COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
PUBLIC HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
RE: FY '02 CITY OPERATING BUDGET

- - -

Room 400, City Hall
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- - -

BILL 010005 - Re FY '02 City Operating Budget
Public Testimony

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. MCPHERSON: Before we start the hearing, I have one announcement to make. We have someone here for sign language. Does anyone need the service? If you do, please raise your hand.

There's one. Okay thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone. This is the continued public hearing of the Committee of the Whole. I would as Mr. McPherson to please call our first witness.

MR. MCPHERSON: Lauren Bornfriend, Friends of Philadelphia Parks. And I believe she had a few other people to bring to the table: Beth Ormsworth, James Brown IV, and Brad Thompson.

(Witnesses come forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And while our witnesses are approaching the table, I would also like to make an announcement, that each witness will be given three minutes for testimony.

Good afternoon. Kindly identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. BORNFRIEND: Good afternoon. I am

Lauren Bornfriend, the Executive Director of Friends of Philadelphia Parks. And I am joined here today by members of the Friends of Philadelphia Parks Board: James L. Brown IV, Brad Thompson, and our president, Beth Ormsworth.

We are here to ask you to increase the operating budgets of the Fairmount Park Commission and the Philadelphia Department of Recreation. By now, you are familiar with the Friends' specific request for increasing the park budgets. There is clearly an understanding among park people and agencies that the City cannot do and be everything to our parks. We do, however, ask for park budget appropriations that support and build on the extraordinary stewardship of the more than 30,000 volunteers in Philadelphia as well as on the commitment of the private sector, foundations, and nonprofits.

To this end, here is what the Friends of Philadelphia Parks are asking for:

First, budget allocations for full-time permanent maintenance positions and a special horticultural unit for preventive maintenance for all major Department of Recreation parks;

Second, for Fairmount Park funding for five volunteer coordinators and for the Ranger Corps, as well as increased funding for Corps staff, maintenance staff, and natural area restoration.

At this time, Friends of Philadelphia Parks cannot speak accurately to the process of how funding for the Fairmount Park Commission and the Department of Recreation is ultimately determined. We can speak to the need for a planning process by City government that will relate Philadelphia's parks to our City's programs, goals, and economic development. We can also speak to the need for statistics providing numerical and factual data about land use and the economic impact of Philadelphia's parks and open space on our neighborhoods and city.

Friends of Philadelphia Parks has and will continue to present Council with comparative statistics illustrating that Philadelphia's investment in and commitment to our park systems does not measure up to other American cities. We will give examples of successful projects where public/private-sector partnerships created and

rejuvenated parks and turned around misused, crime-ridden, and economically-depressed communities and districts. We will continue to ask you to make our parks a priority for the sake of our city and our neighborhoods.

Last December, Friends of Philadelphia Parks gave each of you a book entitled "Inside City Parks" by Peter Harnick (ph.) of the Trust for Public Land in which Harnick ranked the park systems in our nation's 25 largest cities. No cities have learned earned the highest five-star rating because all still have improvements to make, but Philadelphia's score is two stars. According to Harnick, Philadelphia spends less on parks and recreation than all but six of the cities profiled in this book.

In Harnick's comparison of park-related expenditure per resident by city, the average expenditure of the 8 highest-density American cities, including Philadelphia, is $64. The average expenditure for all of the 25 American cities profiled in the book is $80; Philadelphia's expenditure is only $47.

In the comparison of 30 American

cities, park-related expenditure per acre by agency, Philadelphia's combined expenditure for the Commission and the Department is $ 6,658, which is $3,000, or 31 percent, below the average expenditure.

We ask to you make a commitment to find a way to change Philadelphia's two-star rating so that we can become a first-class city with a five-star park system.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MR. BROWN: Good afternoon.

COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Good afternoon.

MR. BROWN: My name is James L. Brown IV, and I am Executive Director of Parks and Historic Preservation Corporation. As you know, the Parks and Historic Preservation Corporation has been involved in -- right beside Fairmount Park in the restoration of the parks of the historic district.

I am here today as a Board member of Friends of Philadelphia parks to talk about the importance of public-private partnerships to the

process of park revitalization. In cities across America, government is recognizing the central role of the parks and open space in urban transformation formation. Of course, every city is different. Each is faced with its own history, structure, challenges, and needs. What the innovative cities have in common are creative vision, leadership, and commitment to work for change, in coalition with citizens, business, and the nonprofit sector.

An example would be, as one, would be Chattanooga, Tennessee, as one of these cities. In the 1980s, it faced a serious economic recession, the loss of residents and tax base, the closing of factories, unclean air, crime, and unemployment -- not very much different than ourselves. In response, government, community groups, and the private sector came together to improve the city's quality of life. A significant focus of their plan was to construct trails, parks, quiet, open space, and clean their air.

In Philadelphia's case, we do not have to do such, we already have an asset, which is Fairmount Park, which is already in existing

condition.

Along the Tennessee River, abandoned warehouses were transformed to an eight-mile greenway, the center of a planned 75-mile network of trails and greenways. The new Tennessee River Park surrounds a new aquarium, which, since opening in 1992, has added approximately 500 million into the new economy. Jobs and businesses in the downtown river district more than doubled in eight years. Assessed property values went up 127.5 percent. City and county property tax revenues increased by 99 percent.

Today, Chattanooga thrives. The chairman of their City Council, David Crocking (ph.) said, "People ask why we should spend money on parks when we have schools that need money and roads to fix and we need to create more jobs. But now that they have moved in the direction they did, beyond that thinking and different types of trade-offs, it's understood that we invest in those types of things too."

Boston's Post Office Square Park is an example of a city partnering with the private sector to take down a 500,000 square-foot concrete

parking garage in its financial district. It has been replaced by an underground garage, topped by an elegant park, boasting formal gardens, sculptures, fountains, a great lawn, cafe, and more. Boston receives $1 million in annual taxes and another million annually for its ownership interest in the garage. Ownership of the park and the garage revert to the city after the construction debt is paid. The Boston Globe architecture critic, Robert Campbell, wrote, "Post Office Square Park has changed Boston forever."

In New York City, a 9-acre run-down, drug-infested Bryant Park was renovated over 5 years at a cost of about $9 million, and it is now a thriving, much-used park. Commercial activity has been rejuvenated and rents have climbed. In five to seven years, construction debt will be paid by revenues from park concessions, and the park will be financially self-sufficient, no longer needing City Funds.

I could sit here and give many more examples of cities that have reclaimed districts and neighborhoods by means of investment in parks that give back and pay back. Bryant Park in

Manhattan and Post Office Square in Boston are but two examples.

It is time that Philadelphia began the process of conceptualizing and planning our own strategy to revitalize our remarkable 9,000 acres of park land and our neighborhoods. Philadelphia parks are viewed as venues for recreation and pleasure, but the City cannot meet the needs of these parks with its current budget and current revenues. To do this will require commitment, collaboration, and vision.

And lastly, I'd like to add that one of the things that we do see is that when we can create in those areas around the park and in the park, particularly where we have assets that already exist, using the private sector to stimulate the reinvestment of the City with smaller dollars, which I would think would bring larger returns.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MR. THOMPSON: I am Brad Thompson and I'm also a member of the Board of the Friends of

Philly Parks. And if you'll notice, with my testimony, I have addended a number of pictures that underscore the problems in the park.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yes.

MR. THOMPSON: I'd like to first address the Fairmount Park budget. I must respectfully disagree that the proposed budget is insufficient to preserve, protect, and maintain the landscape, structure, streams, woodlands, trails, and education programs of the park.

Every day, the citizens of this city, your constituents, request increased maintenance, more policing, control and abatement of trash and dumping. On any given day in our parks, one can find deferred maintenance, trash, and dumping uncollected. This is due to a large extent on the decline of staffing. The budget that is proposed will only continue this decline.

Let me be more specific. The Commission's Division of Operation and Landscape Management budget contains staff reduction. Throughout the park, it's clear that there's not enough staff to maintain the appropriate level of maintenance, which, in turn, leads to further

decline of the facilities and needs of more capital dollars. Again, the pictures addended to this will demonstrate those needs.

Besides the decreases in park maintenance, the budget does not support the volunteer coordinators. This valuable staff works with local residents in the neighborhoods that are adjacent to the parks and work in the parks. Not only will we lose the valuable talent of our volunteer coordinators, we will lose our links with the stewards of the park, who are your constituents.

Environmental education another area in the budget which has been decreased.

Another program which offers promise in the park is the Rangers Program. This program is so poorly funded, it is virtually ineffective. As it was first conceived, it provided 80 rangers and could offer routine patrols to the six large watershed parks: Pennypack, Wissahickon, FDR, Tacony, Cobbs, and Fairmount. Today, the program has 21 rangers and is not able to offer routine patrols to Cobbs Creek Park, Tacony Creek Park, or FDR Park.

Throughout the City, people point to the lack of policing in the park as the cause of its current problems. The current lack of support for the rangers is inadequate to be effective in our park. Our Fairmount Park is in dire need of increase in maintenance, policing, as the pictures indicate.

I urge you to increase the budget for the park in the areas of operations, the rangers, environmental educators, and volunteer coordinators so that we can begin to and reverse the overall decline.

MR. MCPHERSON: Thank you.

MS. ORMSWORTH: I am Beth Ormsworth, President of Friends of Philadelphia Parks, and to conclude the testimony of the Friends of Philadelphia Parks, I would emphasize the overall need for long- and short-term allocations for the parks.

And as you have heard today from my colleagues, other cities appear to value their parks as a fundamental benefit to their taxpayers. They put a priority on the enrichments that parks and open spaces offer to their cities as a whole

and to their citizens individually.

Creative financing can be found for large recreational projects such as stadiums; yet it is a shame that adequate monies cannot be found to finance the long- and short-term needs of our parks. Many of our citizens cannot afford to pay for a ticket to a professional sports event but are free to use our park land for rejuvenating their bodies and spirits. The parks afford opportunities for Philadelphia's children to become acquainted with nature and provide them with educational programs.

In 1855, visionaries saw the need to protect the drinking water and acquired the land above the Schuylkill River. Subsequently, our City's leaders envisioned protecting the Wissahickon Gorge. Apparently, there was dissention in City Council at the time about the expense, but fortunately for us, our forefathers made good decisions to preserve these green spaces and all of the park land we enjoy today.

Buildings decay but parks remain forever for the use of the citizens of Philadelphia. It is our duty to see that future

generations inherit a safe and well-maintained park system.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you all very much.

I believe -- Councilwoman Blackwell, did you have a comment that you wanted to make?

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Madam President.

Certainly I would like to thank this organization, but a special thank-you for Jim Brown for all of he does at Parkside and has over the years. We thank you for your commitment to the parks and your commitment to Parkside.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you all very much.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Michael Groman.

(Witnesses come forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

MR. GROMAN: Good afternoon, Councilmembers. How are you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Fine, thank

you.

MR. GROMAN: My name is Michael Groman. I'm the Director of the Philadelphia Green Program at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. And with me is Doris Goldney (ph.), who represents the Friends of Carol Park in West Philadelphia. And we do have some official testimony that has been prepared and is being passed around, so I'll just take my time to paraphrase some of the statistics that are in there.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. GROMAN: Basically, what we're here today is to talk about maintenance of the park system in the City a Philadelphia and a little bit of background in our relationship to it.

Back in 1993, we received some generous support from the William Penn Foundation and then later from the Wallace Reader's Digest Fund to start what we call the Parks Revitalization Program in the City of Philadelphia. And the overall objective of that program was basically to -- not only to improve the appearance of parks throughout the City, and these are neighborhood parks throughout the City, but also to build the

capacity of the Friends groups that are out there taking care of these parks, and also to, in general, make parks the vital centers of communities as they once were.

And over the past eight or nine years we're getting into, we've had some tremendous results. We've been working closely with the Department of Recreation. We first started out this program with Commissioner DeBerardinis, and we're now working with Commissioner Richard. We started ut with three parks, we're now working with 31. We built a coalition of 1500 volunteers who are working to support the work in the parks. We've coordinated over 50 new programs, we've planted 300 new trees, we've helped to renovate 20 acres of turf in these parks. We've helped to leverage the $1 million that we've brought into the program with the support from City Council and the Department of Recreation for another million dollars. And we even had the Friends groups raise over $150,000 on their own to bring into their neighborhood parks. So we think that's quite a tremendous feat.

But the main thing is that we've

established this partnership with the Department of Recreation. And in many cases, we now have mothers pushing babies carriages in parks in places where we would have had criminals pushing drugs. So there's a wide of positive impacts that this work has on neighborhoods parks.

One of the big results over the last two years has been the introduction of the seasonal maintenance attendance program at the Department of Recreation, and we can't emphasize enough how important maintenance is to the long-term success of this program. The seasonal maintenance attendance, I think right now, is about 28 people. Some of them re students, young of them are adults. They're hired for about anywhere from 25 to 35 hours per week. And they're the general caretakers during those critical months between May to October of the parks. So they not only help to do general cleanup, they clean up after events, but they are the eyes and ears of the park, they help to be the connection to the Department of Recreation, and they're the bridge between the Department of Recreation and the Friends groups. So they're

really a vital component. And what we're looking to do over the long term is continue to continue have support for the SMA program, and hopefully institutionalize this program over the long run.

Now, let me introduce Doris Goldney, who will give you her firsthand look at the parks and provide her testimony.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

MS. GOLDNEY: Thank you. I'm Doris Goldney, I'm the President of the Carol Park Neighbors.

I am a park person. We are the 200-plus volunteers who have reclaimed 25 City parks on behalf of the neighborhoods in which they are located. Neighborhood transformation? These 25 parks are already transformed and are at the forefront of neighborhood transformation.

At last, the citizens of Philadelphia can now believe that their city's government is serious about removing blight and stagnation in all of the neighborhoods outside Center City. Although some people may grumble that all of the

hoopla about neighborhood transformation is merely politicians talking out of both sides of mouth and what else is new, the park people who arrive early on park cleanup days and stay late to tidy up after the refreshments have been served must believe that the neighborhood transformation plans of this administration are real and true.

Indeed, we have seen Councilwoman Reynolds Brown hit the ground running on behalf of Philadelphia's parks. And Councilwoman Blackwell, applause and bouquets to you for your service to Malcolm X Park. And Councilman Nutter, please do not weigh yourself for payment in gold; we at Carol Park, Gorgus Park, and Manayunk Park cannot pay you. Councilman Nutter has been unwaivering and loyal in his support for his parks.

As we speak, tree work in Carol Park is being completed, paid for with funds given to us through Philadelphia Green by the Wallace Reader's Digest Foundation. Next month, a contractor will begin working on improvement plans for the center of Carol Park. An exercise track with four piece of exercise equipment will also be installed around the perimeter of the park. These two

projects are being paid for with City funds.

The Philadelphia Green Parks revitalization program is gaining recognition in greening programs around this country. Representatives from the Department of Recreation, Philadelphia Green, and I have been invited to a parks conference in Cleveland, Ohio, next month to bring to the park people in Cleveland the story of a unique relationship established in Philadelphia between the Department of Recreation, Philadelphia Green, and volunteers from the community. How would it play in Cleveland if the story taken from the wire revealed that funding for Philadelphia parks was reduced. How would that bit of news be received in New York by the Wallace Reader's Digest Foundation, whose generous donation to Philadelphia Green enabled 16 more parks to join the Philadelphia Green family.

After 30-plus years of neglect, the pathways in our parks need to be repaved for the safety of park visitors. The sidewalks around the parks needs to be repaired. A park is supposed to have grass. Turf improvements are a necessity. The seasonal maintenance attendants need to be

paid a decent wage for their service to the parks during the summer when activity in the parks are at its peak.

Park lighting is a priority. I cannot emphasize this issue too strongly. Park lighting is a priority in the dark places. In Carol Park, between the hours of 10 p.m. and dawn, the self-employed young ladies and their attendant entrepreneurs ply their dark trade. In the daytime, Carol Park is a pleasant place in which to spend leisure time, but the negative activity in the small hours of the morning is the other story.

After 30-plus years of neglect, the condition of our parks would suggest that the funding for park infrastructure and capital improvements should be raised so that 30 years from now, park groups and the City will not be faced with these daunting capital expenses and social challenges.

A park group cannot deceive the City of Philadelphia, we cannot put one over on you. Any member of this august body can visit any active Philadelphia Green park at any time and see if

that park is being cared for.

I feel that I, along with my fellow volunteers in the others parks around this great city deserve consideration and continuing support from the City until we all have our own Rittenhouse Square.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. We appreciate your coming in to testify and certainly for all of the work that you do.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair now recognizes Councilman Nutter.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Miss Goldney, I deeply appreciate your comments. I don't remember in recent times my mother, who loves me dearly, speaking so highly of me.

(Laughter.)

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I'll have to ask her to come to these hearings from time to time.

So I appreciate that, and I will continue to support the great work that you do and the groups do at Carol Park and the other parks

that you mentioned that are in the 4th District. I've been a longtime park supporter before I ever arrived at this particular place, and spent a lot of time actually in Councilwoman Blackwell's district, where I grew up, in what used to be Black Oak Park and is now Malcolm X Park.

I don't, Madam Chair, so have much have a question for the witnesses at the table. On the other hand, we've had a couple folks up at the table talking about concerns about the park. We did go over some of this in earlier budget hearings, and my concern is that there is a record that is seemingly being established that Council either is waivering in its general support for the parks, which I do not believe to be the case, or that there is an overall lack of concern for the parks by the City government, which I also don't necessarily believe is the case.

At the same time, I am unaware of any requests, official requests, for additional funding for our park system. And I think that it's very important, given the public testimony and the public interest in this issue, that we try to provide some clarity to the record on that in

just where things are and where they're not. And so obviously, Madam President, as the Chair, at your discretion, there has to be some opportunity to make sure that this record is crystal-clear about who is doing what or who is not doing what and to whom.

I'm going to maintain my strong support for the park, but there is no proposal in front of us at this moment during these budget hearings making a request, general or specific, regarding park funding. And so if there is one, again, I'd like to have an opportunity to see it and to read it, but I will reiterate my concern that given some of testimony and where it seems to be going, that the Council is potentially being portrayed as less-than-caring about our park system, and that is absolutely not the case.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And, Councilman, if my memory serves me correctly, when we had our budget hearings and the Fairmount Park Commission did in fact testify, they indicated for the record that their budget was sufficient. That was the exact word that was used, "sufficient," and they felt that it was ample to do the work

that they had before them.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I understand that and, I mean, obviously --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And we have always been, as you said, very, very supportive of the parks.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: The public, obviously, absolutely has the right to testify, and people have the right to feel how they feel about their parks; I feel very strongly about them as well. But we are now in this public forum, in a budget-hearing setting and, again, at the appropriate time, so that people can understand what is going on, I think the record does need to be made clear about what's going on in this process.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And we will certainly be happy to do that.

Thank you, Councilman.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Brown.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you, Madam

President.

I too want to -- two points. I want to, one, echo the sentiments raised by Councilman Nutter and to say that given the testimony and the very organized presence of the Philadelphia parks and Friends of parks, it behooves us to look again closely at how we can actively respond to their requests.

And, secondly, let me say to you in particular, since you represent this world that you're speaking about, you mentioned a number of accomplishments, and hats off to you. Let me encourage you, as you continue to shape and reshape your strategy, to include all of the work that you're already doing with area schools, public and private, and often remind us on how you're expanding that particular partnership, because that too is a part of the overall strategy.

MR. GROMAN: Right. Very well taken.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you very, very much.

Thank you, Madam President.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

And thank you both so much for coming into testify. We appreciate it.

MR. GORMAN: Thanks a lot.

(Applause.)

MR. MCPHERSON: The next witness is Shug Davis. Shug Davis?

(Mr. Davis not present at this time.)

MR. MCPHERSON: Lorraine Galone?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is this Miss Galone? Please approach the witness table.

(Witness comes forward.).

COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Good afternoon. Kindly identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. GALONE: Hello. I'm Lorraine Galone. I live at Winchester Park in the Northeast. And I am here to speak for my family and neighbors.

I'd like to say that the Fairmount Park Commission has turned our neighborhood park into a war zone. The Fairmount Park Commission has chosen to spend a large amount of money to conduct their deer kill in the Wissahickon and now in Pennypack Park. A supporter of this organization

stated he wanted to save the park for his children and grandchildren to enjoy. Well, the children and grandchildren of the residents of the 8200 block of Winthrop Street actually got to see how the park got saved and heard firsthand how this policy has gone astray.

Police were called on Friday evening, February 23rd, because of vehicles on the dirt paths, hunters' lights, including one hunter, who was on private property in a park area that stretches from the rear of the properties to the dirt trail. It is approximately 54 yards from the property lines to the dirt road. The lone shooter was spotted behind a tree at a distance of six feet from the property line, and upon fleeing, ran over several private backyards.

Saturday evening was a recurrence of Friday, with the addition of neighborhood involvement with the police on the Welsh Road Bridge and in their backyards. Between 2:30 and 3 a.m., the park area under and around the Welsh Road overpass was described by the residents of this block as "a shooting gallery." Between 3 a.m. and 3:15 a.m., the shooting continued but

was sporadic. One of the adults distinguished two separate weapons being used.

A resident informed me that the FPC has denied involvement. If so, then this cull has produced an environment where poaching is acceptable. And if so, this is even more dangerous.

I strongly implore Mayor Street, Council President Verna, and all members of City Council to deny any funds used for this kill and see that the appropriated funds are used economically. They have seriously compromised the safety of the residents of a vital, family-oriented neighborhood. The park has been an important part of community life for all of us who have moved close to the park to improve the quality of our families' lives. It has provided a wildlife education, as well as recreation.

Please help us to have a safe park again. Safety is a huge issue.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you, Mrs. Galone. Just a moment, please.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Rizzo.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This issue of the deer cull in the City of Philadelphia has obviously gained a lot of attention, and I know that last year, we conducted a cull, which was not very effective for many reasons, and I think that it might be informative to ask the Fairmount Park Commission, because I know they changed the way they're administering the cull, and I have some information that was given to me in confidence at this point, and I don't feel free that I can speak about it.

But I would hope that we would recall the Director during the recall process of these hearing to discuss exactly who and what and how and what differently we're doing now that there's been legislation passed in Harrisburg that permits the Fairmount Park Commission to conduct a cull at any time basically they choose. So I would, I think, find it interesting to hear exactly how we're proceeding, and I would appreciate the Chair considering that at the appropriate time, to have the Fairmount Park Commission discuss that.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

And it is my understanding that Mr. Mifflin is not in the room. Apparently, there was a court case on this very issue, I am told.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: No, I don't know of any court case presently on this issue. That court case is --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We were told that he was supposed to be in a courtroom.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Madam Chair, if there is a court case, then Mr. Mifflin can say that for the record and --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Well, as soon as he arrives, we'll question him.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: There was a court -- last -- the first cull a year ago, there was, and if there's a new one, fine.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm not aware of it. I'm just informing you of what I was told.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Okay.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you. But if when -- is there a representative of the Fairmount Park Commission here that would be willing to step forward to speak on it?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Can someone address the issue? Would you approach the witness table, please.

(Witness comes forward.)

MR. DONAGHY: Hi.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Are you able to address this issue?

MR. DONAGHY: I cannot address the issue specifically. I'm here representing Fairmount Park Commission, as the Director was called away and was unable to attend. And I'm James Donaghy.

I will take the information back to the Director and be sure that he gets it.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Do you know of -- may I ask the witness, is there a -- do you know of any pending court case on this issue presently?

MR. DONAGHY: No, I do not.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. Mifflin informed someone that he had to be in court, and we were assuming it was on this issue, and that was the reason he was not here.

MR. DONAGHY: Okay, I was told that he

could not make it, he had another engagement, and that's why I am here. I really can't respond to that right now.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Madam Chair, I would appreciate it if at the recall, during the recall, that we ask Mr. Mifflin to come back, and if there is a case pending, that he says what he can, and what he can't say, that's fine, but I think we all need to know exactly how we're proceeding in this effort.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: In fact, I think -- will he be available this evening?

MR. DONAGHY: Possibly.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I beg your pardon?

MR. DONAGHY: Possibly. I'll get in touch with his office and I can get back to you shortly.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Fine. We would like him to be here sometime this afternoon or early evening so that he could discuss this issue.

MR. DONAGHY: Okay.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. DONAGHY: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mrs. Galone, thank you so much for coming in to testify.

MS. GALONE: Thank you for the opportunity.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Dr. Sanford Sher. Sanford Sher?

(Dr. Sher not present.)

MR. MCPHERSON: The people for the Mural Arts Program: Ruth Birchette, David McShane, Jim Helman, Irene Russell, Ana Uribe.

(Witnesses come forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon. Kindly identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. RUSSELL: Good afternoon, Council President Verna, Councilmembers, community leaders and citizens.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. Helman? Excuse me. Why don't you pull a chair to the side of the table and the two of you could. . .

MS. RUSSELL: My name is Irene Russell,

and I am a resident of Grays Ferry and a member of the Friends of Stinger Square Park and the Stinger Square Advisory Council.

Last summer, I was afforded the opportunity to work very closely with the Mural Arts team as they worked on two murals, one in Stinger Square Park and the other directly across the street from the park called "Guardian Angels." I watch as a once-blighted area was turned into an oasis of life and enchantment. During the course of this undertaking, friendships were formed between the Mural Arts team and many residents of the community, who offered help and sought insight about the program and the project at hand.

The murals creation became a centerpiece of activity and a galvanizing force in the community by sparking interest and participation from the youth to the elders in the area. I also saw the artist's perception based on bad press and other people's opinion of the Grays Ferry area transformed into admiration for a community that was active, organized, and loving in its interactions.

Due to the overwhelming success and the

comfort that the artist felt while in our community, a community day was planned in the park, and a third mural was completed, using the input of the residents of the community and the Mural Arts team. It was a culmination of a true labor of love.

I am here testifying to the members of this Council for the continued funding of this vital program. This program serves so many functions within a community, aside from the actual murals that remove blight, and become a have for activity in the area. It opens up opportunities for children with talent to become skilled artists, while connecting with diverse people and cultures. Some of these children become eligible for scholarships to further their education through arts.

It also brings communities together through shared participation and interaction with one another. It forges new friendships while strengthening existing bonds between people and bridge the generation gap by affording something for people of all ages to do together.

