and

- 1 sometimes I'm worried about.
- 2 Dr. Hite, thank you very much.
- 3 Madam Chair, thank you.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Let
- 5 us also note and greet they have been here
- 6 since the beginning, Jerry Jordan and the
- 7 whole PFT team. Thank you very much all of
- 8 you.
- 9 Now we are beginning our second round.
- 10 Next is Councilwoman Gym.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you very much,
- 12 Madam Chair.
- So I wanted to, you know, Dr. Hite, just
- 14 raise a lot of concerns about the school
- 15 closings issue. And part because I think
- 16 the District's kind of passive acceptance of
- 17 declining enrollment and school closings as
- 18 being inevitable as opposed to a situation
- 19 that is potentially influenced by the
- 20 District's investment around what it chooses
- 21 to make is not something that should go
- 22 unchallenged. I mean, you, yourself, said
- 23 earlier that the District is severely
- 24 damaged. It's own brand is damaged partly

- 1 through the issue of school closings. And
- 2 it comes up again when you make a very
- 3 public statement that the District is just
- 4 going to passively accept the closings of
- 5 three schools a year.
- 6 It seems like there is an issue in terms
- 7 of how you're looking at the situation. And
- 8 you know, in part it's also that there were
- 9 a lot of lessons learned from the 2012
- 10 school closings that were massive, had
- 11 dramatic impact. You, yourself, noted there
- 12 were very few academic gains that came out
- of it, consolidating, failing schools and to
- 14 disinvested struggling schools is not a
- 15 formula for success. It hasn't been done in
- 16 any school district in this country.
- 17 Asking you to really think very
- 18 carefully that this isn't just a situation
- 19 that is inevitable. This is a situation
- 20 that we are either going to control or cede
- 21 control to. One of the areas where I think
- 22 we have been most concerned about is, again,
- 23 the issue of what makes schools, schools
- 24 again and this issue of staffing and in

- 1 particular the question of curriculum. I
- 2 think it is fundamentally the District's
- 3 mandate to provide a full range of
- 4 curriculum.
- 5 But we have seen circumstances just in
- 6 this year, not even including previous
- 7 years, where the District has not delivered
- 8 on its curriculum mandates that includes
- 9 twelfth graders at Edison High School who
- 10 went most of the year without twelfth grade
- 11 English teacher. It's kind of inconceivable
- 12 that a child would have their last year of
- 13 high school without high school English.
- We had no music at Bartram, which was
- 15 announced in June before the year opened
- 16 that the music teacher would be gone and
- 17 there was not a clear plan to replace the
- 18 music teacher. We have heard on the record
- 19 that there isn't two foreign languages in
- 20 every high school as mandated by the School
- 21 Code. And you know, there are other
- 22 examples of this.
- 23 And so, you know, it's not just that
- 24 you're declining enrollment. It's that the

- 1 School District's mandate is to provide this
- 2 curriculum. And when it's not happening,
- 3 how are we -- how are we making amends for
- 4 that. So as we go into this year, what are
- 5 you doing to ensure that these curriculum
- 6 mandates are met and accounted for. That
- 7 they are covered not just through vacancy
- 8 filling, but actually the filling of a
- 9 certified educator in that area?
- 10 And who, fundamentally, is responsible
- 11 for addressing this? Is this the
- 12 principal's job? Is it a regional
- 13 superintendent's job? Is this -- you know,
- 14 who is responsible for addressing the
- 15 situation.
- DR. HITE: Yes. Ultimately, I am
- 17 responsible, Councilwoman. And the -- I
- 18 think a couple of points to -- and I will,
- 19 if you don't mind, I will conflate the
- 20 question.
- 21 So, some of the things that happen
- 22 throughout the District happen because of
- 23 the District's inability to fill a position,
- 24 for instance. Other things happen because

- 1 there are localized decisions by school
- 2 leaders in that buildings who say we want
- 3 these types of programs.
- 4 And so to your music point, we have
- 5 music in every school but seven. Music is
- 6 in every school but seven. And some of the
- 7 seven are saying, yeah, that doesn't really
- 8 work inside of the program. I don't know if
- 9 that's the case at Bartram. I have to be
- 10 honest, I don't know if that's the case.
- 11 But I want to make sure that we balance the
- 12 conversation in terms of the mandates around
- 13 curriculum standards with the principal's
- 14 flexibility in order to operate in the
- 15 context of their educational program.
- 16 That's number one.
- 17 Number two. I do think that if, in
- 18 fact, we are seeing declines in enrollment
- 19 that are projected to be at a thousand
- 20 students a year for whatever reason, maybe
- 21 those children are selecting other schools,
- 22 maybe they are selecting different types of
- 23 schools, maybe they are moving into
- 24 different parts of the City, then we have to

- 1 adjust our resources so that we can direct
- 2 those resources to places where children
- 3 are.
- 4 So for instance, if we have a high
- 5 school next year that only has a freshman
- 6 incoming class of less than 30 students,
- 7 then that gives us some information about
- 8 some -- potential decisions that we will
- 9 have to make down the road. So part of this
- 10 is not just a passive acceptance of school
- 11 closures, but it is also trying to operate
- 12 an efficient manner so that we can provide
- 13 children where they are attending schools
- 14 with the resources like the music teacher,
- 15 the art teacher, if there are two languages,
- 16 if children want to take two languages, they
- 17 can take two languages.
- And that just allows us to be a lot more
- 19 flexible with our resources as opposed to
- 20 putting them into buildings that are
- 21 three-quarters empty.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So, I just want to be
- 23 clear what I'm talking about. I am not
- 24 actually talking about flexibility about a

- 1 principal's choice to have a variety of
- 2 courses of which they may choose to make it.
- 3 I'm talking about the inability of the
- 4 District to actually provide music in those
- 5 seven schools. That's not an optional
- 6 situation. That is a mandate of the State
- 7 Code. If the School District is not
- 8 providing music in seven schools, it is
- 9 actually in violation of state curricular
- 10 standards for those schools. I don't think
- 11 that's a flexibility issue.
- 12 I don't believe any principal chooses
- 13 not to have enrichment or art or music. And
- 14 if they are making that decision, we as a
- 15 District have to announce that you are not
- 16 allowed to do that. You are not allowed to
- 17 deny children the access to the arts. That
- 18 this is a commitment that is enshrined
- 19 within the State Code.
- I want to be clear that flexibility
- 21 can't be used as an excuse for evasion or
- 22 that. But that -- I'm talking about
- 23 fundamental issues. Twelfth grade English
- 24 at Edison High School, music at Bartram High

- 1 School, two languages. I'm not saying
- 2 children take two languages, but the State
- 3 Code clearly articulates two languages must
- 4 be provided t every high school and every
- 5 school in this District, and that children
- 6 have the right in a global environment to
- 7 have that.
- 8 And you know, really quickly, that I am
- 9 fully aware of the District's right to make
- 10 choices about how investments go. This is
- 11 the fundamental question that I think we are
- in a struggle over is the District -- is the
- 13 District taking a serious look at what is
- 14 driving students away from our schools? I
- 15 would argue that it is not an issue of
- 16 choice. That children aren't saying, oh,
- 17 here' a pretty good option. I will go to a
- 18 slightly better option. But that, in fact,
- 19 our schools have become places where we are
- 20 not upholding mandates. That there are
- 21 major concerns around school safety and
- 22 climate issues. That we're not paying
- 23 attention to curriculum. We're not
- 24 staffing.

- 1 And thus, the forcing out and driving
- 2 out of kids should not be defined as a
- 3 matter of school choice. It's a driving out
- 4 of kids from dysfunctional situations and
- 5 asking the District to be fully conscious
- 6 that the issue isn't then to downgrade it
- 7 and close it and consolidate the problems,
- 8 but to reinvest and figure out strategically
- 9 where it's going to go to make these
- 10 convincing situations.
- 11 (Applause)
- DR. HITE: I will use a couple of
- 13 examples. So to just to -- I'm not debating
- 14 the point. But this notion of flexibility
- 15 then is in response to what schools choose
- 16 to do. So, we have the Workshop School.
- 17 The Workshop School is in West Philadelphia.
- 18 Those young people built an electric car to
- 19 put in the car show.
- 20 So while they have a -- the children
- 21 built a studio, a music recording studio,
- 22 they don't have a formalized music program
- 23 at that school because they are choosing to
- 24 do something else. And they feel like their

- 1 work is to provide the children with the
- 2 ability to do the project-based learning
- 3 thing.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Do you think that the
- 5 State Department of Education would consider
- 6 that being in violation of the State Code
- 7 given what the State Code says about art and
- 8 music?
- 9 DR. HITE: I don't think so. No, ma'am.
- 10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. You know,
- 11 again, I guess I would just like to go back
- 12 and clarify who is actually responsible for
- 13 understanding the curriculum that is
- 14 being -- that is happening? If a principal
- does not have the opportunity to fulfil its
- 16 curricular, has the high school fulfil its
- 17 curricular mandates, who is accountable for
- 18 that?
- 19 DR. HITE: Yeah. So that -- those are
- 20 the, at the school level, it's the principal
- 21 and then the assistant superintendents
- 22 working in conjunction with Chief of
- 23 Academic Supports. That's Cheryl Logan.
- 24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And how do principals

- 1 do this? What is the way that the
- 2 District -- the principal says there's no
- 3 twelfth grade English teacher. What happens
- 4 next?
- DR. HITE: Cheryl, you want to come up?
- 6 The -- I want you to come up anyway.
- 7 The principal says there is no -- I
- 8 don't have a twelfth grade English teacher,
- 9 then it is incumbent upon us to staff that
- 10 school with an English teacher. If the
- 11 principal says I'm not offering twelfth
- 12 grade English, then that is an issue where
- 13 the District would then -- will then enter
- 14 into a directive with that individual that
- 15 tenth grade -- twelfth grade English is a
- 16 requirement; and therefore, must be a part
- 17 of their curriculum program.
- 18 So an individual saying I don't have
- 19 a -- I can't fill a vacancy is very
- 20 different than I refuse to offer twelfth
- 21 grade English because we would not allow
- 22 them to make that.
- 23 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Both outcomes are the
- 24 same, so how does the District change the

- 1 way it approaches the situation?
- DR. HITE: Well, the outcomes are not
- 3 the same. Because then we would direct the
- 4 principal to have twelfth grade English.
- 5 And then provide -- hopefully, the candidate
- 6 that would then fill that vacancy in order
- 7 to do the work. Sometimes we have to help
- 8 those individuals with their schedules and
- 9 find ways for them to, within the time that
- 10 they have, create schedules that have --
- 11 make all of those things available.
- 12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Ms. Logan, how is the
- 13 District accounting for -- how are you doing
- 14 the audit to make sure each school is
- 15 providing the requirements demanded by the
- 16 School Code.
- MS. LOGAN: So when --
- 18 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: If you can just
- 19 introduce yourself.
- 20 MS. LOGAN: Cheryl Logan, Chief Academic
- 21 Support School District of Philadelphia.
- 22 For me, the question is twofold. One is
- 23 about vacancies. It's a complete
- 24 different -- completely different question.

- 1 The question around curricular mandates,
- 2 principals have to -- high school principals
- 3 have to account for high school credits that
- 4 are needed for graduation. Twelfth grade
- 5 English would be one. Schools do not have
- 6 flexibility to not offer twelfth grade
- 7 English. If there is a vacancy, we are
- 8 talking about two different issues. So if
- 9 there's a vacancy in the classroom,
- 10 principals work to provide a substitute
- 11 teacher. They work with, obviously, our
- 12 substitute system which we've already spoken
- 13 about.
- But there is not an opportunity for them
- 15 to do that. They must enter the credits
- 16 into our -- into our system where they would
- 17 be accounted for towards graduation --
- 18 towards a graduation requirement.
- 19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So, Madam Chair, I
- 20 know my time is up. But I just -- you know,
- 21 I think what the problem is, is that Edison
- 22 High School didn't have twelfth grade
- 23 English, not in May. They didn't have it in
- 24 November. And I'm trying to understand how

- 1 thousands of kids enter into summer school
- 2 because they did not have a teacher in the
- 3 classroom for two thirds of the year.
- 4 MS. LOGAN: And so, if students are not
- 5 entering into summer school -- students who
- 6 don't pass a course and who need credit
- 7 recovery, have an opportunity eleventh grade
- 8 and twelfth grade students have an
- 9 opportunity if they didn't pass a course,
- 10 they are not sent to summer school because
- 11 they did not have a teacher. They are sent
- 12 because they didn't pass a course. Those
- 13 are two different issues.
- 14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Well, what percentage
- of students didn't have a teacher for this
- 16 year?
- 17 MS. LOGAN: I don't have that data in
- 18 front of me.
- 19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: You had it before in
- 20 May when we talked earlier about it.
- 21 MS. LOGAN: I personally did not. I
- 22 don't do -- I'm not in the Talent Division.
- 23 I don't have that information in front of
- 24 me.

- 1 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So, this is a problem
- 2 because you are the person who should know
- 3 this. And this is what I'm trying to get
- 4 at. That if we do not know the number of
- 5 students who didn't have a teacher for a
- 6 majority of the year, then that becomes an
- 7 issue. And this is a repeated concern it
- 8 seems to be heard at both the student level
- 9 to the principal level that no one is --
- 10 that the vacancy issue is a passive
- 11 situation. That people are helpless, we are
- 12 hamstrung, and there is nothing we can do.
- 13 And thus, it doesn't get addressed.
- 14 And I'm trying to understand who is
- 15 going to ultimately account so this problem
- 16 does not happen in spring of 2016 -- in
- 17 September of 2016.
- 18 MS. LOGAN: So, the question that I hear
- 19 is, again, around the vacancy issue. And
- 20 you are correct. The number of students --
- 21 I apologize. The number of students who did
- 22 not have a teacher in K through 7, I did
- 23 report that the last time I was here.
- 24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And it was in the

- 1 thousands, right?
- MS. LOGAN: Yeah. The low twos, I
- 3 believe. I just don't have -- I brought all
- 4 of that information last time. I apologize.
- 5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: The two thousand
- 6 students in grades K to 7 that we're aware
- 7 of did not have a teacher for more than
- 8 two-thirds of the year.
- 9 MS. LOGAN: That is correct. That is
- 10 correct. Do you have another -- sorry. Was
- 11 there another question?
- 12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: It was to ask about
- 13 how are we accounting -- who is going to
- 14 ensure that this does not happen again in
- 15 September of 2016?
- 16 MS. LOGAN: Well, I think for me, the
- 17 person -- the people and the group are all
- 18 the people that are in this room. That we
- 19 are all working to ensure that we find the
- 20 700 teachers that we need to fill our --
- 21 highly qualified teachers to fill the
- 22 vacancy so that we do not have students
- 23 without a teacher. That is who I think are
- 24 the people that are responsible for that.

- 1 DR. HITE: So, I am ultimately responsible, Councilwoman. And then in the 2 end to ensure that -- again, I'm going to 3 4 make that commitment today. And I want to add that there is nothing passive about not having a teacher in a classroom. We've been 6 working through this issue since the 8 beginning of the school year. We would fill vacancies and then vacancies were created 9 for a number of reasons. 10 11 Vacancies were created because 12 individuals were retiring and/or they were taking some time off to finish a degree or 13 whatever the case may be. Individuals were 14 sick and not there. But it's nothing 15 passive about the non-filling of these 16 vacancies. We've been working all year to 17 18 address this problem in the current year. 19 And as I've indicated on multiple
- year without any vacancies and even doing
 supplemental hiring to ensure that we can
 fill vacancies much faster than we were able

20

21

occasions, we are starting to address that

problem next year. And we want to start the

- 1 to fill them this year.
- 2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you very much.
- 3 I just, you know, it's hard to -- you know,
- 4 I understand that the District and many
- 5 people within the District have been
- 6 struggling about this issue. It's just a
- 7 very important point to make that when you
- 8 are announcing the issue of school closings
- 9 that when the District and students aren't
- 10 given the very basics and the fundamental
- 11 building blocks of schools, that the
- 12 District will fundamentally drive families
- away.
- 14 And the announcement around the school
- 15 closings and the choices that are being
- 16 made, are going to ultimately be the
- 17 District making a clear statement, not a
- 18 message or a branding issue, but a clear
- 19 statement about its investment in
- 20 broad-based District-wide equity issues that
- 21 are fundamental to its mission versus
- 22 optional things that are based around
- 23 privatization, outsourcing and have shown to
- 24 not have significant guarantees.

- 1 I'll wait till my next round. Thank
- 2 you, Madam Chair.
- 3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
- 4 Councilwoman Gym.
- 5 Another issue related to this is that we
- 6 had hearings on it long before you were here
- 7 about settling schools earlier. Because
- 8 there was a time when we settled schools
- 9 maybe in early November. And it's awful
- 10 when you lose a vice principal and you gain
- 11 one and all of that. Because -- and this
- 12 wasn't even when we had the teacher
- 13 shortage.
- 14 It's very important that we settle
- 15 schools early at the beginning of the year
- 16 so that everybody is not switched around and
- 17 transferred back and forth. Unfortunately,
- 18 that shouldn't be an issue given this is
- 19 really important that we are talking about
- 20 now. But we really need to make sure we
- 21 settle them as early as possible.
- 22 Councilman Oh.
- 23 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much,
- 24 Chairwoman.

