ORIGINAL

PHILADELPHIA HOUSING AUTHORITY

QUEEN LANE COMMUNITY MEETING

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Thursday, January 5, 2012

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Meeting of THE PHILADELPHIA HOUSING AUTHORITY, held at the NEW MOUNT MORIAH BAPTIST CHURCH OF GERMANTOWN, 5323 Pulaski Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19144, commencing at 6:30 p.m., on the above date, before Ronald DeShields, Registered Professional Reporter and Notary Public.

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2 A P P E A R A N C E S:

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4 Michael Johns,
Keith Caldwell
5 Rylanda Wilson
Kyle Flood
6 Thomas Kuhar
Corliss Gray
7 Nicole Ward
Ken Granderson
8 Ismail Abdul-Hamid

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2 MR. CALDWELL: My name is Keith

3 Caldwell, I work for the Philadelphia

4 Housing Authority. I will be facilitating this

5 meeting this evening.

6 First of all we say welcome. As we

7 promised we -- we're going to have these meetings,

8 bring you all back to keep you all informed and

9 gather your input on this very important project.

10 But before we go forward, we'd like to

11 have a word of prayer from Pastor Hasty, Senior,

12 and thanking him for allowing us the use of this

13 venue here at the Mount Moriah Baptist Church.

14 So, Pastor Hasty, if we could have a few

15 words. Thank you.

16 PASTOR HASTY: Good evening, and

17 welcome.

18 * * * *

19 (Whereupon, there was prayer

20 had off the record.)

21 * * * *

22 MR. CALDWELL: Thank you.

23 And going forward, we'd like to bring

24 together a tireless effort on the part of a

1 resident at the Queen Lane Apartment. We'd like
2 to bring up Ms. Corliss Gray to give a few opening
3 remarks as to the status for residents here at the
4 Queen Lane here in Germantown.
5 Ms. Corliss Gray.
6 MS. GRAY: Hi. I'm glad to see
7 everybody here, and I truly welcome you here. And
8 I think if we start off good and end up good
9 this evening.
10 But before I leave down I have some
11 individuals I'd like to -- to have them
12 stand as I introduce them.
13 Ms. Nelly Reynolds, Tenant Liaison of
14 the Board.
15 Asia Kooney, President, Resident
16 Advisory Board.
17 Shirley Jones, our business
18 adminstrator.
19 And as I say, welcome to everybody
20 again.
21 MR. CALDWELL: Thank you, Ms. Gray.
22 As I said, we have a lot to cover this
23 evening, so we're going to be moving this right
24 along.

1 During our last meeting -- excuse me.
2 I'm sorry, we'd like to welcome and give
3 acknowledgement to Councilwoman Miller, who is
4 here. Donna Reed Miller, who is here.
5 Thank you very much for joining us.
6 From the last meeting, we had one of our
7 PHA staffers, Ms. Rylanda Wilson, who was
8 here to talk to you about some of the partnerships
9 and resource development programs that we have in
10 place for the residents and folks within the
11 community as we begin the construction of the new
12 development.
13 And, so, I'd like to bring Ms. Wilson up
14 to kind of give us a quick recap of some of the
15 items that she went over during the last meeting.
16 MS. WILSON: We had 134 people sign our
17 sign-in sheets at our last meeting. We had a
18 really good turnout upstairs. And we appreciate
19 how many people have come to this meeting this
20 evening.
21 We have a lot of different kinds of
22 meetings. The meeting last time was about giving
23 people an overview of the process, giving people
24 an overview of the plans that have been made to

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1 date, and telling people about programs and
2 services.
3 * * * *
4 (Whereupon, there was a short
5 break in the meeting.)
6 * * * *
7 MS. WILSON: Sorry, a little technical
8 difficulty here. Pardon me.
9 We talked about -- we had a slide
10 PowerPoint Point presentation. It's a typical
11 meeting that we have where we give people as much
12 information so that everyone is sort of on the --
13 on a level playing field. Everyone knows what the
14 person next to you knows. You know what PHA
15 knows, and we invited people to comment on the
16 proposed plan.
17 We got a lot of comments, written
18 comments as well as comments at the microphone.
19 We -- this meeting this evening is a
20 charette. And you'll find out in a minute how
21 this meeting is different than the meeting we had
22 a couple of weeks ago. If you weren't here for
23 the December 15th meeting and you did not see the
24 presentation or see the video about how we