As for a wise investment of funds, this

program stands out as having a 300 percent return because of the many areas that are affected from one mural going up: The homeowner benefits from the reinforcement and ceiling of their wall if a mural is painted on it; the community benefits from the removal of blight and the opening up of places considered safe havens for people to gather; Philadelphia benefits from the wonderful art display throughout its metropolis, which has now become world-renowned for its mural art work.

Just a tour throughout City and a discussion with people who have been involved in any way with the production of a mural in their neighborhood, and I know you will have to vote unanimously to continue the Mural Arts Program for years to come.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Ana, are you going to testify next?

MS. URIBE: I'm Ana Uribe. I'm just going to talk from my heart here.

The best thing that has happened in my life is to become a muralist. I come here to Philadelphia and paint on big walls for the people. I'm from Columbia, South America. The first wall I did was a violent wall, it was a wall for Amy Wheeler. It moved me so much because it gave me the opportunity to talk about a violent in a nonviolent way. And then after that, I became the voice of the people from the south, of all the Latin people. I have been painting their landscape, the landscape they need so much.

You know, when you immigrate from a company to this country, you get a much better standard of living, you get all of your basic needs covered. But then there is that part of your feelings that you left back at your land. And I have been painting water falls, rain forest, and I feel like the voice of so many people that I call "minority," and I'm making them feel a majority, because then they feel pride, they feel very, very proud of who they are and that they have people that are talking for them.

So they start to care for their neighborhood. They think we are making a palace

out of their, you know, trashed lands. And then a lot of people come behind my mural, it came a bulldozer that cleaned the trash, it came students from Temple, it came students from the University of Pennsylvania that planted gardens, it came the Horticulture Society, it came the whole neighborhood. And everything is looking much better.

When I got to North Philadelphia, and still it looks like trash land, but I think we are making a difference because we are making people proud, proud of themselves. And if you are proud, you care for yourself and then you care for where you live.

One of the other projects I did, I did with the Art Museum, and we worked with a program that was called -- the Philadelphia Foundation, they gave money for middle school students to go to the museum and work. So they put the tiles around the wall. And all these kids that are the future and the people that going to be the future residents and the people that is going to take care of Philadelphia are starting to love their city. They don't feel like they are just -- no,

they feel like they are a part of the City because then, the kids they are making the difference, you know. They are painting the walls, they are cleaning, they are painting. And that's the best part. It's not that we are just doing everything, it's that they are a part of it. And when you are a part of our program, you feel much better.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MS. URIBE: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. Helman?

MR. HELMAN: Good afternoon, members of City Council. My name is Jim Helman. Along with my friend Irene, I'm a resident of Grays Ferry and a founding member of the Committee of Concerned Citizens.

Before I begin my testimony, I just want to take a moment to say hello to our District member of City Council and to let you know, President Verna, that our community acknowledges and appreciates your support for recreation and mural arts.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. HELMAN: There is a mural in Grays

Ferry at 29th and Wharton Streets. Many people call the mural "The Hands Mural." The title of the mural is actually "The Peace Wall." The mural gets its title from a Bible verse painted next to the mural that reads, "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." The mural shows the arms of 11 multiracial people coming together in a pile of hands. The mural was created at a time when a series of racial incidents had further divided our community.

Now, it's no secret that Grays Ferry is a racially troubled community, and has been for many years. Having been tested by time, Grays Ferry residents tend to be opinionated, outspoken, and stubborn. There are those who scoff at the Peace Wall, saying that it's simplistic or idealistic. But a growing number of residents glance at the Peace Wall whenever they pass it and think of the possibilities. They think of what Grays Ferry can be, what Grays Ferry should be.

The Peace Wall is a vivid visual display that the strength of our community is in the diversity of our residents, residents of every

faith and belief, of every economic level, and of every ethnic origin. The Peace Wall is a great example of a powerful statement that can be made through mural art, even in a troubled community.

Now, Grays Ferry residents are not shy, so we have no problem asking the Mural Arts Program, Hey, what have you done for us lately? Let me take a moment to answer that question.

Two years ago, the Mural Arts Program brought the big picture program to Vare Recreation Center. Under the thoughtful and sensitive guidance of mural artist Wade Williams, Grays Ferry children have been exposed to the culture and drama of art in all forms. This had never previously been available to our children, and they love it.

Last year, in citywide art competition, Vare Big Picture kids captured five awards. In December, the children proudly displayed their art at a show at Eleventh and Market Street and even sold some work. Today the Big Picture kids are learning mosaic art and are contributing to a large mosaic that will be displayed at different locations throughout the City.

Last year, the Vare Big Picture kids painted two murals in Grays Ferry. One is a three-panel work across the street from Vare. The other is a mural painted on the building at Stinger Square Park. In November, a mural artist, Jason Slowik (ph.) and the Mural Arts Program participated in a community cleanup day at Stinger Square. Jason and his partner, muralist Eric Oakday (ph.), had just completed a large-scale mural at 33nd and Reed Streets, titled "Guardian Angels." Guardian Angels memorializes a well-known community activist and expresses the importance of education and interaction between young people and adults.

Last week, our community and the Mural Arts Program chose a theme for a large two-wall mural that will be painted this year at 34th and Wharton Streets. The mural will include a vacant lot that hopefully will be converted into a park to blend in with the mural. The theme that was chosen is Grays Ferry in colonial days. The mural proms to be dynamic and will help to give an identity and a sense of perspective to our community. The theme was inspired by recent

excavations at Independence Mall that revealed evidence that white settlers, black settlers, and Native Americans all lived together in the area. We feel that is a very important lesson that the past can teach the present.

The Mural Arts Program has done well in our community and throughout the City. In the last week or so, I have spoken to a number of Grays Ferry community leaders, and I can tell you that mural art is supported by the Committee of Concerned Citizens, the Friends of Stinger Square, the South Philadelphia Rainbow Committee, the Tasker Homes Tenant Improvement Council, the Grays Ferry West Action Committee, the Forgotten Bottom Neighborhood Association, and the Advisory Councils at Vare Recreation Center, Lanier Playground, Finnigan Playground, and Stinger Square Park.

The Mural Arts Program is ready to move into the future, and they have planned an ambitious and positive future for our city. We can't believe that Council would not want to be an important part of that future. The best way Council can do that is to provide the funding

requested by the Department of Recreation Mural Arts Program for the next fiscal year.

For myself, and on behalf of the Committee of Concerned Citizens and on behalf of many Grays Ferry residents, we urge City Council to do just that.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MR. MCSHANE: Hi. My name is David McShane a mural artist for the Mural Arts Program. I've spent ten -- roughly ten years learning my craft in terms of painting, which culminated in a master's degree from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1995, and since then, have gone on to do a lot of different murals for the mural program.

Compared to painting murals in the private sector, I don't get paid particularly well for the mural work I do with all things considered, considering the amount of extra taxes I have to pay as a private contractor and the health insurance that I have to pay for myself, et cetera. But I didn't come here to complain about

the fact that I'm, you know, about my financial situation. I'm basically here to kind of answer the question, why is it that I paint in this program, with all things considered? And the answer is really fairly simple, and I'll give you three examples:

The first one is the Jackie Robinson mural at Broad and Sommerset Street. I painted that in the summer of 1997. This corner was, initially when I got there, trash-strewn and an overgrown lot; people were leaving all things behind, including appliances and things like that. Today, it is a fenced-in, maintained park that features the mural along with kids' programs and an African market that's organized by Marilyn Porter, the owner of the house that the Jackie Robinson mural is painted on. This mural, it appears to me, has clearly helped empower this neighborhood to change itself.

The second one is a portrait of an anonymous young man, a mural about nonviolence, at Broad and Clearfield. While painting this mural, I met Joseph, a 10-year-old boy who lived a few doors down from this mural. His curiosity and

creative energy was apparent. Through his persistence, he became my mural assistant, and although I met him two years ago, we still meet every other week on Thursdays to make art together. This mural has changed my life as well as his.

The third reason is the Herman Rice mural at 34th and Spring Garden. I can think of no better role model who deserves a tribute mural. Herman's community activism and anti-drug work were inspiring to all, including me. While I was painting this mural, countless friends and family and neighbors from Mantua and throughout the City stopped and shared story after story of their experiences with Herman. This mural is helping to keep alive the momentum that Herman started with his work.

I'm proud of all of the murals I have painted, and I feel fortunate to have contributed to the landscape of the City and to do what I love to do; but most particularly, I'm proud that I get a chance to help communities have their own voice.

The reality is that this program needs funding to continue this vision that Jane Golden

has. I consider myself fortunate to work for Jane, and her vision is clearly being expressed by the other three parties here today. It's a very clear and real vision that is working in this city. Artists like me love this program, but if the program is to survive, we must survive as well.

Please help make this possible and increase the Mural Arts Program budget so that we can continue to do this work.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I just want you all to know that the Administration and I know that every member of City Council strongly supports the Mural Arts Program, and we really want to thank you for coming in to testify.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Cohen.

COUNCILMAN COHEN: I was just going to ask the President to state the record on this matter, and you've done that really well.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN COHEN: We do support -- everybody in City Council supports the program, and we understand that the Administration and the Mayor and his whole staff does.

You do a remarkable thing. The last witness spoke about my home neighborhood, and everything he says is true, and it looks so much better than it had before the Mural Arts Program began. And we thank all of you.

And, Grays Ferry, we just think it's wonderful that the Mural Arts Program is helping to lead the way to a real understanding of how people live together. So we thank you for all you've done.

Thank you, Madam President.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

Certainly I agree with all that's been said, and we're hoping to make sure that you have space. You know, we've been really interested in having a stationery and permanent place for the Mural Arts young people to work out of. So we're mindful of that as well. And I'm very happy that

we're number one in the nation in terms of our murals.

And while I have the mike, let me also thank those from Malcolm X -- that's going to be a model for the country. Thanks for your remarks on the parks. And, again, we're glad to be number one in murals.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Thank you all for coming in.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Phyllis Gibson, Marie Rose Atlas, Frank Cervone.

(Witnesses come forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon. Please identify yourself for the record.

MS. ATLAS: Good afternoon. My name is Mary Rose Atlas. I'm the Program Director for the Families and Murder Victims Program of the Anti-violence Partnership of Philadelphia. This is also Frank Cervone. He is from the Support Center for Child Advocates. Frank and I both support citywide victim service programs here in Philadelphia.

MS. GIBSON: I'm Phyllis Gibson, Director of West Southwest Victim Services. I'm here representing 12 victim service agencies. Please stand.

(Agency members stand.)

MS. GIBSON: These agencies provide victim service in Philadelphia. These agencies are also funded through City Council and the D.A.'s budget.

Action Alliance Elderly Victim Assistance, Center City Crime Victim Services, East Division Crime Victim Services, North Central Victim Services, Northeast Philadelphia Victim Witness Services, Northwest Victim Services, Support Center for Child Advocates, Victim Services of South Philadelphia, West Southwest Victim Services, Women Organized Against Rape, Women Against Abuse.

MS. ATLAS: Thank you again for having given us this opportunity to speak to you today.

We hope that each of you have in front of you a statement of need, and that statement of need describes the services that are currently being provided by all of our agencies here in

Philadelphia to all types of crime victims. This statement also describes the minimum amount of money that we feel that we need in the coming year. We understand that this amount has been included in the District Attorney's budget request and in the Mayor's proposed budget, and we are hoping that you will indeed approve it.

The purpose of our presentation is to give you examples of what our agencies do. And I must say what we do very well on a day-to-day basis. But also, we need to show you today what it looks like when we're struggling, you know, when we're scraping together resources, and sometimes we're doing this in crisis. And we're doing this to address the needs of crime victims and their families. Many of these services go beyond what we're usually funded to do. But the need is real, and we are expected to respond.

We're asking you to look at us as a group of agencies who are being asked to extend themselves in ways that we never have before. See us as a group of professionals with the dedication and commitment and the ability to work together to stop the cycles of violence happening within

Philadelphia's families due to victimization and trauma.

MS. GIBSON: The services that these agencies provide to victims and Wissahickon are: crisis intervention, follow-up counseling, information and referrals, criminal justice support, accompaniment to court, assistance in filing victim compensation forms, emergency food and shelter, advocating with other agencies, and transportation.

In the year 2000, there were 101 homicides in west southwest Philadelphia. Seven of these homicides occurred on December the 28th on Lex Street. The magnitude of these murders were overwhelming. However, with the collaboration of the victim service agencies, together we were able to provide early intervention services, hold a press conferences to stop the rumors that were circulating, and to make the community aware of services that we provide. We were instrumental in relocating families who were in danger. We had individual counseling sessions with co-victims, provided assistance in stopping intimidation and harassment of the

co-victims. We identified a funeral director who donated his services to four of the families. We provided support and counseling to the co-victims at each funeral, provided evening transportation to the co-victims to participate in a grief assistance program, and we provided outreach services to the Mill Creek community.

The Keystone Crisis Team was called in to organize and plan each day's intervention. At the end of each day, they debriefed our staff. This is a professional team, with members from different counties in Pennsylvania. They were trained by the National Organization for Victim Assistance. Without the assistance from this crisis team, we would not have been able to provide these intervention services as effectively.

For us to better service victims, we need additional training and crisis intervention, a citywide crisis response team, relocation services for victims and Wissahickon who are in danger of retaliation.

We wish to thank City Council for their financial support.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MS. ATLAS: Just in addition, though, one of the other things that we wanted to describe was that immediately after the seven deaths on Lex Street, West Southwest Victim Services, Anti-violence Partnership, and other victim service agencies collaborated with the Keystone Intervention Team, the Philadelphia School District, the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, and other professionals throughout the City. This is one of the first times, I think, we ever really needed to really pull together.

And the purpose was to provide -- for that particular incident, we needed to look at what was happening with the children involved in these communities and who were affected by this trauma. Specifically, we needed to provide crisis debriefings to students and the staff, and we provided these debriefings to six schools in the University City cluster and the West Philadelphia cluster.

These clusters were identified by victim services and by school family resource

coordinators, psychologists, and other staff as needing attention because of their close proximity to the incident, and also, because these schools house many of siblings, cousins, and friends of the victims. And here we want to say, you know, these incidents of homicide affect the whole family; just as crime and victimization on one individual in a family affects the whole family unit.

From January 3rd to February 4th, victim advocates and crisis responders visited 60 classrooms, and we provided approximately 1,450 children with the ability to ask questions about this incident, to have their misperceptions about the incident clarified. They needed -- they really needed someone to allow them to vent their feelings about the deaths and about this and other incidents that happened in their lives and to be offered emotional support and follow-up by professionals.

There's still a need out there that is fairly overwhelming for many of us, that we still need to address. We still have a need to follow up with the several schools on the status of those

students that were identified in the debriefings, and many staff continue to require support and education on trauma and traumatic stress in these children.

Additionally, there's a broader pressure that's on each of our agencies, and this added pressure involves all of the comprehensive victim service centers across the State. Our funders are expecting, and demanding, increased levels of professionalism from each of our agencies. No longer do we function as small, volunteer-based grassroots programs. We are now required to have written policies and procedures in place to reflect the best practices in victim services, including ensuring client confidentiality, having staff that are trained to meet the culturally diverse needs of our communities.

We're required to have a plan to respond to crime victims in crisis and within 24 hours of our agency being notified of an incident. We're required to develop a resource network, where we can refer clients and ensure continuity in service delivery.

As Phyllis said, we need improved levels of staff training, we need to monitor these professionals, and we need to provide ongoing support to avoid staff burnout. And in addition, we need to have safety plans and options for victims and families who say they're being threatened and that their lives are in danger. We need to have an answer for them when they look at us.

We respectfully say that all of these issues require that you as City Council have as much vision and dedication towards the residents of this city and the needs of these residents as we have. And we acknowledge and deeply appreciate all of your support in the past, but we ask for your continued help, especially in working collaboratively with each of our community-based agencies in your district in order to stop the cycle of violence within and around our families.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

Are you not testifying?

(Person shakes head no.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We certainly

want to applaud you for the wonderful work that you do. And as you may be aware, the District Attorney has, in fact, asked that the budget for your agencies -- I don't know exactly how many there are in total -- be increased by $172,000. I know that when she was in here last week, that was a part of her testimony.

And as I said, we truly, truly applaud the work that you do. And I think that without you, it would be a much different world, believe me, and not for the better.

And the Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Madam President.

Most certainly, I agree, and I would like to say a special thanks for all that happened in the, quote/unquote, Lex Street massacre. A special thanks to my friend Phyllis Gibson, who works so hard in the community to try to reduce crime and to improve the quality of life.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you all

very much. Thank you.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Susan Gobreski.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sorry. I can't hear you are you testifying on recycling?

(Witness comes forward.)

MS. GOBRESKI: Council President, there are other people here who want to testify on recycling. Would you like us to all come together?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: With the Clean Water Action?

MS. GOBRESKI: There are other groups on the recycling issue. They can come up or they can wait.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Are you testifying on recycling?

MS. GOBRESKI: Yes. I'm with Clean Water Action.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay. How many are in the group?

MS. GOBRESKI: There are, I believe, three others.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And do they

have their names already on the list?

MS. GOBRESKI: Three others, and I think they are. They can either wait or they can come up and join me, whatever, at your pleasure.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: What are their names?

MS. GOBRESKI: Camille Nicholas, Maurice Sampson, and Bob Pierson.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Bring them up, please.

(Witnesses come forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Susan, kindly identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. GOBRESKI: Sure. And I have copies here for you, if you'd like.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MS. GOBRESKI: My name is Susan Gobreski. I'm a program organizer with Clean Water Action. Good afternoon, President Verna and members of Council, and thank you for allowing me to testify today.

I am a program organizer with Clean Water Action. It's a grassroots organization. We

do environmental work that works to advocate for better policy in the City and across the State. Clean Water Action was also one of the founding members of the Recycling Alliance, which is an association of neighborhood and community groups that understand the value that recycling has to our city and to our neighborhoods and that have come together to speak on its behalf. I am also a member of the RAC.

This is my fourth year of testifying here about recycling. There has been some progress but not enough. We need weekly recycling citywide and enough education and visibility to ensure participation and a confidence in the program from the citizens. We are asking for your support of an expanded and supported program that provides the same level of service to all residents in all communities, rather than a marginally-improved program to a few select areas.

We all know that landfills and incinerators cause pollution often in communities of color. We know that recycling saves natural resources. We also know that it is possible to achieve at a much higher level than we have done.

Other places are doing it. They are succeeding because they are implementing fully-supported programs, including their residents in their plan, and finding ways to make their programs more cost-effective by running them well. Philadelphia continues to aspire to be a world-class city. And with my apologies for references ballparks, but if you want to play in big leagues, you can't play farm-league ball. Big-league cities implement cutting-edge programs that provide a vision of a better place, and they do it well. This is what builds pride and community and belonging. Truly, a failure in something so simple and so clear is just backwards.

The problem that exists in our program, including the problems of expense, are because the program has been designed and run poorly. It is simply unacceptable to have a program that lacks a strategic plan, inadequate funding for its task, inconstant management, support, and staffing, and then damn it for its failure. We have a new commissioner and a new recycling coordinator, both of whom have held out hopes for recycling. Both

of them have expressed a vision for a better program. Unfortunately, it falls to both of them to carry our failures to date and to make good on a promise that a well-run program offers.

We have had some success. There is weekly collection in at least some neighborhoods, if too few, and we have a coordinator. Last year, as I had testified before all of you, we were asking for that. The Philadelphia Recycling Office needs to be able to do more, and they need your support. They need to hear from you and hear that the will of this body, since it passed the original recycling law more than ten years ago, is that we recycle, that we are not satisfied to send our trash off to our neighborhoods and pollute their neighborhoods or upstream to pollute our own drinking water.

We must at least try hard to find alternatives to landfills and incinerators. Give our commissioner an new recycling coordinator an unmistakable signal that you expect them to put together a plan and a program that will work, that is for all of our neighborhoods, and then tell them you will support them as they try.

We need adequate funding, we need weekly collection, and we need strong education programs. This is what will increase participation and improve the cost situation. This is how you play in the big leagues.

Next year, I hope to be able to be testifying before you about the need to support market development for our vast quantity of collected recyclables.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MS. NICHOLAS: Good afternoon. My name is Camille Nicholas. I'm a policy analyst at Clean Air Council here in Philadelphia.

Clean Air Council was founded in 1967 as a citizen-based nonprofit to address pollution in the Delaware Valley. The Council has served on the City of Philadelphia's Recycling Advisory Committee since its founding 14 years ago. The Clean Air Council is committed to monitoring and

advising the City on plans for environmentally and fiscally sound waste reduction in management policy.

I am also here as co-organizer of the Grassroots Recycling Alliance of Philadelphia. In the past several years, we have grown to a coalition of 24 neighborhood and environmental groups and businesses who support improved recycling in Philadelphia. You can see the member organizations on the list that I have submitted to the members of Council who represent a large group of diverse organizations throughout the City.

The Alliance is proud to see that some of the action points we have outlined have been accomplished in the past year. We are pleased by the initiative of Streets Commissioner Johnson and the willingness he has shown to work together with diverse advisory and community groups. We're glad that the long-vacant post of recycling coordinator filled been by someone as competent and well-meaning as David Robinson, very well-qualified. And the Recycling Alliance is glad to see the Streets Department and the Recycling Office developing a strategic recycling plan, including a

focus on promotion and education, which is something we've been working on for a long time.

While I am pleased by the progress that has been made, recycling in Philadelphia is still a long way from where I believe the City needs to be. Of particular concern is the household recycling rate of just 6 percent, meaning that only 6 percent of household waste set out at residents' curbsides is recycled.

I look forward to seeing the comprehensive, integrated solid-waste management plan that Commissioner Johnson promised in his testimony last week. I expect that the plan when it is unveiled in a year will be well thought out. But I want to emphasize that Philadelphia needs to invest in improvements in recycling today to lay the groundwork for continuing improvements in the future.

In the near term, Philadelphia needs to improve both its recycling service and its public education efforts. Frequent, consistent, reliable recycling serves as a prerequisite to a successful recycling program. Streets Department data presented to the RAC demonstrated a 27 percent

increase in the tonnage recycled for areas in Philadelphia receiving weekly collection, compared to a 1 percent decrease recycling in recycling tonnage in areas receiving less frequent recycling service. Philadelphia needs weekly recycling to make the program work.

But weekly recycling is only a start. If the trucks are coming by every week and no one is putting out recycling, then obviously, the program isn't working. People need to know what, when, and why to recycle. This education needs to happen on every level, from neighborhoods to homes to schools. I'm glad to see the new recycling coordinator investing in education efforts and want to encourage this focus on education to continue and expand.

In conclusion, I have heard powerful demands for increase and improved recycling everywhere, from the streets of North Philadelphia to this Council chamber. The Clean Air Council and the Recycling Alliance of Philadelphia are working hard for long-overdue recycling improvements. We need the help of City Council to succeed.

I call on members of City Council to hold the Streets Department accountable for the City's recycling programs and for our recycling rate. I ask City Councilmembers to lend their support to increase recycling through budgetary, political, and personal support. Please give the new leadership of the Streets Department the resources and support that they need to give our city the recycling program that we deserve.

Thank you very much.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. PIERSON: Good afternoon, members of City Council.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

MR. PIERSON: My name is Bob Pierson, and I'm also a member of the Recycling Advisory Committee and have been on that committee since 1987 and when the program began, and I've been before the Council on many occasions since then to talk about recycling.

There's two points that I'd like to bring out, and I'll be quite brief about it. The first one is staffing, that we've observed over

the last decade that there's been an attrition in the recycling staff and loss of some key people with expertise in different areas such as public relations, outreach, and education, people who are expert on commercial recycling, people who knew about source reduction and procurement, and someone who can get the hundreds of government buildings recycling so that citizens, ordinary citizens, can see that as an example of what they should do instead of using it as an excuse for why they shouldn't recycle. And so I -- this point is to support the commissioner and the recycling coordinator in the hiring of new staff to replace those good people that have left over the past years.

The second point is to pick up on something that Susan has just said about market development. That's one thing that lies a little bit outside the mission of the Streets Department, and frankly, I feel over the years, it's been neglected, that the Streets Department mission is to collect on the Sanitation Division side, is to collect trash and collect recyclables, and they really have no one in the department who is an

entrepreneur and someone who could put deals together to work with Philadelphia's infrastructure of the scrap industry and to use the recycled materials that are collected and also to attract new industry to Philadelphia for commodities that are not processed here. And this has an effect on lowering the transportation distances for the City trucks, which, when you got two workers in that truck on a truck (indiscernible), it's going to run you 60, $70 an hour just to take stuff back and forth. And if you could deliver if very close by, you're going to save a lot of money. And it's also by increasing this industry in Philadelphia that you're going to create jobs, and of course, increase the tax base.

And so my recommendation is here that the Council should support the Streets Department effort in market development, and I'd urge that the Streets Department sit down with the Commerce Department to develop a program to increase the capacity to process recycled commodities and transform them into consumer goods made right here in Philadelphia.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

(Applause.)

MR. SAMPSON: Good afternoon, Council President Verna, members of City Council. My statement has not been taken, so someone will want to pick up a copy of it here.

My name is Maurice Sampson, and I'm the Director for Sustainable Development for an organization called Citizens for Pennsylvania Future, or Penn Future. I am also a member of Philadelphia's Solid Waste Advisory Committee, and I live in the Mt. Airy section of Philadelphia.

I want to speak to the Streets Department's budget testimony and comments from City Council, as delivered by Streets Commissioner William Johnson on the 20th of February.

First, I want to acknowledge and to publicly thank Mayor John Street for his selection of Commissioner William Johnson. Commissioner Johnson is the first solid waste professional to hold the Streets Commissioner's post since the departure of Harry Perks in the late '80s. Quite frankly, given his background and experience, if

he wasn't the Streets Commissioner, he'd be the most capable coordinator we've ever had.

Since his arrival last summer, he's proven to be both accessible and responsive. In the selection of Dave Roberts, the recycling coordinator, he fully involved the Recycling Advisory Committee and the Solid Waste Advisory Committee in the selection process. He has made it clear that he wants and needs our involvement in the planning and implementation of a new solid waste plant for the City of Philadelphia. I can honestly say that for the first time in 15 years, I'm encouraged that we're truly working towards the development of the most efficient recycling and waste disposal system our City deserves.

Two closely-related points emerged as themes during the Streets Department budget hearing: cost effectiveness and the need for education. Questions were raised concerning the pilot and the absence of conclusions on its effects and the decision to continue it rather than to expand, change, or scrap it. Commissioner Johnson's position that recycling cost $300 a ton brought a logical and rational

response from Councilman Rizzo, implying that we should scrap the program as too expensive. Let me address the question of cost effectiveness first.