- 1 In your financial report that you gave
- 2 us, you indicated that you will receive a
- 3 certain amount of money from the State. Do
- 4 you generally get a consistent amount of
- 5 money? How much money has the State
- 6 provided for this fiscal year?
- 7 MR. MONSON: We get an amount based on a
- 8 -- well, now if -- there are a couple
- 9 different pots. There's the basic education
- 10 formula. We get a share of that money. We
- 11 get a share of the pot for special
- 12 education. Then we get a series of
- 13 reimbursements. Certain percentage based on
- 14 the ratio which is impacted by the AVI, we
- 15 mentioned, which are reimbursements related
- 16 to our pension contributions,
- 17 transportation, social security and FICA.
- 18 There are certain other grant monies we get
- 19 from the state, Ready To Learn and some
- 20 others.
- 21 It's a series of different pots. But
- 22 it's -- they all have their own formula.
- 23 COUNCILMAN OH: For this past year or
- 24 this current year, how much did the State

- 1 contribute? Do you roughly know?
- 2 I don't know if you know or not.
- 3 MR. MONSON: How much did we get from
- 4 the State this year?
- 5 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes.
- 6 MR. MONSON: In total in '16 we are
- 7 projecting to get about 1.4 billion.
- 8 COUNCILMAN OH: 1.4 billion? And what
- 9 did you get last year?
- 10 MR. MONSON: Don't actually have the '15
- 11 number in front of me. I will get that for
- 12 you.
- 13 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. Would you give it
- 14 to the Chair, please?
- MR. MONSON: Sure.
- 16 COUNCILMAN OH: This year you indicated
- 17 you expect to receive 118 million more than
- 18 you did last year?
- 19 MR. MONSON: Yes and no.
- 20 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay.
- 21 MR. MONSON: And let me explain it. So,
- 22 the -- what we are projecting off the
- 23 Governor's proposed budget -- in the basic
- 24 ed formula, there is the basic pot. We are

- 1 projecting the Governor's request to
- 2 \$200 million for the entire Commonwealth of
- 3 which we would get 46 million, about
- 4 23 percent. We would get about another
- 5 10 million or so in special ed. Then there
- 6 is increase in the reimbursements. Pension
- 7 is a large piece of that.
- 8 In addition, actually if you look at all
- 9 the reimbursements, it's about 28 million.
- 10 There is a shift is making a piece of this.
- 11 I know I had some questions about the 118.
- 12 When the Fiscal Code was passed by the State
- in the beginning of this month, it shifted
- 14 money that was originally be given to us
- 15 through the Ready To Learn Grant and moved
- 16 it back to basic ed. Those grant funds
- 17 don't appear in the operating budget.
- 18 So, there is \$40 million of State
- 19 revenues effective that got moved back in
- 20 along with the costs that would have been a
- 21 grant. It's no net increase for us overall
- 22 because the expenses came over. But because
- 23 it's no longer through the grant funding but
- 24 through the State.

- 1 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. The 118 million
- 2 is not really an increase at end of the day?
- 3 MR. MONSON: The \$56 million is an -- I
- 4 would say is an increase. It's not
- 5 generated by new expenses. That is the 200
- 6 million increase in basic ed and increase in
- 7 special ed. That's what is new based on the
- 8 Governor's proposed budget.
- 9 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. Has not passed
- 10 yet?
- 11 MR. MONSON: Correct.
- 12 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. If it doesn't
- pass, then where do you go for the money?
- MR. MONSON: It if doesn't pass, it
- 15 speeds up our need to have the discussion
- 16 with all of our funders. In the current
- 17 year, we would still have a positive fund
- 18 balance in '17, it would just be much
- 19 narrower in the \$40 million range. And we
- 20 would have a negative fund balance in '18.
- 21 It just means that that conversation we want
- 22 to have with all of our funders -- the City,
- 23 the State, private funders, whomever --
- 24 needs to happen that much faster. And that

- 1 the urgency of coming up with a plan to deal
- 2 with structural problems is that much --
- 3 that much more in front of us.
- 4 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. This Body, in
- 5 addition to passing the laws that were --
- 6 legislation that was talked about to raise
- 7 more money for the schools, also increased
- 8 parking meters by \$0.50. In many neighbors
- 9 surrounding Center City and as a result of
- 10 the increase in the \$0.50, I am told that
- 11 there was an increase in revenues of
- 12 1.3 million. I don't know how anybody can
- 13 say that really. You really can't tell.
- But anyway, giving that to PPA, okay,
- 15 1.3 million, I see that there's a decrease
- in your contribution from PPA of 3 million.
- 17 So we increased the parking meters \$0.50 and
- 18 you are getting 3 million less.
- 19 Can you explain that?
- 20 MR. MONSON: I don't know if I can
- 21 explain it other than I can tell you what I
- 22 know.
- 23 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. Please do.
- MR. MONSON: Which is we don't get any

- 1 money from formula of Parking Authority. We
- 2 essentially, get a check from them. We have
- 3 no control over how it is, what comes to us
- 4 and how much it is. In fact, the only way
- 5 we know about the \$3 million less was an
- 6 article that appeared in the notebook about
- 7 a meeting of the Parking Authority where
- 8 they projected to reduce its payment to the
- 9 School District in 2017 by \$3 million.
- 10 We have tried to have more of
- 11 communications and have been unsuccessful.
- 12 COUNCILMAN OH: We do have a hearing
- 13 next week, a joint Council hearing of
- 14 Education and Streets, so we may find out.
- 15 What I have also learned is that you get no
- 16 money from the Red Light Camera Program, not
- 17 one cent.
- 18 MR. MONSON: That is correct.
- 19 COUNCILMAN OH: So, the Philadelphia
- 20 Parking Authority used to be a City entity.
- 21 And I believe it predates me, but I think
- 22 all the revenues of the Philadelphia Parking
- 23 Authority went to the City and the School
- 24 District. That's what I understand. I

- 1 could be wrong. But it is -- the revenues
- 2 go to the State. And some of it comes to
- 3 the City, and some of it comes to the School
- 4 District. But you know, in our efforts to
- 5 look at sustainable funding, there are --
- 6 there are these challenges. We don't
- 7 control a lot of the entities that people
- 8 believe are funding the City and the State,
- 9 and the money doesn't actually come to the
- 10 City; yet, we have to go to the state to ask
- 11 for money they don't give us while they are
- 12 taking out money that used to come to us.
- So in that regard, I have to go back to
- 14 the -- my first question about Philadelphia
- 15 Education Fund. So, three public schools
- 16 are being planned to close per year based on
- 17 declining attendance, I suppose; yet schools
- 18 are being opened. So while public schools
- 19 are being closed, it appears without perhaps
- 20 any planning or maybe there's planning, that
- 21 schools are being opened and they are
- 22 typically charter schools.
- The question that I have is, you know,
- 24 to put it as plain as I can and just this

- 1 issue of this conflict of interest, SRC
- 2 member has got to make decisions on closing
- 3 public schools, opening charter schools.
- 4 Everybody, I think, has read that her
- 5 husband represents one of the charter school
- 6 entities that opens school, and there is
- 7 nothing wrong with that. Wonderful charter
- 8 schools. I am for charter schools. I just
- 9 don't know how that's not a conflict of
- 10 interest when you have to close public
- 11 school and you are opening charter schools.
- 12 You probably have to close some charter
- 13 schools. And charter schools just keep
- opening, 80-some, I don't know, charter
- 15 schools and growing.
- 16 With the Supreme Court decision that you
- 17 cannot cap the attendance of these charter
- 18 schools, that's potentially a huge financial
- 19 and administrative problem.
- 20 How do you approach that problem?
- 21 MS. NEFF: And add to that the fact that
- 22 we are not permitted to consider the
- 23 financial impact on the District when
- 24 reviewing an application. Add to that the

- 1 fact that the Cigarette Tax included a
- 2 requirement that we begin reviewing
- 3 applications again. So while I would like
- 4 to say that we have total control in the
- 5 situation, we do not. We are mandated by
- 6 State law.
- 7 As you alluded to, as a SRC, we will try
- 8 to have some control over growth by first
- 9 not as a District not accepting
- 10 applications. Then once we are required to
- 11 by imposing conditions such as caps that
- 12 would help us control the growing charter
- 13 school population. Neither one of those
- 14 we're permitted to do at this point unless
- 15 we negotiate the cap.
- 16 The other -- the other -- I just lost my
- 17 thought. The other factor involved with
- 18 the -- you talked about closing of charter
- 19 schools. We do have a process, the Quality
- 20 Authorizing Initiative, where every five
- 21 years we are looking at charter schools, not
- 22 to close them from the perspective of we
- 23 need more money, let's go find a school to
- 24 close. But ensuring that we have quality in

- 1 our charter sector as well as in our regular
- 2 public school sector. So we are choosing --
- 3 closing non-performing charter schools. But
- 4 again, it's a long process based on the
- 5 charter school two years, three years when
- 6 you include an appeals process.
- 7 So, I completely agree with your
- 8 analysis of what some of the problems are
- 9 around the charter school situation. That's
- 10 why we need reform of the charter school
- 11 legislation. Thank you.
- DR. HITE: Councilman Oh, I just wanted
- 13 to add we also have four charters that
- 14 closed last year. And we have four current
- 15 non-renewals that does take time as the
- 16 Chairwoman stated. And we have one other
- 17 charter closure this year. So that over the
- 18 last two years, would be nine. But the four
- 19 asterisk because those take time to go
- 20 through the non-renewal process.
- 21 COUNCILMAN OH: I will finally say,
- 22 listen, I appreciate and even more so --
- DR. HITE: I'm sorry. I need to add
- 24 because the SRC hasn't taken action on the

- 1 nine, we have four recommendations.
- 2 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. So, I will
- 3 conclude by saying I appreciate the
- 4 complexity of the -- of the challenges that
- 5 you have as you try to address this very
- 6 difficult, you know, situation. Not of your
- 7 making, but with all this legislation and
- 8 limitations and requirements, it's very
- 9 challenging.
- 10 I do agree that we all have to get on
- 11 one sheet of music. You know, our Council,
- 12 our delegation, our folks in Harrisburg, our
- 13 congressional folks to figure this thing
- 14 out. I do, at the end of the day, have a
- 15 lot of concerns that if our only option is a
- 16 charter school that, you know, in other
- 17 words a bad -- a bad choice, a rock and a
- 18 hard place, and we don't have the ability to
- 19 provide a good quality public school in the
- 20 neighborhood, if we don't have the resources
- 21 to do that, the only thing that happens
- 22 is -- the only other alternative is a
- 23 private provider.
- And I'd hate to see that we are going in

- 1 the direction of, you know, just kind of an
- 2 unplanned, you know, public education system
- 3 for, you know, the complexities and
- 4 challenges that exist.
- 5 Thank you very much. Thank you,
- 6 Chairwoman.
- 7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Certainly,
- 8 you're welcome.
- 9 Councilman Domb.
- 10 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you, Madam
- 11 Chairwoman.
- 12 I guess this is for you, Dr. Hite, this
- 13 question. I heard Councilwoman Blondell
- 14 Reynolds Brown talk about truancy. I know a
- 15 few weeks ago Councilman Taubenberger spoke
- 16 about it I think with the District
- 17 Attorney's Office.
- 18 Do you know what the truancy rate is
- 19 today for public schools?
- DR. HITE: We are at, I think,
- 21 91.2 percent attendance.
- 22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. It's about 8 to
- 23 9 percent truancy. Okay. And then the
- 24 second question --

- 1 DR. HITE: That is different than
- 2 truancy. That is attendance, so that's
- 3 not -- that's not truancy. The 9 percent
- 4 are not all truant. So, some could be for
- 5 other reasons.
- 6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: You hear rumors like
- 7 some schools have a 30 percent truancy rate.
- 8 Can that be possible?
- 9 DR. HITE: Yes. That could be possible.
- 10 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Could be. And is the
- 11 that area you were talking about earlier
- 12 working with the District Attorney's Office
- 13 to address those issues?
- 14 DR. HITE: Right.
- 15 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay, great. I have
- 16 two other questions and then I can come
- 17 back. But this one I am actually carrying
- 18 the water for my fellow Councilwoman, no pun
- 19 intended.
- The issue is we had a panel last week, I
- 21 think it was, or two weeks ago. It was two
- 22 weeks ago, about the water fountain issue in
- 23 the School District. And when it first was
- 24 brought to me and I was listening to the

- 1 testimony, it reminded me of the movie "Walk
- 2 the Line, " remember? When johnny Cash is in
- 3 the prison and he holds up the rusty water.
- 4 Remember that scene?
- 5 So, the information that I have, it says
- 6 15 percent of District's total water
- 7 fountains have been deemed inoperable.
- 8 That's the information I have.
- 9 Concentration of inoperable fountains varies
- 10 greatly in some school. It's as high as 90
- 11 percent.
- 12 There is an opportunity, though, for a
- 13 water fountain system basically that's cost
- 14 1500 per unit. About \$900 for the cost and
- 15 600 for the install. And the math was done
- 16 at three per school. It's 218 schools.
- 17 It's just under a million dollars to clean
- 18 up the whole water situation.
- 19 Is that something we can look at and
- 20 fund in this budget?
- 21 (Applause)
- DR. HITE: Well, I will add before Fran
- 23 comes up, because it may not be a reason for
- 24 her to respond. It is a part of our

- 1 priorities on -- as was mentioned earlier in
- 2 the Green Schools Future Plan on, I think it
- 3 was, Item 58, Action Item Number 58, was to
- 4 ensure that we have operable fountains. And
- 5 that in the event that we did not have
- 6 operable water stations, that we would then
- 7 make the necessary investments to have
- 8 those, both through external means and
- 9 through our School Food Service which is
- 10 also entity that allows us to also purchase
- 11 hydration stations or water, fresh water.
- 12 COUNCILMAN DOMB: You got that under
- 13 control? Hopefully, that will happen?
- DR. HITE: Yes. I mean, this is a part
- 15 of -- naturally, we have a lot of essential
- 16 request for monies and monies for various
- 17 things. This is one of the high priority
- 18 items for us because this is very important
- 19 that we have children in schools that have
- 20 access to clean water.
- 21 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Well, especially if
- 22 they are going to pay more money for soda.
- 23 If they have water, at least they can drink.
- One last question on this. There's been

- 1 a lot of discussions about PreK, which I
- 2 think everybody thinks is a good idea. I
- 3 guess my concern has been we do a great job
- 4 with PreK, which I hope we will if we get
- 5 there. And then the transition into
- 6 kindergarten.
- 7 I am just wondering what you all need to
- 8 do to prepare for that transition from the
- 9 PreK into kindergarten? And have there been
- 10 discussions about that process?
- DR. HITE: Yes. As a matter of fact, we
- 12 for the first time a year ago, we were
- 13 working and had all of our PreK educators
- 14 along with our kindergartener educators
- 15 along with first grade in doing the
- 16 development as a entire group, not separate
- 17 development for one group versus the other
- 18 group. It's really important that we clear
- 19 the lines of not only communication, but
- 20 also have development opportunities for
- 21 those individuals and make sure those
- 22 development opportunities are consistent, so
- 23 that the PreK individuals hear what's
- 24 happening in kindergarten. And the

- 1 kindergarten are informed by the things that
- 2 worked in PreK and so forth and so on.
- 3 Last year we did a call out. And I
- 4 think it was a three-day development for all
- 5 PreK through second grade teachers. And it
- 6 was a development that had them all in one
- 7 place. And we got a lot of positive
- 8 feedback from that, as well.
- 9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So, what you're really
- 10 saying is we should not be -- one of our
- 11 concerns is we are going to do this PreK and
- 12 then get to kindergarten, and we don't want
- 13 them to fall off.
- DR. HITE: That's correct.
- 15 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So, you'll make sure
- 16 that they're on that path, trajectory?
- 17 DR. HITE: Yes.
- 18 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you very much.
- 19 Thank you.
- 20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- Next we'll have Councilwoman Parker.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank you, Madam
- 23 Chair. Prior during his line of
- 24 questioning, Councilman-At-Large Derek Green

- 1 mentioned the phrase tale of two cities.
- 2 And he jogged my memory when I was talking
- 3 about one of our -- I forgot to mention one
- 4 of our valuable stakeholders and advocacy
- 5 for funding public education. But he
- 6 reminded me, David Cohen at Comcast was the
- 7 first individual that I heard use the tale
- 8 of two cities in his -- during his inaugural
- 9 speech, his Chair of the Chamber. So, it
- 10 jogged my memory like, Dr. Hite and
- 11 Chairwoman Neff, don't forget to make sure
- 12 the Chamber is at the table. Like they've
- 13 really been a very valuable partner for us.
- In addition to that, I want to go back
- 15 to the issue that I ended with Dr. Hite.
- 16 And that was the career and technical
- 17 education training, particularly with the
- 18 Mayor's proposal of Rebuild in mind. And
- 19 again, diversity and minority inclusion has
- 20 been a major part of our discussion.
- 21 So has there been any -- just for the
- 22 record, our Chief Education Official, he and
- 23 I have talked extensively. I have a great
- 24 deal of admiration and respect for him and

- 1 the work that he has done. If you probably
- were to say to Otis Hackney, like Cherelle
- 3 Parker, he would say CTE, right?
- 4 Tell us, Dr. Hite, what's the
- 5 communication been with the District and/or
- 6 the building trades in this issue? Are
- 7 there any partners? Because I often, again,
- 8 I'm talking about the process. When I think
- 9 of partnership and education, I think about
- 10 CCP. I think about the School District. I
- 11 think about the trades. I think about the
- 12 Administration.
- 13 Has that kind of discussion started?
- DR. HITE: In part. I mean, we have
- 15 the -- you saw as a part of the video, the
- 16 advanced manufacturing program at Benjamin
- 17 Franklin. We also have children who every
- 18 day now participate in the finishing trades.
- 19 And they are children from multiple high
- 20 schools from around the City.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: What does that
- 22 mean, Dr. Hite? Explain finishing.
- DR. HITE: Finishing trades are young
- 24 people who come in and they could do

- 1 painting, sheet rock. They do bridge
- 2 painting. And it is -- and these young
- 3 people will do trim. It's all the finishing
- 4 things to building trades, if you will and
- 5 some electrical. And so, we have children
- 6 who work with the finishing trades as a
- 7 direct feeder to their apprenticeship
- 8 program. We have young people who are
- 9 leaving our program at Randolph who are
- 10 completing the plumbing program and leaving
- 11 with the certification as a plumber.
- 12 As a matter of fact a year ago, two of
- 13 the youngest pre-apprentice students that
- 14 Aker Shipyard ever hired were from Randolph
- 15 High School. All eleven young people
- 16 finished and were successful in acquiring
- 17 their certificate as plumbers after -- I'm
- 18 sorry, as welders after that program.
- 19 And so, we have the ability to do that.
- 20 We -- in the end, we want to fully engage
- 21 with building trades. We have not fully
- 22 established those conversations yet. There
- 23 has been some request for those
- 24 conversations. But it is our position that

- 1 we have young people and programs in schools
- 2 that could support the types of competencies
- 3 and skills that these young people will need
- 4 in order to work in the building trades.
- 5 And that, we would love for our program to
- 6 be natural feeders for those types of
- 7 programs. Because then it would allow for
- 8 the diversity throughout the City that is
- 9 currently enrolled in our programs.
- 10 That's one thing that we are looking
- 11 forward to. We have a very good
- 12 relationship with the laborers and the work
- 13 that they do. And I will just add, the
- 14 community college is also using our advanced
- 15 manufacturing lab at Ben Franklin as their
- 16 workforce development site for programs that
- 17 they have. So, children could go from
- 18 our -- complete that program, go into CCP
- 19 and then into advanced manufacturing and
- 20 never leave Ben Franklin, by the way.
- 21 And so, but we look forward to engaging
- 22 in those conversations and looking forward
- 23 to having those conversations with building
- 24 trades.

- 1 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: I want to thank
- 2 you, Dr. Hite, for your response. I know
- 3 Mayor Kenney, Council President Clarke, our
- 4 building trades and Councilman Bobby Henon
- 5 has been a very strong advocate from this
- 6 perspective, have talked a lot about trying
- 7 to find a way to facilitate the discussion
- 8 to move us forward to the action items to
- 9 actually make what you describe like to
- 10 bolster it, to an enhance it. So, I am
- 11 going to keep on doing as much as I could to
- 12 push the envelope.
- Now, Dr. Hite, I want to quickly just go
- 14 through something that we -- you know, it
- 15 was a -- we had a crisis in the 9th District
- 16 as it relates to Edmund School this year and
- 17 infrastructure. I heard the number \$5
- 18 billion. That was a given that would be
- 19 needed if we could, you know, wave the magic
- 20 wand and get it all done. Every time I
- 21 think about that \$5 billion number, people
- 22 say why can't you do it overnight.
- 23 Again, just because I'm accustomed to
- 24 not being able to sound the alarm, I'm

- 1 accustomed to trying to do the difficult
- 2 work like my colleagues and come up with the
- 3 revenue, right?
- 4 \$5 billion, how many local and state
- 5 taxes would have to be raised, right, to
- 6 generate the revenue needed so you could
- 7 wave the magic wand and do it all at once?
- 8 With that being said, I wanted you to
- 9 tell us how you'll be addressing in this
- 10 budget on the capital side, revenue to make
- 11 some improvements to the infrastructure? I
- 12 also want you to give me an answer to a
- 13 question that I have gotten in regards to
- 14 the number of licensed engineers that the
- 15 District has to have? Is there any
- 16 regulation as to how many you have to have
- in a school? And what's that number, and
- 18 then how many does the District actually
- 19 have?
- 20 DR. HITE: Great. Thank you. I am
- 21 going to start on the deferred maintenance
- 22 question, and then hand it off to Uri Monson
- 23 and then to Fran Burns to respond to the
- 24 other two questions.

- 1 But with respect to the deferred
- 2 maintenance, and we currently -- we just
- 3 completed a facility condition index study
- 4 that was done. And it indicates pretty
- 5 significant needs, deferred maintenance
- 6 needs, across the District. And as you
- 7 indicated, we could not do that. We can't
- 8 do that overnight. We do have in the Five
- 9 Year Plan \$600 million in capital
- 10 improvement monies.
- 11 Once we have access to the market for
- 12 capital --
- 13 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Access to the
- 14 market? You mean, you can't borrow?
- DR. HITE: Not at the moment. And
- 16 that's the part I wanted to hand off to our
- 17 Chief Financial Officer.
- 18 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay.
- 19 MR. MONSON: So, unfortunately, at the
- 20 current time, we don't have access to the
- 21 markets to borrow. Combination of two
- 22 issues.
- Number one, there is no state budget for
- 24 next year. And after this past year, the

- 1 market is little jittery as you might
- 2 imagine. This is true for all Pennsylvania
- 3 borrowers.
- 4 In addition, the state intercept was
- 5 effectively broken during the year. There
- 6 are some proposed legislative fixes that are
- 7 up that we believe would -- would make the
- 8 rating agencies satisfied that the intercept
- 9 is back in place. But we have been told and
- 10 we have spoken with multiple banks that
- 11 effectively would not be able to -- our
- 12 bonds would not sell without either the
- 13 state budget or the inceptor, ideally both.
- 14 It's dramatically impacting our own bond
- 15 rating and our ability to go to the markets.
- 16 We were supposed to borrow money this past
- 17 year and simply could not because of the
- 18 state. That's already been deferred. And
- 19 as Dr. Hite mentioned, we have almost
- 20 \$600 million proposed over the Five Year
- 21 Period to borrow and invest primarily in the
- 22 capital needs of our buildings.
- 23 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Well, surprise and
- 24 understand sort of overall how when

- 1 Councilman Oh asked the question what would
- 2 happen if that state budget, you know, isn't
- 3 passed, like, we get the fund balance right
- 4 as you all have laid out in your Five Year
- 5 Plan. But the idea that it is hampering
- 6 your ability to go to the markets, you know.
- 7 It is, again, I'm familiar with when you
- 8 have to do the tran, you know, in order to
- 9 make payroll, you know, Chairwoman Neff,
- 10 that was prior to your becoming Chair. I
- 11 think I am going back to Pedro now, right.
- 12 So, that is really just disappointing to
- 13 hear. But I thank you for putting that on
- 14 the record.
- Just if we can get 15 seconds across,
- 16 you know, a response to how many are you
- 17 required to have by law, and how many do we
- 18 have in terms of building engineers?
- 19 MS. BURNS: Good afternoon, Fran Burns,
- 20 Chief Operating Officer. We are required to
- 21 have a licensed Stationary Class A, license
- 22 to -- that would oversee the boiler
- 23 operation. We are not actually required by
- 24 law to have a licensed engineer per

- 1 building. In practice, we have had a
- 2 licensed engineer in our buildings.
- Right now, we have 160 building
- 4 engineers that have licenses, and then we
- 5 have 60 trainees that are currently in the
- 6 program that are not licensed.
- 7 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Sixty trainees
- 8 that are in the program and are not licensed
- 9 yet?
- 10 MS. BURNS: That's correct.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: That would take
- 12 our total, you just bear with me here, be up
- 13 to 220 when they finish?
- MS. BURNS: That's correct.
- 15 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: All right. And so
- 16 again, there is no actual number
- 17 legislatively that we are required to meet,
- 18 no mandated. This is the bottom line for
- 19 building engineers?
- 20 MS. BURNS: There is not.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank you, Madam
- 22 Chair for your leeway. As usual, I want to
- 23 close by thanking you and Councilwoman
- 24 Blondell Reynolds Brown. As usual, I follow

- 1 your lead, right? You all wave the flag as
- 2 it relates to our good friend Evelyn
- 3 Sample-Oates. And as you all were talking,
- 4 Councilwoman, I was thinking about Evelyn,
- 5 you must feel like the husband of a -- who
- 6 has a wife who works all the time, right,
- 7 when people don't tell you they love you
- 8 enough. So, you get all of my abuse, right,
- 9 my angry calls. And she is very graceful,
- 10 yes, we will handle it. We will look into
- 11 it.
- I know I am on a hundred, right? We get
- on a hundred when the public is calling us,
- 14 but you handle it gracefully. So, I needed
- 15 to tell you thank you very much for the
- 16 record.
- 17 Thank you, Madam Chair.
- 18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
- 19 much. We must break for our stenographer.
- 20 So, we will break for lunch until 2:00 p.m.
- 21 Thank you.
- 22 (Hearing broke for lunch at 1:15 p.m.)
- 23 - -
- 24 (Hearing resumed at 2:14 p.m.)

- 1 2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Councilman 3 Domb, we are going to call on you. He's out 4 of order because you're not here, Blondie. You're not here, Helen. 5 6 Councilman Domb. Thank you all. I hope everybody got kind of rejuvenated. 7 8 Thank you. 9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Many school districts and municipalities leased out rooftop spaces 10 for revenue. And I know the School District 11 12 looked at this seven or ten years ago. 13 was wondering if -- I think the City of Atlanta collects 1 to \$2 million in rooftop 14 15 revenue.
- 16 Is this a possibility for Philadelphia,
- 17 and is it an area we can look at for
- 18 additional revenue, though it may not be
- 19 that much, but it's something?
- 20 DR. HITE: Yes. We could -- we could
- 21 most definitely look at it. We would have
- 22 to because of bonds and public views versus
- 23 private used bonds, we'd have to determine
- 24 it on a site-by-site basis. But we are more

- 1 than willing to look at that as a revenue
- 2 source.
- 3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. And I heard you
- 4 talk earlier about, I guess for lack of a
- 5 better word, the -- is it CTE, Career
- 6 Technical Education. One of the schools, I
- 7 know it's not part of the School District.
- 8 One of the schools which I personally like
- 9 is the Cristo Rey School. And I talk about
- 10 it all the time. And I actually have
- 11 students from Cristo Rey in my office.
- 12 And the concept basically is that
- 13 student works one day a week from ninth to
- 14 twelfth grade. And they are going to
- 15 graduate a hundred percent of their students
- 16 this year which is pretty amazing because
- 17 everyone in that school is lower income.
- 18 And yet the experience of working in that
- 19 job one day a week is huge.
- Is there any way to take that model of
- 21 Cristo Rey and expand it to the public
- 22 schools where maybe students who aren't
- 23 going to get paid, but I would say that the
- 24 opportunity to work in a business or some

- 1 sort of employment one day a week is huge.
- 2 You don't need the money. The experience is
- 3 phenomenal and the social experience is
- 4 great. And having four job-related
- 5 experiences between ninth and twelfth grade
- 6 I think would be a great opportunity.
- 7 Is there a way to expand that for public
- 8 schools?
- 9 DR. HITE: Yes. We have several
- 10 programs that actually offer that now,
- 11 Councilman. And then in addition, we are
- 12 learning from schools like Cristo Rey, one
- 13 of the networks that the Chair was
- 14 describing is Opportunity Network. And
- 15 that's a part -- that's a network which
- 16 Cristo Rey is a part of it.
- 17 And it is -- so what we learn from those
- 18 schools gives us the ability to replicate
- 19 those things across the District. But we
- 20 have quite a few programs now that take that
- 21 approach.
- 22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: It's great. I think
- 23 it's a great program.
- One other question. Source4Teachers is

- 1 a contract, I guess, \$34 million. And I
- 2 guess they canceled the contract, that you
- 3 guys canceled the contract in March of this
- 4 year, I believe. My question is, the
- 5 company came nowhere near the proposed
- 6 75 percent fill rate.
- 7 Did the School District get back any of
- 8 the money because of that lack of filling
- 9 the vacancies? The financial side of that,
- 10 did we get the proper money back?
- 11 DR. HITE: Yeah. It was a contract that
- 12 is a -- it was -- the contract terms was
- 13 that it would not exceed \$34 million, but
- 14 the payments were based on their ability to
- 15 fill vacancies. And so, the actual amount
- 16 that was spent with Source4Teachers was far
- 17 less than the 34 million. I think that was
- 18 close.
- 19 MR. MONSON: About 6 million through the
- 20 end of April.
- 21 DR. HITE: 6 million through the end of
- 22 April.
- 23 COUNCILMAN DOMB: That's good news.
- I don't think I have any other questions

- 1 right now, Madam Chairwoman.
- 2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you very much.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
- 5 much. For all those in the building, my
- 6 colleagues here would like to -- thank you.
- 7 Councilwoman Gym, it looks like you will
- 8 be our final person.
- 9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Can I ask one more
- 10 question?
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
- 12 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I just want to put
- 13 this on the record. I constantly would hear
- 14 this before when I was running for office
- 15 how schools didn't have enough toilet paper,
- 16 paper supplies, pens or pencils.
- 17 Is that the case or is that not the
- 18 case?
- 19 DR. HITE: Yeah. I will have -- once
- 20 again if it needs more explanation, one of
- 21 the things that we did this year was a full
- 22 inventory of all of those types of supplies
- 23 and ensured that schools had those supplies.
- 24 We even replaced the dispensers for those

- 1 types of supplies. And then when I'm in
- 2 schools, I actually make a point to go into
- 3 at least the boys restroom to see if those
- 4 supplies there. And so, we do have enough
- 5 supplies for that.
- 6 And part of why we release \$60 per
- 7 student earlier in the year was to provide
- 8 schools with additional monies to buy the
- 9 materials and supplies that they need that
- 10 we did not provide. And so, if there are
- 11 more specific -- if there's a more specific
- 12 response needed, than Fran can come up and
- 13 talk about it.
- 14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So, we can squash that
- 15 rumor. We have the supplies.
- 16 DR. HITE: Yes.
- 17 COUNCILMAN DOMB: There isn't an issue
- 18 anymore.
- 19 DR. HITE: Yes.
- 20 COUNCILMAN DOMB: One last comment I
- 21 want to mention to you. I took a tour of
- 22 two schools that stayed in my mind. One is
- 23 the Webster School and one is the Lewis
- 24 Elkins School. Both were excellent. The

- 1 principals, the teachers, the students were
- 2 so well behaved. And when we talk about
- 3 some of those things that aren't positive,
- 4 here are two great examples of two really
- 5 good schools in the system. Just the two
- 6 that I saw that really were exemplary.
- 7 I really wanted to commend you and
- 8 commend the principals and teachers there,
- 9 too. Really good cools.
- 10 DR. HITE: Thank you for acknowledging
- 11 those two leaders and their -- in the work
- 12 that they are doing in the schools. And
- 13 that is happening more and more schools,
- 14 Councilman. Thank you for that.
- 15 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you very much.
- 16 Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.
- 17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You are very
- 18 welcome.
- 19 Councilwoman Gym.
- 20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you very much,
- 21 Madam Chair.
- 22 So, I think some of my questions might
- 23 be for the Districts' charter school person.
- 24 Is that Ms. Dawn Lynn Kaiser.