The figure mentioned for the cost of recycling by the Commissioner of $300 a ton, I believe, was offered out of context. Collection costs within the pilot never approached $300. According to the Streets Department report on the pilot, which was released on January 27th of last year, collection costs ranged from 135 to $200 a ton. These costs, when compared to corresponding waste costs within the pilot were often competitive and sometimes less than the waste collection costs.

Now, what does that mean, and just what is cost-effectiveness? There are three factors that determine cost-effectiveness: the collection cost per truck, including the labor and vehicle costs, the processing cost for recycling the number of tons collected by a given recycling truck. If cost effectiveness is measured as parity with the cost of trash collection, the most important variable is the number of tons of recyclables collected.

For example, if we were to assume that the cost of the crew and supervision, its trucks for recycling or trash -- I'm sorry. For example, if we assume the cost of the crew and supervision, the truck for recycling (indiscernible) $800 a day and the landfill cost of $50 a ton and the revenue is $20 a ton for recycling, then a recycling truck that that carries 6.3 tons a day would have the same cost as a rubbish truck carrying 14 tons a day. Reduced costs increase the recycling program's viability. Increased costs require an increase in the number of tons collected on each truck to maintain cost effectiveness.

The performance of the City's recycling program should be addressed on the basis of collection routes, not as the City on the whole. While it is true on the average that recycling is more expensive to collect than trash, the pilot suggests that on a route-to-route basis, recycling is very successful in some areas and understated in others.

To underscore this, with my testimony, I attached a map that shows recycling collections by district across the City. If you look at that,

you'll see that collection rates vary greatly. In the northwest and Northeast Philadelphia, volumes are produced as high as 60 tons a day, while some routes in North Philadelphia produce less than 5 tons a day.

To put it in a Councilmatic perspective, I also included with the map a chart that shows the tons collected per day in each Council district, or if you're a member at large, in your neighborhood. Be assured of this: Every neighborhood in the City enough recyclable materials to support a cost-effective program, provided the materials are collected.

Here is the bottom line: What we learned in the pilot is that if education is provided, and that means clearly explained, the program is convenient, which means reliable weekly and the same day as trash, people will participate. An unprecedented effort was made during the pilot to deliver the recycling message. It resulted in a 39 percent increase in recycling volumes and a decrease in per-ton collection costs.

The rational conclusion to these

results and an underlying message in the questions asked by Councilmembers is that we should expand the pilot citywide. So why isn't this the plan we can expect.

In order to expand the current program citywide, it will be necessary to double the collection fleet, a costly investment that will take two to five years to implement, based on past experience. The most advanced programs in the country are using one vehicle to collect both recyclables and solid waste. This is called "co-collection," an approach which has proven in other jurisdictions to increase efficiency for waste and recycling collection, while reducing the overall cost. As applied do Philadelphia co-collection has tremendous implications which could dramatically change how waste is managed.

The pilot the Commissioner is planning is essential to determining co-collections feasibility in Philadelphia. Should we decide this is the best way to go, we need to invest in a very different fleet than we currently use and a plan to transform the current collection system.

The Commissioner has promised both a

pilot and a new integrated solid-waste plan. Under the circumstances, it may make sense to delay fully expanding the pilot. Is it worth the wait? My research suggests that it would be.

Coupled with other modifications, co-collection has reduced costs in other jurisdictions by as much as 20 percent, while greatly increasing recycling rates. I'm going to say that again, okay? Co-collection has reduced costs in jurisdictions by as much as 20 percent, while greatly increasing recycling rates.

Co-collection will allow for a crew of three to collect trash and recyclables, a task now requiring two trucks and six workers. Co-collection will make it cost-effective to collect plastics and old corrugated containers, increasing the items we can recycle and something we've all been wanting. It will also support separate collection of yard waste, of electronics and other reusable bulky wastes. These are improvements that we can't expect from the current collection system.

Now, I don't believe we need to wait when it comes to expanding on education and

promotion. Even if we accept that citywide expansion the same day as trash should be delayed, there is no reason to wait in improving the education and promotions program. Increased participation will result in more materials and decreased collection costs, regardless of how the material is collected. Independent studies collected in Philadelphia of set-out rates show that even in the areas with the highest rates of recycling, we're only placing about 20 percent of the potential recyclables that we could be putting out for collection. This is why we need education. Some of the lessons learned in the pilot need to be exported citywide now, and City Council should insist on it.

In conclusion, I want to point out that Commissioner Johnson projected that his integrated solid-waste plan would be complete in eight to twelve months. This would mean the plan would be ready for review by either October of 2001 or March of 2002. I encourage the City Council to hold the Streets Department to this schedule and announce now your intention to stage a public hearing to review the plan for those months.

Thank you for this opportunity.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much.

Are we ready for questions?

Councilman Cohen.

COUNCILMAN COHEN: I wanted to thank all of the members of the panel for their testimony, and particularly Maurice Sampson's very fine analysis.

Is it your understanding, Mr. Sampson, that the Commissioner supports the concept of co-collection?

MR. SAMPSON: In fact, he introduced it to us.

COUNCILMAN COHEN: Because it's the first time I've heard of it. It sounds awfully good to me. I think all folks interested in the environment, in the air, in the earth, in the water have to understand that we're in the process of having to renew not only educational efforts but basic understanding. In the last ten to fifteen years, I have found that instead of education being increased on the subject and understanding developing, the exact reverse has

occurred. And recycling, where ten years ago everybody knew it was the right thing to do, even the communities that were slow in adopting actual tactics to achieve it, today there are questions raised about whether or not it's interfering with economic development. Even the successful efforts to stop the trash-to-steam plant, which has saved the City, incidently, over the 30 years of the life of that plant, the City will be saving not only many lives from a health point of view but a billion and a half dollars in City tax dollars as a result of the employees not having trash-to-steam plant, let alone all of the health problems.

Despite all of that, today, currently most people don't treasure the earth, the sky. They don't think the sky belongs to the people, they don't think that concerns about clean water and earth are important. So I just suggest to the community and the whole environmental community that we've got to understand that education is paramount, and we've got to convince people that that's the right thing to do.

And you've got to have the right

facts. I'm very heartened by the information you gave us about the new commissioner. And I agree with you that over the last 150 years in the Streets Department, recycling has been a stepchild and has never been welcomed. Apparently, the new commissioner has a more modern take on the picture and is going to be much more cooperative. And we're hoping to help, that City Council (inaudible) will be in developing hearings on the co-collection idea as soon as possible. We would like to work with both the City Department of Streets and the recycling and environmental community in general to make those hearings happen to show how important it is to work to preserve the earth, the sky, and everything about natural living, and we will look to you for support. And I think you will find in Council a cooperative voice.

But I have to tell you, you've got a lot of hard work to do because the movement just going forward with regard to environmental matters deteriorated in the last years or, so we've got a lot of work to make up for.

But thanks again for your extraordinary

analysis of the situation, and we'll have to see what the hearings produce in the way of evidence to determine whether or not the co-collection policy is the soundest policy for Philadelphia. It certainly sounds enormously promising.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: You're welcome.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Brown.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you, Madam President.

Councilman Cohen has mentioned the one fundamental key I think will help us in conquering this problem, and that is education. You mention in your testimony that there are currently 24 neighborhoods and environmental groups. In those neighborhoods that are participating, does there exist any linkages with area schools? Because if we're going to conquer this as well, we have to start in the schools now.

MS. NICHOLAS: Well, we did provide last year, at your request, with the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, that

curriculum, which I thank you for your interest in.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

MS. NICHOLAS: Thank you for your interest, and I understand that you helped to implement in some neighborhood schools.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Has that been expanded?

MS. NICHOLAS: We are trying to get that information to all of our members.

MS. GOBRESKI: Right. We've also done some presentations to some of the member groups. I mean, right now, this is still -- I mean, since it's been taking sort of the nonprofit community to keep propping this up, it's constant. You mentioned hard work. It's the only kind we do.

(Laughter.)

MS. GOBRESKI: The -- we have -- actually, we just got a call and I think you guys got a call recently from a school for some of the senior -- the high school projects, and so I think we'd like to do more outreach to them, we want to work with them. It's something we're definitely interested in. You know, right now, the big fight

has been getting the support to get the program in place. You can't go out and tell a bunch of kids to recycle and then have them walk into their homes and see nothing.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Right.

MS. GOBRESKI: You know? I mean, if they can't put the stuff out, it's a meaningless message to them. And so, you know, I think it's definitely something we want to see move forward, and we've been working with the City in pushing that and beating that drum over and over at the RAC meetings. So we're with you.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. And just as you are growing neighborhood by neighborhood one at a time, business by business one at a time, it may require that same approach with both of our -- all of our schools in the City, not just the public schools.

MR. SAMPSON: My neighbors, the principal at Andrew Jackson School, I think it's on Federal Street in South Philly, she brought me a memo just this last week announcing the plans for the recycling that are going to go on in the school. She also told me that they have on at

least two occasions put programs together that work, and they fell down because no one came to collect the materials. My understanding is that that part of the program is being addressed.

You know, I don't care where you are, whether it's a school or you're a resident, if it doesn't go away as recyclables, you'll make it go away as trash.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Mm-hmm.

MR. SAMPSON: So I sense that there are issues. The memo was a very interesting one and encouraging, because it really looks as though there's a lot of energy going on there. I think our getting more connected perhaps with some of the principals in the schools so we can understand what some of their issues are would be a big help. But, you know, with a number of things that are going on that the School Board has put together in terms of the commitment to service projects --

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

MR. SAMPSON: And then the new standards for environmental ecology that the Department of Education has put forward. And

there's something -- I believe it's called Act 48, where teachers have to get continuing credits.

All of those things play really powerful as incentives for the schools to get thoroughly involved in education.

I would also tell you that you can look at a direct correlation in the improvement of the recycling on the community level based on how strong the programs are in the schools.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: In the schools, absolutely.

MR. SAMPSON: So it's just absolutely critical and a center point of making these things happen.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well, in closing, let me again echo Councilman Cohen's comments. The work you're doing is exceedingly important, and if we are to conquer it, I'm of the -- my editorial comment is that we have to start with kids.

MR. SAMPSON: Yes.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Are there any other comments from members of the committee?

(No further questions.)

MS. GOBRESKI: Thank you.

MS. NICHOLAS: Thank you.

MR. SAMPSON: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Dr. Dominic Debias.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Please identify yourself for the record, please.

DR. DEBIAS: I'm Dominic Debias. I'm retired. And before my retirement, I spent 42 years teaching medical students in the City of Philadelphia. After that time, at my alma mater, Jefferson Medical College, and the other half at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine.

I'm appearing here today as President of the Fairmount Park Commission Advisory Council, which is an organization I've been a member of since its inception, about 15 years now. And, of course, I'm here to support the budget of the Fairmount Park Commission and specifically any

increases that you can see fit to make in the Capital Budget or in the annual Operating Budget in your wisdom of your deliberations.

I'm going to support my appearance here today by three items, and they may be unrelated or they may seem unrelated to the park, so if you're thinking, what does this have to do with the park? just bear we with me, and I'll tie them all up for you.

The first one is an article that appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer, which really prompted me to be here, and this article appeared on January 17th of this year, and only one statistic I'm going to read. It talks about City employees between 1995 and 2000, and the first one lists the DA's Office, with a 747 percent increase in the workforce. And when I read that, I thought, Oh, my God is crime up 747 percent in the City of Philadelphia that we need that many more prosecutors? Now, I have no aversion against the District Attorney, so don't get that idea from the first place -- a lot of my friends are district attorneys. But anyway, that was kind of alarming to me, and I thought, Well,

what's going on here? And then I thought maybe we're not directing our youth in the right direction, we're not giving them the time and effort and monies that they deserve.

The second article appeared on January 24th, and this article is an article about a project done by John Hopkins University Research Center for -- what's the term they use. . . Well, they used the term for -- I think it was "at-risk students" or something like that. And this is important to bring up here, I think, because in that study, two schools of Philadelphia are included, Strawberry Mansion and Edison, and I think that's important, because in that study, they talk about using a method where students are given a lot more personal supervision in English, mathematics, and science -- and keep the word "science" in mind here. And the program went on for one year last year.

And, again, I'm going to read two statistics without going into too many statistics about the program and one statistic is arrests for Strawberry Mansion in one year, okay, in 1999 to 2000, down 74 percent. Edison arrests down

83 percent.

Now, I know if the statistician is going to hear me now, he's going to jump all over me, but wouldn't that be nice if we could cut the District Attorney's Office by 84 if we had this all over the City and had these students doing better and not going in the direction of feeding the District Attorney's Office. And that's just a statistic.

Academics. And this includes passing examinations in English, math, and science -- again, the word "science." Up 31.7 percentage points.

So the program is a success, and it's a success because these students are directed towards something that's making a productive life for them.

The third thing that I want to bring in here is, you all know now that the President is talking about using faith-based social services to protect our youth from going in the wrong direction, and I think that's a good idea, because getting down to these people at the roots is where we have to direct our attention, because after

they've committed their crime, they've gotten into the drugs, and that's where I think it gets to be a more difficult problem. So we have to get them early on, and I think that's the place to get them.

Now, what does this have to do with parks? I think that what we have to do in the City of Philadelphia is use every available resource -- parks, recreation facilities, museums, zoo, anything that can contribute to directing these students to their purpose in life and their purpose in the City of Philadelphia. Why are we here? Nobody ever thinks about that. We talk about ecology systems. Do these students know that they're a part of the ecology system. We talk about the parks, the trees and the plants; we're part of those parks we're a part of that system.

And so I think that what needs to be done are initiatives have to be brought up or thought of that will entwine our school systems with our museums, with our parks, with our zoos, so that the students get a sense of who they are and what they are. And I think it behooves City

Council to do anything in their power, even monetarily especially, that will maintain those initiatives.

So I, as President of the Advisory Council, will ask my group to come up with initiatives where we can expand all of these things into the parks. I think park is the place for those kids to learn their science. I mentioned science before. Reading about it in the book is one thing, but being out there is something else, and I think that that's where these kids belong, in the park, learning about their ecosystems, learning about themselves.

I wonder how many people in the City of Philadelphia really appreciate the importance of trees in our life. We can't live without trees in our life, they're very important to our ecosystem. Again, the parks come into play.

So what I'm saying is, do everything you can to give the parks the money that they need so that we could expand these into the systems, into the institutions that are going to bring these students to, you know, what do we guarantee them by the constitution: life, liberty, and the

pursuit of happiness. And this is the way we're going to do it.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much for coming in to testify. We really appreciate it, Doctor.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Fred Maurer.

(Witness comes forward.)

MR. MAURER: I have a copy for the clerk.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I beg your pardon, sir?

MR. MAURER: I do have a copy for the clerk.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Oh, thank you.

MR. MAURER: My name is Fred Maurer, and I am an officer in the Friends of Tacony Creek Park.

Our Friends group was organized 11 years ago from a Town Watch in the park. It was

started in response to the dangerous crimes and vandalisms in our park. We were becoming very desperate. We citizens had to do something because our City officials were neglecting community welfare. Our park was suffering after years of budget cuts as a financial abuse to Fairmount Park Commission.

The parks should never have been allowed to disintegrate to the stage where volunteers had to supplement professional workers needed in any City park. Our 11 years of hard volunteer years has recaptured some dignity of a usable park, but we are not a substitute for a paid staff. Unpaid volunteers are not a substitute. It is double taxation on us.

Fairmount Park had a quality reputation before unjustified budget cuts reduced the staff to under one half. We do not have the quality you might expect. Instead, we had the deformed quality that you reluctantly fund. Our leaders praise and gloat over Fairmount Park for vanity's sake, but they neglect to fund us with cash deeds necessary to sustain us.

Fairmount Park Commission is a

trillion-dollar investment of the City for the health and welfare of its citizens. It is an asset, not the burden you see when budget time occurs. Fairmount Park Commission returns many more direct financial and social benefits to the City that are not measured in the budget process.

I ask, how much funding do we need to support a trillion-dollar asset? I think it needs more than the starvation budgets of the past few years. Fairmount Park's true measured worth is equal to over 100 stadiums.

You recently accepted a (indiscernible) deficit with $54 million with a casual comment that it would be easy to fix that. That makeup would be the whole capital budget of Fairmount Park for ten years. It could double the Operating Budget of Fairmount Park for four years. And in fact, the annual debt service would be equal to the Fairmount Park Commission budget.

The capital and operation expenses of a new stadium are a transfer of public funds that could be used better in the General Fund. If stadiums are such cash cows to players, then it should also generate considerable wealth to the

City. Indeed, it should pay for all park and recreation budgets because they are deliberately commingled by the City to support professional sports. I think you need a real audit of stadiums' paybacks.

In 1983, the needs of the Fairmount Park Commission was documented and a professional master plan to guide City Council. The report was never taken off the shelf. None of the master plans has been funded to bring up capital or operations or staff needs up to a reasonable status. All expectations of City Council to fund Fairmount Park were ignored. Instead, it suffered more budget cuts. It now has less staff under a load of more obligation.

Operations and maintenance of a park system is a reasonable cost of City infrastructure. The costs are embedded in commitments to the City to (indiscernible) as other charter agencies such as a law department or a City Council funding. Fairmount Park is not discretionary funding for the satisfaction of a school clientele; it is an institution that affects everyone. Where would we be without it, I

ask. The current staff is under 250 and is insufficient to do its task. The staff compares to the Hegele Museum and to Winter Tour Gardens in staff numbers, but those places maintain only a tenth of our landscape, and they do it with less crime.

Fairmount Park is a system of 70 parks, places and buildings that has a problem of public safety and park security that has become decades old. The City stole $6.5 million of guard security from Fairmount Park and replaced it with 911 but forgot to install phones. Fairmount Park security losses include burned historical houses, vandalism, and more crimes. Hunting Park vandalism is an example of the typical harm from budget cuts. The Hunting Park Mansion was burned after the police vacated the building, the maintenance building is now closed, and the swimming pool and the regulation staff was cut out. The destruction of Hunting Park swimming pool was preventable -- by simple security. If only police or maintenance workers were available, Hunting Park would be more secure. Instead, it became a criminal haven by City neglect for

funding.

Our citizens feel unsafe in parks, and even taxicab drivers warn visitors to stay away. The unsafe feeling in a park is justified. Last year, I was assaulted with a gun while doing volunteer work. Volunteers of staff are now told not work alone in the park and don't enter without a buddy as more safety security.

We did not have that fear when Tacony park had a regular mounted patrol. Now our mounted patrol does parade work in Washington, DC, but not in our parks. The security of Fairmount Park assets and park users are not being funded. The only police presence we see is incidental traffic duty. We deserve a special district of professionals.

The City requires private police at Temple University and at Penn campuses and at SEPTA and for the Housing Authority. But there is no security system in Fairmount Park, not even a sergeant-of-arms.

Fairmount Park Commission proposed a chief alternative security system in the Fairmount Park master plan. They had a safety plan that

needed 75 rangers. But it was never funded. After ten years of waiting, a charitable five-year grant initiated the park rangers to hire 40 rangers. That was at half staff. That paid for the startup expenses and it was hoped to sustain it until the City funding. The last troop of 14 rangers at the beginning of this year was preserved by an emergency transfer gift.

We need full funding of our Ranger Corps. We need to train and prepare our Ranger Corps before the next summer season. They deserve to be regarded as professional employees in City service and should be regarded as professional employees. They should be regarded not as a nonprofit charity appendage begging for donations.

I'm not proud to be a volunteer in these circumstances. I should not take the work of someone needing and willing to do a park job and sustain their family in Philadelphia and pay the high taxes of honest work. A viable Fairmount Park is a crucial element of city urban life. It helps to mitigate citizens from urban flight. Suburbs are now using park values that we had but we are losing.

The next time the President of the United States wants to come to Philadelphia, to Memorial Hall and Fairmount Park as a place to wander the City nationally, or in the case of a dignitary lying in state in Memorial Hall, then Council needs to answer to us, where would we be without were Fairmount Park. Please tell us in your budget, what has Council done for the betterment of Fairmount Park in this budget year.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

MR. MAURER: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Shelly Yanoff.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

MS. YANOFF: Good afternoon. I'm Shelly Yanoff, Executive Director of PCCY, the region's outside government child advocacy

organization.

We receive no funds from government, but we work collaboratively as much as possible to urge all levels of government to do more and to do better by kids. We do this not just because it's the right thing to do, although it is; not just because it's the smart thing to do for the future, although it is; but because it's the best thing to do for now.

If we become known as the city that's good for children and families, we will encourage families to come and live here, we will encourage our businesses to settle or stay and expand here, and we will encourage thousands of college graduates to make Philadelphia their home here. If we believe enough in ourselves, we will make this city the place to be, not for its cheese steaks but for the stake the people have in children and families. We will begin to stop our infighting and fight to keep our families and businesses in, by investing communities, in child care, and in our schools and in our after-school programs.

With some few exception, the budget you

have before you continues and expands somewhat many of your efforts of the past several years. We are moving forward. The challenge is to move quickly enough to make the difference to the City's children and families and to the City itself.

We want to begin by commending the funding primarily provided by the State's TANF dollars to provide home visiting and follow-up supports to fragile families. We believe that this effort that DHS is making, in combination with increased community-based programming for similar families, may well lower the number of babies and children who end up casualties or in the child welfare system. We strongly support this and our family support efforts.

We also are pleased to see the substantial increase in youth development funds. You've all heard us speak time and time again of the need for all of our kids to have someplace to go and something to do when school's out. While we agree that we have a long way to go, we've come a long way. Several years ago, this city spent less than half a million dollar on after-school

programming and served a handful of children. Today, thousands upon thousands of children are benefitting because of the actions of this Council and the Administration, and many more will as a result of this budget.

We also are pleased that there's an effort to improve standards in drawing down more funding as recreation centers strive to become licensed school-aged child-care providers. We also want to commend the health and safety fund's expansion to help child-care providers come into compliance with health and safety needs of kids.

We urge you, however, to pass a budget which includes $600,000 for the health and safety fund. We believe responding to the current requests from child-care home providers for help for this fund would require that. We urge you to make sure that at least $600,000 again is set aside to support these programs, as they provide care to children so their parents can work.

We understand the proposed budget includes 300,000 for this fund. This is an improvement, but it's not enough. By making it advantageous for homes to register as child-care

providers, you increase the safety of the children and the eventual funds of the City. Do it.

We next want to urge you to increase the funding for the Health Department's efforts to decrease the lead hazard by adding a half a million dollars to the budget specifically for this purpose. You all know that lead poisoning is hurting thousands of our children every year, robbing them of their futures, and causing us to pay enormous costs in special education and hospitalization and simply lost opportunities. Each of you knows that most of the houses in this City were built at a time when lead was used in the paint. In lower-income communities, where the owner wouldn't or couldn't keep the paint intact, the kids and families suffered.

Today, about one-third of the young children in low-income communities have elevated lead levels. In the last several years, we have developed a way to decrease the hazard. That generally doesn't require abatement, but it does help kids and families. Last year, about 700 new cases of lead poisoning were found in children. That's in addition to the cases where the families

were already living in unsafe lead-hazard conditions with children known to have lead poisoning.

There were about 1100 houses waiting for the Health Department to come out and do the work because the owner had not come into compliance. Last year, because of personnel vacancies the Health Department was only able to clean up about 30 of these homes. And, Council President, they were in your district and they were in Councilwoman Blackwell's district and they were in all of your districts. They were all over the City.

If this Council simply increased the Health Department's funding for this lead work by a half a million dollars, the City could make it safer for almost 200 families whose children are already being injured by lead. The funding would also allow support for a safe house for families to stay in while their home is being cleaned. This $500,000 could mean a savings in special ed costs or a lifetime of dependency. It also could begin to have a stop in wasting the minds and futures of too many children. The request then is

to begin to wipe out the backlog that is wiping out our children's minds. Do it.

We next urge you to do something about Family Court. Last week, you read of the crisis in Dependency Court, and there is one as well court one in Delinquency Court. Courtrooms are not adequately staffed. Some days, there are no judges; some days, there are no lawyers. Even when the courtrooms are staffed, there are up to 50 cases scheduled in a day. Justice is not served. Neither are we. Too often, these cases are not being heard. That hurts the youth and their families and it hurts all of us.

We need more judges, more courtrooms, more lawyers, more staff, more help. If we don't move on this, the results will continue to be more kids held unnecessarily at the Youth Study Center because the hearings are not held. That ends up costing the kids, their families, and us. We urge you to use your capital to see that two more judges are assigned to Family Court. The courtrooms are there, they're ready; they need you to use your political power and energy to get more judges there. By doing that, you will make a

difference in Family Court and in the lives of troubled youth and youth in trouble. We ask that you build in support additionally to make sure there are enough staff and court personnel to do the job.

And now I turn to the shameful situation that many of our children face when they try to go to school but don't have enough money because of the high cost of tokens. At the hearing two years ago, we pointed out that Philadelphia school students pay more than the overwhelming majority of youth in the country to get to school. As you all know, the overwhelming majority of students in the Philadelphia schools are low-income.

As you heard testimony two years ago and one year ago, it's difficult to ascertain exactly how many students are absent on any given day due to lack of fare, but there are many, many of them. You heard from some of them and some of their parents two years ago and again last year, and no doubt, you'll hear from them again in April, when Councilman Goode holds his hearings. And you heard of students who had to drop out of

their programs because they couldn't afford to go to the school they wanted to.

There are students in charter schools, in magnet schools, as well as in parochial schools who also are losing out 'cause they can't stay in the schools they want to without help paying for transportation. And when any of our kids drop out, we all lose. Recently, the CEO of the academy program estimated that between one-fifth and one-quarter of their students missed school days during the month because of the high cost of getting to school.

As we discussed last year, SEPTA provides no discount to the School District, who pays the regular full cost for tokens and also pays the full cost of transfers. The School District pays the full fare of $1.15 per token for about 10,000 students who meet about certain criteria to go free, and then discounts the tokens by 25 cents and sells them to another 20,000 students at 90 cents a ride. More than one half of these students need transfers. The District does not charge the students for transfers, which ends up costing about $2.3 million.

As Councilman Ortiz noted in the hearings last week, in spite of the what the SEPTA representatives tried to imply, there is no special break provided by SEPTA to the District. Anyone can buy tokens for $1.15, which is what the School District is charged.