- 1 DR. HITE: She's here.
- 2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Great. Thank you.
- 3 Good afternoon.
- 4 MS. KAISER: Good afternoon.
- 5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So, the
- 6 Superintendent has talked previously about
- 7 the situation around the District's charter
- 8 schools. And in particular, obviously, that
- 9 charters now make up 30 percent of the
- 10 District's operating budget, \$875 million.
- 11 The \$122 million increase in FY17 represents
- 12 the 16 percent growth. And it also eats up
- 13 two-thirds of the growth in the District's
- 14 operating budget.
- 15 This year, the District approved six new
- 16 charters, three standalone charters and
- 17 three highly controversial renaissance
- 18 charters. Let me clarify. Those three --
- 19 the six new charters were made up of three
- 20 standalones and three renaissance charters.
- 21 And your office is primarily responsible for
- 22 this area.
- One, do you have a net one year and five
- 24 year cost figure to the District for the

- 1 three renaissance charters school you just
- 2 approved.
- 3 MS. KAISER: Thank you, City Council.
- 4 My name is Dawn Lynn Kaiser. I'm the
- 5 Executive Director for the Charter Schools
- 6 Office.
- With regards to the projection in terms
- 8 of enrollment for the three new charters
- 9 that were approved by our office, we do not
- 10 yet have charter agreements for the three
- 11 renaissance charters. Only one of those is
- 12 actually approved and codified by a charter
- 13 agreement at this time. And that is Global
- 14 Leadership Academy Southwest at Huey.
- We do, however, project enrollments. As
- 16 you may recall for two of the new charter
- 17 approvals this year, only one of those was a
- 18 standalone new charter school. That was
- 19 Kipp North Philadelphia. The other two had
- 20 options for Russel Byers and for Esperanza
- 21 to either be charter amendments or new
- 22 charters. And we have not yet finalized
- 23 those to determine whether or not those
- 24 would be new charters or they would be

- 1 expansions or modifications of an existing
- 2 charter. That will affect those projections
- 3 as well as performance requirements for
- 4 academics for two of those three charters.
- 5 So, we do give five year projection
- 6 numbers to the budget office based on those
- 7 staggered requirements and conditions. But
- 8 the budget office is the one that actually
- 9 puts a per pupil amount on that since that
- 10 amount changes from year to year.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. Mr. Monson, do
- 12 you have a net one year and five year cost
- 13 figure to the District for the three
- 14 renaissance charter schools that were just
- 15 approved?
- MR. MONSON: I will need a minute --
- 17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: No problem.
- 18 MR. MONSON: -- if you want to move on.
- 19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Ms. Kaiser, one of
- 20 the things that we noticed is that, you
- 21 know, in the first -- we have seen now two
- 22 cohorts of renaissance charter schools in
- 23 their six year process kind of go through
- 24 the charter schools review process. And the

- 1 first one, about three out of seven of the
- 2 charters had to have some kind of
- 3 significant change in their management or
- 4 leadership or had their charters taken away.
- 5 This year, four out of six charter operators
- 6 are recommended for non-renewal.
- 7 What is the estimated then success rate
- 8 for charters conversions for the
- 9 District's -- for the schools that have been
- 10 up for review by your office?
- 11 MS. KAISER: Could you clarify the
- 12 question? Are you asking if we project a
- 13 success rate?
- 14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: No. I asked you what
- 15 the success rate is. So, we have had
- 16 thirteen schools, thirteen renaissance
- 17 charter schools be reviewed by your office;
- 18 is that correct?
- 19 MS. KAISER: To date, yes.
- 20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And then four out of
- 21 six for deemed for non-renewal for this
- 22 year. One out of seven was deemed for
- 23 non-renewal out of the first cohort, two of
- 24 whom also had to see a shifted -- their

- 1 charter management to another operator or
- 2 seeing some kind of dramatic shift based on
- 3 concerns by the office; is that right?
- 4 MS. KAISER: We -- let me back up for a
- 5 moment. So, we have four non-renewal
- 6 recommendations that have been submitted to
- 7 the SRC this year.
- 8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: By your office.
- 9 MS. KAISER: Those notices of
- 10 non-renewals have not been voted on.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I understand that. I
- 12 asked about your office. So --
- MS. KAISER: We have had four
- 14 recommendations for non-renewal this year of
- 15 renaissance charters. One last year in the
- 16 2014/15 cohort. And there have been
- 17 renaissance charters that have switched
- 18 their charter management organization with
- 19 notification to our office, not necessarily
- 20 at the behest of our office, however, as we
- 21 cannot mandate those types of changes.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Then what is the
- 23 estimated success rate of renaissance
- 24 charters?

- 1 MS. KAISER: I guess I'm not certain
- 2 what the question is because the success
- 3 rate, I'm trying to figure out how you are
- 4 defining success.
- 5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I'm defining success
- 6 as not failing. How is that? Where you
- 7 don't have to see your charter turned over
- 8 or your charter doesn't have to be
- 9 recommended to be stripped from you. That's
- 10 a pretty low bar. Maybe I won't call that
- 11 success.
- MS. KAISER: We have had no renaissance
- 13 charters to date that have closed. And we
- 14 have had the five recommendations for
- 15 non-renewal. So, I would say that of the 20
- 16 active renaissance charters, there have been
- 17 five recommended for non-renewal. I would
- 18 not recommend a change in charter management
- 19 organization as a lack of success.
- 20 That is actually what we want to see
- 21 from a strong charter school board or
- 22 trustees that they recognize that a
- 23 management organization is not achieving the
- 24 goals that have been established for it.

- 1 And it makes the necessary course
- 2 corrections.
- 3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And that has to thus
- 4 be internalized because your office doesn't
- 5 have the power to actually close down
- 6 charter schools. So you're saying if a
- 7 charter school is going on a poor trajectory
- 8 and then decides to do a turnaround of a
- 9 turnaround a second time, then that's
- 10 actually a positive in your estimation.
- 11 MS. KAISER: If the board recognizes
- 12 that they are not on a positive trajectory
- 13 and they make the necessary course
- 14 corrections, yes, we would see that as a
- 15 positive.
- 16 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: We have got seven out
- 17 of thirteen schools, though, that have had
- 18 to see some kind of reversal in their
- 19 renaissance charters. Would you at least
- 20 say some of the providers you have used that
- 21 have not been able to do it like Mosaica,
- 22 Scholar Academies and Espire will not be
- 23 candidates for additional renaissance
- 24 schools?

- 1 MS. KAISER: Any charter operator is
- 2 eligible to apply for a charter. It's not a
- 3 licensure that is withheld. We could not
- 4 prevent them from applying for either a new
- 5 charter through a charter application
- 6 process or a renaissance charter. However,
- 7 their past performance would certainly be a
- 8 consideration of our office in the
- 9 evaluation of that.
- 10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: For school -- for a
- 11 charter operator like Young Scholars Academy
- 12 which has now twice walked away from charter
- 13 schools that they manage, the most recent
- 14 one being Kenderton Elementary School in
- 15 which they decided that the special
- 16 education costs were something that they did
- 17 not no longer want to pay for. And so,
- 18 decided to walk away from that contract.
- 19 Is there any penalty for renaissance
- 20 operators to deter them from bowing out of
- 21 the contracts as they just choose whenever
- 22 they choose to do so?
- I mean, they are signed on to a
- 24 five-year contract. Is there any penalty to

- 1 them?
- 2 MS. KAISER: So again, the charter
- 3 management organization is not the holder of
- 4 the charter. The charter is held by the
- 5 board of the charter school. So, it is not
- 6 the board of Young Scholars Kenderton that
- 7 is walking away from the school. But rather
- 8 Scholars Academy is the charter management
- 9 organization that has indicated it's intent
- 10 to not continue with the charter management
- 11 organization responsibilities and contract
- 12 for that school.
- So, penalties would be cured between the
- 14 board of the school and the vendor, not
- 15 necessarily with the District. However,
- 16 there is no provision in the charter school
- 17 law for any penalty that is assigned to a
- 18 board of trustees to a charter for
- 19 surrendering its charter or for
- 20 discontinuing with a charter management
- 21 contract.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: There is no penalty
- 23 for discontinuing with the charter managing
- 24 contract if it's voluntary. I'm asking you

- 1 would you consider penalties for an operator
- 2 that says, hey, I don't feel like spending
- 3 for special ed? It's too much money. I'm
- 4 walking away.
- 5 Would you consider penalties under that
- 6 kind of situation, or do you think schools
- 7 should be left at the mercy of whatever
- 8 operator chooses to see fit in terms of, you
- 9 know in this particular case, I would
- 10 consider it to be exploitive and somewhat
- 11 abusive to the families at Kenderton to say
- 12 that they don't feel like paying for special
- 13 ed costs. And that they were -- they are
- 14 obligated to the school.
- MS. KAISER: I would say we are always
- 16 looking in the charter school's office for
- 17 the best interest of children. And if a
- 18 charter management organization --
- 19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: You would not say
- 20 that you are?
- 21 MS. KAISER: Said we are always looking
- 22 in the best interest of children. And if a
- 23 charter management organization has signaled
- 24 its intent to no longer be able to provide

- 1 services to those children, we certainly
- 2 want to find a charter management
- 3 organization or organization that would
- 4 support the board of that charter who will
- 5 be able to do so.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I didn't ask you that
- 7 question. I asked if you would consider
- 8 penalties for a charter operator that
- 9 refused to do that.
- 10 MS. KAISER: There are no penalties at
- 11 our disposal to consider.
- 12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Would you consider
- any or do you think it's appropriate to
- 14 explore that? Or do you think that, you
- 15 know -- how do we prevent this from
- 16 happening on multiple occasion?
- 17 MS. KAISER: This is definitely an area
- 18 where the charter school law could make some
- 19 consideration for what the obligations are
- 20 of those who apply for and seek a charter
- 21 for a charter school. What I can say is
- 22 there are minimal things that we can do.
- 23 One of the things that we have
- 24 instituted in our office through our

- 1 resolutions and other agreements and
- 2 contracts with charter providers is that
- 3 changes in charter management organizations
- 4 are deemed material charter amendment. And
- 5 therefore, require the review and approval
- 6 of our office. That is a change that had
- 7 not been previously in resolutions and
- 8 agreements dating back to the beginning of
- 9 renaissance in 2010. But these things could
- 10 not happen now outside of the purview of the
- 11 charter school office and the SRC moving
- 12 forward.
- 13 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I'll have to circle
- 14 back because I don't think I got clarity on
- 15 my answer on that question. But I will come
- 16 back on the next round for Ms. Kaiser.
- 17 Thank you.
- 18 MR. MONSON: Can I answer the dollar
- 19 question?
- 20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Pull your mic
- 21 closer.
- MR. MONSON: Sorry. Just to go back to
- 23 the previous question, for next year
- 24 \$6.6 million is the cost stated with the new

- 1 renaissance charters.
- 2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: For one year?
- 3 MR. MONSON: Correct. We have an
- 4 estimate of an additional \$8 million, but
- 5 that's -- it will depend on, obviously, if
- 6 there are additional investments or growth
- 7 rate and charters. Based on our current
- 8 estimates, I think we have \$8 million.
- 9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: 6 million?
- 10 MR. MONSON: It's 6.6 for the first year
- 11 because you have trend. You have a new cost
- 12 and then you have incremental costs above.
- 13 The growth is you end up with, I believe, \$8
- 14 million by the end.
- 15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: \$8 million?
- MR. MONSON: Yes.
- 17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. Thank you.
- 18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 19 We checked several times and we were
- 20 told with regard to charter schools that we
- 21 were okay with -- at Turner School with
- 22 Kipp. I understand they were talking about
- 23 Beeber charter school. That's Councilman
- 24 Jones' area. But are they trying to deal

- 1 with that as a new location for charter
- 2 schools?
- 3 MS. KAISER: Kipp is looking through a
- 4 number of their facility options as they
- 5 were approved for a new charter as well in
- 6 the City of Philadelphia earlier this year
- 7 for Kipp North Philadelphia. And so, they
- 8 are looking for some long term solutions for
- 9 all of their schools. I do not believe they
- 10 have finalized any of those decisions beyond
- 11 the buildings that they are already in
- 12 contract or under agreement with for the
- 13 District.
- 14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yeah. They
- 15 want to stay at Turner and we want them to
- 16 stay at Turner. We have checked on that
- 17 many times. They were talking about moving
- 18 them upstairs, moving that. But they are
- 19 really a wonderful neighborhood school for
- 20 us. They like being there, and we like them
- 21 being there.
- 22 But there has been talk back and forth
- 23 that maybe upstairs they would -- there are
- 24 some question and varying questions. I am

- 1 just was verifying that everything is
- 2 straight again.
- 3 MS. BURNS: Councilwoman, Fran Burns,
- 4 Chief Operating officer.
- 5 In fact, we have a resolution in front
- 6 of the SRC for the May action meeting to
- 7 extend the lease with Kipp at Motivation so
- 8 that once the action is considered, it is
- 9 recommended by staff. And so, it's --
- 10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 11 Thank you. Every told me that three times.
- 12 And Beeber is not in my area, but are they
- involved in some of this thing? No Beeber?
- 14 Okay. That's all right. Curtis would know
- 15 that anyway. Thank you very much.
- 16 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.
- 17 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Thank you
- 18 very much. Good afternoon.
- 19 Continuing along the concerns raised
- 20 around charter schools, why not -- I am
- 21 aware of is that World Communications
- 22 Charter School has, at least what I've been
- 23 told and I always asked to see some records
- 24 to verify, has about 90 percent college

- 1 acceptance rate. So with that fact as a
- 2 back drop, what I've also learned is that
- 3 this school which has been around since 1998
- 4 may be prematurely closing one year ahead of
- 5 the 2017 charter. The concern is that it is
- 6 the view of those who care about the charter
- 7 schools, that they have -- they have done
- 8 what they needed to do for approval. But
- 9 what I have learned in my fact finding is
- 10 that it actually took the Charter Schools
- 11 Office three months to give approval for the
- 12 schools recommendation for an operator
- 13 period.
- 14 So the question becomes knowing that the
- 15 work you do is massive, it takes three
- 16 months to get back to give approval, just
- 17 share with us why a school that is turning
- 18 around is faced with the possible
- 19 alternative of closure?
- 20 MS. KAISER: Yes. Dawn Lynn Kaiser,
- 21 Executive Director of Charter School Office.
- With regards to World Comm, there are
- 23 some components of that timeline that have
- 24 not been clearly delineated. Although,

- 1 there was a proposal submitted to our office
- 2 by the end of October last year by World
- 3 Communication which was under a signed
- 4 agreement with our office and the District
- 5 to either find another operator this school
- 6 year or to surrender this charter which that
- 7 board engaged in willingly. We could not
- 8 get the additional supplemental information
- 9 that was requested associated with that
- 10 proposal for American Paradigm Schools
- 11 until, in fact, we were able to meet in
- 12 person with American Paradigm Schools as a
- 13 result of their outreach to our office, not
- 14 World Communications, to resolve many of
- 15 those questions which did not occur until
- 16 January.
- 17 Our office was not able to sign off on
- 18 them proceeding forward until we had
- 19 received that additional supplemental
- 20 information that clarified the proposal.
- 21 Unfortunately, without that information,
- 22 yes, we withheld the approval to continue in
- 23 their negotiations because there was
- 24 material and substantive information that we

- 1 did not receive.
- 2 I also want to -- although there may be
- 3 some points of recent improvements in
- 4 school, the school's academic performance
- 5 for the beginning of this charter term, the
- 6 forced three years has been persistently low
- 7 performing. If fact, last year 14/15 World
- 8 Communications Charter School for the high
- 9 school closed out the year for the lowest
- 10 performing school, not just charter school,
- 11 lowest performing public school in terms of
- 12 academic achievement and academic progress
- in the City of Philadelphia last year.
- 14 They were 80 out 80 in achievement and
- 15 80 out of 82 in progress.
- 16 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: And so
- during the hearings before the School Reform
- 18 Commission, are those type of facts shared
- 19 out on the record? Or is that the kind of
- 20 discussion that you have in sit-down caucus
- 21 session?
- When you make the decision, render the
- 23 decisions that move you towards potential
- 24 closure, is that handled in a public -- in

- 1 the public forum there on Wednesday
- 2 evenings?
- 3 MS. NEFF: The Charter School Office
- 4 makes a presentation before they make their
- 5 recommendation at a public meeting.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.
- 7 Then the ask is that you revisit everything
- 8 around World Charter with them directly so
- 9 that -- it's clear there is a disconnect.
- 10 When disconnect happens, they come to our
- 11 attention. And then we, the appropriate
- 12 thing for us to do is to ask that you sit
- down again and make sure they understand
- 14 clearly what the parameters and expectations
- 15 are.
- MS. KAISER: We have had ongoing
- 17 communication with the World Communication
- 18 Charter School. As I mentioned, the school
- 19 itself entered into a agreement with the
- 20 District early last fall prior to the start
- 21 of the school year that it would find
- 22 another operator which it did not do this
- 23 year or that it would surrender its charter.
- 24 We are not initiating closure proceedings

- 1 against the school. The school voluntarily
- 2 agreed to surrender its charter at the end
- 3 of this school year. However, our office
- 4 has not yet been formally notified that the
- 5 board of the charter school has taken the
- 6 action to surrender its charter.
- 7 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: All right.
- 8 Speaking of boards, I want to get as
- 9 many questions in as I can. Let's table the
- 10 board discussion.
- In looking at your outside counsel, from
- 12 2010 to 2015, your payments to outside
- 13 counsel have almost tripled.
- 14 MR. MONSON: Correct.
- 15 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: I need to
- 16 know -- I probably should have sent this in
- 17 advance. Under what conditions or
- 18 circumstances does the School District
- 19 retain outside counsel? How does the School
- 20 District determine who will be outside
- 21 counsel? And I need to see a list of all of
- 22 your outside counsel since 2010.
- 23 How soon can I get that?
- MR. MONSON: Now.

- 1 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: You have
- 2 it now?
- 3 MR. MONSON: Uh-huh.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Can you
- 5 submit that to the Chair, and I'll take a
- 6 quick look see.
- 7 MR. MONSON: Can I answer some of the
- 8 questions? I have the data for you.
- 9 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Please.
- 10 MR. MONSON: To address some of the
- 11 questions, some of the drivers behind it.
- 12 So some of the drivers behind it are when
- 13 the District did its mass cutbacks, that was
- 14 not just in the schools, it was in the
- 15 central office.
- 16 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Please
- 17 pull the mic closer.
- 18 MR. MONSON: Sorry.
- 19 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: First tell
- 20 us who the outside counsel is.
- 21 MR. MONSON: It's a list of 50 firms. I
- 22 will submit that list to the --
- 23 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: You can
- 24 submit those. In any of those cases, what

- 1 consideration is given to making sure that
- 2 some level of sensitivity is given to
- 3 minority and women counsel in those law
- 4 firms?
- 5 MR. MONSON: That I will have to get
- 6 back to you on. I have different data on --
- 7 across procurement in general related to
- 8 which I can get to, also. I don't have the
- 9 data specifically on counsel other than the
- 10 number of firms that are themselves minority
- or, as a firm, minority or women owned.
- 12 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: That's
- 13 reflected in the information you have there?
- 14 MR. MONSON: I have to see -- I have two
- 15 different data points. I have the data
- 16 points for the outside counsel. Let me
- 17 check that first and answer those questions
- 18 first. And then, I will find my data on --
- 19 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: MBE/WBE
- 20 opportunities.
- 21 MR. MONSON: Let me get that also.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: This is a
- 23 District that is majority minority. We want
- 24 to make sure that those you do business with

- 1 reflects the City that it lives in. Members
- 2 of Council are actually tired of
- 3 circumstance where those you serve, those
- 4 who view the School District as a business,
- 5 are getting fat off the back of
- 6 African-American children principally, and
- 7 it's just disturbing. It's very, very
- 8 disturbing.
- 9 MR. MONSON: Let me -- two separate
- 10 questions if I --
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Please.
- 12 MR. MONSON: I will submit to the Chair
- 13 about the detail about all the spending on
- 14 outside counsel from FY10 to FY16 that's
- 15 here including through FY15. It's detailed
- 16 by firm so you will be able to see that.
- 17 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: That will
- 18 be terrific.
- 19 MR. MONSON: I do want to say, some of
- 20 the large growth is a result of two major
- 21 factors that both relate to not only were
- 22 there cuts in the schools, but cuts in the
- 23 central office. So fewer inhouse counsel
- 24 means you wind up using outside counsel

- 1 more. In addition, the cuts in central
- 2 office for special ed has led to a huge
- 3 increase in the number of lawsuits we have
- 4 in the back end. Obviously, not the way we
- 5 want to work, but it's the way it happened.
- 6 We end up having to -- there's -- it's
- 7 created a lot more cases for us to have to
- 8 deal with it. It's one of the issues we are
- 9 looking at to bring more people inhouse,
- 10 bring as much work in-house as well as doing
- 11 the proactive rather than the reactive on
- 12 the special ed.
- In terms of the M/WBE participation
- 14 summary, and I have this. So you
- 15 specifically are asking professional
- 16 services contracts. These are -- this is
- 17 data for the first three quarters of the
- 18 current fiscal year.
- 19 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.
- 20 MR. MONSON: I will submit this, also.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Please.
- MR. MONSON: Just to -- so you know,
- 23 there were 81 total professional services
- 24 contracts awarded. Of those M/WBE

- 1 participation, 59 of them. So more than
- 2 50 percent. The total percentage of award
- 3 dollars to M/WBE was 46 percent.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: For that,
- 5 that's MBE?
- 6 MR. MONSON: For M/WBE. It's combined.
- 7 I don't have -- it's minority or women
- 8 business enterprises.
- 9 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Sc
- 10 Councilman Green would know what my
- 11 follow-up question would be. We need it
- 12 broken down by women, where it's been
- 13 verified that they are indeed owned by women
- 14 and minorities. And then we want it broken
- 15 down by minorities.
- MR. MONSON: I believe we used the City
- 17 certification.
- 18 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Terrific.
- 19 MR. MONSON: I will get -- I will
- 20 provide this to the Chair, but I will also
- 21 get back to you with the broken down
- 22 version. And I will say we have that for
- 23 purchasing contracts, designed construction
- 24 contract awards and professional services

- 1 all here. I will submit these documents to
- 2 the Chair.
- 3 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Appreciate
- 4 it. Thank you.
- 5 Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
- 7 Councilwoman.
- 8 Councilman green.
- 9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you, Madam
- 10 Chair. I actually wanted to follow up on
- 11 questions that Councilwoman Brown asked.
- 12 She had asked in reference to
- 13 professional services contracts. But I had
- 14 a question of something I may have missed
- 15 earlier. What is your participation rates
- in reference to all contracts for both goods
- 17 and services for the School District?
- 18 MR. MONSON: I don't have it broken
- 19 down, I'm sorry, by minority/women. But
- 20 combined rate?
- 21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Yes.
- 22 MR. MONSON: So combined rate for --
- 23 this is for the first three quarters of the
- 24 current fiscal year, percent of award

- 1 dollars in purchasing contracts is
- 2 18 percent. And in terms of the number of
- 3 contracts, it's 21 out of 55 contracts.
- 4 In terms of design and construction
- 5 contract awards, 48 percent of the total
- 6 dollars were to M/WBE. And the
- 7 participation was -- I have to check that
- 8 number. It looks odd to me. It seems more
- 9 than a hundred percent. I want to double
- 10 check that. As I already mentioned on
- 11 professional services contracts, 59 out of
- 12 81 contracts and 46 percent of the total
- dollars spent, so 24.2 million out of
- 14 52.3 million in the professional services
- 15 contracts were awarded to M/W participants.
- 16 I will also point out these do not --
- 17 these numbers do not include anything where
- 18 we piggyback on City, state or government
- 19 contracts or sole sources.
- 20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: How does that trend
- 21 over the past four years?
- MR. MONSON: I will have to get that
- 23 information for you.
- 24 COUNCILMAN GREEN: That information is

- 1 very important. I want to ask a question
- 2 from your Procurement Department. What's
- 3 the philosophy of the Procurement Department
- 4 in reference to trying to increase diversity
- 5 as well as using local based businesses?
- 6 MS. BURNS: Fran Burns. The -- we
- 7 definitely have, I think which are very good
- 8 participation rates, with 40 percent --
- 9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: How would you define
- 10 as very good?
- 11 MS. BURNS: We have 40 percent overall
- 12 which exceeds our overall goal of 25 percent
- in construction. We are at 48 percent as
- 14 Uri testified. So, the way that we get to
- 15 these percentages are we have just similar
- 16 to the City and our solicitations, we have
- 17 minority participation goals that we meet or
- 18 exceed in our -- in our RFPs and public
- 19 solicitations.
- We also have active recruiting with
- 21 local African-American Chamber of Commerce,
- 22 Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. And we have a
- 23 strong vendor database that we build upon
- 24 and we proactively make outreach to vendors

- 1 every time we publicize a solicitation.
- 2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And how many of those
- 3 M/WBE are based in the City of Philadelphia?
- 4 MS. BURNS: I have to get back to you on
- 5 that.
- 6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Would you range any
- 7 percentage or perspective in reference to
- 8 that.
- 9 MS. BURNS: I have to get back to you on
- 10 that.
- 11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. And so, I
- 12 don't think you answered the question in
- 13 reference to the philosophy of the
- 14 department. Let me give you some
- 15 perspective.
- 16 Historically from my observation, the
- 17 City has not necessarily done the best job
- 18 in reference to using our assets or
- 19 resources that we have that local based
- 20 businesses provide to the City that are used
- 21 by the City from a procurement perspective
- 22 to buy goods and services. When you look at
- 23 the School District, are we doing the same
- 24 thing? Are we leveraging the dollars the

- 1 School District receives from the people
- 2 living in the City of Philadelphia possibly
- 3 from the real estate taxes, but have local
- 4 businesses, are we using those resources
- 5 that the School District receives to
- 6 leverage assets to bring in opportunity for
- 7 local based businesses?
- 8 MS. BURNS: For Fiscal Year 16, the
- 9 current fiscal year that we're in, the first
- 10 three quarters which is actually consistent
- 11 with what our CFO reported upon, 35 percent
- 12 of our School District contracts were
- 13 awarded to local Philadelphia vendors.
- 14 However, at the current time, we actually do
- 15 not have that as an active policy.
- So, we have a new procurement director.
- 17 She's going to take a look at all of our
- 18 policies and procedures and also going to
- 19 have an eye towards this in terms of actual
- 20 policy and practive. But 35 percent of
- 21 contractors or 72 contracts out of 204 were
- 22 awarded to Philadelphia vendors.
- 23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I quess the
- 24 information can be provided to the Chair. I

- 1 want to see what the local M/WBE spend has
- 2 been over the past four years.
- 3 MS. BURNS: Understand.
- 4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: In reference to
- 5 charter schools, Councilwoman Gym raised a
- 6 question in regards to charter schools. I
- 7 guess my question is, what is the size of
- 8 the Charter School Office currently?
- 9 MS. KAISER: Dawn Lynn Kaiser. We
- 10 currently have nine FTEs, one of which is in
- 11 education Pioneer.
- 12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Currently, we have
- 13 how many charter schools in the City of
- 14 Philadelphia?
- MS. KAISER: We currently have 83 open
- 16 and operated.
- 17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Eighty-three. What
- 18 is the population of the -- the student
- 19 population of the charter schools for the
- 20 record.
- 21 MS. KAISER: Of those charter schools,
- 22 it's about 62,500.
- 23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So, is nine FTE
- 24 employees sufficient to provide oversight

- 1 for 83 charter schools, about 62,000
- 2 students?
- 3 MS. KAISER: It is certainly not ideal
- 4 for the highest level of charter authorizing
- 5 monitoring and oversight that we would like
- 6 to provide. It is, however, not an outlier
- 7 in terms of the schools per staff member of
- 8 charter authorizing offices that are
- 9 District based for a large authorizer
- 10 nationwide.
- 11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. I want to ask
- 12 the question in reference to the process of
- 13 evaluating charter schools. And I preface
- 14 that based on my experience with the Arise
- 15 Academy Charter School, which is a charter
- 16 school focused on children in the foster
- 17 care system.
- 18 And from my observation, that charter
- 19 school was held to a standard that it could
- 20 not possibly meet because many children at
- 21 Arise, they are coming from a foster care
- 22 perspective and actually developing the
- 23 level of trust at that charter school took a
- 24 period of time. For many students, that

- 1 charter school became the first stability in
- 2 their lives. However, when they went
- 3 through the analysis process and when the
- 4 charter was not renewed, they were held to a
- 5 standard that was not, I would say, not
- 6 acceptable because you are dealing with
- 7 students who have gone through various
- 8 environments in the evening that may be
- 9 changed in a regular basis. And now various
- 10 relationships in the day going from school
- 11 to school. And so, the District decided
- 12 based on their analysis that Arise Charter
- 13 School was not going to stay open.
- 14 What I am trying to get a perspective on
- is what is the analysis that you are using
- in reference to whether a charter school
- 17 stays open or not? And has this changed in
- 18 the years?
- 19 MS. KAISER: Yes, it has changed over
- 20 the years. The Charters School Office under
- 21 the Authorizing Quality Initiative which was
- 22 introduced approximately three years ago and
- 23 was fully brought to implementation this
- 24 year with the release of the annual charter

- 1 evaluation essentially has a charter
- 2 performance framework which compares schools
- 3 academically. There is also a framework
- 4 that analyzes the organizational compliance
- 5 and the financial health and stability of
- 6 the school.
- 7 But academically, compares the school to
- 8 two or three comparison groups in growth and
- 9 proficiency. And that is the peer group for
- 10 the charter school, the District average for
- 11 the same grades served by that charter
- 12 school and/or the charter sector average for
- 13 the same grades served by that charter
- 14 school.
- 15 If it is a renaissance charter school
- 16 and it's first term of operation, the
- 17 comparison is made only to the peer schools
- 18 for proficiency and growth for that charter
- 19 school. Is it a differentiation because the
- 20 Charter School Office recognizes that in the
- 21 first time of renaissance, the school is
- 22 focused on many things including
- 23 stabilization of school, climate and
- 24 culture. And we consider that in the

- 1 evaluation of academic success if the school
- 2 when you look at things like attendance,
- 3 rate of violent incidents, retention, et
- 4 cetera.
- 5 I will say there is an exception with
- 6 the renewal cohort this year tat we had that
- 7 may have been noted with Youth Build Charter
- 8 School. This is a charter school that does
- 9 not have students that take any of the
- 10 state-mandated assessments because of the
- 11 nature of students that it serves which are
- 12 disengaged youth who are classified
- 13 technically as grade twelve students. And
- 14 so, it has a set of academic success goals
- 15 that are incorporated as part of its
- 16 charter. And it was evaluated against those
- 17 goals.
- 18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And so, this level of
- 19 methodology went into effect, you said, this
- 20 year or full implementation went into effect
- 21 this year?
- 22 MS. KAISER: Full implementation this
- 23 year. We have the annual report which will
- 24 show each school, how they are performing

- 1 against those academic success indicators.
- 2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you, Madam
- 3 Chair. I have some additional questions
- 4 regarding special education, which I will
- 5 come back to in the next round.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 7 Councilwoman Parker.
- 8 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank you, Madam
- 9 Chair. So, I have two questions.
- 10 And one is in regard to the hiring of
- 11 substitute teachers. Dr. Hite, I don't want
- 12 to beat a dead horse. I think you publicly
- 13 stated on the record all of the challenges
- 14 of the Source4Teachers contract. We heard
- 15 about Kelly Services.
- Tell us if you will, what's different
- 17 between Kelly and Source4Teachers? How many
- 18 people are in Kelly substitute pool? Where
- 19 do they recruit from, and what is the fill
- 20 rate?
- 21 And I ask the recruitment question,
- 22 Dr. Hite, specifically with regards to even
- in the substitute pool and now here I am
- 24 dating myself. I can remember when the

- 1 substitute teacher became a teacher you knew
- 2 in the school because they had been in the
- 3 school quite often and you would see them
- 4 often. Will we be hiring experienced people
- 5 particularly with the District to be a part
- 6 of that pool?
- 7 DR. HITE: Yeah. So one distinction,
- 8 Councilwoman, is that -- I talked about we
- 9 tried a solution. We tried an approach, and
- 10 the approach was not successful with
- 11 Source4Teachers. Now we are going to the
- 12 organization that has done this in districts
- 13 like ours. It's the largest organization
- 14 with respect to educational services in the
- 15 country. And they've been doing this work
- 16 now for two decades.
- 17 And essentially, it's the number of
- 18 individuals they can put on the ground to
- 19 recruit and the systems that they have in
- 20 place to place people. And they are able to
- 21 depend on their national infrastructure to
- 22 do things like call centers and training
- 23 that they plan to have for every individual
- 24 who goes through their process. And they

- 1 also pay for the credentials for the
- 2 substitutes and the background checks in
- 3 order to get those background checks
- 4 completed.
- 5 We still -- the District will still do
- 6 the long term subs. And so, the notion of
- 7 you remembering your substitute because that
- 8 was the individual who was in the District,
- 9 that is usually different credentials than
- 10 the typical substitute. But that -- those
- 11 are the primary distinctions. Where
- 12 Source4Teachers had very few individuals who
- were recruiting and placing teachers every
- 14 day, this organization has a significant
- 15 number of individuals that they can put on
- 16 the ground to do this work both to recruit
- 17 and to support and can use their national
- 18 structures that are already in place around
- 19 call centers and support and development
- 20 around substitutes.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay. The next
- 22 question, Dr. Hite, I don't know if it was
- 23 raised today. But when we had an education
- 24 committee hearing back in February, there

- 1 was quite a bit of talk about class size.
- 2 And during that time, it was indicated that
- 3 several schools sort of had multiple classes
- 4 with 34 and 35 students.
- 5 So tell me is -- what's the District's
- 6 plan to reduce class sizes? And I'm again
- 7 particularly thinking about that hearing in
- 8 February when this issue came up.
- 9 DR. HITE: Yes. Thank you for that
- 10 question.
- 11 So we have -- the language in that
- 12 contract and this is just a contract
- 13 language. And so, I want to acknowledge
- 14 that right up front. Is that K through 3 is
- 15 30 children in the class. Beyond third
- 16 grade, it is 33 students in every class.
- 17 And we do have -- during the time of that
- 18 briefing or that hearing, it was a question
- 19 about how many classes have over 40 children
- 20 in them.
- 21 And today, we do have of all of the
- 22 classrooms that we have inside of the
- 23 District, we do have some classes that are
- 24 over the maximum class size. And the vast

- 1 majority of those are over by one.
- 2 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: By one.
- 3 DR. HITE: By one student. And they --
- 4 it typically falls into the smaller schools
- 5 that we have. And we can also give
- 6 information about which schools have the
- 7 class size overage in the core academic
- 8 areas. But we have a number of classes for
- 9 every school that is over the class size.
- 10 And the number of class -- in the vast
- 11 majority of those classes are over by one
- 12 student. There could be 34 students in some
- 13 situations versus 33.
- 14 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Let me just ask
- 15 you, Dr. Hite. I appreciate you giving that
- 16 information for the record because the
- 17 accuracy is important. And if it will be
- 18 possible for you to submit what you just
- 19 described to the Chair, that would be great
- 20 for us to be able to have for the record so
- 21 that we can know which schools.
- 22 Madam Chair, while that will conclude my
- 23 questioning for the School District in this
- 24 round, I just wanted to take my last few

- 1 moments to, you know, say a hearty thank you
- 2 to our Members of the Philadelphia
- 3 legislative delegation in Harrisburg. They
- 4 do not have an easy job, Madam Chair, as you
- 5 know. I look at our body and we are
- 6 Philadelphians and we have challenges,
- 7 right. Try two chambers where you don't
- 8 control either one. And you're trying to
- 9 get anything accomplished, it's a lot of
- 10 hard work.
- 11 So, I just want to say to Chairwoman
- 12 Donatucci in the House, Chairwoman Kitchen
- in the Senate, Vincent Hughes who is the
- 14 senior and highest ranking elected official
- on the Senate side from Philadelphia,
- 16 Senator Tony Williams who is Whip on the
- 17 Democratic side in the Senate, we don't take
- 18 what you do lightly. We know it's hard
- 19 work. You know, we have got to raise the
- 20 issues because they are here and we are
- 21 closest. So, people can't take the subway
- 22 to see you, right? They can take the subway
- 23 or the El to come and see us. We have got
- 24 to raise the questions, but we don't take