As Mr. Leary admitted in last week's hearing and in the hearing last year, there are some special arrangements, 5 or 10 percent discounts given to the companies or the universities by SEPTA to encourage bulk ridership. Yet SEPTA has never come to the table and said they'd give a discount to the entity that buys the most bulk, the School District.

Although there have been hearings on the subject and much coverage, nothing happens. As Mr. Leary said last week in response to Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown's question, they've not even put the issue on a board agenda, in spite of all of this fuss over all these years, in spite of the hearings and the Councilmatic interest.

We urge you to insist that Council take this seriously for the first time, and the time to

do that is now, when SEPTA's is asking for millions of dollars from this Council. If SEPTA were to continue to receive the full cost of tokens from the School District but simply not charge for transfers, the School District could put the savings into lowering the cost of tokens. We'd all be better off. We then could turn to the State and ask for more help, but the details of that can be held for another day, perhaps during the April hearings.

We have to do what we can do here first. These are our children, all of them. It's in all of our interests that they go to school. So we urge you to take $2.3 million from SEPTA's request and provide it to the School District for the sole purpose of covering the cost of transfers and, thus, lowering the cost of tokens for children. That could cut the cost from 90 cents per ride to about 55 cents per ride. That's significant.

Many of the members of this Council have expressed leadership, interest, and concern about the high cost we charge for kids to get to school in this city. Only SEPTA has expressed no

interest.

When SEPTA charged that their State funding was short by $6 million in response to this request, we asked whether they would lower the cost or provide a discount were the 6 million restored, or whether SEPTA would have proposed lowering the rate before the State funding was cut. We all know the answer: SEPTA will find a way to fund what it plans to fund. Unfortunately, without significant prodding, they have shown they will do nothing to assist our children in getting to school or in getting a decent education. We ask you to help them change their minds.

In conclusion, we ask that you add $300,000 more to the health and safety fund budget, making its total $600,000 for next year so that thousands of children can have safer child care and so that day-care providers can gain some support for their economic development.

We ask that you add $500,000 to the lead hazard reduction budget so that about 180 more families and at least 300 more children can be safer from lead poisoning. And that you support troubled children and families by seeing

that two more judges assigned to the court.

Finally, we ask that you insist that SEPTA take this issue seriously for the first time, that you take $2.3 million from the SEPTA request and provide it to the School District so that almost 20,000 students can go to and from school at more reasonable rates.

We are thus urging that you change the shape of the budget by a comparatively small amount, but one that will make a big difference in thousands of children and families' lives. And we urge you to show that you care about getting kids to school and that you take this issue very seriously. In doing this, you will make Philadelphia a better, safer, and more supportive place for children and families and for businesses.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilman Cohen.

COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you, Madam President.

It takes so little in terms of dollars to really give meaning to "The Year of the Child," and I think the statement by Shelly Yanoff, it's shameful that it has to be made, and I think we've got to take that statement and apply it to the same test that we've applied in other areas, and I think the City has to come up and explain before this Council takes final action on the budget what is going to be done in all of these areas.

There's only one area that I have some disagreement with Shelly Yanoff, and that's I think she doesn't go far enough. If we have public schools and parochial schools and charter schools, and we believe that kids are entitled to an education and that the education ought to be available free, except for those families that are able to and choose another form of private school, whether parochial or otherwise private, I think every child should be entitled, as a matter of just living in our city, to free transportation to school.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN COHEN: And during the day, I think it would be shameful if there were a

single child that missed a single session of school because the family had to choose between heat or food or medicine or which child goes to school today, or maybe this is the week that nobody goes.

MS. YANOFF: Right.

COUNCILMAN COHEN: Maybe next week, it will be one child, and three, they have to stay home.

And, Madam President, I believe that there ought not to be any appropriation whatever for the School District and/or for SEPTA until this issue is resolved.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN COHEN: I think for years, all of us have been very patient. I think Shelly Yanoff's statement says how reasonable everybody's been. All sorts of ideas have been proposed that sound very reasonable to reduce the cost, but apparently, SEPTA and the School District and the City, including us, have never felt it urgent to take action.

I agree with Shelly Yanoff. I think this is the year and I think what we ought to say

is, beginning in the fall, certainly, every child rides free; you figure out how to do it. And I don't think it would really cost any more money than it costs now for SEPTA to have ample fleets. They're talking about raising prices. You know, when they raise the fare, ridership goes down. There will be plenty of remove room for all of the kids all of the time.

(Laughter.)

COUNCILMAN COHEN: And so, Madam President, I want to thank Shelly Yanoff for the clear vision she has expressed and her sapience, and I think we ought to take an absolute position that every child rides free, kids ride free.

Thank you, Madam President.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you, Councilman.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Brown.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you, Madam President.

I simply want to say that a number of members of this body were absolutely awestruck by

the disheartening statistics around lead poisoning. I mean, when we know that there were 700 new cases last year and only 30 houses were treated, that caught our attention. So you should know that a few of us have had subsequent discussions and conversations about this, and I in no way want to suggest that we can do anything substantial this year, but know that there will be further action by several members of this body to do something about the fact that you have now caught our attention around the topic of lead poisoning.

MS. YANOFF: Thank you. May I respond?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yes.

MS. YANOFF: In my haste to read my statement, I overlooked the fact that I also had a statement, which was distributed to you, from Dr. Carla Campbell, who is a pediatrician, and she urges immediate action on lead poisoning and says -- again, Councilman Cohen, we maybe have been too reasonable. We only asked for half a million dollars so that 200 kids can stop getting poisoned today. That's not -- we didn't ask for 10

million; we asked for one half a million in a budget much 2.5 billion that we could -- these are kids who are known to be sick, they're known to have had elevated lead levels, and they have no place to go.

So we urge you to do what you can. We know that this Council cares about children, we know of your leadership, Councilwoman Brown. We urge you to not let them have to wait for another year the while we try how figure out the best thing. Sometimes getting to be perfect, like getting it free, which is what we want in the transportation, but if we could just begin to reverse the trend, we've made a statement, and we haven't begun yet. And after all of these years, both lead and transportation, let's do it.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN COHEN: Madam President?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Councilman Cohen.

COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thirty-three years ago, when I first sat in City Council, in 1968, one of the first debates was on lead-paint poisoning and how badly it was affecting the

children in Philadelphia, and 31 years later, we're still arguing about several hundred thousand dollars to save several hundred kids' ability, their mental abilities, and their opportunity to have a healthy life.

I think it's outrageous, and I think this year ought to be the year when we tackle it boldly and pay what has to be paid. There's no price too high for the health and safety of our kids.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you, Councilman.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Miss Yanoff, Dr. Campbell's testimony will be made a part of the our record. We have given a copy of it to the stenographer. And at this time, the stenographer is asking for a five-minute break. So we will recess for five minutes.

(Break taken.)

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(Proceedings resume.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We are back

in session.

MR. MCPHERSON: Our next witnesses are.

(Witnesses come forward.)

COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Good afternoon.

MS. GAMBALA: Good afternoon, Madam President. I want to thank you very, very much for letting us get away in a hurry. And all I want to say is that I am President of the Historic Sites in Fairmount Park, and I've been a citizen of this city for 45 years -- just in case you think I'm not.

And I'd like you to know that I think this is a grand opportunity to thank you and members of the Council for the wonderful job did with FDR Park. FDR Park has four marvelous sites. You have Bartram Gardens, we have the Blue Berlin, we have the American Swedish Museum, and we have that wonderful building Belaire.

And really and truly, the people of South Philadelphia deserve to have a lovely oasis there, because when I went last year at this time, it was snowing and it was raining, and there was nobody in the park. And all of a sudden, four cars arrived and four senior citizens came out,

and they put their chairs -- there was only a little bit of sunshine, and they put their little chairs out, and I said, When do you come here? and they said, We come here every Monday if the sun shines. So I think you've done a wonderful job for this park, and I'm so pleased about that.

I also want to draw your attention to the Fairmount Park (indiscernible) historic sites. We have a wonderful group of people, stewards for these houses. We are stewards also, we are nonprofit. And they do a phenomenal job.

And I want to draw my attention -- I'm going to praise Michael Nutter again because we draw your attention to Bill 505, the ordinance that they -- Mayor Street and Councilman Nutter did some years ago, and it has been a great help to us. And these houses are absolutely national treasures. Last year, we had the honor of going to Washington to do a lot of advocacy on these things, and we really did very, very well. And during the convention last year, we had the honor of seeing people a lot of the people who were there. And also, we did give Arlen Specter the Founder's Day Award, because he really helped us a

tremendous amount.

And we've always had in our house the love and protection of Mayor Street, of Councilman Nutter, and Councilman-At-Large Frank Rizzo, and many, many of the Councilpeople, and I hope I haven't left them out because they really have been a marvelous way of strengthening us. And I really think that Michael just a little while ago said, If you don't know what's going on, then we have to tell you. So I appreciate that very, very much indeed.

But I want to take this opportunity of bringing this latest piece of City Parks by Peter Harnick, and this is also about parks, and I want to read this to you because it's terribly important.

"The future of Philadelphia Parks and recreational programs is unclear. On the one hand, the City has a substantial amount of park land and a large number of facilities, perhaps even too much land and too many facilities, and enjoys a high level of private interests and support, particularly from the foundation community, friends groups, and Philadelphia

Green. On the other hand, the bureaucracies are not working together, and there is no effective unified park and recreation lobbying effort before the City Council. Mayor Rendell, who left his office at the end of 1999, was a tireless and effective booster of Philadelphia as a city, but he did not put parks at the top of his agenda and sometimes even tended to look at them as sources of revenue rather than as green infrastructure that need constant tending. If the new mayor, John Street, provides the leadership to pull together divergent public agencies and private advocates, Philadelphia's system could really flourish."

And I think this says it all. And I think you are going to find that this year, with some of the work that -- some of these houses being included in this budget, I really feel that they really need more money. This is not enough. It's -- the people -- we had 300,000 people come into these houses last year.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sorry, how many?

MS. GAMBALA: 300,000 coming for

different programs to these houses. We have an outreach program. We took 34 schools. We have Christmas programs for them, we have all kinds of things for young people. We have showcases of these houses, we invite the schools, and they come. And by seeing the houses and working with our people, they really appreciate what they see.

And we'd be so grateful if you could give the park more money. Remember, 100,000 votes in that park, that's something. So please give us (indiscernible) and I'll turn this over to Maria Mirarchi.

And I wish you continued success, Madam President, and thank you very much for listening to us.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you, thank you.

Maria?

MS. MIRARCHI: Good afternoon. My name is Maria Mirarchi, representing the Friends of Historic Franklin Delano Roosevelt Park in South Philadelphia. We've been in existence since 1987, and we are proud to be a part of the Fairmount Park system, part of the 85 Friends groups

supporting the largest park system of 8,900 acres, not only in the State of PA but also throughout the United States and members of the Fairmount Council of Historic Sites.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our appreciation and gratitude to Council President Anna Verna, all Councilmembers, elected officials, Philadelphia Historic Commission, and Fairmount Park Commission. As of August 9, 2000, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Park has been given Philadelphia historic designation, a milestone for Fairmount Park, the City Preservation Mission, and every single resident of the City of Philadelphia. And hopefully, within the near future, Pennsylvania Registry will also be granted to us.

We are here today to add our support to the Friends of Philadelphia Park, the Friends of Tacony Creek for their in-depth testimony. In order to provide all of our parks with their individual needs and to have them attended and for all major improvements to be made to our wonderful historic sites, additional funding, along with the proposed budget, is called for. Providing continuity and successful compounding on the

already-existing endeavors requires an increase in funding. This can only be accomplished with the support and cooperation of our City Council and elected officials.

With your collective support, this will not only affect the next six years, but this will ensure our natural park resource to be in -- I'm sorry -- to be in with our next few generations.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Please know that we are very grateful for your interest, your concern, and all of the time that you have put into -- that I know Maria has put into FDR Park. And without people like you, I don't know that we would ever be able to accomplish as much as we have.

And I want you to know that we are very grateful. Thank you so much.

MS. GAMBALA: Thank you very much, Madam President. We appreciate that.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: The next group is the

Family of the Dell East: Yvonne Downey, Maya Burnett, Lisette Harris, Sam Staten Jr., and Rena Brown.

(Witnesses come forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

MS. BURNETT: Good afternoon.

MS. BROWN: Good afternoon, Council President. First and foremost, I'd like to give honor and praise to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for allowing me to be here today.

Good afternoon, Council President Anna Verna, distinguished members of City Council, Administration members, and invited guests. Thank you for allowing us to testify today. My name is Rena Brown, and I'm the recording secretary of the Family of the Dell East. And with me is Maya Burnett, our president.

MR. BURNETT: Good afternoon.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

MS. BROWN: We represent the officers of the Family of the Dell East, the official advocacy board for the venerable Dell East. Our

mission today is to attempt to move you as an assemblage of law-makers and approvers of the City of Philadelphia's Operating Budget to assist the Dell East in its need for a budget increase. We recognize the need for fiscal constraints in City spending, and the Dell East has received its fair share of budget cuts. We recognize the needs for capital improvements, and we thank this distinguished chamber, in particular Councilman Michael Nutter and Councilman Darrell Clarke in the 4th and 5th Councilmatic districts respectively, for responding to our capital needs.

However, this testimony is about operating budget.

MR. BURNETT: The management of the Dell East has provided us with creative initiatives, long-term planning strategies, and prayers to help get us through another long, hot-summer season of great concert events at the Dell East. The Dell East program needs an additional $125,000 to completely start up the 2001 summer season of events. This request would help to eradicate a $94,000 debt from last year

and help to prove $30,000 towards booking artists for this new season.

We are here to ask you to please help the Dell East program obtain this needed amount. The Department of Recreation requested this amount in the early stages of the budget process and was denied. Again, we are concerned and we are here to request special consideration for additional funds.

MS. BROWN: The Dell East is a great institution in this city. For 29 years, the City of Philadelphia's Department of Recreation has presented high-quality entertainment for inner-city residents during the long, hot summer. With your continued assistance and a hand up to pull the Dell East out of its present financial dilemma, the City will continue to shine nightly in East Fairmount Park at the Dell East.

If you haven't attended events at the Dell East lately, come out and join us team us, as we are a family and the new team, and we try hard to make each event a family event.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MS. BROWN: Council President, I have

one more thing to add. I'd like your participation, since we didn't use three minutes.

(Witness hands out pieces of Lifesaver candy to Councilmembers.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Nutter.

MS. BROWN: Oh, I'm not completed.

I've passed out a Lifesaver and I'm asking you to hold that up in your hand for a minute. What you're holding in your hand is legacy of a company that put out Lifesavers, and each time they come up with a new concept, they are trying to change the flavor or put a new taste in our mouths.

We are asking you to save the life of the Dell East. We are in desperate need of additional funding for start-up. We cannot bring the best entertainment to the City of Philadelphia. We're asking you to think about the life legacy of the Dell East of Philadelphia.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

At this time, the Chair recognizes Councilman Nutter.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for the Lifesavers. Actually, I like this flavor.

(Laughter.)

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: And I --

MS. BROWN: That's a good sign.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Yes, and I like the Dell East too.

Madam Chair, I think the procedure that we're following today is to not so much ask questions particularly of the public unless imperative. This is a situation that I would like to re-raise with our Budget Director and the Recreation Department. And again, following, your judgment and lead, whenever that appropriate time arises during the course of these hearings, I would like to get back into this particular issue.

Our good friends at the table are correct. Councilman Clarke and I and others have been talking about -- and not just talking about but trying to do something about the Dell East situation, and I know that there have been some

discussions about this. We do not have a complete, up-to-date assessment of what the current situation is, and so I would like to reserve an opportunity at some point in time in the course of the hearings to get from our Budget Director and our Recreation Commissioner what the status on this operating issue is. We've had a lot of discussion about Capital Budget related to the Dell, but operating is equally important. So I'd like to have that opportunity at the appropriate moment.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Thank you both very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: The next witness is Ruth Birchette.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

MS. BIRCHETTE: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ruth Birchette. I'm president and founder of Heritage Community Economic Development Corporation.

And as I listened to the testimony of the ladies who just left the microphone, I decided to move up my comments about the Recreation Department to the top of my list. The Dell East is incredibly essential to our communities, without question. I speak not only as the founder of Heritage but also as a block captain, as a committee person, as someone who has devoted 30 years to community service here in Philadelphia, and a lifelong resident of North Philadelphia.

And I tell you, the Dell East is critical to the life an livelihood of our community. We don't get -- poor families often don't get an opportunity to take advantage of cultural activities, because often, they're out of the reach. The Dell East is a place where people will walk to participate in it, and it's a big joke with the comedians about the people who get on to the cemetery and sit on the lawn and listen because it's such excitement. The Dell East is

our Uptown Theater, now that the Uptown Theater is closed. The Uptown Theater is Philadelphia's Apollo Theater. And so please do whatever you can, and also let us community organizations know what we can do to support you in those efforts because we seriously do need to have the Dell East continue.

And in that regard, the Philadelphia Department of Recreation is very critical to neighborhoods in a lot of different ways, and certainly, Mayor Street in his blight elimination plan really has generated a lot of hope in neighborhoods like mine, at 19th and Norris Street, where my family spent 50 years, and there are no houses left standing across the street. There are five abandoned houses on my side of the street and three vacant lots.

In neighborhood like ours, you need hope, you need something to hope for, and -- but it's very clear that blight elimination is more than bricks and mortar. Blight elimination also has to deal with the social infrastructure of our communities, and so programs of the Philadelphia Department of Recreation and other departments,

which I will mention as well, are very, very critical to ours. For example, the Philadelphia Department of Recreation's Mural Arts Program: It bring again, art, culture to our communities. Their team of talented artists literally with their staff come into our communities, sit with us, find a location, and decide on what needs to happen with regard to that wall or maybe the vacant lot that's near it.

And, you know, after we're done with that, what's left is some type of artistry that reflects the spirit of the neighborhood, the talent of the artist and the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, which is a national-international example of what can happen in downtown business areas as well as deprived neighborhoods such as ours. And so I encourage you to do everything you can to support Jane Golden and her incredible staff with the Mural Arts Program so that they can expand those efforts. They get tremendous amounts of applications, but too often, it takes really a long time to try and get an actual mural done. It takes money. I'm startled at the small amount of money they spend allocated to that program. I

mean, $600,000 is no money for a staff of nine, given what I know as a community person who is active citywide, the demand for the Mural Arts Program throughout City.

Our program, in fact, you know, we're the recipients of the first mosaic tile mural of the Mural Arts Program. We're very, very proud of that, and it supports our efforts to try and turn a previously drug house into a clubhouse for community activities. And so we're able to use a major program like this to leverage volunteer efforts.

And, again, I stress volunteer efforts. I am a volunteer with my community efforts. And it's not just me; it's a lot of other people as well.

Along the same light, in closing my comments regarding the Recreation Department, I'd like to speak about the recreation centers and the pools. I really would like to see -- and there may have been discussion on this already and maybe there's discussion going on now, but I'd really like for the Recreation Department and Council to consider coming up with a plan to enclose the

pools so that the access to that recreation is a year-round opportunity for people. In the winter, our options narrow more and more in our communities for what our children and our families have access to. And it really -- you know, I don't know if it's just a few bricks or whatever and some heat, but it would really give us more options as we're really doing a lot to reshape the way services are being developed in our community efforts.

And as we talk about reshaping efforts and programs, you know, I begin to talk about the Philadelphia Department of Human Services and the tremendous excitement that's generated there within the presence of Alba Martinez and its Commissioner. It's an incredible, incredible effort of improved thought, just the way you look at systems and how systems work together, and not being afraid to look at what is actually happening and what can -- and dream about what can happen in our programs. And rather, it's between the School District and the department and the collaborative efforts of the Family Courts or whatever.

And I think that the Department of DHS

is really doing an incredible job. In particular, the support community outreach program and the prevention services of the department are incredibly important to our community. I know that the Department of Human Services is the child protective agency for the County of Philadelphia. However, in neighborhoods such as ours, it is the prevention services that are just as important in the sense that we're out here trying to prevent our kids from being at risk of juvenile delinquency. And so we don't want our children to enter into the system, and that's why prevention services are so important.

And so in that regard, I want to commend Council and the Department of Human Services for the creative way that the prevention component of DHS is being structured. And also to advocate for adequate funding to support those efforts.

At the community level, there are lots and lots of people who are willing, such as myself, having started my program in my house. We're willing to do volunteer work, we're willing to put forth our own money and things of that sort

and our own energy, but we really do need quality training so that we not just do a job but do a good job for our children and for our communities, and that we also have the kinds of supplies and access to tokens and car fare and things of that sort when it's necessary too.

In line of that, I'd like to advocate that there not be a restriction between a community-based, grassroots organization being able to apply for more than one of these types of programs at the same time. And the example that I will bring up is the fact that under the Managing Director's Office, you have the drug abuse prevention program. Under the Department of Recreation, you have the Philadelphia activities fund. And no community-based organization can apply for both. You have to apply for one or the other.

Well, most of the organizations that are out here applying for these monies and the top -- the maximum you can apply for is $5,000. Most organizations are out there operating on tiny money from the beginning. And it's just ludicrous, given what we're out here working with

for us to be barred from or have to choose from the fact that I run a kids cafe, and that's nutrition and trying to get our kids to cook some -- teach 'em how to cook some food on their own when in fact -- because the adult in their lives very often are not cooking for them. And so -- and I may have -- at the same time, I may have my science and nature club over here that's going around and cleaning vacant lots and trying to remove trash and trying to encourage our neighbors to do recycling. We should not have to choose which of those to apply for. We ought to be able to apply for both.

Also, the ceiling -- the funding ceiling of $5,000, it should be a minimum, it should not be a max. We really ought to --- very often, you apply for the $5,000, which you usually get maybe 1500 or something like that. Again, please do everything that you can. We know that you're already doing an awful lot, but if you would, and if there's any way that we can as community organizations support you in those efforts, it would be greatly appreciated.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Miss

Birchette, we're really enjoying your testimony, but I think you were not here when we indicated that each witness would be given three minutes to testify.

MS. BIRCHETTE: I wasn't.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And you're well beyond the three minutes.

MS. BIRCHETTE: I'm really well beyond.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And we still do have any number of people waiting to testify, so if you would just summarize your testimony at this point, we'd appreciate it.

MS. BIRCHETTE: I think you mean prioritize. Okay, I got it.

I have to say something about SEPTA and the Police Department, and that's going to be it. SEPTA and the Police Department. SEPTA, as it relates to the fares and the problem of the fares and the incredible problem we had with SEPTA going on strike the last time. In our community, the statistics for SEPTA will show you that we're -- our community in Northeast Philadelphia is most dependent on the public transportation. We had children who were unable to acquire summer youth

employment because of the SEPTA strike the last time, and so we advocate that there not be an increase but also that there be every effort to avoid a strike.

With regard to the Police Department, the abandoned car situation is really a -- has produced a very negative situation for people in low-income neighborhoods to the extent that these neighborhoods like ours don't have garages, and so, you know, while you're unemployed and you're waiting to get things together and have that car, you have nowhere to hide it, and I believe that while it's been very nice to clean up the neighborhoods, there have been some situations that have been totally extreme. I had a car right outside my door that's only been there since Saturday that was removed this morning. Absolutely unreal, uncalled for, totally uncalled for. No opportunity whatsoever for the young man to deal with -- to have a chance to deal with it. A young father, got a baby on the way in less than a month. Unreal.

I conclude my comments with that. Thank you once again for tolerating my comments

and for your diligence as well.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you so very much.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Peggy Amsterdam.

(Witness comes forward.)

MS. AMSTERDAM: Good afternoon Councilmembers. My name is Peggy Amsterdam, the Executive Director of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, a regional arts and cultural advocacy organization. I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of arts and culture in our city, specifically in support of the Philadelphia Cultural Fund.

We are so lucky to live in Philadelphia, a city that boasts a wealth of cultural organizations that are vital to the City and region's social and economic quality of life. Arts and culture serves as one of our leading industries, generating $564 million in regional spending, attracting a wealth of tourists, and providing nearly $6.5 million in Philadelphia sales and wage taxes.

In 1995, almost 18 million people

visited a cultural organization or site in the Philadelphia region, 18 million people. In that same year, only 2 million people attended a Phillies game, and about 700,000 observed the Eagles in action.

A recent survey of area business leaders published by the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and Sovereign Bank revealed that 64 percent of business leaders find cultural attractions to be a key strength of the region, second only to our geographical location in the northeast corridor.

But beyond this substantial impact on our economy, the arts also revitalize Philadelphia's neighborhoods by creating a community where every person, regardless of his or her social, ethnic or economic background, can contribute as an equal and succeed. I applaud the City for its current and past investments in the cultural sector and urge their continued growth. We've heard some success stories about that here this afternoon.

Since FY '99, appropriations for the cultural fund have remained steady at

$1.5 million. However, the cultural industry has continued to grow and to increase its impact in our communities. Philadelphia ranks seventh of the nation's ten largest cities in government per-capita operating support for the arts. I think we should be able to do better than that.

The cultural fund is critical to ensuring that the City's cultural institutions, everything from the Academy of Natural Sciences to the Village of Arts and Humanities, can continue to serve Philadelphia's residents. As you know, the cultural fund provides general operating support, the type of funds most difficult for nonprofits to raise. Yet it is operating funds that enable organizations to survive while developing new and innovative programming that revitalizes neighborhoods, increases tourism, and provides safe and enriching after-school activities for our children.

As Philadelphia's cultural sector grows, demand for services for our citizens increase, new organizations continue to emerge, and existing ones broaden their most successful program. The cultural fund is prepared to support

new and established organizations alike. However, the fund must grow to accommodate the growth of the cultural industry. As demands for cultural services in communities continues to grow, requests to the cultural funds increases as well. This year alone, the cultural fund received 214 requests, an increase of 14.5 percent.

On behalf of the Cultural Alliance's more than 200 member organizations, many of which receive grants from the cultural fund, I thank Mayor Street, City Council, and all of the City department heads for their past support and ask that you continue this commitment with an increase in the cultural fund's FY '02 appropriation and that you establish the fund's continued growth in the City's Five-Year Plan.

Cultural organizations invest heavily in their neighborhoods. We care. We want Philadelphia to be an exciting, interesting, and vibrant place to work and live. We hope that our city will share this vision by increasing its support of the Philadelphia cultural fund.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you

very much. We appreciate your coming in to testify. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Jeremiah White.

(Witness comes forward.)