- 1 lightly what you do. And we thank you.
- Thank you, Madam Chair, for your leeway.
- 3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
- 4 Councilwoman.
- 5 Councilwoman Gym.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you very much.
- 7 Some more questions for Ms. Kaiser, please.
- 8 Thank you.
- 9 So, Ms. Kaiser, I want to go back to a
- 10 statement that you made earlier which was
- 11 kind of mind boggling in the sense that you
- 12 were suggesting a distinction between a
- 13 charter operator and the board which is
- 14 actually created by that charter operator,
- 15 thus arguing that the charter operator that
- 16 created the board is simply a contractual
- 17 entity to the board.
- 18 Is that a correct understanding of what
- 19 I'm hearing you say?
- 20 MS. KAISER: Although in the case of
- 21 renaissance it is the charter management or
- 22 charter operator organization that
- 23 facilitates the initial board, that is
- 24 because there is an absence of entity prior

- 1 to that. But it is correct that the board
- 2 of trustees of the charter school is the
- 3 entity and only entity which holds a
- 4 charter.
- 5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So you know, I guess
- 6 if you just see charter operators then as
- 7 contracts, right, they are effectively just
- 8 contracts, then I'm still trying to
- 9 understand why you wouldn't work in
- 10 penalties for operators that continue to
- 11 walk away from their obligations and duties?
- 12 Why would that not be something considered
- 13 to be an obligation? Otherwise, where is
- 14 the deterrents to have that be a regular
- 15 procedure that has now happened twice in
- 16 fact.
- 17 MS. KAISER: Although they are now
- 18 vendors which contract with their boards,
- 19 they don't contract with us. They engage in
- 20 a charter process with us. And there are
- 21 certain laws which protect the nature of
- 22 charters in the State of Pennsylvania. That
- 23 doesn't mean, as we said earlier, that this
- 24 isn't a great area for the charter school

- 1 law to contemplate what kind of requirements
- 2 there should be on applicants for a charter.
- 3 But presently, those are not contemplated.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: You are currently
- 5 working on these agreements with the current
- 6 charter entities, are you not?
- 7 MS. KAISER: Yes, we are.
- 8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Would you say that
- 9 you have no role to play in the agreements
- 10 that you are currently negotiating with
- 11 these charter entities?
- 12 MS. KAISER: Again, these charter
- 13 agreements that we are negotiating are with
- 14 the board -- will be held by the board of
- 15 trustees of the charter schools, not the
- 16 charter management operators themselves.
- 17 They are signed by the chairs of the board
- 18 of trustees.
- 19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So, you currently
- 20 approved a couple of interesting renaissance
- 21 charters in this last go around. One of the
- 22 renaissance operators was found to be out of
- 23 compliance in seven out of eleven compliance
- 24 categories by your office. Is that

- 1 accurate?
- 2 MS. KAISER: I would need to confirm
- 3 that.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: You wouldn't know if
- 5 a renaissance operator was out of compliance
- 6 at that level? There are only three.
- 7 MS. KAISER: Which operator are you
- 8 referring to?
- 9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Global.
- 10 MS. KAISER: And I can look that up.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And then one of the
- 12 renaissance operators that you approved for
- 13 a K to 8 school had never, in fact, operated
- 14 a K to 5 school; is that correct?
- 15 MS. KAISER: Great Oaks Foundation,
- 16 correct, is an operator of six through
- 17 twelve schools. However, they did have
- 18 school leadership team members identified in
- 19 their application with experience operating
- 20 elementary school grades.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: But those -- you
- 22 didn't contract with those individuals, did
- 23 you? You contracted with an operator,
- 24 right?

- 1 MS. KAISER: The charter agreement would
- 2 be executed with the board of trustees of
- 3 the school.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Right. For an
- 5 operator that has no experience in operating
- 6 a K to 5 school. You are not contracting
- 7 with individuals, with individual entities.
- 8 Those individuals who may be part of the
- 9 charter group could be fired, let go, may
- 10 not be part of the original group are not
- 11 obligated to be part of that charter
- 12 agreement; is that right?
- 13 MS. KAISER: The --
- 14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes. Why don't we
- 15 move on.
- 16 MS. KAISER: They are employees of the
- 17 school. However, the individuals that I'm
- 18 referring to are employed by Great Oaks
- 19 Foundation.
- 20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Understood. You are
- 21 not obligating them to remain in their
- 22 employment; is that right? You have no
- 23 power to do that?
- MS. KAISER: That is correct.

- 1 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: You have -- let me
- 2 repeat again, that you are -- you chose and
- 3 approved an operator that has not had any
- 4 experience in operating K to 5 schools.
- 5 MS. KAISER: The Charters School Office
- 6 recommended an application for a renaissance
- 7 charter school --
- 8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: It's a yes or no
- 9 question. Could you just answer yes or no,
- 10 please?
- 11 MS. KAISER: Then actually, the answer
- 12 is no. Charter School Office cannot approve
- 13 applications.
- 14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Your Charter School
- 15 Office cannot recommend applications?
- MS. KAISER: You asked if we approved.
- 17 We cannot approved. We did recommend.
- 18 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Right. Okay. You
- 19 recommended an operator that had never had
- 20 experience with K to 5 schools.
- 21 MS. KAISER: We recommended an applicant
- 22 which demonstrated experience on its team
- 23 for elementary school grades.
- 24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: But had never

- 1 operated a K to 5 school prior?
- 2 MS. KAISER: That is correct.
- 3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.
- 4 I guess one of the questions that I have
- 5 around renaissance charters given the fact
- 6 seven out of thirteen have seen either
- 7 turnaround to their turnaround or
- 8 recommended for non-renewal.
- 9 How is your office ensuring, therefore,
- 10 when you take operators that are out of
- 11 compliance and seven out of eleven rated
- 12 categories or have never operated a K to 5
- 13 school for a school that you are now turning
- over to the K to 8, How are you ensuring us
- 15 that your office is capable of ensuring
- 16 quality and high quality operators for
- 17 vulnerable school communities that are being
- 18 promised, you know, not a generic charter
- 19 but in which they opt in, but where you are
- 20 mandating and creating an in-District
- 21 boundary school?
- We have often noted that, you know,
- 23 numbers of in-District Councilman students
- 24 have been falling. I guess I am curious

- 1 about how you feel your office is
- 2 quaranteeing quality?
- 3 MS. KAISER: So to go back to an earlier
- 4 point, I did confirm the Global Leadership
- 5 Academy, not the renaissance school that is
- 6 proposed and was recommended by our office,
- 7 but the existing charter school was, yes,
- 8 found to be non-compliant in seven of the
- 9 eleven areas.
- 10 To answer your question about how we are
- 11 ensuring that with the annual charter
- 12 evaluation, which I believe is the document
- 13 you were referring to that cited those areas
- of non-compliance, we highlighted those
- 15 areas that could potentially, could
- 16 potentially show themselves in the
- 17 renaissance environment for Global
- 18 Leadership Academy Huey, identified those
- 19 areas in the resolution to recommend and
- 20 approve that renaissance application that
- 21 the SRC approved at its April 28 meeting.
- 22 And those will be conditions of that charter
- 23 actually being executed. A number of which,
- 24 the applicant had addressed in the materials

- 1 that it submitted to our office with regards
- 2 to bylaws, English language learning policy
- 3 or admission policies, some of which would
- 4 not even exist because of the nature of it
- 5 being a renaissance school.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: But you would argue
- 7 that given that these operator either are
- 8 out of compliance or don't have experience
- 9 in this area for the great groups they are
- 10 being approved for, that we are in the area
- 11 of surmising?
- 12 We do not actually -- in fact, past
- 13 performance isn't a factor on some of this
- 14 because past performance would indicate
- 15 either zero experience or troubling
- 16 experiences.
- 17 MS. KAISER: First, I would like to
- 18 finish what I was stating earlier, which was
- 19 that this was the initial inaugural year of
- 20 the annual charter evaluation. This was the
- 21 first time schools and the community was
- 22 able to see these various areas of
- 23 performance, academic, organizational
- 24 compliance and finance. Schools now clearly

- 1 understand what is expected of them. This
- 2 was not true nor public reporting that
- 3 existed prior to this year from our office.
- 4 With this going forward, schools are
- 5 very clear about what the expectations are.
- 6 Many of the charters have already taken
- 7 action to correct those issues. And it is a
- 8 tool that the office will use to ensure the
- 9 quality of not just the renaissance
- 10 charters, but all charters schools in the
- 11 City going forward. Because we will have
- 12 this information and it will be actionable
- 13 for the schools and the school leaders to
- 14 make necessary improvements to assure
- 15 quality for our students.
- 16 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: You didn't choose to
- 17 use the information that you had for the
- 18 charter schools that you operated this year.
- 19 Do you -- is there something that's going to
- 20 significantly change for the next year?
- 21 There is no reason not to use those
- 22 decisions for this current batch and go
- 23 around. So, you chose not to do that for
- 24 this year.

1 How can we ensure that you are actually committed to a quality -- to a quality and 2 curated charter school system and making 3 4 promises that these haphazard, you know, erratic situations where charter schools are 5 failing mid year or simply switching 6 operators and management teams as they choose doesn't continue to ransack our 8 9 school communities and neighborhoods? We did actually use the 10 MS. KAISER: 11 information this year. As I mentioned, the 12 information that we highlighted in the ACE for Global Leadership Academy, those items 13 which could potentially present themselves 14 at Global Leadership Academy Southwest at 15 16 Huey were incorporated as conditions in the approval of that application. So, the 17 18 information was used. As I also mentioned earlier, we have 19 added information in the resolutions as well 20 21 as language in the charter agreements which allows for both the Charter Schools Office 22 and the School Reform Commission to review 23 24 any material changes or amendments to our

- 1 charter agreement including the charter
- 2 management organization as a material
- 3 amendment. And that we would have the
- 4 ability to have a voice and have oversight
- 5 in those decisions going forward.
- 6 Unfortunately, that was not incorporated in
- 7 the charter agreements at the start of the
- 8 renaissance process in 2010, and so we did
- 9 not have that oversight or that authority at
- 10 that time for those charter changes.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So, are the license
- 12 agreements for charter schools operated in
- 13 District buildings uniform, or do they vary
- 14 in terms of what services the District is
- 15 responsible for and what the charters pay
- 16 for?
- 17 MS. BURNS: It is -- the license
- 18 agreements have varied to date. Although,
- 19 there is a recognition of that to
- 20 standardize moving forward at the time of
- 21 renewal.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Will the current
- 23 round of renaissance schools be standardized
- 24 in terms of their charter licensing

- 1 agreements?
- 2 MS. BURNS: They are not yet executed.
- 3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: That wasn't my
- 4 question. My question was, will they be
- 5 standardized?
- 6 Tell us that.
- 7 MS. BURNS: That's the intention. Since
- 8 we're still working on them, I don't want to
- 9 give a commitment without the documents
- 10 being fully executed. But that was the
- 11 intention.
- 12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And you would agree
- then that the license and agreements being
- 14 equitable minimizing cost to the District
- 15 and becoming standardize is an important
- 16 issue?
- 17 MS. BURNS: It's been one that we
- 18 recognized from an operation standpoint.
- 19 The ability to manage is much easier when
- 20 it's standardized.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Also, the uses won't
- 22 necessarily happen? For example, schools
- 23 that might receive buildings free of charge
- 24 or have maintenance provided to them or

- 1 service like of that sort?
- 2 MS. BURNS: Yeah. That would be the
- 3 benefit of standardizing.
- 4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay.
- 5 Thank you very much.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
- 7 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.
- 8 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: I will say
- 9 bravo. I am pleased to hear that a
- 10 standardized process is now in place because
- 11 it certainly takes a lot of the subjectivity
- 12 out and becomes more believable to charter
- 13 school operators who ultimately are rendered
- 14 no longer -- ultimately rendered difficult
- 15 decision you cannot be a charter school
- 16 anymore, but it's based on objective
- 17 standardized data uniformity, if you will.
- 18 It just makes everyone's life so much
- 19 better. So bravo for finally having that
- 20 practice in place.
- 21 And let me say thank you. I had the
- 22 conversation regarding special education. I
- 23 know that there's a new sheriff in town when
- 24 it comes to special ed. I am not going to

- 1 use my time to address that issue. Because
- 2 I am a lot more confident that that young
- 3 person's life is going to turn around as
- 4 deservingly so. I'm going to leave that
- 5 there.
- 6 Back to the MBE/WBE question which, as I
- 7 said often as a broken record for me, we are
- 8 going to play it until folks get it. Is
- 9 there an expectation that charter school
- 10 operators have some commitment to MBE/WBE
- 11 procurement practices either on the
- 12 professional services side or the goods and
- 13 services?
- 14 And is there policy for that?
- DR. HITE: I am bringing Ms. Kaiser the
- 16 professional up.
- 17 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Expert. I
- 18 get it.
- 19 MS. KAISER: Yes. There are requests
- 20 that we make in terms of our renaissance
- 21 charter process where we solicit that
- 22 information about minority and women-owned
- 23 businesses from the applicants. There is
- 24 nothing, however, in State Charter School

- 1 Law that has either an expectation or an
- 2 allowance for us to use that in a
- 3 determination factor in approving or denying
- 4 a charter application.
- 5 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.
- 6 With that said and knowing that we have to
- 7 be in compliance, knowing also that that is
- 8 an expectation in Philadelphia City Council
- 9 across the universe, where is the School
- 10 District in drilling down that information
- 11 that's needed for us?
- 12 Do you think it's important? Let's
- 13 start there.
- 14 MS. KAISER: I think it's very important
- 15 I would go a step further to say I think
- 16 some of the other information that we would
- 17 like to have about diversity for board of
- 18 trustees members of a charter school,
- 19 instructional staff members of a charter
- 20 school are also important.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.
- 22 MS. KAISER: Unfortunately, we are
- 23 caught between this rock and a hard place
- 24 where the charter school law does not

- 1 explicitly provide for that as a reason to
- 2 approve or deny an application. And then,
- 3 we do not have a legal sufficiency standard
- 4 that we can meet to approve or deny that
- 5 applicant on those basis.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: I see.
- 7 You took care of my answer to the follow-up
- 8 question about boards, because we also
- 9 believe that boards should look like the
- 10 constituents they serve. So, that answers
- 11 that question. We need not beat a dead
- 12 horse. It's just a reminder that we need to
- do all we can to get on the same page and
- 14 amend change or get rid of -- I'm just
- 15 kidding -- the Charter School Law.
- 16 All right. Trades. CCP. So, we have
- 17 heard a lot about the Mayor's Rebuild. And
- 18 all of us philosophically agree that PreK is
- 19 important. It's overdue. We need to do it,
- 20 but there is sentiment amongst some members
- 21 that -- let me speak for Blondell so that it
- 22 is exceedingly clear. I'm not for universal
- 23 PreK if we can't ensure that Rebuild is done
- in a way that connects high school students

- 1 and is happening in some small way, but the
- 2 is not in a tangible structured way. A
- 3 systemic way where high school students are
- 4 going to be intimately locked into tangible
- 5 opportunities with this Rebuild.
- 6 And so, while I hear that CCP is
- 7 actively engaged and you have some examples
- 8 of where it's working, the hope of a number
- 9 of members of Council is that systemically
- 10 we get our high school students connected to
- 11 this Rebuild enterprise. Conversations are
- 12 great, but we want -- there will be some of
- 13 us who want tangible evidence that that is
- 14 going to be real when and if we prove how we
- 15 fund PreK.
- DR. HITE: Absolutely, Councilwoman.
- 17 And I would add -- I should have said this
- 18 earlier. Number one, we are excited by the
- 19 focus of both you, City Council as a group
- 20 and the Mayor have on increasing the number
- 21 of PreK seats in the City. Additional 500
- 22 seats would be great and would benefit all
- 23 of our young people. And when funding
- 24 becomes secured, we stand ready to provide

- 1 our experience and expertise. That's on the
- 2 first point.
- 3 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Yes.
- 4 DR. HITE: The second point, it's
- 5 absolutely essential that we use the
- 6 resources that we now have in many of our
- 7 schools to provide children with the skills
- 8 and ability and the competencies to do this
- 9 work with opportunities to do this work.
- 10 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Thank you
- 11 very much, with the opportunity.
- 12 DR. HITE: And I think they should -- it
- 13 should be a natural pipeline for many of our
- 14 young people who are learning these skills
- in schools in order to be a part of that
- 16 possible development, a workforce that would
- 17 be required if, in fact, there is more
- 18 building that goes on in the City.
- 19 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Yes. I
- 20 think we will have one chance to get this
- 21 right because it has long term positive
- 22 implications if we do, and long term
- 23 positive implications if we don't.
- 24 DR. HITE: Right.