MR. JONES: Good afternoon, President Verna and members of Council.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

MS. JONES: My name is Wilkins Jones, I'm the Executive Director of the Friends of the Free Library, and I'm testifying in place of Jeremiah White, the President of the Friends of Free Library, who was here but had to leave.

The Free Library's branch renovation program, Changing Lives, has been a resounding success. Every Philadelphian can be, and should be, proud of the progress the system has made in the last five years. In a little over 5 years, most of the 55 branches of the library system have been renovated and upgraded, thanks to the infusion of approximately $25 million in City

capital funds into the Changing Lives project.

The concern of the Friends is that after the expenditure of so much money in renovating branch libraries, these substantial gains will be diminished without ongoing preventive maintenance. The first of the libraries renovated are already showing some signs of wear and needing some attention. The Friends believe the library needs additional money over and above its current budget for contracted maintenance to keep neighborhood branches in good shape.

The preventive maintenance projects that would be funded with such an allocation would include, or could include, interior and exterior painting of branch libraries and replacement of furniture and carpeting. We also believe that additional money for landscaping would further beautify our neighborhood libraries. In particular, we think that landscaping and exterior painting of neighborhood libraries makes sense. Not only is it a good preventive maintenance investment in own right, but it supports the Administration's initiative to remove blight.

Clearly, any exterior enhancements to a neighborhood library will not only improve the appearance of the building, but it will contribute to the overall enhancement of that community's beautification.

In a recent interview with American Libraries, the magazine of the American Library Association, Mary Dempsey, the Commissioner of the Chicago public library system said, "The welcoming physical presence of a beautiful library building makes a strong statement." The Friends of Free Library could not agree with that statement more.

In Chicago, where the library system is in the midst of a renaissance, libraries have become the center of the community. The City's Mayor, Richard Daley, believes that libraries can spearhead the resurrection of quality urban living.

As proud Philadelphians, we believe that our renovated and upgraded neighborhood libraries are poised to also play such a role. And with additional funding for preventive maintenance, they will be able to do so.

Thank you, President Verna and members

of Council.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much, Mr. White. We appreciate your coming in to testify.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Tom Grade. Tom Grade?

(Mr. Grade not present at this time.)

MR. MCPHERSON: Mike McCrae?

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

MR. MCCRAE: Good afternoon.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Please identify yourself for the record.

MR. MCCRAE: Good afternoon. I'm Michael McCrae. I'm President of Philadelphia Recreation Advisory. Before I start, I do want to congratulate yourself for the support you've given us and all the work we try to do at Grays Ferry at the Youth Access Center, and it makes my job a lot easier with your support, and it really has helped us to move that forward a lot quicker and a lot faster and keep the thing rolling, so I do appreciate your support in that matter.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Wonderful, thank you.

(Mr. McCrae proceeds to read his written testimony verbatim, which can be found attached hereto.)

COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Thank you. Your testimony was excellent, and we appreciate you coming in. Thank you.

MR. MCCRAE: You're welcome.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Lauren Ward, Dorothy Pat Simmons.

MS. WARD: Good afternoon.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

MS. WARD: We are Laurie Ward, Chair, and Pat Simmons, Secretary, of the Southeast Region Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services. In these volunteer roles, we represent 66 private nonprofit child welfare agencies in the five-county Philadelphia area.

The Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services is a statewide

membership organization of agencies that provide services to abused, neglected, and delinquent children and youth and their families. Our member agencies provide a vast array of high-quality services, including abuse and neglect prevention programs, foster and kinship care, emergency shelters, group homes, and residential treatment. We also help families through parenting education, after school, truancy prevention, and day treatment services. Approximately 85 percent of the services to children and family for whom DHS is responsible are provided through our member agencies. As partners with DHS to provide quality services to children and their families, we have welcomed this administration's fresh approach to problem-solving and integration of services.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Fiscal Year 2002 Operating Budget. Based on our collective experience of serving vulnerable dependent and delinquent children and youth in every neighborhood through many different types of programs, several points made by Commissioner Martinez in her testimony warrant special recognition.

MS. SIMMONS: The first point we want to recognize is DHS's efforts to increase revenues for services to children and families by increasing revenues from other governmental sources, which will result in the reduction of the City's DHS expenditures from 25.4 percent in FY '99 to 9.8 percent in FY 2002.

Another point we want to recognize is the creation of the Division of Community-based Prevention Services, which will coordinate the Department's wide array of services to prevent abuse, neglect, and delinquency. Many of our member agencies provide prevention services to support families so that the children do not have to enter the more formal parts of the child welfare system.

It is important to implement the school attendance program, which provides support services to absent students before they are excessively truant, to expand after-school programs to support school-aged children and their caretakers, and to support the community-based treatment programs to help youth avoid criminal and delinquent behavior.

Another point worth recognizing is the implementation of the home-visiting programs for new mothers. We recognize the financial constraints in limiting this program to 400 new mothers, but we would like to emphasize that this type of in-home support has been proven to be successful. Home-visiting is an effective intervention throughout the life cycle of children and their families. It can be used not only for new mothers, but also as a prevention program for children as they grow. It also is helpful in families where parents have mental retardation issues through the HIP program, have mental health concerns, or who are caring for medically fragile children. Many of these home-visiting service models do not need to use the medical model that is important to newborns.

Another point we want to recognize is the safety net for children. The Commissioner reiterated the need to strengthen the safety net for children who require protection by ensuring safety and achieving permanency for children and youth in and placement. Because of the private providers' close partnership with DHS,

Philadelphia has exceeded federal standards for children placed with DHS. This is evidenced by the decrease in length of stay and care, successful reunifications, and increased adoptions. We have done this while facing critical staffing shortage, implementing additional service requirements, and serving children and families with increasingly complex problem.

And another point, integration of services and funding, the need for systems integration. Children who come into placement require much attention and need many services. Besides a safe and supportive temporary home, they require comprehensive medical, developmental, and behavioral health assessments and services. The parents of the children also require intensive services and support to enable them to care for their children. If we give families the services they need initially, more intensive services may not be needed later.

We were pleased that this front-loading of services to adults is part of the Commissioner's goals. We would like to add that

these services must be available for the children as well.

As we return children to their families and communities, we have to ensure that services are available to support the kids and their families and their reunification or their stepdown to a less restrictive placement setting. Too often, there is a disconnect between the services needed, the services available, and the services that are funded.

One of the most frustrating issues for our staff and the families is the inability to have physical, behavioral, and drug and alcohol services readily available. Sometimes it is the lack of the available service at a specific time or place. More often, it is a lack of funding for the needed services. Some members have had to designate staff whose sole function is to communicate with the physical and behavioral health managed care organizations to access needed services for children. They spend inordinate amounts of time trying to obtain these services. Together, we need to remove this barrier.

The creation of a clinical services

unit to coordinate the physical and behavioral health-care services for children in out-of-home placement is important. The goal to improve access to behavioral health services is critical. Again, the ability to access appropriate and timely behavioral health services is a critical factor in achieving successful outcomes, especially for children returning to families or being placed in less restrictive placement settings. However, it must be recognized that the direct services to the children are delivered by private contractors, and the quality and quantity of these services is dependent on the contracts.

MS. SIMMONS: Management and organization. We support the addition of 39 staff in DHS's case managers. One of the major barriers to all of us is the recruitment and retention of staff, whether it's case manager or direct child-serving staff. We have appreciated the department's willingness to share their communications plan to help us all recruit and retain the necessary staff. We are pleased that DHS is building its internal capacity for policy and planning to build resources that are based on

best-practice research, cost-effective, and focused on outcomes.

The department also plans on implementing performance-based contracting that will communicate measurable goals for DHS's contract providers. As part of this effort, the Department, in collaboration with contract providers, has implemented the Philadelphia Outcome Measurement Project, which was designed to track and measure service delivery outcomes. The relationship between the quality of the outcome and the cost of each service need to be identified and recognized.

We have appreciated the Commissioner's willingness to discuss regular reviews for the services and costs that are delivered under contracts. Some of the contracts have not been increased for over five years. We all know that the cost of living as well as the goods and services we purchased have increased during this time period. Many of our member agencies have experienced extraordinary difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff as we compete with higher-paying industries. Simultaneously, we have

undertaken a number of program changes to support additional regulatory and contractual requirements.

In order to ensure that we can achieve desired outcomes, it is critical services are adequately funded. Fair rates will be possible through regular reviews of service expectations and costs. We look forward to working with this administration toward this goal.

We would like to reiterate support of the current administration's thoughtful and comprehensive goals to support Philadelphia's most vulnerable children and their families. We as partners stand with the Commissioner in her efforts to implement the vision outlined in her testimony.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Ladies, I believe Councilwoman Brown would like to be recognized. I don't know whether she has a question or a comment.

Councilwoman Brown.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I'm so sorry.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do you have a question or a comment?

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I do not.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay, your light was on.

Thank you again. We appreciate your coming in to testify.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Ed Stanton.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. Stanton, I've seen you sitting back there. You've been extremely patient. Thank you very much for waiting.

MR. STANTON: Thank you all for listening to us. I'm Ed Stanton, President, Friends of the Wissahickon. I'll guarantee you I'll be under three minutes.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. STANTON: We applauded when Mayor Street and the City Council removed 40,000 abandoned cars from Philadelphia. This was a major step towards making our city more liveable.

One interesting thing was that the Friends of the Wissahickon was asked for the number of abandoned cars in the Wissahickon that had to be removed. There was only one car in the Wissahickon, a 1966 Corvair, through whole skeleton remains was wearing a tree seven foot in diameter. Volunteers had spent over two years breaking apart and dragging out the remains of the car in the Wissahickon so that Fairmount Park could haul the pieces away.

Countless volunteers have spent thousands and thousands of hours cleaning up the Wissahickon. Why? Most of these volunteers live close the to Wissahickon. They have all one thing in common: the love for the park. All along the edges of the Wissahickon -- Manayunk, Roxborough, Andorra, Chestnut Hill, Mt. Airy, Germantown, and East Falls -- are some of the most desirable and solid neighborhoods in our City. The reason is obvious. These citizens are staying in these neighborhoods because of the Wissahickon.

Wake up, City Council. Increase the Fairmount Park budget so that all of our parks will become a desirable place to live next to in

our wonderful city of parks. This money will help revitalize many, many neighborhoods as did removing 40,000 cars.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you so much, Mr. Stanton.

Councilman Rizzo?

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

Mr. Stanton, I know that throughout the years, we've been back and forth on some issues, but I want to publicly state that I personally, as you know, as a supporter of Fairmount Park, and want to thank you and the members for all of the work you do. I think it's a double-edged sword. You do such a great job that sometimes people that control the purse strings figure you'll make it work.

And, again, I want to thank you for all of the good work that you do, and I know Bill Mifflin and the other members of the Fairmount Park Commission and the commissioners certainly appreciate everything.

MR. STANTON: Thank you, Councilman.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: You're quite

welcome.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Mr. Vernard Johnson.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MR. JOHNSON: Good evening, Council President Verna and Councilwoman Blackwell. How are you.

I was visiting City Hall today and found out that this was the opportunity to testify around the Operating Budget. In all of the years I've been testifying, I've only testified around the School District budget, so this is somewhat from the hip.

Most of my testimony is going to be related to the Philadelphia Health Department, who, I think, comes to these hearings most of the time. I've witnessed them but never testified. And they are totally undercutting themselves as it relates to your budget. And I think this year, they did themselves a real disservice in terms of their budget request.

And I certainly would like to start out by saying that I believe we need to pay more attention, just as Shelly Yanoff testified, around children and families who live in environments that could result in their children being lead-poisoned. And now that we have a concern about lead in the water in the Philadelphia school system, even more of our children are being exposed to the dangers of lead poisoning.

And I must tell you that it was Estelle Richman, during her tenure as Health Commissioner here in Philadelphia, that certainly made me more aware of the issues around lead poisoning, and then we were able to talk more clearly to the people in our community around those issues.

I'd like to say I'm terribly disappointed in this Health Commissioner, his lack of advocacy around issues of the environment, and certainly to have his staff come and present the kind of plan that they presented around lead awareness and education, in my opinion, was an absolute disgrace. And I just want to make that very clear for the record.

We have met with this Health

Commissioner to talk about issues of the environment, we have asked this Commissioner to join in an environmental team with people from your district, Councilwoman Verna, out in the Eastwick area, with people from Passyunk Homes, Mrs. Carter, that whole public housing development. For some reason, all of those fine families down there were displaced. We've asked this Health Department to do a risk assessment of these families, and they have not cooperated in the least.

So I just want to -- from our organization, I'm speaking as the Executive Director of Healthy Family, and at this point, we're receiving no government dollars, and I feel real strong in a sense to sit here and say that we believe that we have made the wrong choice in hiring Walter Tsou as the Health Commissioner of the City of Philadelphia, and we would like to see him replaced.

I would also like to say on a positive note that we believe the Health Department is critical to the recovery of our communities. We believe that they need to be involved in more

education around issues of breast cancer, issues of prostate cancer. They need to be more active in our community around issues of infant death and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. We believe that some of the neighborhoods, like the community of Larchwood Gardens out in the Eastwick section of Southwest Philadelphia, are so far removed from quality health services, we believe that maybe there needs to be annexing of health center services to neighborhoods where it's almost -- where it's very hard for people to get to those services.

And I guess in closing, we think that there needs to be a greater effort to educate the families who have children attending Philadelphia public schools around this issue of -- around this issue of lead in the water. And not isolated to that, but here's an opportunity to cut across curriculum in the School District and talk about other environmental concerns. So I certainly would support the effort to do more environmental education in the School District.

And Shelly Yanoff, I think, made a good point of the need for -- she calls it a "safe

house"; we call it "transitional living." There is not adequate space for a family who has children that are coming home from the hospital and we know that that environment where that child is going is going to be an environment for lead paint. There is not enough housing, transitional housing or safe housing, for that family to go through while we remediate the circumstances of their problem. So we would call for more dollars than Shelly called for to support this whole area around education.

And I thank you for your time.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. We appreciate your coming in and we certainly appreciate your patience in sitting here all of that time to testify.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

I likewise would like to say thank you and certainly thank you for your commitment to our city and all of your efforts, especially with the Health Department and with lead paint.

I'm sure Councilwoman Reynolds Brown

will concur with me that we have big problems in the lead paint issue and in lead poisoning and that we need to do something about it. And your leadership has really done a lot.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. McPherson, at this time, would you again call the names of people who are on our list and did not respond to the first call.

MR. MCPHERSON: Shug Davis.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is Shug Davis here?

(No response.)

MR. MCPHERSON: Dr. Stanford Sher.

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Neither one of them are here.

Councilman Rizzo, at this point, would you like me to call Mr. Mifflin up to the table?

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Commissioner Mifflin.

(Mr. Mifflin comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MR. MIFFLIN: Good evening, Council President. My name is William Mifflin, and I'm the Executive Director of the Fairmount Park Commission.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And you were not here earlier because. . .?

MR. MIFFLIN: I was in court, in Courtroom 275.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. MIFFLIN: Capably represented by Solicitor Lebusky (ph.).

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. MIFFLIN: Successfully too.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Great.

I believe Councilman Rizzo had a question or two that he wanted to address to you earlier, so I thought this would be a good time to do that.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Good afternoon, Bill.

MR. MIFFLIN: Good evening, Councilman.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Earlier today, we

had conversation, and earlier this year, I had some conversation with you that I considered privileged, and I did not want to discuss that information, and I thought I'd rather have you explain the situation.

Earlier today, we had some accusations about gunshots in Pennypack Park and poachers versus the deer cull, and I know how controversial this deer cull issue has been, and I know that the first deer cull that occurred was not, in your opinion, as satisfactory as it could be, and I know that you did some things to hopefully make this a better effort this year. And I think that it's only fair that if people think that the gunshots that they're hearing are associated with the cull and if we have poachers, you need to know about it.

So I thought that what we would do is to ask you, for the record, and this is being televised from what I understand, and there's a lot of people interested in this issue, that you could explain how the Fairmount Park Commission has changed the way we are attempting to cull the deer in Fairmount Park from the point where you've

gotten legislation that allows you to do certain things.

And so I would appreciate it if you would explain, because I didn't think it was appropriate for me to reveal the information that you gave me in the past.

MR. MIFFLIN: Well, I'd be happy to. I appreciate the opportunity, actually, to have a public forum in which perhaps I can get a few of the Fairmount Park Commission issues across publicly. It seems that the opposition garners their fair support of the media.

As you well know, Councilman, the Fairmount Park Commission, and at least in the opinion of the Fairmount Park Commission, there are too many deer in both the Pennypack and in the Wissahickon, perhaps as many as 30 times more than what we feel is appropriate for the park to be able to regenerate itself in an appropriate biodiversity manner.

Two years ago, we began to take action with the use of professional sharpshooters to remove deer in the park. Not everyone agreed with that approach. There was some litigation, and we

successfully fought or won or addressed, I guess, those issues, and we were able to continue, although in a much abbreviated manner.

I guess the good thing is, we learned some lessons from that. And as you know, I believe the white tail deer in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are really the authority and the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

So not only do we have a unique situation of having an overpopulation of deer in the fifth largest city in the country, in a very urban area in the (indiscernible) parks, but we have a fairly significant burden of working within the confines of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's regulations, which called for hunting to be a part of any deer control permit that they issued.

They did issue two permits to us -- one in '99 and one in 2000, with the proviso that that would be the last two permits that they would issue. And quite frankly, in that manner, without a hunting component. The Fairmount Park Commission has said repeatedly and even most recently that hunting is not acceptable to the Fairmount Park Commission. So we sought a relief

from the regulations of the Game Commission and what we believed to be in the benefit interests of Fairmount Park Commission, not promoting hunting.

And with the support of our State legislators, we were successful in getting Senate Bill 612 approved. I guess it was early January, late December, somewhere in that time frame.

And basically, in quick summary, what Senate Bill 612 does is give us the ability to not include hunting as a part of the process in which the Fairmount Park Commission is utilizing and removing deer. It does not give us unilateral authority, as some people think we have, with deer. We still must apply to the Pennsylvania Game Commission for a permit. We still must apply for the number of deer tags, which suggests the number of deer we're going to remove from the park; each deer has to be tagged. It's a reporting situation or a requirement of the Game Commission that talks about the gender, the age, the health, and other statistics associated with each of the deer that we remove.

It requires that all of the meat, venison meat that's taken from the animals to be

given to food shelters in the City of Philadelphia. And it requires that we do all of this in a safe and appropriate manner.

But it certainly gives us some latitude from the hunting seasons, and most importantly, it gives us the latitude that we do not have to do this through hunting, but through what we believe to be the most efficient and economical manner and safe, and that's with the use of USDA agents, in this case, working in concert with Fairmount Park staff in removing the deer.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Could you not give just the acronym, 'cause it sounds like we have a secret service here.

MR. MIFFLIN: I'm sorry. The United States Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Management Bureau.

And we have been in on operational mode since the 1st of February and we've been pleased with our success.

I regret I was not in the room when the witnesses testified to some action in Pennypack Park, so I didn't hear it firsthand, but at least a dozen people have told me about the testimony,

so I have a pretty good idea of what was presented this afternoon.

And my answer is that this, of course, was not the Fairmount Park Commission performing what I was told to be actions of people with rifles on either private property or immediately-adjacent private property, and I believe this occurred on a Friday and a Saturday evening, times when we're not operating. So I feel 100 percent certain that this was not an operation of the Fairmount Park Commission.

However, once brought to our attention, we immediately contacted the Philadelphia Police Department, who have been with us every single time, event that we've been in the park, basically approve every move that we make. Their supposition is that these were perhaps poachers or illegal actions taken by, at this point, unknown individuals.

I'm not going to divulge what specific action the Police Department's going to take in regards to this matter because I think some of this information is somewhat sensitive, and we want to see if we can't, you know, stop this in a

-- in the fastest way possible that we can.

So it's very disturbing. Councilman, you and I have talked about this illegal act, known as "poaching," which has been going on for years, quite frankly. It's not just a symptom of what Fairmount Park is doing presently; it goes back regrettably decades. But it is an issue that has to be dealt with.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, I certainly appreciate that because I would not want the citizens of this city to equate what was heard here today with the program that the Fairmount Park Commission has undertaken to try to put this herd under control. And I am pleased that you're utilizing the folks -- the feds to come here and be of assistance to conduct this cull.

And, again, I know it's controversial, and you were kind enough to brief me when I questioned you about this, and I didn't think it was appropriate for me to discuss what you told me, and that's why I asked you to.

MR. MIFFLIN: Okay. Well, I appreciate the opportunity. I think quite frankly that the majority of folks who care about the park and who

know the park think we're doing the right thing.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you very much, Mr. Mifflin.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Nutter.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Mr. Mifflin, we have also had a number of conversations about this particular issue, and we'll make somewhat of an assumption, because Councilman Rizzo and I have also talked about. This our conversations have probably been slightly different than the conversations that you've had with Councilman Rizzo on this particular issue. He does, I know, feel very strongly about this and I respect his views on this matter very deeply.

I have supported Fairmount Park in its efforts to bring the deer population under control. I don't consider myself an inhumane person. And at some level, there is, I think, somewhat of a humanitarian concern with regard to the deer population if they are not only eating up everything that's living around them but also at times literally running out of food, and in some

instances, it may cause some of the deer to starve in the woods.

Having said that, I was contacted by a constituent who had a concern, and it's probably to some extent in the same area that Councilman Rizzo raised a concern, which is either how efficient -- I'll use that term -- the sharpshooter is or the increased level of potential poaching activity, again, going on in the park.

One of my constituents did contact me, Mr. Joseph Angell (ph.), who is very upset about a situation that he personally witnessed, where one of the deer had obviously been hit and hit ultimately fatally, but at the time he saw the deer, it was still walking around with a significant amount of head and neck area displaced.

The -- a report was made, and I think some of the Game Warden people came out, who also said that more than likely, it was from a poaching activity. I think my constituent was not totally satisfied with that response. And to the extent that we have this activity going on, which I said

earlier, I do support, whether it's going on at any particular point in time or not, this poaching issue, whether it's with rifles, bow and arrow,, lasso or whatever it is that people are doing out there, I think is a very, very serious issue and does raise some significant public-safety and also treatment issues with regard to these animals out in the woods but also people who either live nearby or frequent these particular areas.

What I would ask is to the extent that the Commission can, in coordination with the Police Department and the 92nd Police District and at least for the portion that I cover of Fairmount Park as well as the Pennsylvania Game Commission, we need to see what other steps we can take to cut down on the number of non-authorized people who are engaged in this kind of activity.

If you want to hunt, if people are into hunting, there are places in Pennsylvania that you can go to do that. Fairmount Park is not one of those places, as best I know.

And I will give you a copy of this particular letter. It's rather detailed and slightly more graphic than we want to share on the

record, but I do feel very strongly about a clear distinction between our authorized activity for a purpose versus what other people are doing just because they don't want to maybe travel 25, 50, 75 miles, wherever you have to go to engage in that activity. If you want to do that, that's fine; I don't have anything really against it, but it is very dangerous in an urban environment surrounded by a community.

So I will give you this letter, and I would greatly appreciate it if you could respond directly to my constituent on the particular issue, and then I would like to know at a future point in time that there is a game plan put in place between the park, the police, and the Game Commission on how we're going to deal with this poaching issue.

MR. MIFFLIN: Councilman, I'll be happy to respond to that person directly, and I appreciate you passing on that information to me.

I don't think there's anything that irritates me more than the cowardly act of poaching. It's just totally unacceptable to all of us here. It does nothing beneficial for the

park or for the City. And it's criminal, it's a criminal act, and it's just graceful that people would take the opportunity, whether it's because we're in the field now ourselves or, as I said earlier, it's actually regrettably been going on for sometime, but I think it is on the increase now.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Let me ask you question.

MR. MIFFLIN: Because deer are on the increase, and we do have a plan and I'd be happy to share with you that plan now and improvements that can be made to it.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Let me ask you one question, and I am not asking for any proprietary or confidential information with regard to the cull that's going on now and the person or people who are engaged by the Commission to do this work. The scope of this, I'll call it, "service," are they required -- if a shot is made and they believe that they have hit a target, are they then required to track the target down and make a retrieval? And what happens in a situation if they believe that they have made a hit, go to the

location, and the target is not there?

MR. MIFFLIN: Well, I can testify that that hasn't happened yet. We hit -- for every shot that's been fired, we've had a successful hit.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: And retrieval?

MR. MIFFLIN: And retrieval.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay.

MR. MIFFLIN: I'd rather not go into further detail.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I understand.

MR. MIFFLIN: But any animal --

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I mean, if your testimony is -- whatever the number is, and I'll make up a low number, that if 25 shots were made and there were 25 deer recovered, then, I mean, that's -- that's about as good as it gets.

MR. MIFFLIN: That's right.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Rizzo.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Mr. Mifflin, the accuracy of the people involved in this is

obviously very good. But I'm wondering, to avoid any finger-pointing, obviously, I haven't even read that letter, but I'm assuming that that letter is trying to associate that deer's demise as a result of the cull, that that deer got away, but now you're telling us that that's not the case.

Isn't there any way that the cull could have some way in identifying a cartridge or a slug that is able to -- you're able to prove that that -- in other words, that they would use one particular --

MR. MIFFLIN: Sure.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Can't you prove that in fact to a person it would be adamant that -- I'm not asking you to develop a crime lab.

MR. MIFFLIN: Sure, I understand.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: -- for the Fairmount Park Commission, but -- it's not in your budget. But it would be very helpful to be able to say, without -- matter-of-factly that the carcass of that deer, that that shot that killed that deer had nothing with the cull activity.

MR. MIFFLIN: That's right. An animal

that -- the way -- if it was injured the way the Councilman was paraphrasing the letter, it was totally different weaponry than we are using. Now, that was most likely a shotgun weapon, and we're not using that type of weaponry.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Do you believe these poachers are -- anybody that shoots deer with a shotgun is obviously doing it just to kill something, because I don't know how usable, even if you shot a deer in the head with a shotgun, how usable the meat of that animal would be.

MR. MIFFLIN: No.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Do we understand the psyche of a poacher? What are most of these poachers trying to accomplish?

MR. MIFFLIN: Well, I said earlier that they're cowards and they're lazy and they're criminals. Beyond that, I can't think of anything positive to say about them. They need to be stopped. It's just something we can't tolerate.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Just another 30 seconds.

I a got a letter, believe it or not, in reference to the deer cull, and the issue is

this. It's interesting, I never thought of it. The meat goes to a shelter?