- 1 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: That's why
- 2 in writing -- I have learned a long time
- 3 ago. If it's not in writing, it doesn't
- 4 exist. It will be important that whatever
- 5 this partnership relationship is going to be
- 6 between the School District and the Rebuild
- 7 part of the universal pie that is in writing
- 8 and tangible. Thank you all very much.
- 9 Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.
- 10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You are quite
- 11 welcome.
- 12 Councilwoman Gym.
- 13 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you very much.
- Dr. Hite, I think I struggled a little
- 15 bit with the Charter Office around
- 16 articulating some of the concerns. One of
- 17 the or getting some clarification to some of
- 18 these concerns.
- 19 But you know one of the questions has
- 20 been this concern about what happened at
- 21 Kenderton where we had Young Scholars as an
- 22 operator who has now twice walked away from
- 23 a charter school mid contract within its
- 24 care. And I actually am going to disagree a

- 1 little bit with the interpretation that if
- 2 the law is silent, we can't act. I think if
- 3 the law is silent, you can act actually
- 4 until the law tells you not to. The law is
- 5 not meant to be comprehensive. It's not
- 6 meant to delineate every single thing that
- 7 the District must do in the specific order
- 8 that it can. If the School District sees a
- 9 problem, you know, that it has a
- 10 responsibility to act unless the law says it
- 11 doesn't have the power to do so.
- 12 I guess the guestion then is, you know,
- 13 back to that original statement that we are
- 14 dealing with charter operators the have past
- 15 performances shown them to be out of
- 16 compliance in areas or don't have
- 17 experience. Would the School District
- 18 consider exploring issues of penalties for
- 19 charter operators that refuse to fulfil
- 20 their contracts mid year? I'm going to not
- 21 even deal with the whole strangeness around
- 22 distinguishing between board of trustees and
- 23 the charter operator that creates that board
- 24 because I think that that's a little bit,

- 1 you know -- I struggle to actually believe
- 2 that that's a serious thing that is the
- 3 case. Because at that point, why not just
- 4 have a SAC just simply contract with a
- 5 management entity to run a school. I don't
- 6 think that that's accurate.
- 7 So you know, back again, is it -- is
- 8 this something that the District is looking
- 9 at to avoid, you know, to write in financial
- 10 penalties into the contracts with new
- 11 renaissance operators to deter them from
- 12 bowing out of the contracts like what
- 13 happened at Kenderton and specifically with
- 14 Young Scholars twice?
- DR. HITE: Yeah. That's -- as
- 16 described, Councilwoman Gym, that is a lot
- 17 easier to do when it is a contract. When
- 18 charter law then is involved in the
- 19 development of that contract, and it is with
- 20 most of our charter agreements be it
- 21 renaissance or new charters, then we do have
- 22 to operate within the charter school law to
- 23 do that.
- 24 And it is -- yes, the District would

- 1 like to have the opportunity to impose
- 2 penalties or sanctions if, in fact, the --
- 3 we were allowed to do that within charter
- 4 school law. And so, I want to come back to
- 5 the point that I almost started the hearings
- 6 with earlier this morning is that our
- 7 opportunity here is around new charter
- 8 school legislation that allows us to do
- 9 those type of things that would help us to
- 10 control some of the actions and some of the
- 11 activities within that sector.
- 12 Absent that, when we have a charter
- 13 school agreement, then the agreement is
- 14 guided by the charter school legislation.
- 15 And the legislation gives us ability at
- 16 renewal, non -- if you are going through a
- 17 non-renewal process or if that entity hands
- 18 it back to us. If the group with which we
- 19 have chartered, we have entered into a
- 20 charter agreement, in most cases that is the
- 21 board, if in fact those individuals chose
- 22 another operator, then we do not have the
- 23 ability to address it.
- 24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: For clarity though, a

- 1 renaissance charter is neither recognized by
- 2 state law nor enshrined into it in any
- 3 specific way; is that correct?
- 4 DR. HITE: That's correct.
- 5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. We are now
- 6 dealing with -- let's take charters out of
- 7 the equation. We have a situation where,
- 8 you know, renaissance is fundamentally
- 9 different and is clearly an action that the
- 10 District is taking that is outside the
- 11 purview of the state charter law. In fact,
- 12 primarily because it does not require
- 13 students to be brought in by lottery. And
- 14 that it mandates students to actually
- 15 have -- it mandates the operator or the
- 16 charter school board of trustees to have a
- 17 specific catchment area and obligation to
- 18 those students in the catchment area which
- 19 is specifically not what the state charter
- 20 law says.
- 21 If that's the case, why are we making
- 22 renaissance charters a charter school? Why
- 23 are they not simply a SAC that contracts
- 24 with the management entity? It thus

- 1 prevents us -- one, it gives us control over
- 2 the contract. Two, it takes us out of the
- 3 insanity of charter school funding, charter
- 4 school caps on enrollments, inability to
- 5 control these operators and allowing them to
- 6 basically run amuck.
- Why are we -- what -- it is not accurate
- 8 to say that the charter law has to govern
- 9 this when we are already outside the law.
- 10 DR. HITE: Yes.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I quess I'm
- 12 wondering, why go charter for renaissance?
- 13 Why not make it simply a management contract
- 14 obligated to the SAC at that school?
- DR. HITE: Once we enter into the
- 16 charter agreement, it does become -- even if
- it's renaissance, it's actually guided by
- 18 then charter school legislation although
- 19 it's dealing with an in-boundary set of
- 20 students. Several years ago we actually --
- 21 we are experimenting with putting out for
- 22 RFP for providers who would come in and take
- 23 on some of our challenging schools. And
- 24 what we found was that there were very few

- 1 entities other than the charter providers,
- 2 so the CMOs, who were interested in coming
- 3 in and doing that work partly to have the
- 4 protection under the charter school law.
- 5 And I'm only making that assumption.
- 6 But we did not have a lot of other
- 7 entities. Although now with some of our new
- 8 schools, we have joined contract with Big
- 9 Picture. We are looking at a school -- at a
- 10 company that talks about strategies and a
- 11 different approach.
- 12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Big Picture as a
- 13 charter or --
- DR. HITE: No. No. As a contract.
- 15 They will run a District school. They will
- 16 be a District school, and we will contract
- 17 with that organization to do that. That
- 18 school remains a Philadelphia District
- 19 school. We have also done that with one --
- 20 Building 21 School that is up and running
- 21 now. And so, but those individuals are not
- 22 interested in turnaround, which is very
- 23 specific work around the work that is
- 24 happening at some of the schools that have

- 1 been designated renaissance.
- 2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: It's interesting. I
- 3 mean, I still think it begs the question of
- 4 whether renaissance is the way to go when we
- 5 have a lot of problems with the program.
- 6 And whether we are entertaining operators
- 7 that are far beyond, you know, raise a lot
- 8 of questions about their ability to execute
- 9 on the contract over a long term.
- 10 And that we have an office that is not
- 11 really, you know, attune to that. And that
- 12 we are -- might be better off in the
- 13 situation where you are exploring the things
- 14 like that this, that we have an in-District
- 15 turnaround model. You have entities that
- 16 are willing to come in as contracts, ones
- 17 that we therefore can sustain control. We
- 18 don't worry about catchment and we don't
- 19 worry about the restrictions that, you know,
- 20 are under the charter law.
- 21 I just think it's an important question
- 22 and really asks about the \$6.6 million in
- 23 renaissance contracts for next year alone
- that are some costs obligate us for the next

- 1 five years and for me create a lot of alarm
- 2 bells.
- 3 DR. HITE: Yes, thank you. That's why
- 4 we are investing equal amount in the
- 5 in-District turnaround. Because we also, we
- 6 haven't had that before. We do have that
- 7 now. We are really excited about the
- 8 schools that are going to enter into that
- 9 and give us an opportunity to compare and
- 10 contrast, if you will, the approaches.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very
- 12 much.
- 13 Councilman green.
- 14 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you, Madam
- 15 Chair.
- 16 Earlier in testimony from discussion
- 17 with Councilman Brown regarding outside
- 18 legal expenditures. And I remember in that
- 19 conversation that colloquy there was the
- 20 perspective that outside legal costs have
- 21 increased because of funding challenges that
- 22 District has had and has reduced the amount
- of, I would say, staff and others that can
- 24 provide support to children with special

- 1 needs. So I guess my question I have is,
- 2 how much money is the District currently
- 3 spend on children with disabilities?
- 4 DR. HITE: We have to get that number --
- 5 Councilman, we can get that number. It will
- 6 take some time, but we have it in the budget
- 7 book. We think it's in the high 300 or low
- 8 \$400 million.
- 9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: That sounds about
- 10 right. I guess the question is, because of
- 11 the fact that you have had -- although I
- 12 understand the concept of having to make
- 13 reductions on stand perspective from a
- 14 fiscal challenge, but that opens the
- 15 District up to possible litigation from not
- 16 being able to meet IEP initiatives for
- 17 various children.
- 18 How do you balance it, too, in reference
- 19 to budget challenges in reference to staff
- 20 reduction versus opening yourself up to
- 21 litigation from IEP perspective?
- DR. HITE: Yes. It's both a matter of
- 23 operations and priorities and making sure,
- 24 number one, that we are able to meet the

- 1 individual educational needs of those young
- 2 people. But at the same token, prioritizing
- 3 the very few dollars we have in order to
- 4 invest to ensure that we are solving that
- 5 problem that you raised, so that it doesn't
- 6 create and additional problem around legal
- 7 challenges or not being able to serve
- 8 children or out-of-District placements. All
- 9 of those are byproducts of not being able to
- 10 serve children in our current -- in our
- 11 current educational environment.
- 12 The one thing that we are doing moving
- 13 forward is looking student by student at all
- 14 of the things that they need, making sure
- 15 that we have those compliance practices in
- 16 place at every school, making sure that we
- 17 have individuals who are accountable and
- 18 responsible for that work, and making sure
- 19 that we have sufficient legal staff in our
- 20 central administration so that we don't
- 21 contract on the back end all of the -- all
- 22 of the work that is related to educating
- 23 these children moving forward.
- 24 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And how are you

- 1 making sure that's occurring?
- DR. HITE: I'm going to ask Cheryl Logan
- 3 to come up who is doing that work right now.
- 4 She's the individual that --
- 5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: As she's coming to
- 6 the table, I also have a question. What's
- 7 the percentage of children with special
- 8 needs in the District?
- 9 DR. HITE: Think that's 14 percent.
- 10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: From a charter school
- 11 perspective, do you have any idea what
- 12 percentage is for charter schools?
- MS. LOGAN: I don't know the percent of
- 14 the charter schools. It's 16 in charter
- 15 schools.
- 16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: 16 percent in charter
- 17 schools, 14 percent for District. Okay.
- 18 How are we making sure that IEP needs
- 19 are being fulfilled within the schools
- 20 throughout a District when there's been
- 21 staffing challenges in the District?
- 22 MS. LOGAN: Cheryl Logan, Chief Academic
- 23 Supports. A couple things we are doing.
- 24 When we have had staffing challenges, one of

- 1 the things we have done is gone to some
- 2 contract teachers especially for our low
- 3 incident students. Specifically, AS and our
- 4 ES classes, we want to make sure that all of
- 5 those classes are covered with either a
- 6 School District teacher or a contract
- 7 teacher. So we are able to be --
- 8 COUNCILMAN GREEN: When you say contract
- 9 teacher, you are talking from either what
- 10 would have been Source4Teachers?
- 11 MS. LOGAN: No. Thank you for your
- 12 question. The contracted teacher, we
- 13 contract through -- we have a few agencies
- 14 that are able to provide contract teachers.
- 15 Typically, the contract comes with a
- 16 teacher, and then the appropriate number of
- 17 assistants that would accompany. So, it's
- 18 more of a class model. That they provide
- 19 the educator and the assistant, a
- 20 certification educator and assistant to
- 21 cover the class.
- We were able to do that with all of our
- 23 AS classes and all of the rest of our ES
- 24 classes.

- 1 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Who are some of those
- 2 providers?
- 3 MS. LOGAN: I don't have the names, I'm
- 4 sorry, in front of me. But I will make sure
- 5 to get those to you.
- 6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. Then in my
- 7 final question, there was some earlier
- 8 testimony regarding truancy. I know
- 9 Ms. Lynch testified and I think Councilwoman
- 10 Brown raised the question based on the
- 11 hearings that Councilman Jones and
- 12 Councilman Johnson had regarding youth
- 13 violence as it relates to guns.
- I guess my understanding based on
- 15 Ms. Lynch's testimony and also from the
- 16 budget testimony from District Attorney
- 17 Williams and now I am hearing from the
- 18 School District, this issue has now been
- 19 resolved in reference to information being
- 20 provided from both parties and now things
- 21 are going through Truancy Court.
- 22 That's my understanding?
- DR. HITE: While Ms. Lynch is coming up,
- 24 Councilman, I want to go back to the IEP

- 1 numbers. In the District, the IEP
- 2 percentage is 15.3 percent. In the
- 3 charters, it's 16.8 percent. And the cyber
- 4 charter and non-Philadelphia placed
- 5 students, those are out-of-District
- 6 placements, that's 19.8 percent.
- 7 MS. LYNCH: For the record, Karen Lynch,
- 8 Chief Student Support Services for the
- 9 School District of Philadelphia.
- 10 My understanding of your question is
- 11 whether or not the District Attorney's
- 12 original concern has been addressed. His
- 13 was a further concern regarding the sharing
- 14 of information. I think when we last spoke
- 15 and I shared this earlier, the District
- 16 Attorney planned to or at least his staff
- indicated he planned to talk with courts.
- 18 And to my knowledge, that has not happened.
- 19 There has not been a response to us
- 20 regarding or following any conversation with
- 21 the courts regarding a court order to
- 22 provide the confidential information.
- 23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I think that's
- 24 somewhat different. Because I think

- 1 Councilwoman Brown led to understand this
- 2 issue has been resolved in reference in
- 3 going to Truancy Court. But now I am
- 4 hearing somewhat different perspective.
- 5 That you are saying the District
- 6 Attorney's Office is not going to First
- 7 Judicial District for a court order in
- 8 reference to having the information provided
- 9 from the School District to DA's Office. Is
- 10 that what I'm hearing? That's clearly not
- 11 what Councilwoman Brown was led to believe
- 12 earlier.
- MS. LYNCH: So, I do not know whether or
- 14 not the District Attorney went to the Court
- 15 and asked them to provide the court order.
- 16 I have not heard back. We have not heard
- 17 back as a District from the District
- 18 Attorney following any conversations with
- 19 the court at all.
- The questions that I was asked earlier
- 21 were about the process that the District
- 22 Attorney's Office and the School District
- 23 engages in, whether or not those processes
- 24 were now aligned. And my response to the

- 1 Councilwoman was, yes, in fact the processes
- 2 are more aligned than they were in the past
- 3 because now the District Attorney has
- 4 requested for those schools, those charter
- 5 schools that the District Attorney has been
- 6 working with, he is now requested that those
- 7 schools now also go to those families when
- 8 truancy continues, that they go to Truancy
- 9 Court.
- 10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But I'm not talking
- 11 about charter schools. I am talking in
- 12 reference to the School District of
- 13 Philadelphia, in reference to trying to
- 14 address the issue of truancy. Because the
- 15 premise with Councilwoman Brown's question
- 16 is that truancy unfortunately provides a
- 17 path to unfortunate outcome for many young
- 18 children. And I think the gist of her
- 19 questions were in reference to the issue
- 20 being resolved. And you're making reference
- 21 to Truancy Court as well as charter schools.
- 22 My perspective and from my understanding
- 23 I received in conversations, that both the
- 24 District Attorney and Dr. Hite were aligned

- 1 in reference to trying to addresses truancy
- 2 through this process similar to what has
- 3 occurred with previous School District
- 4 administrations with Dr. Ackerman. My
- 5 question is why can't that be resolved now?
- 6 I think part of the perspective is that
- 7 charter schools believe they can provide us
- 8 information without violating federal law.
- 9 But for whatever reason, the School District
- 10 has a different perspective.
- 11 DR. HITE: I will add to that,
- 12 Councilman Green. So we are absolutely in
- 13 alignment on addressing the issue. This
- 14 issue is a result of the information that we
- 15 can make public, we allow to make public.
- 16 And we are not allowed to provide the type
- 17 of data that is being requested by the
- 18 District Attorney as so far as this issue is
- 19 concerned with respect to truancy.
- We can provide all of the names, and
- 21 addresses of all of our young people. As
- 22 soon as that request includes specific
- 23 information about that child's academic
- 24 history or attendance or anything else,

- 1 that -- that's information that's protected
- 2 under FERPA that then creates a problem for
- 3 us to share. So, the notion of the District
- 4 Attorney going to the courts and asking that
- 5 question, perhaps that could provide a
- 6 pathway for us to share that information.
- 7 We want to share the information as much as
- 8 he wants the information. And we're just
- 9 not able to under FERPA.
- 10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. That is an
- 11 opinion that was shared by your counsel?
- 12 That you couldn't share under FERPA?
- MS. LYNCH: That's the opinion shared by
- 14 FERPA. We contacted the FERPA Office, the
- 15 national FERPA Office and asked them. We
- 16 also shared that opinion that was given to
- 17 us by FERPA, by the Department of
- 18 Education's FERPA Office. We shared that
- 19 with the District Attorney.
- We urged that if they had any question
- 21 or concerns, they too could seek an opinion
- 22 from FERPA. And there was not a response
- 23 that was provided. They have all the
- 24 information --

- 1 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Could you provide a
- 2 copy of that opinion to the Chair? And is
- 3 there -- let me ask this question.
- 4 Is there a way of getting to that
- 5 information without violating that federal
- 6 law in a way to address truancy?
- 7 MS. LYNCH: The information, the
- 8 correspondence at your request and the
- 9 request of several other Councilmembers was
- 10 in fact shared after the hearing that you
- 11 referenced earlier. We don't know of any
- 12 way around it other than a change in state
- 13 law and/or consent of parents involved. And
- 14 we have shared that with the District
- 15 Attorney. And the District Attorney's
- 16 response was it's not likely that parents
- 17 are going to want to give consent to have
- 18 their information shared when the result is
- 19 going to be a letter from the District
- 20 Attorney indicating that they are violating
- 21 the law.
- 22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So, it's your
- 23 perspective that we would need to get the
- 24 information from the First Judicial District

- 1 as a way of addressing the issue?
- 2 MS. LYNCH: The best way that I know of,
- 3 and again, I can't comment on that. The
- 4 court is going to have to decide and the
- 5 court has in the past said that this is not
- 6 information that they are going to order the
- 7 District to share. But the best that I can
- 8 offer on this is we have reached out to
- 9 FERPA.
- 10 DR. HITE: We asked this question three
- 11 years ago, Councilman Green. That was the
- 12 response we got from the courts.
- 13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you, Madam
- 14 Chair.
- 15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're welcome.
- 16 Councilwoman Gym.
- 17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I feel like Ping
- 18 Pong, Councilman Green.
- 19 So you know, I wanted to thank you
- 20 working through the last round of questions
- 21 with me. I know that was a little bit of
- 22 trying to understand the different practices
- 23 that we can explore. Ultimately, who would
- 24 be responsible for school contracts like a

- 1 Big Picture?
- 2 What office would that be under?
- 3 DR. HITE: That would be under
- 4 Procurement. But that would be -- we would
- 5 contract with -- the network that would do
- 6 the work is our Innovation Network. And so,
- 7 that would be Chris Laman who would help
- 8 structure the components of that.
- 9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Again, I want to
- 10 underscore that I think that's an
- interesting model from a number of different
- 12 reasons. One, it talks about innovation as
- 13 opposed to failure rates which I think the
- 14 renaissance is heavily routed around and
- 15 makes it difficult when families are pitted
- 16 against what is perceived as a failing
- 17 school versus, you know, the only other
- 18 option in there.
- 19 And I also don't deny that operators
- 20 would want to have the charter law, to fall
- 21 under the charter law. There is no question
- they operate with enormous freedom and, you
- 23 know, hold districts basically in the palm
- 24 of their hand under the state charter law.