MR. MIFFLIN: Yes, sir.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: The question was, where does the skin and the deer -- the leather associated with the animal go? There's apparently supposed to be a value for gloves. Where are the skins for these animals being taken and what happens to them?

MR. MIFFLIN: In 1999, all of it was taken by Native Americans. This time, a small percentage of it is being used by Native Americans. The rest is just being lost.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So it's just being thrown away, there's no use for the deer skin?

MR. MIFFLIN: That's correct. We're finding a lot of infestation of Lyme disease-carrying tics, so we just would rather dispose of it.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: That little mouse is responsible for that.

MR. MIFFLIN: Well, I'm here to tell you that it's not just the mouse.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you, Madam

Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Any other questions for Mr. Mifflin?

(No further questions.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much, sir.

MR. MIFFLIN: Thank you for the opportunity. Thank you for the support, Councilwoman.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: You're welcome.

The committee will stand in recess until 6 o'clock this evening.

(Break taken.)

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(Proceedings resume.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening, everyone. This is our continued public hearing of the Committee of the Whole.

Our first witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Mr. Tom Leonard.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is Mr. Leonard here?

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening. Kindly identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MR. LEONARD: Okay. Good evening. My name is Tom Leonard. And I'm a lifelong resident of the City of Philadelphia and I'm also a 24-year veteran of the Philadelphia Fire Department.

I would like to start off by asking one question, if I may. The Councilpeople who are not present. Will they get a copy of what I'm going to say?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sure they will.

MR. LEONARD: I thank you very much.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We have a stenographer back here who's taking notes.

MR. LEONARD: Okay. I would really like Council to explain to me -- I was to listening to the budget hearings the past couple of days since they've been going on, and I would like Council to explain to me how the City can fund needles for AIDS patients, methadone for drug addicts, and the City can't fund hepatitis C for Philadelphia firefighters.

You people have to be fair. There is something wrong with this picture. If you can support drug addicts and people that shoot dope, I can't see how you can't afford Worker's Compensation benefits for the Philadelphia Firefighters.

We just went through eight years of the Rendell Administration and he did nothing but decimate our union. The morale has been the lowest I've seen it since I came on.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. Leonard.

MR. LEONARD: Yes, ma'am?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: City Council did pass a resolution supporting --

MR. LEONARD: I understand that.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: This is an issue that the Mayor has been personally addressing.

MR. LEONARD: I understand that, but the issue is, you did pass a resolution, and I really, really appreciate. All but three, I believe, voted positive for the resolution, but it's been a standstill since, nothing has been done. And right after youse did that, youse

passed a stadium bill, not even knowing where $54 million is coming from.

I can't see the point of this, I can't see how youse can continue to turn your backs on the City of Philadelphia Firefighters.

I thank you very much.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. Leonard, wait a minute.

MR. LEONARD: Sure.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: If my memory serves me, there was $3 million.

MR. LEONARD: Yes, ma'am.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And the last we heard, how much of that was used? About only 100,000 of the 3 million was used.

MR. LEONARD: Okay. Mayor Street appealed our contract because he stated he couldn't afford $10 million over a 5-year period to fund hepatitis C.

The Philadelphia Fire Department, last, the EMS Program pulled into the General Fund $16,539,000 went to the General Fund from the men and women of the Philadelphia Fire Department, and Mayor Street can't afford 10 million over 5 years

to help hepatitis C? There is something wrong with this picture, and I really, really appreciate having the honor to speak before youse today. There's something wrong with this.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you, Mr. Leonard.

MR. LEONARD: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Angela Logan.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Miss Logan, before you start your testimony, we do have quite a list of witnesses to testify, and we're giving every witness three minutes in which to testify.

MS. LOGAN: These fine that's fine great.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Please identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. LOGAN: Sure. My name is Angela Logan, L-O-G-A-N.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Angie

Logan, and I am the Assistant Child Care Director for Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, the advocacy partner for the Childcare Matters early childhood initiative.

I am here today to urge you to support increased funding for the City's child care, health and safety fund. The health and safety fund originated as a partnership between Childcare Matters and the City of Philadelphia, with each contributing $85,000 to the program.

Since June, the fund has provided small grants to 112 child-care programs to help them meet fire safety code, improve playground safety, and make accommodations to serve children with special needs. More than 2000 of Philadelphia's children have benefitted from this program.

Child-care programs often lack resources to make even minor improvements to address basic health and safety regulations. Child-care programs have an especially hard time because the State reimbursement rates do not cover the true cost of care for child-care programs, and child-care programs are limited in what they can charge by what parents are able to pay.

The fund is critical for helping resource-poor programs meet quality health and safety standards. Without this fund, programs would have delayed making basic improvements that protect children's safety.

Health and safety funds can be used for a variety of purposes to improve the health and safety of child-care programs. Funds can be used to assist providers in complying with local and State governmental requirements, to help programs serve children with special needs, to exceed minimum safety requirements through best-practice standards, but most importantly, to ensure that children are not injured while they are in child-care programs.

Three key areas that the fund addresses are: playground safety, which is the most likely location for injury to children in child-care programs; food safety; and fire safety.

While the purpose of these funds is laudable, the amount of funding available is nowhere near what is needed. The health and safety fund provides grants of up to $1,000 to family child-care homes, up to 2,000 for group

homes, and 5,000 to child-care centers. Group child-care homes and centers are eligible for an additional 5,000 for a qualified fire detection system, but the cost of many of these improvements is far greater than the grant provides. For example, a fire detection system costs at least $15,000.

Here are just a few examples of how these funds have make child-care programs safer and healthier for our kids, and I would be more than happy to supply the City Councilmembers with other stories of constituents within their districts who were able to address the health and safety needs of their children.

In the Northeast, Minuette Taylor, a family child-care provider, was able to install safety doors.

And Irena Lesnik (ph.) from Asbooka (ph.) Day Care updated her fire detection system and made her outdoor play area safe for children.

Sky Blue Academy in West Philadelphia used health and safety funds to install a wheelchair-accessible ramp to make it easier for children to access her facility. This program

also installed fire doors for added safety.

Shermelle (ph.) Smith of South Philadelphia was able to install radiator covers, a garbage disposal, and a carbon monoxide detector.

Unfortunately, demand outweighs the supply for funding for this program. In Fiscal Year '99-2000, a total of 207 applicants requested over $500,000; yet only 83 were funded. Only 20 of 95 applicants were funded during a second grant cycle. Indeed, only 12 percent of eligible child-care centers. Seventeen percent of eligible group child care homes and 15 percent of eligible family child-care providers were awarded grants.

Currently the CCRD, which administers the programs, has $479,000 in outstanding requests, but only $138,000 available. It is obvious from numbers that there is strong demand for this program.

Let me speak for a moment about why child care is important for children, families, and Philadelphia's economic health. Child care is important to Philadelphia's economic viability. We know City Council is concerned with keeping

families and businesses in Philadelphia, and child care is one such service that enables parents to work and stay in this city. Child care is also a business that generates tax revenues for this city. Quality child-care programs help children do better in school, especially for at-risk.

Other states support children by investing heavily in both quality child-care and preschool, because they know that quality child-care and preschool programs are essential to preparing children for school.

City Council has shown its support for increased standard-based outcomes in its City public schools. We ask only that City Council be just as concerned with our youngest children's early-childhood educational experiences.

And lastly, child care is important for families. Today, 60 percent of Pennsylvania's families have one or both parents in the workforce. And welfare reform has been successful, in large part, due to families who are able to leave welfare for work because they have access and can afford child care.

We urge you to support a $600,000

annual appropriation for the City health and safety fund as you participate in the budget process. Keep children safe and happy in regulated child-care settings by helping the child-care providers help meet health and safety standards.

In addition, we would like a line item in the budget so we can better monitor funding for this important program. By providing these funds, you will ensure that for many more child-care programs can provide safe and healthy environments for children.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. We appreciate your coming in to testify.

MS. LOGAN: Thank you for letting me speak.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Our next group is?

MR. MCPHERSON: The National Student Union: Pop Dixon, Carole Jones, Ebony Jones, Jeremy Kaplan, and Day Augustine.

(Applause.)

2/27/01 - FY '02 OPERATING BUDGET

(Philadelphia Student Union members in audience hold up signs.)

(Witnesses come forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is Mr. Dixon going to be the first to testify?

MR. AUGUSTINE: No.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Pardon me?

MR. AUGUSTINE: No.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Who's testifying?

MR. AUGUSTINE: I am, she is, and he is.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: All right. Would you identify yourself for the record, please, and proceed with your testimony.

MR. AUGUSTINE: Well, first and foremost, I have copies of this, so --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: All right.

MR. AUGUSTINE: My name is -- my name is Day Augustine, and I am a member of the Philadelphia Student Union.

(Applause.)

MR. DAY: The reason I'm here testifying is simple. I go to West Philadelphia

High School and I am attending a school for aviation and an ROTC program, but I live in the Wynnefield area, which is several miles from the school that I attend. So I must take a bus.

My grandmother's on a fixed income and it is very difficult for her to put out $36 every month just for me to go to school and get the education that I so rightfully deserve.

(Applause.)

MR. DAY: There has been many times when I have had to miss school because my grandmother and I couldn't afford tokens. When I was in my sophomore year, there were multiple cases when I couldn't go to school. In fact, the reason was because I didn't have the transportation to get there.

During that time, I was very serious in graduating in three years, but instead of that happening, I ended up failing a class because I didn't have tokens, and now instead of graduating in three years, now I have to go to school my senior year and make up that class that I failed.

(Applause.)

MR. DAY: You know, the craziest thing

about it is, I'm not the only student that has this problem. There are many students in the Philadelphia School District that seem to have this problem, and that's why we're here today pretty much.

I think we deserve free tokens. The public school is supposed to be free, but if we have to pay to get there, it's not really free.

(Applause.)

MR. DAY: Our access to school as well as our education is free, because you have to keep in mind, our parents pay taxes for us to go to school. I mean, regardless of the fact that they may not pay a lot of taxes, but they pay taxes for us to get to school.

And I see it this way: If we are allowed to get free tokens, then that means more students will go to school, more students will graduate, meaning that they won't be out in the streets and getting in gangs or with drugs, or even worse, hurt or killed.

And it's just as simple as this: I want to go to school to learn, but I need your help to do it.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.).

MS. JONES: Hello. My name is Ebony Jones, and I live at Cecil B. Moore, near Cecil B. Moore, and I attend Simon Gratz High School. I enjoy going to school also, and I'm very serious about getting my education.

My mother has four children that attend public high schools. She spends $144 a month on school tokens to send me and my siblings to school and back. I believe that school is very important in a child's life and I would hope that you have the same beliefs as I do.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: I think that $145 a month is too much to pay for a free education.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: I'm not speaking just for myself. There are lots of other students in a similar situation. Some students are ashamed of letting people know that they can't afford tokens, and that's why some aren't here today.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: What I am so adamantly asking you is to consider not voting on the budget until you come up with a plan to make tokens free or more affordable for public school students.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: We understand that you don't have to vote on the budget until the end of May so that gives you time to find out a solution to our problem.

You are our leaders.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: You are our leaders, and we look up to you, and it is your responsibility to take -- it is your responsibility to take action in this tragic situation.

We can tell that money is no issue, you know, when we see the stadiums. When City Council wants something done, it happens. Everyone says that education is paramount, and this is your chance to prove it.

(Applause.)

MR. KAPLAN: Hello.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MR. KAPLAN: My name is Jeremy Kaplan. I'm a senior at Masterman High School.

The most valuable asset of our future is young people, specifically students. We will be the City's next doctors, the next lawyers, the next City Councilmen, or even the next City's SEPTA drivers. We're tired of being overlooked, taken for granted, and taken advantage of. Our newly-elected mayor, John Street, has a large focus on improving the quality of our city's schools. The Student Union feels that we should start with lowering the cost of public transportation for students.

(Applause.)

MR. KAPLAN: We pay three times more than our peers in Boston and more than four times the students in San Francisco.

(Applause.)

MR. KAPLAN: What is the reasoning behind this extreme inequality? Do these other cities simply place more value upon getting their students to and from school than we do in Philadelphia?

(Applause.)

MR. KAPLAN: In an effort to illustrate our predicament, we'd also like to draw comparisons to our fellow Pennsylvania cities like Pittsburgh and Erie. In both of these cities, transportation to school is free. In response, people say, All right, Philadelphia is a larger city than Pittsburgh or Erie, so their system wouldn't work like it would work in Philadelphia. In theory, that may sound good, but the largest city in our nation, New York, has worked out a system to also get their students to go to school for free. Why are we still paying $36 a month?

(Applause.)

MR. KAPLAN: This is not a small amount and this is not a small issue. Transportation costs can have large effect on an experience per student. It can be the difference between attending a magnet school or a neighborhood school. It could also be the difference between buying food for a family with four children or paying $144 a month for tokens.

The Student Union has come up with a plan to reduce the cost of tokens for all students. In order for our proposal to be carried

out successfully, we need the support of the City Council.

(Applause.)

MR. KAPLAN: First of all, we would like SEPTA to stop charging the School District for transfers. That way, the School District could use that money to reduce the price for families. The School District has estimated that alone would drop the cost of a pack of tokens by $4.

We are also asking that the City Council withhold $2.3 million from SEPTA unless they agree to stop charging the School District for transfers. We believe that it is fair to ask SEPTA to give this discount to students. SEPTA discounts for senior citizens and other groups, but currently gives no discounts for students.

In addition, we would like City Council to contribute an extra $2 million to further reduce the cost of tokens. With this extra money, the School District would be able to drop the price of tokens to a reasonable amount, or at least competitive with these other cities.

(Applause.)

MR. KAPLAN: Our third suggestion to you is this: We call on you to use your position to find the means from the State, the City, or other resources to make tokens free.

(Applause.)

MR. KAPLAN: We know that you have the money. We have witnessed you find billions of dollars for a stadium, or stadiums.

(Applause.)

MR. KAPLAN: You seem to be able to find funding for these that you feel are important. Well, this is one of these issues. You make it work when you want to, so make it work.

(Applause.)

MR. KAPLAN: We are demanding that you not vote on your budget until you find a provision to reduce the price of tokens. There still is time, because you do not have to vote on your budget until the end of May.

Our responsibility is to go to school; your responsibility is to get us there.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I would like the record to reflect that there are approximately 40 students here with signs. "We want to learn to learn." "Help us."

MR. KAPLAN: That's 40 opinionated students.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And we certainly want to thank all of you for coming in and testifying this evening. Thank you very much.

MR. KAPLAN: Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sorry. Would you mind taking your seats again.

Councilman Rizzo, do you want to be recognized?

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Rather than speak to one of you, I'll speak to all of you and everyone in this room. Until we resolve this problem, a very kind person in this city -- and it distresses me to hear, Day, that you couldn't go to school because you couldn't afford the token, so we need to do

something, and do it quickly.

But, but until we get this resolved, there's a very kind person in the City of Philadelphia that has a foundation, and she helps young people that have this same problem that you described today. And her name is Mary Mason, the Mary Mason Foundation. And she gives -- and people -- and it needs to be justified.

So if you know anyone that's in a situation that you ever were put into, please reach out to the Mary Mason Foundation. If you can't figure out how to do that, you call me, Councilman Frank Rizzo, and I will put that student in touch with the Mary Mason Foundation, because that really distresses me to hear what has occurred to you. And because of the kindness of Mary Mason and her ability to have this foundation, hopefully, until we resolve this problem, we can avoid this ever happening again.

Thanks.

MR. KAPLAN: I think that I can speak for the rest of us, that we do extend our gratitude to Mary Mason, but we don't feel that it's her responsibility, and that's basically --

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Did you hear what I said? Until we get it fixed.

MR. KAPLAN: Yes, yes, yes.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So don't cut off your nose, you know, to spite your face here. If you have a person that needs some help between now and when we have it resolved, if you don't want it, maybe someone else does. So --

MR. KAPLAN: Excuse me, I'm not saying that we don't want it, and I said that we extend our gratitude to her for it, but all I'm saying is that we are here today because we feel that it's the City's responsibility.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: We understand that, and that's why we're here and I'm here to listen to you.

MR. KAPLAN: All right, and thank you for listening.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thanks.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Ellen Maenner.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening, Ellen.

MS. MAENNER: Good evening. My name is Ellen Maenner, and I'm a ward leader for the 7th Ward, and I am here today to speak out against Prevention Point, the needle exchange program.

I am aware of some of the studies, but not all of them support the conclusion of the needle exchange program reduces the transmission of HIV, as you know it. I believe the needle exchange program sent the wrong message to our children. They seem to be condoning illegal drug use and conflict of efforts in reducing illegal drug use.

The root of our problem of spreading HIV through needles sharing is drugs. Remember, this is a major part of our drug culture, not recognizing the real problem. And the increase of numbers of needles that circulate not only add to the AIDS epidemics in the long term. There are numerous numbers of for urban underclass of (indiscernible) suspected of social engineering and willing to exploit them, as they have been

exploited in the Tuskegee experience -- experiments.

I remind you that the needle exchange program would not take place either in Center City, Northeast, Chestnut Hill, Manayunk. But the needle exchange program, however, has devastated the effects of the West Philadelphia, Kensington, South Philadelphia, and North Philadelphia.

If needle exchange has ever become legal or allowed to operate legally, it will be the ultimate scenario. More tax dollars will needed to fund a provision of more needles for more people to use drugs and contact HIV. We'll be running -- it will (indiscernible). It will put them in immediate cost of medical care, like your firemen with hepatitis C. We put all our firemen and policemen and everybody else, our community, at risk.

Taxpayers should ask themselves, why are they willing to pay for more drug use and continue their destructive behavior in consequences of our society and holding the outstanding providing the safety and healthy environments of ourself and our children (sic).

Furthermore, to allow illegal activity such as PPP, Project Needle Exchange, to continue will once again to send the wrong message to our children.

I've had a meeting with the Health Commissioner, who was here today, and asked him if he knew that this was illegal; he did know it. I brought 80 dirty needles here today and have turned in 150 at the last meeting with him. There are some legal technalities (sic) about this program. Not one tax dollar money is allowed to be spent on this program.

The cards, which I do have an example of, when the police stop these people with drugs on them, they are told they are not allowed to take the needles because the City of Philadelphia allows them to have these needles. I've brought copies of everything here.

Act 64, I believe it was two years ago. I have met with City Councilmembers and showed them Act 64, where it was illegal and the executive order. There was never no hearings held on this executive order. The executive order, you're supposed to have a hearing held within 30

days of that executive order. That has never happened.

So $300,000 of our taxpayers' money is being misspent, and the City is paying for it.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mary, did I understand you to say earlier, before you testified, that those needles were found in front of your property?

MS. MAENNER: I have found 150 with John, who works with the needle exchange van. He came out, he wanted to know why I was attacking the van. Now, spend one day with me, and he did do that. He picked up 150 dirty needles.

I have children living on my street. We had ten dead bodies in one month on my street from drug overdoses. We had over 1,000 drug overdoses. We've lost Episcopal Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital. Okay?

Now, this has become a real problem in our community. These people don't care. They're out there for the money, that's it. There is no one out there saying, Let's go into drug rehab. If we took this money and spent this on drug rehab, really, we'd be doing better services for

our community and our tax dollars being spent properly.

(Applause.)

MS. MAENNER: But to continue somebody continuing this, it's wrong, it's illegal. And if you're going to support this needle exchange program, you better also have them accept the responsibility for lawsuits, because somebody who dies, it's just like a drug dealer. If somebody gives somebody a bad batch of drugs, they could be held for murder.

So I think the City should be responsible. You have 132 firemen with hepatitis C out there. What do you think they're doing to our communities, what do you think they're doing to the people who live in them communities.

This is an illegal program, and it should be stopped here tonight.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Ellen, Ellen.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Sit down.

MS. MAENNER: Yes?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Councilman

Rizzo would like to make a statement or ask you a question.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ellen, I know how involved you are with this issue, and we appreciate all of the work you do in your community. I spoke with Director Estelle Richman, and I'd appreciate you surrendering that bag of needles to the sergeant-at-arms and she will make sure that they are properly disposed of.

MS. MAENNER: I dispose of these needles my way: I take 'em to the hospital. By giving her these needles, the number of needles that are supposed to be exchanged and the number of needles that are supposed to be returned, this will give 'em 80 needles that would have not been returned to the needle exchange, that they would have had credit for.

I take these to Episcopal Hospital, and they are disposed of there.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, I'm again offering you to surrender those to the sergeant-at-arms, and Miss Estelle Richman will

make sure that they get disposed or properly.

MS. MAENNER: Okay.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: A deal?

MS. MAENNER: All right.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Okay?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. And thank you so much for coming in to testify.

MS. MAENNER: There is one other thing. This program was operating within 50 feet of schools and churches, and they had meetings over this. And Estelle Richman did move it from five of the locations.

But if you look under State law, this is illegal.

There's no danger in them needles. They have been. . .

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Thank you very much for coming in. Thank you.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Beth Gross.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MR. GROSS: Good evening, Council President Verna. I'm here tonight. My name is

Glenn Gross, and I am representing my wife, Beth Gross, who took ill on Monday morning and is currently in the hospital. So if you don't mind, I will read her information for her.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: That would be fine.

MR. GROSS: Thank you, Councilwoman.

Again, my name is Glen Gross. My wife, Beth, and I live in Center City Philadelphia.

Beth would like to impart with you that during the last three years, she has spoken with many people who use public transportation in Philadelphia. So far, Beth has collected by herself over 23,000 signatures of people who agree with the no-strike requirement for SEPTA. She has provided these signatures to many public officials, including Governor Ridge, Mayor Street, Representative (indiscernible), Representative John Perzel, State Senator Vincent Fumo, and (indiscernible) President Harry Lombardo, as well as you, Council President Verna.

She appreciates the opportunity to express her views and concerns with respect to ensuring uninterrupted public transportation in

the City, where over 800,000 people rely on the service every day. Seventy thousand of these riders, as you have seen, are students. They rely on SEPTA to get to school. (Indiscernible) opportunity for all of them.

Public transportation is a center service for the people who live in the City with no private transportation in order to get them where they need to go. SEPTA is funded by primarily State and local taxes. Please acknowledge the inequity between those of us who use public transportation and those who have cars to gain access to employment and jobs. The mobility that is provided by SEPTA enables us without cars the freedom to go to work, school, and employment places.

The household income of SEPTA riders is relatively low. Two-thirds of your riders -- I'm sorry, two-thirds of the respondents to a recent survey said that they were annual household was less than $35,000. Public transportation is a service which is paid for but then never provided during the last SEPTA strike. People who bought TransPasses as well as TransPasses were never

provided the service they paid for. They were never reimbursed, and they were expenses that they paid for.

Living and working in the City, where millions of taxpayer dollars used to fund the public transportation, we are entitled to wake up a working SEPTA. And in gathering the 23,000 signatures for support of a no-strike policy, Beth became aware of nearly 200 people who lost their jobs because of the 1998 strike. Over 50 students were unable to attend their own graduation.

Beth wishes to be able to attend this services that she, along with thousands of other Philadelphians, have paid for directly or indirectly through here their tax money.

To date, no single approach has consistently been implemented to ensure the riding public uninterrupted contract negotiations without escalating conflicts. (Indiscernible) make a contribution to remediation, but it falls short of (indiscernible) available. Correspondence has been received from Babette Josephs, State Senator Vincent Fumo, and John Perzel sent a letter today in support of a no-strike clause.

To close, John Perzel, who has specifically asked his staff to study the possibility of expanding (indiscernible) or of the public employee relations that would prohibit strikes while providing a form of binding arbitration for contract disputes to include public transportation workers.

Please help Beth to prevent the fear that is experienced by public transportation users everywhere every three years when SEPTA negotiates a new contract. One way this could be achieved is by implementing a no-strike clause. However, if you are aware of a better way to ensure that the rider services are available to everyone, I would be pleased to work with you.

Beth thanks you for your time and your willingness to hear her issues.

Thank you very much.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We certainly appreciate your taking the time to come in and testify, and we certainly hope your wife is feeling better.

MR. GROSS: Thank you, Councilwoman.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

And I'm sure that we will all look into this issue.

MR. GROSS: Thank you very much.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Tom Zemartis.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MR. ZEMARTIS: Good evening, Council President Verna and honorable City Councilmembers. My name is Joseph T. Zemartis, and I'm a business agent for AFSCME, Local 222. I represent Recreation and Fairmount Park employees. I'll try to make this testimony brief as possible.

As a union representative and a City resident, I am not only concerned for my members but the conditions of the deteriorating recreational park facilities. At this time, there is no problem with the Department of Recreation. I would like to commend Commissioner Vic Richard for the wonderful job that he has done to lead and guide the Department on the correct path to benefit the citizens of Philadelphia and also to

members that work for the Department of Recreation.

My concern tonight is for the employees of Fairmount Park Commission. I have met with the director and his staff. Together, I thought that we might eliminate ongoing problems of an understaffed and declining workforce. Unfortunately, the same problem of underfunding keeps arising.

At one time, the Fairmount Park Commission employed approximately 700 employees. Today, the workforce is around 200, and of these, one-third to a half are in supervisory positions. No wonder there is such a drastic backlog for tree removal, pruning, and areas around the City where cutting grass is ignored.

I was here Friday, February 16th, for Director Mifflin's testimony regarding the Fairmount Park Commission's FY 2002 Operating Budget, and I am troubled by the director's failure to request additional funding. It is very unfortunate that the present and past administrations cannot support Fairmount Park at a greater level than presently exists.

I am here to testify that the Fairmount Park Commission does in fact need an enormous increase in our FY 2002 budget before this beautiful park deteriorates from the inside out. As you know, it's the largest inner-city park in the United States and it is our city's greatest treasure.

My next issue involves the Fairmount Park Rangers. For over 13 years the park rangers have fallen short of reaping the same benefits as civil service employees. It is imperative that City Council consider making these 19 park rangers full-time civil service employees. Be reminded that the City considers the rangers essential personnel during citywide emergencies.

Here are some other vital reasons should become civil service employees. They operate City-owned vehicles that are repaired at Shop 282, the car barn. They are located and dispatched from City-owned facilities. They have security codes for City buildings and their alarm systems. They have keys and access for City parking lots and different district locations. They work with City-owned equipment and City

office supplies.

I have talked to several City Councilmembers on these issues who agree that Fairmount Park Commission is substantially understaffed and underfunded in all of these aspects. I urge you to join with me and your colleagues in fully supporting the needs of the Fairmount Park Commission.

This concludes my testimony, Madam President and honorable Councilmembers. And I would be glad to answer any questions about this testimony.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Can you tell us when the Fairmount Park Commission had 700 employees?

MR. ZEMARTIS: I believe it was between 15 and 20 years ago.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And you say of the 200 that we presently have, approximately half of them are in supervisory positions?

MR. ZEMARTIS: Yes, 75 to 100 are in supervisory positions, that's correct.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay, the Chair recognizes Rizzo.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Madam Chair, thank you.

Mr. Zemartis, I do remember the days when there were 700-plus employees in the Fairmount Park Commission, but could you maybe elaborate on how we've been able to do what we do? And I understand we're not, in your opinion, doing the job that we once did with City employees, but have they been split supplemented by private contractors? The tree removal is not done, in most cases, the Fairmount Park Commission directly; I believe they're subcontracted a lot of that work out.

Do you know of other privatization or do you know of any contracts now that are in place with the Fairmount Park Commission doing the work of those 700-plus employees?

MR. ZEMARTIS: Most of the work, Councilman Rizzo, is done by contractors.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well --

MR. ZEMARTIS: The people they have now are basically for special events. When the contractors don't show up, they use these people to cover up what the contractor misses.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So what basically you're saying is that replacing the employees and doing the work currently required in Fairmount Park, there are private contractors doing those tasks?

MR. ZEMARTIS: That is correct. And as we all know, little by little, as contractors move in and the employees and the equipment leaves, prices go up, and we end up losing in the long run.

That's what I'm concerned with, long-term issues.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you. Good luck.

MR. ZEMARTIS: Thank you, Councilman Rizzo.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Can I assume that perhaps among the 700 employees 15 or 20 years ago, they may have been under the SETA program?

MR. ZEMARTIS: Pardon me?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Were they

under the SETA program?

MR. ZEMARTIS: That's not correct. With SETA and the mounted police, it was probably close to 12 to 1300 employees.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay.

Are there any other questions or comments from members of the committee?

(No further questions.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MR. ZEMARTIS: Thank you, Madam President.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Alatabius Clark?

(Witness comes forward.)

MR. CLARKE: Hello.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening. Please identify yourself for the record for the record.

MR. CLARKE: Altabius Clarke.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Proceed with your testimony, please.

MR. CLARKE: I would like to talk about

Prevention Point of Philadelphia.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sorry?

MR. CLARKE: I would like to talk about Prevention Point of Philadelphia, the City's needle exchange program. As a former employee of the needle exchange program, I would like to let you know that it's a misuse of taxpayers' dollars.

They promote prostitution, they print up pamphlets like these, "Tricks of the Trades," with taxpayers' dollars, telling people to get their money up front, telling women to wear something fashionable.

They print up other pamphlets telling people how to smoke crack successfully. I have never seen a successful crack addict yet. Smoke crack before you go to work, smoke crack after work.

They tell people basically again and again that you should inject drugs safely. Their idea of injecting drugs safely is to have people get high in their building at Third and Girard, which is their main office. They hold groups there that are supposed to teach people about HIV

and AIDS. Instead of teaching people about HIV and AIDS and the spread of transmission, they have people that are getting high in the basement. It's basically a shooting gallery. That's their idea of what have they call "harm reduction."

They have doctors at their sites -- that's what they tell their participants. They're just medical students. These students come out in groups of 30, they have a medical van. Inside this medical van, these people actually think that they're seeing doctors. They're medical students. They're cutting open wounds, cleaning out abscesses, lancing boils. All of this on a van, okay?

One of my neighbors collected these syringes. These are clean, by the way. Now, all of these syringes were collected by one of my neighbors. My neighbor's no drug addict. She just feels as though if she goes to the van and collects syringes, there will be fewer more syringes that will be left out in the streets of Philadelphia. Okay?

Every week, my neighbor goes over to the van and gets seven more syringes. They give

syringes out to people from New Jersey, Delaware. People come as far as New York.

Prevention Point of Philadelphia sets a bad example. They give out syringes behind McMichael Elementary School every Tuesday morning at 37th and Brown?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Behind an elementary school?

MR. CLARKE: Yes, 37th and Brown. I believe that's Miss Jannie Blackwell's district.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It's my area.

MR. CLARKE: Okay, Prevention Point of Philadelphia also gives out syringes on Wednesday morning behind the Performing Arts High School in South Philadelphia. They feel as though, oh, it's okay to give out syringes at that time because school's in session. It's not okay to give out syringes behind the school.

They leave behind broken syringe points, orange caps, bottles, cookers, all types of drug paraphernalia. It's a shame.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilman Nutter.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you, Madam

Chair. I just needed to try to get some additional information with regard to the gentleman's testimony.

Now, did I understand you to say that you were a former employee of Prevention Point?

MR. CLARKE: Yes, sir.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: How long did you work there?

MR. CLARKE: A year and a half.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. And why did you work there?

MR. CLARKE: Well, when I originally went there, I actually believed in the organization and the work that they did, until actually, when I got there, I realized that the work they did was not to stop the spread of AIDS or HIV. Basically, all their employees are there just to get a paycheck. And basically, the whole idea of the organization is to keep people getting high, keep giving 'em clean syringes, and we can maintain a job.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: What was the nature of your leaving?

MR. CLARKE: The reason why I left is

because I didn't agree with them teaching prostitution, telling people how to smoke crack successfully, and they were not really promoting people to get into drug rehab or treatment. They just continuously wanted people get into their van and exchange syringes week after week after week. They didn't make their exchanges responsible at all.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I understand that and I heard most of that story.

Did you resign your position?

MR. CLARKE: Yes, I did.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. And what locations did you work at?

MR. CLARKE: I worked at all of the locations. I was a site coordinator.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: A what?

MR. CLARKE: I worked at all of the locations, I was a site coordinator.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay, okay. Thank you very much.

MR. CLARKE: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Are there any other questions or

comments from members of the committee?

(No further questions.)

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Thank you very much for coming in.

MR. CLARKE: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Take your time.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Shira Walkinsky.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Councilman Nutter?

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you.

I just again would like to request of the Chair, if there is some opportunity, the testimony that we just heard was -- I'm not sure if I'd try to characterize it, but the Director of Social Services and former Health Director of the City is here, and I've not talked to her obviously between that testimony and right now. But I do think that it's the kind of situation that may need some level of clarification, if not possibility some clearing of the record.

We've had tons and tons and hours and

hours of discussion about this particular issue. I don't know the gentleman, I don't know the circumstances of his employment. But, you know, we have all, I'm sure, experienced some situations where, in a post-employment environment, certain things may be said about a company or an organization or entity, and so I think that at a minimum, there should be some equalization of comments about such a very serious public health matter.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And I totally agree with you, and perhaps after the two witnesses that we have at the table testify, we will call Estelle Richman up.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

McMichael School is my area, and McMichael School -- it's not far. McMichael School is at 36th and Fairmount, and he's talking about 37th and Brown, which is not far.

But the needle exchange program is --

Brown Street has many lots, vacant lots, and it's part of what we're talking about for renewal in my area. We have a lot of vacant lots there. The needle exchange program has been there for a while and for several years.

And, basically, the community supports it. I've been out there, I've seen it. And it's -- it's not directly behind it, but if that's the issue, I respect varying people's different opinions, but I will say that for that community,, the needle exchange program is appreciated and supported by the adults who live there. If that's the question.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And I know that the people who testified earlier are still here, and I just want them to know immediately after we hear testimony from the two witnesses at the table, we will ask Estelle Richman to come up, okay.

Please identify yourself for the record for the record.

MS. WALINSKY: My name is Shira Walinsky, and I'm here through the Mural Arts Program, and I'm just here to encourage you to

keep supporting the Mural Arts Program.

I've done one mural and hopefully will do some more. I'm working at Olney High School, and it's a great program because it works intensely with a small number of kids who may not have had any art experience, and it helps them to discover themselves, it helps them learn new skills, it helps them to improve their communities.

So I would just say the proof is just to look at all of the murals in the City and look at how they've really helped the communities and helped to change the look of the whole City. So I'm going to be really brief and just say, please keep supporting the Mural Arts Program.

And this is one of my students, Cherie Harris.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Good evening.

MS. HARRIS: My name is Cherie Harris. I think that we need more money to get more paints and stuff for our murals, and we need more canvas for our murals. And that's all I have to say.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you

both so much for coming in to testify.

MS. WALINSKY: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And we in Council truly support that program. It's really a wonderful program.

MS. WALINSKY: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

May I ask Estelle Richman, the Director of Social Services, to please come up since there has been an issue that has been brought out this evening. People are still here and I would like you to have the opportunity to please explain about this program. And you heard what the complaints have been.

(Witness comes forward.)

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: The needle exchange program has been -- I'm Estelle Richman Director of Social Services, City of Philadelphia.

The needle exchange program has been operating in Philadelphia for approximately nine years under an executive order by Mayor Ed Rendell. The Philadelphia program has actually been one of the more successful programs in the country, with one of the highest exchange rates.

In other words, the number of needles turned in and the number of needles turned in for exchange is usually in the high 90 percent range. We have -- the program started with two sites, expanded to three, and the newest site is in West Philadelphia.

The purpose of the program is to prevent HIV. There's also a strong effort to be able to work with people who are at the exchange to encourage them to enter drug treatment programs. Some have, many do not, but the effort to continue to have them do that continues.

The program does have as part of its staff students from the Jeff Home Program. They are supervised by an attending physician. As you can imagine, no medical student is allowed to provide any kind of medical care without supervision from the folks at Jefferson, and they are very vigilant in doing so.

Obviously, I am not there to examine all of the activity that's going on a day-to-day basis, but the Behavioral Health office of the Coordinating Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs does monitor the program.

There has been literature developed at times that we have -- that had not been pre-approved by the Director of CODAAP or AICO. Consequently, we put in a very tight monitoring program that Prevention Point or any other of the AIDS or drug and alcohol providers cannot develop material without having it reviewed first by the directors of those programs and subsequently by me before any of those. We did do that this year in response to some material that we agreed probably should have not been approved before we had an opportunity to review it.

If there are other issues that I can clarify, I'd be glad to do so.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Rizzo.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

Director, again, constantly, we hear and defend Prevention Point. We hear these complaints. Could you provide to the Chair this report that you just reported on where this program request is allegedly a very successful and model program.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: Yes, I'd be very

glad to do so.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Also, have you convened professionals within your organization and in the Health Department to examine exactly how this program is administered? Because I know that sometimes you're surprised by things that you see, and I don't mean to put you on the spot, but I surprised you with a document tonight that you claimed that you've seen before. And I would hope that we would examine this very carefully to make sure that the allegations that we're hearing about being set up behind schools, and I know that there's a criteria of 50 feet, and that doesn't sound very far away, 50 feet.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: I don't think -- I think it's not 50 feet, I think it's 50 yards, but there is a distance, there is a criteria. And we have made sure that they weren't -- I will go back to make sure there is no encroachment on that, but we have moved sites that we felt were too close to a school or to any other building where there would be children.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Director, the taxpayers of the City of Philadelphia pay for this

program. And if this is a good program, it should be limited to people who live here in this city, or in this region. I have gotten a call from a father asking me, as a member of City Council, from a child that lives in the State of New Jersey, and it was stated here tonight that we have people coming from out of state to take advantage of this program to get their syringes. I have a parent who was absolutely in tears, saying that his daughter on a weekly basis comes to Philadelphia, picks up clean syringes, and returns to New Jersey.

Now, I guess the bottom line is that we're helping -- we're being helpful to a human being, but should this program be allowed to supply people that come from out of state to get clean syringes?

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: The -- no. The program needs to be focused on people in Philadelphia. However, they do not ask for I.D. when people come to the program.

There are -- my belief is, and the belief I believe of the people who monitor the program, is that the number of people who use it

from out of state is a very, very small percentage. And if one or two people are coming from out of state in relationship to the hundreds of people that are using the program, we probably aren't going to effectively begin to -- have to -- be able shut that down.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Director, it's easy to throw out a number of 1 percent. You just said you don't know.

SECRETARY RICHMAN: We don't know.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So don't throw a low ball at me because it's not really fair to do that. You don't know how many people are coming from out of state.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: We do know that most of the people --

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, look at this young man that just walked in here with a whole bag of clean syringes that the person that got them was not HIV-positive and was able to collect as many syringes basically as she needed, whoever the person was.

But my point being, do we need a hearing to examine this thing, to look at it very

carefully to make sure? Because we constantly hear about the problems, and we also hear about the good things.

But if there's any -- if there's some concern that possibly it's not being administered and the people that are -- you know, you're the former Health Commissioner, and for me to surprise you with that document tonight, it kind of got me a little bit.

And again, I'm not -- it's just that I think we need to sit down, either a select group or this entire Council, to see exactly how this program works.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: Councilman, we really monitor this program very tightly. I have not seen that particular card before. I would be very surprised if Mark Bencivengo has not seen it.

But I'm not sure that the card is a major part of our problem. I actually -- also, the card, as you explained it to me, is used as identification by the people who use the exchange. That may be an opportunity for us to make sure that it is a Philadelphian that uses the

exchange and not someone from out of state.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So it's like having a Mac card. You have to show your card before -- that's okay, that's okay. That works.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: And I can find that out for you, but I don't want to leave you with the impression that no matter how tightly we monitor this program, we're going to be able to assure you that everyone who comes to the needle exchange is going to be someone who lives within the boundaries of Philadelphia.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Okay, and I'm very realistic that this is a difficult audience that you're dealing with, that this is a very a tough program to administer. I wouldn't want to have any responsibility in making sure it runs right.

But, again, we had a Mayor's executive order that was signed in the previous administration. And the question is, does this current mayor want to continue this program? And the statement was that he does. And if he does, then I would think that this mayor would want to make sure it's run as efficiently and as tightly as humanly possible. And, again, there's area for

mistakes and there could be flaws in it, but I think a new reexamination of the program, understanding all of the documents that are associated with it, where it's positioned, how it's run, I think that that's not an unreasonable request.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: No, Councilman, and we will continue to monitor this program very tightly and to assure that all the requirements and procedures that we had originally requested that they follow are continuing to be followed and that all of the safeguards continue to be there.

And I will again make sure and talk to the Deputy Commissioner who is in charge of this program and his staff and request from them both a report on a program and that the safeguards are continuing to be in place.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: And you can understand that there are a lot of people listening tonight, watching here that depend on syringes to keep them alive, people that have diabetes, and I don't see those folks -- would those folks be able to go to one of these exchanges and bring in their old needles and get

clean ones?

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: The folks at the exchange do not inquire as to the health reason from one requesting an exchange, that's correct.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So if they wanted, then they could.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: That is correct.

The key for us in the program is to prevent people from dying from HIV, and indeed the program has shown to decrease the number of HIV by ingest injection drug users.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: And you will provide the Chair with --

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: And we will provide the --

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: -- the data that substantiates that success.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: That is correct.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Maybe it would be better if we all understood how this program works. Would you walk

us there how this needle exchange program actually works?

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: The needle exchange program is funded by the Coordinating Office of Drug and Alcohol Abuse Programs, the dollars that go to Prevention Point. Prevention Point sets up, I believe, four sites in different parts of City.

The sites typically run from one to two hours, Saturday or different days of the week. During that period of time, an individual can bring needles and are given exchanges for those needles. If you bring in 20 needles, you will get 20 fresh needles. The needles that you turned in are then appropriately disposed of so they are no longer a danger for those needles that are returned to us.

The exchanges rate is approximately, I don't know, 95 percent. I really would have to get back to the folks at CODAAP to give you the exact exchange. They are exchanging a high number of needles, somewhere -- I'm not sure they've crossed a million, but there are several hundred thousand needles that are being exchanged. If you

only took a small percentage of those, you do have needles that are not being exchanged.

When they come to exchange needles, they also receive alcohol and other material that can hopefully help them take care of themselves and to ensure their own health. They also are provided with materials around HIV, the dangers of injection drug use. They're also given materials on where they can seek help for their drug addiction, where there may be methadone programs and detox programs.

While we do spend $300,000 on this needle exchange program, we spend approximately in the City $60 million on drug rehab, detox programs, and other opportunities for people to treat their drug addiction, and we are constantly giving people opportunities to come into drug addiction programs. And the needle exchange program is one way to reach some of the people who've been most resilient in listening to us to come to drug programs, which makes them highly susceptible and vulnerable to the HIV virus.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

May I again add that before it started, when the site in Mantua was selected, I went out there and went to the van. In fact, the people welcomed me, they were glad to see me out there. As I said, it was on vacant lots. I even have a ward leader in my office for the area.

I have not had one complaint in the years it's been there that it wasn't needed. This area is one of the highest infant mortality in the City. It's an area where we have a lot of -- we've had a lot of drug problems. It's an area where we've had the -- some years ago, some of you may remember the women that were killed in Mantua, they were found molested with bags over their heads.

We've had many numerous problems in Mantua. Drug problems, infant mortality problems, you name it, we've had problems. In fact, it's adjacent to Mill Creek, where we had the Lex Street massacre.

So we are really trying to do all we

can. We have an excellent family center at McMichael School, we have a principal in the school that's doing what he can to reach out to the community, notwithstanding that this community needs help.

And as I said, this is the first in the year since it started that I've ever heard a complaint. I've never heard anyone say anything than it was a fine program and that it worked well.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: Thank you.

And, Madam President, I will make sure that you get the research material and the current material on how this program is operating in Philadelphia.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Just one moment, please.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Rizzo.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I'd just like to follow up. I'm smart enough to know that that this program is not going to go away, but I would appreciate the fact that this program is run efficiently and it plays by the rules; that if they publish materials, that it gets approved

through the approval process; that if it's supposed to be 50 feet or 50 yards, it's 50 yards or 50 feet away from a school.

For the record, Director, could you tell us -- I understand we're getting to the point where we're now providing over a million syringes a year, a million. Is that good number?

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: I don't know whether it's over a million or not, but I'm sure it's several hundred thousand and pretty close, but I --

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, when you were Health Commissioner, it was several hundred thousands, from what I remember.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: Yeah.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: And from what I understand, it's risen now to be over a million.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: Okay, I'm sure that's close, but I can't give you an exact number, but I can find it out.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Okay, but I think this is a really serious program, and Councilwoman Blackwell indicates how pleased the community is with it, and I'm happy about that, but I'm sure

the community would be pleased to know that this program is running as effectively as possible and that the people that really need the needles are getting them and not people that are just testing the system or coming in from Pittsburgh or New Jersey, that we keep the out-of-pocket expense -- again for the record, could you tell us in real numbers now, how much are we spending, City dollars, on this program?

SECRETARY RICHMAN: I don't have those numbers in front of me.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Could you provide it to the Chair.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: Absolutely. We will provide you with a full report on the program, all of the regulations around it, and the research that has been done at the national level.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Terrific. Because I think I would love to be put in a situation where I can say that I believe the people that write to me, that call me to discuss this with me, that I believe that this program is running well, running the best it can. Because, again, this is a very difficult program to manage. I wouldn't, again,

want to be a part of that.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: This is a very difficult program to manage, and it will always have some controversy attached to it, but we will continue to try to make sure that it's as safe as possible for the people who use the exchange as the people who live in the community where the exchanges happen.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Like the point you just made, you come with 20 needles, you leave with 20. Well, one for one, is that absolutely necessary? You know, I don't know if a person needs to come with 20 needles and leave with 20. You know, I don't know whether that's good, bad, or whatever, so I'd like to better the program, and after I read it from cover to cover, I'll understand it better.

COMMISSIONER RICHMAN: Certainly, Councilman. If when you read it, you continue to have questions, I would be glad to meet with you along with Mark Bencivengo and anyone else on his staff that monitors the program personally.

COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Secretary.

MR. MCPHERSON: The next witness is Natalie Padilla.

(Witness comes forward.)

MS. MARTIN: Hello. Peggy's sick tonight and she asked me if I could take her place if that would be okay with you.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Just identify yourself for the stenographer and begin your testimony and welcome.

MS. MARTIN: My name is Barbara Martin, I am a Town Watcher, and I am also with C.B. Kimmens of the anti-drug program.

Now, what they are saying about the needle exchange program, I was also given these pamphlets for myself, and I was up there protesting against it. They get the needles, they go down on the railroad tracks, they shoot up, they leave the needles down there. They do not go back and exchange 'em. Little kids play down there, they're in danger of getting hurt, getting diseases.

Not only that, the needles that they do

have -- Councilman Rizzo, you brought up a very good point: Why do they have to have one for one? When they go in with the needles and they hand them 20 needle back? No, that's not right. 'Cause they go down the corner and they sell the needles for $3 apiece. I know this for a fact.

Now, what gets to me is all the little kids in the neighborhood. All this is doing is bringing more undesirable people into the neighborhoods that we are trying to clean up. And I'm getting sick and tired of having 'em in there, and a lot of other of our neighbors are too. We're fighting to try to clean this up, and the drug exchange program is just bringing more and more in.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much.

Any questions?

(No questions.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

MR. MCPHERSON: The next witness, Elizabeth Zack.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good evening.

Please identify yourself for the record and begin your testimony.

MS. ZACK: My name is Elizabeth Zack. I'm here to ask for your support of the Mural Arts Program.

I live in Bella Vista, at Ninth and Bainbridge Streets, and there is a mural painted by David Gwynn (ph.) on the corners of Tenth and Bainbridge. When David began to paint the mural a couple years ago, soon after we moved into our home, I was taken by its beauty and how it improved our neighborhood. So I asked David how I could have a mural painted on the side of our house, and he put me in touch with the Mural Arts Program, and we're now in the process of painting a mural on the side of our home.

Not only do David's murals beautify the neighborhood, it had many other unexpected benefits as well. While David was painting, I met a lot of other neighbors who were admiring his work, and also the planning of the mural on the side of our home has allowed me to meet and get to know a lot of neighbors that I hadn't known prior to it. The meetings we've had have created a

better sense of community among the neighborhood, and we appreciate any and all support City Council can give to the Mural Arts Program. It's a worthwhile cause.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much. And as you've heard, we love the Mural Arts Program. And we happily support it.

MS. ZACK: Great.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much.

Any questions?

(No questions.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: The next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Vivian Vanstory?

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Vivian Vanstory?

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good evening, welcome. Please identify yourself for the record again for the record and begin your testimony.

MS. VANSTORY: My name is Vivian Vanstory. Good evening. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the budget

hearing for the Fiscal Year 2002. I wish to thank Anna Verna, President of City Council, and City Councilmembers for hosting this needed hearing.

My name is Vivian Vanstory, and I am President and Founder of the Community Land Trust Corporation, which is a multipurpose organization, which primary objective is environmental plan and design.

I have served my community for more than ten years. I have come before you today to describe the needs of environmental education, and I am also a member of the Recycle Alliance of Philadelphia, a community-based discussion. And surveys of members of the organization, individuals working to promote recycling in Philadelphia have identified the following priorities as they to improve the City's recycling program: to increase residential neighborhoods' participation, to implement strategies, to improve City programs, services, and increase residential and neighborhoods participation, to improve services, weekly collection, implementation of a weekly citywide collection program, starting with this year.

Buckets -- make large buckets available to all residents while offering small buckets to those who want them. Materials collection. To improve information available to residents about what materials currently can be recycled, including, tires, household hazardous waste, and appliances. And how to use plastics.

To increase educational efforts. To increase educational efforts, this project will establish a fundamental necessity for attitude change concerning the environment in the community about recycling programs.

To improve community participation in recycling programs, enable residents to address issues and take actions in litter control and preservation of illegal dumping. To work with existing community-based organizations to expand educational outreach efforts. And to improve cooperation with communication among public and private and nonprofit recycling stakeholders.

In closing, to expand facilities to increase availability of recycling to cover more of the City. To implement recycled's in schools, City facilities, institutions, public housing,

parks, and recreational centers.

Increase members of -- numbers of businesses, stores, apartments, and office buildings that may recycle and provide recycling to be used.

I think that people take lightly of the environment and how it's deteriorating the quality of life in our communities, that the budget, without a clean and safe and healthy environment and to be more concerned about where do we dispose of trash is very important. It's important to the quality of life. And I'm here today to ask City Council to put more money into recycling education.

Thank you so kindly.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. We appreciate your coming in to testify.

MR. MCPHERSON: Isaac Shomer.

(Witness comes forward.)

MR. SHOMER: Good evening. My name is Isaac Shomer, and I am a student at Central High School in the 10th grade, and I'm also a member of the Board of Directors of the Delaware Valley

Association of Rail Passengers, and I'm here to testify also about student tokens and also to talk about the position of the Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers on the position of the Student Union about lowering the prices of school tokens.

The Delaware Valley of Rail Passengers -- well, here's a statement from Donald Nigro, the President, saying that they would support the City, State or federal government in providing extra funds to subsidize student fares, but SEPTA should not be expected to just eat this loss.

And I have some other testimony from a member of the Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers -- it's not from the organization, and this person is, by the way, not a student. And she asked, is it true that once a student turns 18, is that student no longer eligible for school tokens? And she says that with the movement toward ending social promotions and more stringent graduation requirements and earlier cut-of age to enter kindergarten, there will be more 18-year-olds still in high school in the future. It would be a shame to cut off this type of

assistance to someone, especially a high school senior on track to graduate that school year, especially if this is the difference between being able to afford to stay in school for that short period of time or not be able to afford that.

So I hope that that's given consideration that all people in high school should be able to get student tokens and to get their reduced-price fares to get to school so they'll be able to graduate.

And I guess are there any questions?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I don't think so.

MR. SHOMER: Okay. Thank you for listening to my testimony, and have a nice evening.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. MCPHERSON: Our next witness is Yvonne Money.

(Witness comes forward.)

MS. MONEY: Good evening, Council President and members of the Board of Council.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. MONEY: My name is Yvonne Money and

I serve as First Vice President of the Albert W. Christie Advisory Council.

During the past three years as I have served on this council, we have had a large number of students, especially boys, who have attended. We have classes ranging from art classes, basketball for boys and girls ceramics, dance class, which is modern and ballet, double dutch, which we came in second place Statewide, exercise class, Golden Age Community Association, ham operator classes, Karate, Operation Latch Key, and tumbling.

The reason why I'm here this evening 'cause I do want to advise you of the importance of continuing on with the activities over at the Recreation Center. Juvenile offenders from ages 10 to 16 years of age with violent assaults, robbery, and intimidating students, aggravating assaults has, and is still, constantly on the rise. I do advise the Council to continue on supporting us.