- 1 All the more reason why when we're dealing
- 2 with renaissance in particular, that I would
- 3 urge the District to consider not going
- 4 charter. That it's not the only option as
- 5 you're starting to explore other areas.
- 6 And that we -- you know, we have a
- 7 luxury to be able to think very carefully
- 8 about the kinds of companies we want to
- 9 bring in. And that we are not scraping kind
- 10 of the bottom of the barrel but we are
- 11 looking for creative innovative options to
- 12 school communities long denied that.
- 13 Hopefully, confidence in your Innovation
- 14 Network leader to really be cognizant of
- 15 that. I think he's particularly really in
- 16 tune to that.
- I want to thank you for that and for
- 18 helping work through for that. And would
- 19 like to continue those conversations.
- 20 I want to return to the issue. I just
- 21 kind of three quick areas of sorts. I
- 22 wanted to return to this issue of the
- 23 District losing a thousand students a year
- 24 and kind of the hollowing out of the

- 1 District schools that's happening. And you
- 2 know, that just creates a downward
- 3 enrollment spiral and trying to pick up the
- 4 factors that result in that.
- 5 One of the questions that kind of comes
- 6 to mind is this question of transportation.
- 7 So if I'm a family and I want -- I'm unhappy
- 8 with my neighborhood District school and I
- 9 want to attend another District school
- 10 outside of my neighborhood school, what
- 11 exactly are my options? And can I get
- 12 busing transportation there?
- 13 MS. LYNCH: Transportation is not going
- 14 to -- let me show your options. Your
- 15 options are to request an exception to the
- 16 1.5 Rule if, in fact, it is beyond 1.5
- 17 miles. But unfortunately transportation is
- 18 not likely to be provided. So what we look
- 19 for is we look for hazardous routes. We
- 20 look for whether or not there are existing
- 21 transportation like an existing bus that the
- 22 child can ride upon.
- 23 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Is that a financial
- 24 reason that that's not offered?

- 1 MS. LYNCH: I would defer to, but the --
- 2 I can share with you that for the State,
- 3 it's 2 miles. For the City of Philadelphia,
- 4 it's 1.5 miles. And cost is, in fact, a
- 5 factor.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And I understand that
- 7 cost is a factor absolutely. I understand
- 8 also that the state law allows families to
- 9 be bused through charter laws almost
- 10 anywhere. And one question is that if
- 11 we don't --
- DR. HITE: And private schools.
- 13 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And private schools,
- 14 obviously. But if we ourselves do not offer
- 15 busing to District families that would like
- 16 to attend another District school, then
- 17 isn't that a barrier to enrollment and
- 18 retaining enrollment of families?
- 19 MS. LYNCH: It's unequal certainly. And
- 20 it is -- and it is challenge for families,
- 21 yes.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And you know, it's
- 23 something that I would like the District to
- 24 just think about a little bit. I know that

- 1 this is an extreme expense. I very closely
- 2 track the transportation budget numbers. I
- 3 understand how expensive it is. But it does
- 4 feel like it is a significant barrier to
- 5 retaining enrollment in the School District
- 6 overall.
- 7 DR. HITE: And it would be. We would
- 8 love to talk more about this, Councilwoman.
- 9 And looking at the number of children who
- 10 would be eligible for that and then
- 11 considering what those costs would be and
- 12 then trying to make an informed
- 13 determination around the cost associated
- 14 with that. But it does jump up in costs
- 15 pretty quickly depending on the numbers of
- 16 children.
- 17 We were feeling -- we were estimating
- 18 that it would be around 3 to 4,000 children
- 19 who may qualify for that level of
- 20 transportation, which could add significant
- 21 costs to us over the long haul.
- 22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: But in part, it's
- 23 also this idea about the School District
- 24 would like to say it's a School District of

- 1 choice. But in fact for District families
- 2 that want to remain within the School
- 3 District of Philadelphia, the choices are
- 4 very limited because the burdens falls upon
- 5 them. Whereas, if the driver is towards
- 6 outside the District. NCLB used to pay for
- 7 that. Is that gone right now?
- 8 DR. HITE: No.
- 9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Let me clarify. The
- 10 District would have been under the old NCLB
- 11 laws obligated to provide housing or busing
- 12 to families if they attended a,
- 13 quote/unquote, failing school in the
- 14 neighborhood and then chose to apply outside
- 15 of that.
- 16 DR. HITE: That's correct.
- 17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Are you no longer
- 18 under that obligation?
- DR. HITE: We are no longer under that
- 20 obligation.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Is that neighbor or
- 22 did it go away? Do you know what the
- 23 mechanism is for that?
- DR. HITE: Well, NCLB has been

- 1 reauthorized. Every student -- that part of
- 2 that provision came out. Now that is going
- 3 to be determined by each individual state
- 4 how those options will work for the bottom 1
- 5 percent of schools.
- 6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Maybe that's
- 7 something we can continue to talk about a
- 8 little bit.
- 9 One question I wanted to ask Ms. Lynch
- 10 was, you know, there has been a lot of
- 11 changes with our Department of Human
- 12 Services. Some unfortunately with
- 13 yesterday's news, not for the better. But
- 14 you know, there's -- I know that you have
- 15 down a tremendous amount of work of this
- 16 issue of trauma informed care in schools. I
- 17 am curious about whether the District has
- 18 opened up conversations with DHS about
- 19 bringing some of the social workers into
- 20 schools? And particularly, if you've
- 21 prioritized high schools at all?
- 22 And if you can just speak to that a
- 23 little bit.
- 24 MS. LYNCH: First, I thank you very much

- 1 for the question because bringing social
- 2 workers, MSWs from the Department of Human
- 3 Services into the School District is
- 4 something that we would very much like to
- 5 do. And we have, in fact, opened
- 6 conversations with them.
- We have probably about 15 or 20 in our
- 8 schools right now. But if we were able to
- 9 have on each and every one of our high
- 10 schools a social worker, our principals are
- 11 asking for it. It is absolutely a need that
- 12 exists within our schools. And it is a
- 13 skillset that our students need given the
- 14 experiences that they have had.
- 15 So, we would very much like to have a
- 16 social worker in every one of our schools.
- 17 DR. HITE: In addition to the resources
- 18 that are there now. Not to replace a
- 19 resource, but in addition.
- 20 MS. LYNCH: Correct.
- 21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Madam Chair, as
- 22 yourself being Chair of Education and myself
- 23 being Chair of the Children and Youth
- 24 Committee, perhaps we can have an open up

- 1 conversations with DHS about seeing what the
- 2 possibility is. And if we can work with
- 3 your department, Ms. Lynch, it would be
- 4 great if we can see what could move within,
- 5 you know, DHS. We want to be responsive and
- 6 responsible to them. But if the District
- 7 and principals within the District are open
- 8 to having a social worker in every high
- 9 school or, you know, especially in our high
- 10 schools I think, but particularly in other
- 11 high need schools in that DHS might be a
- 12 place to ask some questions about whether
- 13 that could be, I would love to see if we can
- 14 continue this conversation after this
- 15 hearing about that.
- MS. LYNCH: We definitely appreciate
- 17 that. Thank you.
- 18 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.
- 19 And my final question for Dr. Hite is a
- 20 little bit around suspensions and discipline
- 21 in schools. I note that we have had some
- 22 concerns about high school students who have
- 23 complained about having suspensions for
- 24 relatively minor things or being sent home

- 1 if they are not in a school uniform or being
- 2 charged fines for not having an ID or forced
- 3 to not carry water bottles or other types of
- 4 things in schools.
- 5 You know, does the -- do you feel like
- 6 this type of -- I want to be thoughtful
- 7 because I think principals should have a
- 8 right to establish some norms within their
- 9 schools. At the point when it reaches
- 10 punitive levels and starts to really kind of
- 11 filter out as being extremely punitive
- 12 relatively minor compared to the level of
- 13 things that we are seeing, you know, is
- 14 there an ability for the District to clarify
- 15 what its policies should be around, you
- 16 know, minor -- again, I want to be careful
- 17 because I think principals should have the
- 18 right to determine the norms within their
- 19 schools. But for relatively minor
- 20 infractions that don't seem to rise to the
- 21 level of suspension and fines and those kind
- 22 of things?
- DR. HITE: Thank you for asking that
- 24 question. This is one area where this is --

- 1 I have heard this from the students who
- 2 attend that send me text messages and
- 3 emails. And this has been a subject of
- 4 conversations with many of our student
- 5 leaders for some period of time.
- 6 This is an area where we have engaged
- 7 pretty actively with principals and school
- 8 leaders. To their dismay because they -- we
- 9 are in some cases referring back to a code
- 10 of student conduct that has been redesigned
- 11 to create other avenues as opposed to a zero
- 12 tolerance approach to everything. And so,
- 13 Karen Lynch and her department have been
- 14 doing a lot of good work around this.
- 15 But we have walked children back to
- 16 school. We have redefined for clarity
- 17 reasons what the Code says are suspendible
- 18 and non-suspendible events. And we have
- 19 been very direct with schools about that.
- 20 And so, the best thing that -- the best
- 21 advice we are giving to those individuals is
- 22 bringing those issues to our attention. And
- 23 we are addressing those issues in a pretty
- 24 active and engaged way so that our young

- 1 people are not subject to a catch-all rule
- 2 that allows mass suspensions for things like
- 3 being in the hallway a minute after the bell
- 4 rings.
- 5 And so, those are -- those are issues
- 6 that we are addressing with our Code of
- 7 Student Conduct. We are looking at a youth
- 8 court. We are trying to -- we are trying to
- 9 implement the positive behavior approach,
- 10 the restorative practices approach. All of
- 11 the things around creating more conducive
- 12 types of environments for young people.
- And I will ask Ms. Lynch to add anything
- 14 that I may have missed. This is a very
- 15 important point. And it is an area where we
- 16 actively engaged. If a principal is trying
- 17 to solve a problem, then we try to work with
- 18 him or her to solve that issue not using a
- 19 discipline approach to solve those things.
- 20 MS. LYNCH: Thank you, Dr. Hite. The
- 21 only thing that I would add is that our Code
- 22 of Student Conduct right now specifically
- 23 does not allow those infractions that you
- 24 just mentioned. When Dr. Hite first

- 1 arrived, he asked that we remove from the
- 2 code those subjective grey areas like the
- 3 water bottle and uniform infraction and so
- 4 on and so on. Those are violations. If
- 5 suspensions are issued for those violations,
- 6 those are, in fact, violations of our Code
- 7 of Student Conduct.
- 8 And we recognize, too, that when
- 9 students have offenses that are subjective
- 10 like you mentioned, that leads over time to
- 11 escalating. And in fact, we saw in the past
- 12 where that led to ongoing suspensions,
- 13 expulsion. That starts that pipeline to
- 14 prison. So that is the one of the things we
- 15 want to make certain we do not do.
- 16 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: One of the things
- 17 that I wanted to suggest is that, you know,
- 18 we have dealt with -- when you are dealing
- 19 with widespread kind of uncertainty around
- 20 this, you don't -- it's hard to do on a
- 21 case-by-case basis. And I am sure you are
- 22 hearing from a lot of these. But that is
- 23 something that can help. And you US
- 24 Department of Education could occasionally

- 1 does this.
- 2 For example, when they mandated the use
- 3 of transgendered -- allows transgendered
- 4 students use bathrooms and other spaces
- 5 within schools, they send a wide letter out
- 6 to clarify what the policy is.
- 7 And my question is, would you commit to
- 8 writing a public letter to principals in
- 9 September that clarifies what the policies
- 10 are and helps uniformily open the year with
- 11 this is permitted, we have become aware of
- 12 repeated situations around this, this is not
- 13 permitted?
- DR. HITE: Yes. And not only would we
- 15 be engaged in that, we have -- that's
- 16 consistent with steps that we have taken
- 17 previously. And as we speak, we are also
- 18 working on a policy that we are going to
- 19 submit to the SRC -- a resolution we are
- 20 going to submit to the SRC for their
- 21 consideration around the transgender issues
- 22 that the -- that came out of the Office of
- 23 Civil Rights and the Education Office last
- 24 week. We were already working to address

- 1 that issue and provide clarity to our -- to
- 2 all of the leaders of our schools.
- And so, yes, we will commit to doing
- 4 that. And we not only sent out that
- 5 information, we have a training day where we
- 6 say here are the -- here are the appropriate
- 7 actions to take. Here are the
- 8 non-appropriate. And we also talked about
- 9 unattended biases and trying to address
- 10 those issues. And last year, we opened the
- 11 year with a conference around unattended
- 12 biases that sometimes exist with certain
- 13 individuals.
- 14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: You know, along those
- 15 similar lines, a lot of parents and families
- 16 complain about bullying and harassment in
- 17 schools as being one of the major obstacles
- 18 around school safety. I know that earlier
- 19 in February, we were talking about the
- 20 position that was once held by Diane Shur
- 21 that came about through the U.S. Department
- 22 of Justices Civil Rights Mandate to address
- 23 harassment in schools, was vacated and has
- 24 not been refilled. But really wanted to

- 1 emphasize that, you know, we really did talk
- 2 very deeply when dealing with significant
- 3 amounts of harassment. A lot of questions
- 4 about who is responsible.
- 5 The U.S. Department of Civil Rights made
- 6 it very clear that the District cannot say
- 7 that everyone is responsible for safety. It
- 8 actually has to designate people who are
- 9 responsible for school safety. And that
- 10 students, staff and administrator have to
- 11 know who that person is. It has to be both
- 12 at the school level and at the District
- 13 level. And could you talk a little bit
- 14 about where we can be with that in
- 15 September.
- MS. LYNCH: In September? We have
- 17 advertized that position. We are
- 18 interviewing. We have got a couple of
- 19 finalists that I think are going to be
- 20 ideal.
- 21 The compliance part of that position has
- 22 been filled by Rachel Holtzman who is
- 23 leading our Office of Student Rights and
- 24 Responsibilities. We want to increase the

- 1 training that takes place as well as the
- 2 recognition of new and different techniques
- 3 in order to address the needs of a child
- 4 that is the victim as well the child who is
- 5 the bully.
- 6 And so, we are bringing in a person who
- 7 has behavioral health background who is very
- 8 much involved with addressing issues of
- 9 trauma because we think that in large part
- 10 the bullying stems from some of that
- 11 experience. And so, we are going to
- 12 approach the issue from two perspectives
- 13 moving forward.
- 14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: That's great. You
- 15 know, just to add to that a little bit,
- 16 there is a distinction I draw between
- 17 bullying and harassment. Bullying can be
- 18 out of norms, harassment can be very much
- 19 within norms of sorts because they
- 20 specifically target people based on broad
- 21 classes including whether language is
- 22 spoken, race, gender, physical ability, you
- 23 know. And that these are very vulnerable
- 24 classes. And that both our teachers, our

- 1 staff members and our students do have to be
- 2 trained on the civil rights of young people
- 3 when that would be -- and sexual
- 4 orientation. That they have a
- 5 responsibility as well as, you know, an
- 6 obligation, a legal obligation to uphold
- 7 their ability to move and travel through
- 8 school safely and with full access, as well.
- 9 Thank you.
- 10 MS. LYNCH: We agree a hundred percent.
- 11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I would just like to
- 12 note for the record that the School District
- 13 and our office does not always disagree on
- 14 things. That was very encouraging.
- 15 So I want to thank you. Thank you,
- 16 Madam Chair.
- 17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You're welcome.
- 18 Thank you.
- 19 We thank you all very much. Do we have
- 20 any other questions or comments from Members
- 21 of this Committee? I guess we've had enough
- 22 time to do them all, huh?
- There being none, this Committee will
- 24 stand in recess until Wednesday, May 18, ten

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| 1 | o'clock a.m. where we will reconvene in this | | |
| 2 | room in 400 City Hall. | | |
| 3 | Thank you all very much. | | |
| 4 | (Public Hearing recessed at 3:58 p.m.) | | |
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CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence noted are contained fully and accurately in the stenographic notes taken by me in the foregoing matter, and that this is a correct transcript of the same.

ANGELA M. KING, RPR Court Reporter - Notary Public

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