And just -- I understand on the 16th, Councilman Darrell Clarke had mentioned the necessity of Council to become involved with the

advisory council, which I do think is very important, so they way, you know, they will know exactly what's going on.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you so much.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much for coming in, and certainly, we respect the job that you do with Christie. I'm sure if Mike Carpenter knew you were here, he'd be right here, and you know we're working on the air-conditioning for the gym, and our Recreation Commissioner is back there who works very well with us. So we're final trying to get some air in that beautiful gym.

MS. MONEY: And I do thank you, Councilwoman Blackwell, for your continuous support.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

MS. MONEY: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you again.

Our next witness?

MR. MCPHERSON: Sheila Harper.

(Witnesses come forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. HARPER: Good evening, how are you?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Fine, thank you.

MS. HARPER: Great.

Good evening. I'm here this evening on behalf of all of the boards of citizens for our district public health centers. My name is Sheila Harper. And with me also is the chair of Health Center Number 10, I'm the Chair of Health Center Number 9.

We are here this evening to just bring some things to your attention after having had an opportunity to review the budget that was submitted for the Health Department, and we have some concerns.

The first concern that we have is, we reviewed the Ordinance No. 1601, section 703, that specifies that appointments should be available to all patients on an average of 14 days, and we've

been observing that it's anywhere from 21 to 35 days, where people are obtaining appointments at our health centers. That is of great concern to us, and we feel as though based on it being a City ordinance, that it ought to be adhered to. And so that's the first point that we'd like to mention.

The second point is dealing with the growth rate of the uninsured. We noticed in looking at the same ordinance in 1990, when it was implemented, that the percentage of uninsured at that time was reported as 66 percent, but we also noticed that in the recent testimony provided by the Health Department, it's still 66 percent. Nationally, it's grown a lot, the percentage of uninsured.

That concerns us, and we do not want to diminish the magnitude of the problem of the uninsured in Philadelphia. We're concerned what that actually does to the budget, if it is in fact underestimated. We have seen reports that have come from the MIS system that at times have reflected as high as 75 percent. I know at Health Center No. 9, our uninsured rate is 80 percent. So it concerns when we say that it's 66 percent.

I don't believe it. I'm surprised if it hasn't changed in 10 years.

The third point that we would like to reflect on is with regard to the provision of medication and the pharmacy hours. According to the same ordinance, and the section is indicated in the handout that we gave you, it indicates that prescriptions are to be filled within the same day. That is an exception. It does not happen the same day. Often, you go to certain health centers and the pharmacy is closed, period. We have people coming back two and three days at a time, trying to get medication. That concerns us.

Another concern, in the testimony that was submitted, we understand that there is a three-day supply of medication that's provided to prison releasees, okay, for those who have AIDS. That concerns us, if in fact there's a three-day supply given and we have a waiting period of 25 to 35 days to be seen at our health centers, what happens? I know there is Health Center No. 1, they can walk in, but it concerns us that we would just leave it up to the prisoners to walk into Health Center No. 1 and sit there and wait to get

their prescriptions filled. We feel as though there should have some specific mechanism put in place in order to deal with those prisoners as they're released from prison in order to get their required medication.

Our third issue that we would like to bring up is with regard to staffing vacancies. We've noticed that there are a larger number of budgeted staff positions in comparison to those that are filled. We are concerned about that. We feel as though we should be given the same priority as the fire and police departments because we are also -- the health centers are also dealing with the health, welfare, and safety of Philadelphia citizens. So we, therefore, would like to have the same priority, and we would like to have our vacancies filled.

We also noted that on the testimony that there was $1 million that was earmarked for capital expenditures for Fiscal Year 2002. I don't know if that's sufficient. The reason I'm concerned, Health Center No. 9 and No. 4 were both promised to have renovations done in two phases because our needs were above and beyond the

current renovation project. $1 million, I can't imagine is going to take care of the renovations of both of those centers, along with whatever ongoing needs are required at the other health centers.

The other issue is the nursing coverage. We've noticed that there's been a significant decline in nursing, which is provided at the health centers. One of the biggest complaints that our patients have is the waiting time. If there are not nurses and support staff in place to support patients and the doctors, it's going to be a continuing delay in patients being seen. We notice that there was, maybe 5 years ago, anywhere between around 25 nurses on staff at any one given center. Now that's down to anywhere between 4 and 5. Nationally, we're aware that there is a nursing shortage. However, it seems to be an ongoing problem.

The other issue that we would like to bring to your attention is the per-capita rate that is currently being paid by the State of Pennsylvania underneath something called the County Health Act. It's paid currently at a

per-capita rate of $6.50 per patient, and it has not been increased in anywhere between 15 to 20 years. That concerns us. We need Council's support in requesting that the State increase that per-capita rate from $6.50 as it was 20 years ago because, of course, costs have increased. That would also help to offset our operating costs for the Health Department.

We are also concerned about the reported 3.2 percent increase in African-Americans with AIDS. That concerns us because it's contradictory to everything that we're hearing from the American Medical Association. I would request that the Health Department review those numbers, in addition to the numbers of the uninsured that was mentioned earlier.

Regarding the med screening and treatment, we are calling on -- when we were here the other day, we heard some numbers tossed around that there were 32 houses that were actually cleaned and there were 1100 that were identified, and we don't understand what the variance is. We don't know if it's a funding issue or what the issue is, but we are requesting that the issue be

addressed because lead poisoning is obviously affecting a lot of our children who normally would have, you know, normal lifestyles.

The other issue that we would like to address and we are deeply concerned, if the Health Department is committed to the goals of Healthy People 2010, which deals with infant mortality, we've noticed that they have increased the amount of funding from the federal government in a request that was made to cover, I believe, lower North Philadelphia. I am concerned when I look at a statistic that was put out by the Maternal and Child Health Department in 1999 that shows Council District No. 8, the Northwest section of the City as having the second highest infant mortality rate. I've had discussions with -- I believe it was Sue Lieberman, with regard to trying to address the matter, and I was deeply concerned when I found out that there was a proposal that was submitted that was did not address the matter. That's also something that we would like to make certain is dealt with.

Finally, we are requesting that the City of Philadelphia, combined with the Health

Department, submit a formal request to the State of Pennsylvania with regard to the tobacco settlement funds. We missed the opportunity to file suit ourselves. We understand that New York City and Los Angeles have filed their own individual suits.

Our concern is, yes, it appears that the hospital lobby force is going to be getting some of the tobacco funds. The health centers -- and, unfortunately, the way it looks, it stated hospitals and clinics. They're not referring to our clinics; they're referring to hospital clinics. We are concerned.

I myself am a smoker. The uninsured that we see at our centers, again, looks like around 75 percent to 80 percent. If some of those people who have tobacco-related illnesses are not covered, we're concerned. And we feel as though a formal letter should be requested, both from the City Council and the Health Department to go to the State of Pennsylvania.

And, finally, we also just have a couple of questions. In reading the testimony of the Health Commissioner, it referred to something

called Report Card 2000, and we would like to know how we can obtain a copy of that. I'm assuming it kind of, you know, rates the City health centers. And, finally, what is the specific plan to immunize the 7300 unimmunized children in the City of Philadelphia?

Those are our concerns. We would like to have them addressed. We are deeply concerned. Sue and myself are volunteers, and we have a group of volunteers that work with us. We'd like our concerns specifically addressed, and we'd like again for City Council to request formally to the State to go up to the -- I think we sent 1,000 names up to the State of Pennsylvania on a petition with regard to the tobacco settlement funding.

That's the end of my testimony. And if Sue has something else. . .

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Ortiz.

COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you, Madam. I'm sorry for being so late, but I was out.

In terms of staffing of the health centers, I've heard that the waiting for

appointments has lengthened, that the staffing positions are not being filled. Is this true? And do you have a list of positions in health centers that have not been filled and that you can make available to us?

MS. HARPER: I'm not certain if the testimony that Dr. Tsou submitted and all of the documents that were attached included that, but I know that by health center, I know Health Center No. 9, we could provide that to you.

COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Well, I know that they didn't tell us what positions are not being filled though.

MS. HARPER: Oh, and we're concerned because it's budgeted. You know, so if it's not filled and, you know, the services are not being provided, we can, I think, assimilate that information between all of our centers.

COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay, I appreciate that.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Tasco.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very

much.

Madam President, what I'd like to request is that the Health Department respond to this young lady's testimony, specifically regarding issue no. 1. This is for me. Issue no. 2, issue no. 3, issue no. 5, issue no. 6, and some of the other areas we're going to take care of in public hearings, but those are the issues that I would specifically like them to respond to you to come to the Council.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do you want that response in writing, or did you want them to come in and testify.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: In writing.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: In writing? Thank you.

Thank you very much.

MS. HARPER: Okay. Also, I'd like to request an opportunity to meet with the Chair of the Health Committee, myself along with the other board chairs, to discuss some of these concerns if possible after she's submitted -- Mrs. Tasco, we were wondering if we could have an opportunity, all of the board chairs, to meet with you to

discuss whatever outcome you get in terms of the feedback that you get with this.

Okay, thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MR. MCPHERSON: Our next witness is? .

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is Joan Preston here?

MS. PRESTON: Yes.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And after Joan Preston is Kevin Murphy. So if he would be near the witness table, we could hear him immediately after.

(Witnesses come forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. PRESTON: Good evening. I'm Joan Preston, and I'm a representative of the Time Deliverance Television Ministry, where Pastor Benjamin Smith is the President of the organization.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mm-hmm.

MS. PRESTON: And we're here to remind Council and discuss briefly about how important we feel the implementation of public access is to the

City of Philadelphia and to its citizens.

There are some concerns that if public access became a reality in Philadelphia, it would encourage pornography and other immoral stances that could serve as destructive to our communities. We strongly disagree with this concept. There are numerous reasons why society is decaying.

It has been proven in other cities that public access linked have brought many communities and cities together. The cities of Pittsburgh, D.C., New York, California, and Chicago. Does Council ever plan to give us the reason why public access has not been implemented? How can you in good conscience continue to turn your back and refuse to do what is right? How difficult is it?

You are depriving the citizens of this city of a vast resource that would create jobs and a variety of technical training. You are depriving the citizens of a right.

I remind you that the ordinance defining the nonprofit which would operate Philadelphia's public access channels were approved by former Mayor Wilson Goode. I also

remind you that our former President of City Council, the Honorable Mayor John Street, stated in this room that Council wanted to do the right thing, but do you? The right thing is to do what is right by the people, especially when it has been written and decreed as an ordinance.

Question. We are not going away, but the question is, why has Comcast been permitted to discriminate against the citizens of this city? Yes, discriminate. Council is aware that there is a fee for Philadelphia and a lesser fee for the suburbs. Why? This should not be.

We heard the media's report regarding how sorry you are about RCN giving up and deciding not to operate in Philadelphia. That was a smoke screen. I sat in this room and witnessed Mr. Burnside being badgered, all because RCN has proven that they are people- and community-oriented. We want RCN in this city.

In this same room, a representative from one of our major TV networks testified against the disgraceful behavior that Comcast has displayed toward them, including debts. Why is this permitted?

We are the citizens, the residents of this city. We vote. When you are on the campaign trail, you consistently -- we consistently hear you talk about all of the good you would do if elected, and when you are elected, it is business as usual. Nothing favorable happens for the citizens. Most of what is done is not for the benefit of the constituents. And it is election time again.

In closing, I say to you, this law does not change, it is still righteousness that exhaulted a nation and sent as a approach to any people. Therefore, truth and righteousness will prevail, whether the law is obeyed or not.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

Kevin Murphy?

MR. MCCULLOUGH: I'm going to speak on behalf of Kevin Murphy. My name is George McCullough, and I'm here on behalf of the Philadelphia Community Access Coalition. We are a coalition of community groups and individuals like

Joan here from all across the City, and we've come together to urge the City to establish public access television, as was man dated in City Ordinance 1963. And we have in the past clearly demonstrated broad community support and have testified about its benefits.

Though most Councilmembers see public access as a good thing, we've had difficulty moving forward. In recent weeks, it's been increasingly clear that something or someone has been blocking our efforts. The Philadelphia Inquirer wrote about RCN's troubles about going up against Comcast. It's no wonder that citizens like us have had such a hard time.

I feel, and I'm speaking on behalf of myself, that the whole process has broken down. For instance, when Comcast and former Mayor Ed Rendell held a secret briefing with Councilmembers that one Councilmember characterized as "an attempted brainwashing," and that's the kind of stuff we've been going up against.

All we've been asking for is a fair hearing, for you guys to hear us out. And everyone here tonight gets real excited about the

possibilities of public access. Over the last few years, we've been researching what other cities have been doing, and the possibilities of what public access offers is totally amazing.

And we would like to have an opportunity to meet with you, Council President, to share with you some of those possibilities. And one of the reasons why we do want to meet with you is that finally, we've come across the articles of incorporation, which you and Mayor Street, you're the ones that are going to have to sign this, and that's why we'd like to have an opportunity to meet with you.

Thanks.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Does anyone else wants to testify in your group? Please approach the witness table.

MS. WANGER: My name is Tanya Wanger, and I work with the Wages for Housework Campaign, but I'm going to be speaking on behalf of Dina Mendros. She says:

My name is Dina Mendros, and I am here today speaking on behalf of Citizens for Consumer Justice. I'd first like to thank members of City

Council for allowing me to speak.

Citizens for Consumer Justice has become the State's largest consumer organization and coalition working on preserving and strengthening Social Security and Medicare, lowering prescription drug prices for consumers, passing a strong Patient's Bill of Rights, preserving access to our civil justice system, winning clean-money elections, and more. We have also been involved in fighting for public access here in Philadelphia for approximately three years.

I come to today's budget hearings to ask the City to fund public access television and to make good on the promise to implement public access that was over 15 years ago. As you've been told many times before, Philadelphia is the only major city in the United States without public access television. And for the three years I have been involved in the fight to establish public access in our city, I still can't imagine why there's such disinterest by City government for what could be one of the greatest public resources for Philadelphia residents.

In other cities, public access has come to be more than access to producing and airing television programs, although the ability for an ordinary person off the street to get training and produce a show about anything they want for all the community to see in and of itself is extremely valuable. However, there are so many other ways to benefit, citizens and City government from public access. And the cost of implementing public access is extremely low compared to the dollar value you would get from it.

We could, like other cities, create neighborhood media centers. These could even become a prominent part of our City infrastructure. They could become resource centers where students of all ages have access to all types of media and communication training, as well as access to Internet and other information technologies. In addition, they could be centers where people within a neighborhood could come to connect with one another and support each other, and where, through communication technologies, people from different neighborhoods could connect with one another across distance.

Before I close, let me make one other point. Every so often, the cable companies must come before City Council in order to negotiate a franchise agreement with the City. They must do this in order to negotiate the use of the public right-of-way. That's right, it's the public's right-of-way. As our representatives, you are supposed to protect our interests in these negotiations. Yet you are not representing our best interests when you allow this most valuable resource, access to the airwaves, to be out of the public's reach.

Philadelphia has made great progress to become a first-class city, but without this basic right to access to the airwaves, a right that all other first-class U.S. cities have. We will never really attain that goal. Please provide funding for public access and show Philadelphia residents that it's not just the rich that matter to our government, but that ordinary citizens matter too.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MS. COOK: Good evening, City Council.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. COOK: My name is Barbara, and I'm speaking to you as an ordinary citizen, I'm not a part of any particular public action committee, and it's all relatively new to me.

But I do remember when this first started in the City of Philadelphia about 15 years ago, when it was Wade that was in West Philadelphia. And one of the major selling points I seem to remember of having cable even coming into the Philadelphia was the public access that it would provide to the community, and it was ballyhooed with all of the potential benefits that it would bring to the ordinary citizens in Philadelphia that would have access to the airways, people who normally couldn't afford this. And for these past 15 years. It seems to have become a forgotten issue, and it seems as there is though no longer any interest for the community to have this access.

And what I would really like to say is I am a Comcast subscriber, and their fees are high, and I just don't seem to understand how they can use those eight channels for their own

financial benefit when it's a public trust that's entrusted to City Council to manage. And it seems to me that if it was managed properly that it would generate its own funds and it would pay for itself.

And basically that's all I wanted to say to you, and I hope that you will consider what I said to you and implement public access for the citizens of Philadelphia.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MS. PRESTON: We have one more question. We'd like to know whether or not Madam President is willing to meet with us after these hearings.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Not this evening. I've been here since 6:30 this morning, and we do have budget hearings next week. I will meet with you at a later date, but I certainly don't want to meet this evening.

MS. PRESTON: Okay, thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: You're welcome.

MR. MCPHERSON: Peter Tridish.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Are you Peter?

MR. TRIDISH: Yes. Hello. My name is Pete Tredish. I am from the Prometheus Radio Project, a West Philly-based nonprofit access group that helps building radio stations across the country.

Somewhere around four years and seven months ago, myself and five friends around my kitchen table launched a pirate radio station in West Philadelphia. We launched it in defiance of the federal regulations that require that citizens have licenses to operate radio stations. We defied those regulations because we saw that the media in this country is coming to be owned by a smaller and smaller number of hands. At that point, 10 corporations owned 50 percent of all media. That includes radio, TV, book publishing, magazines, the large portions of the Internet, large portions of the movie industry, music publishing. At this point, 6 corporations own

50 percent of all media.

We, in the tradition of our heroes Ghandi, Martin Luther King, committed civil disobedience by putting a radio station on the air without a license and telling the FCC that they had to do something to change the way that the airwaves were regulated.

About three months later, we had 60 programmers, and for every one of those programmers that played music, from hip hop to big bands, and we had programmers of all sorts of different nonprofit organizations around the City, there were ten that wanted to be on our station that were ready to break the law and risk imprisonment and fines in order to have a voice in the electronic media.

And eventually, after a about a year and a half, the FCC broke into our building and took away the radio station that we operated. But at the same time, remarkably enough, they admitted that we were right and they were wrong. And now, two years ago later, we are building 250 radio station across the country, community radio stations like we operated in West Philadelphia.

Talk about an industry that was made in Philadelphia, in the traditions of Philadelphia. This is the City where the First Amendment was born, and this is where our politicians really need to be supportive of our citizens' right to speak and our right to speak in the public media.

The First Amendment was not written so that I could talk to you. It was not written so that I could stand on the street and hold a puppet. The First Amendment was created so that citizens of a democracy could have a voice in creating public opinion, so that public opinion could inform public policy, and that our elected representatives could know what the people wanted. And what we have in Philadelphia is, we have a dramatic lack of access to the airwaves, a lack so great that people are willing to risk arrest and fines and imprisonment.

Now, what kind of City Council do you want to be? Do you want to be the types of politicians that ask the people of Philadelphia to shut up and vote? Or do you want to be the kind of politicians that encourage those public forums, that encourage the people's voices to come and

speak forth on issues of public importance and create an environment where our public officials can know what it is that the people want.

That is what public action access is about in cities all across the country. In a lot of cities, public access is like the public libraries. In fact, it's in the public libraries in a number of cities. There are community media centers that include a vast range of technology and it's all based around the public access.

And what we what we're simply asking is for you to recognize you're in government. If you want this city to be a leader in communications, you know that there cannot be a successful private sector without a significant, vibrant public sector that creates -- and a sector where there is not just the market forces at work but there are incubators, places where people learn skills, where people communicate directly with their communities, and that is what creates success in the private sector as well.

So what I'd ask you to do is take a hint from the FCC. Reevaluate your stand on public access. Think about how much money it is

for just what Philadelphia is going to get.

And one more thing. I sit here before you. I've told that that I've broken laws, I've created civil disobedience for freedom of speech in this country. What you as City Council right now, you are doing the reverse. You are committing civil disobedience in favor of media concentration of ownership, in favor of a closed media system that is shut off from its citizens by not going ahead, following the laws that the well-informed public officials of 20 years ago put in motion to fund public access in Philadelphia.

I'd like to thank you a lot for listening and I hope you hear one of our radio stations sometime soon.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Thank you very much.

(Witness comes forward.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. YOUNG: To the creator, the ancestors, and to this prestigious body, good evening. My name is Mamie Young, nurtured, educated, worked, retired, and returned to work

part-time and involved in civic and community issues and concerns for 56 of my 60 years in the City of Brotherly Love and sisterly affection, recently labeled "The City That Loves You Back." Tina turner sang, "What's love got to do with it?"

Well, if you really love the people of Philadelphia, give the citizens the ability to have public access. This was passed as a City Ordinance Bill No. 1963 in 1983. This ordinance provided establishment a citywide public access training center and two neighborhood training centers in each of the four cable districts, instruction for citizens, community groups on proper use of the equipment.

Other cities also provide training and access for Internet equipment free or at low cost. Living in Philadelphia has become very expensive. Utilities, real estate taxes, water and sewage, everything is escalating, with little incentive to stay in the City.

Cable is very expensive. I can't afford it. The information that we would receive by having public access is knowledge. Provision

of public access would allow City government forums, religious, community, educational, cultural, et cetera. Modern technology, this digital divide, this is something that has to be remedied very soon. It is essential for progress in this great city. It is incumbent upon the City and the current cable companies to fulfill the agreement which has been ignored for over 150 years or more.

I conclude with this: We live in the richest country, the fifth largest city in the nation. Yet, these excellent resources are going to waste for lack of implementation.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on this issue.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do we have anyone else to testify? We have gone through our list. Is there anyone else who wishes to testify?

Please approach the witness table.

(Witness comes forward.).

MS. KENNEDY: I think you have copies passed out. Good evening.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. KENNEDY: City Council President Verna and members of City Council, thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding Mayor John Street's budget for Fiscal Year 2001 and 2002.

My name is Sally Kennedy and I'm representing the Greater Germantown Recreation Network, which is co-sponsored by the Germantown monthly meeting of the Religious Society of Friends and Recreation Advisory Council representatives from some of the centers and playgrounds of Recreation Districts 3 and 4. As you know, in addition to focusing on the needs of Greater Germantown, we are interested in supporting and improving the citywide recreation system.

Also, I work as substitute teacher for the Philadelphia Public School District. This brings home to me daily the need for a strong, supportive recreation system, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods, to provide opportunities and supervision for children and

youth at risk. There's a tendency to exclude those who need it most -- in communities with single parents and hard-working parents at the bottom of the economic ladder and those who have had educational and developmental opportunities.

It is time we stopped sitting around saying parents need to do a better job. Of course, they do, but we all need to do a better job in making sure that children who lack proper home guidance and sufficient economic resources to be exposed to a larger world do not fall between the cracks. It is they who hang out in the streets, take and sell drugs, et cetera, and make life dangerous for everyone. If they are not going to get the discipline and nurturing needed in their own homes, society's institutions must step into the breach. But how can they when they are so under-funded?

Like the school system, the Recreation Department has a ridiculously low adult-child or youth ratio. In the after-school program, we do not pay enough to attract the caliber person, with some notable exceptions, not only to work with the children but to recruit, coordinate, and give

direction to the number of volunteers needed to provide the one-on-one attention so desperately needed.

I was not able to be present to hear Commissioner Richard's presentation to City Council, but I have had had the opportunity to read it. First, I wish to commend Mayor Street for selecting someone to be commissioner who has energy and vision, some prior experience in recreation, and a strong administrative background. The application of Commissioner Richard's knowledge and skills is already having a positive impact.

I have had the opportunity elsewhere to hear him speak and believe that his vision for the children and communities served by recreation centers is very similar to that of the Greater Germantown Recreation Network. However, he cannot realize that vision without sufficient resources.

I applaud the Commissioner's responsiveness and understanding of the City's current delicate fiscal situation and his willingness to be a team player, but he is simply not asking for enough money. Of course, he's

asking for what the Mayor tells him to ask for. It is not enough, and you do not have to listen. Commissioner Richard a good manager. If you come up with several hundred thousand dollars more, I am sure he would know what to do with it.

The youth initiative needs some real money. The after-school program and maintenance, which has improved since the infusion of money two years ago are still major concerns. The Commissioner states that his budget request allows the Department to maintain its current level of service. He is imaginative and things will improve, but the current level of service is not good enough. Just for the after-school program alone, not including the summer, the budget should have an increase of 1.5 million for approximately 130 centers to cover a slight increase in pay for community workers -- people pay more than $10 an hour to have their houses cleaned -- plus $20 an hour to hire a person in each center program, asking for higher qualifications and relevant, plus $50 per center for additional supplies.

What has happened to the $4 million the Mayor planned to allocate for after-school

programs? Has the Recreation Department seen any of it, or does that amount include what is already being spent on after-school programs in the Recreation Department?

Right now, all centers and playgrounds are understaffed. Two and one half program staff members in an A center in a rough neighborhood just doesn't cut it. Staff ends up babysitting the building instead of being free to organize a number of programs that the building could handle if there were more staff. The designated B centers have one and a half persons in C playgrounds, one half a person, as I understand it. Some centers need to be redesignated upwards. To add one and a half more staff to A centers, one to B centers, and a half staff center to C playgrounds, plus something more for training and supplies, you would need to increase the program budget by about $5 million.

Needs for centers in our areas of Recreation Districts 3 and 4 include replacing tile floor in the community room and five blackboards and rims on the basketball courts -- oh, I failed to write down which center I'm

talking about there. I think that's Barrett. Additional staff for Furco (ph.) playground, which should be upgraded to a B, stage and window curtains for Lonnie Young, facility improvements for Morris Estate, stage curtains and trophy case at Bellfield. Stenton Park could use a whole new center and so too Pleasant Playground, which needs more staff, as there are needy children and poor adult involvement in the neighborhood. Zeiler Playground needs a new roof badly. (Indiscernible) needs improved outdoor lighting for its sports areas. Waterview needs its painting to be completed and almost all of the floors retiled.

I could keep going. Recreation for the rich in the form of sports stadiums can be funded. How about some of the profits being reallocated to the communities that supply the cheap labor for the concessions in the stadiums?

This country is in a crisis, performing 22nd- and in comparison with other developed nations in fields of higher education, with overloaded jails and people everywhere afraid to go out alone at night. We need to set our priorities straight. City Councilmembers are

elected to do that. May we count on you?

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is there anyone else to testify?

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Do we have anyone else to testify?

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Seeing none, this concludes the hearings. This committee will stand in recess until Tuesday, March the 13th, at 10 a.m.

Thank you very much.

(Adjourned 8:30 p.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing proceedings of the Council of the City of Philadelphia of Tuesday, February 27, 2001, were reported fully and accurately by me, and that this is a correct transcript of same.

RE: COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
BILL NO. 010005

_____,
JOSEPHINE CARDILLO,
Registered Professional Reporter