1 presented Weathering an Economic Downturn and how
2 the housing market -- everyone can read about it
3 and hear about the housing market, the talk --
4 housing market for home ownership. How PHA
5 transforms communities. How crime in our
6 low-income housing tax credit projects declined
7 from -- we have statistics where usually they just
8 go down to zero in our new developments.
9 Where we are -- a history of how PHA has
10 been building houses and creating jobs using the
11 funding that we -- that we get to build the houses
12 to create jobs in the community. What the tax
13 credit -- process is, how it works. The proposed
14 schedule and the community supportive services.
15 If you weren't here on the 15th, don't worry.
16 In subsequent meetings to tonight we're
17 going to go into more detail about that. So don't
18 feel as if you've missed anything or you can't
19 understand what other people are going to know
20 today.
21 I want to show the video, because we
22 think that the before and the after is a powerful
23 way for people to see in a very short period of
24 time what PHA has done in the developing --

1 develop projects like the Queen Lane highrise and
2 other developments throughout the City into tax
3 credit projects, which is what we are proposing
4 for the site.
5 Thank you.
6 * * * *
7 (Whereupon, there was a
8 PowerPoint presentation.)
9 * * * *
10 MR. CALDWELL: So, do we know what we're
11 doing? Do we give you the idea that we know what
12 we're doing? Okay. A picture says a thousand
13 words, right? Right.
14 So, we look to do the same. We look to
15 do the same. Okay. Fair enough.
16 Anyway, that's just a little bit of what
17 we've been doing over the last few years. And we
18 feel very honored and proud to be able to
19 contribute to reinvesting in neighborhoods.
20 Our next presenter is my colleague, my
21 friend, one of the most talented architects I've
22 met in 15 years.
23 Mr. Michael Johns.
24 MR. JOHNS: Good evening. Good evening,

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1 everybody.

2 AUDIENCE: Good evening.

3 MR. JOHNS: Um, a little bit about me

4 before I start.

5 First of all, I'd like to say I'm

6 blessed to be here. It's an honor to be here in

7 another community to provide some level of support

8 and revitalization for a neighborhood that needs

9 it.

10 My name is Michael Johns. I'm the

11 General Manager for Community Development and

12 Design for the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

13 Essentially, you just saw my resume, but.

14 I'm a licensed architect,

15 African-American architect. We make up less than

16 two percent of the registered architects in the

17 country. How shameful is that?

18 I am a native of Philadelphia, so I'm

19 committed to Philadelphia. I went to Temple

20 University. I was a founding member of the

21 Philadelphia Chapter of Black Architects, NOMA.

22 And I'm a former president of that organization.

23 Why, because black architects make up two percent

24 of the national -- less than two percent of the

1 national registered architects, and we needed to
2 have some more, and we needed to have some input
3 at a national level and at a local level, and we
4 needed to have folks like me in neighborhoods that
5 know what it's like to live in neighborhoods. So,
6 that's who I am. So, that's a little bit about
7 me.
8 So, I'm going to go through a little bit
9 of the history of the site across the street. The
10 site across the street has had a very interesting
11 history. Has had a tumultuous, has had a shameful
12 history in some respects. But rather than me
13 stand here and give you dates and times, we felt
14 that it was more appropriate to hear some of the
15 voices from the past. So we -- I've asked some of
16 my colleagues -- Tom Kuhar is also a licensed
17 architect and a project manager for the project.
18 Great guy. Nicole Ward, who just recently got
19 registered as an architect, congratulations.
20 Ismail Hamid-Abdul is one of our program managers
21 working with our finances. And Ken Granderson,
22 who I hired, who's not yet licensed, but is going
23 to be licensed very shortly, we hope.
24 Kyle, who is also one of our program

1 managers and a great (unintelligible). Steve, who
2 is also going to be licensed very shortly as an
3 architect, we're looking forward to that.
4 So, we're going to do it like this. If
5 you can put the pictures up. This is the existing
6 highrise site as it is, but I'll ask my colleagues
7 to begin (indicating).
8 MR. FLOOD: Good evening, everybody.
9 This is from an article from 1912.
10 MS. WILSON: Say your name.
11 MR. FLOOD: I'm sorry, Kyle Flood.
12 The headline of the article is, Would
13 Abolish Potter's Field.
14 It says, Acting upon the contention that
15 Germantown's ancient potter's field has become a
16 mere dumping ground for refuse, the members of the
17 Poor Board at their monthly meeting on Wednesday,
18 decided to appoint a committee to consider the
19 advisability of disposing of the tract and buying
20 another site at a distance from the builtup part
21 of the ward, if it is found that such a burial
22 place is still needed.
23 Germantown's potter's field was
24 established in the middle of the eighteenth

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1 century, and is situated on Queen Lane west of
2 Pulaski Avenue. The ground is about an acre in
3 extent. Since the law giving unclaimed corpses to
4 the State anatomical board has been in effect, few
5 burials have been made there, and the tract has
6 been used as a playground by the boys of the
7 neighborhood.
8 From time to time the Poor Board has the
9 lot cleaned, when it is necessary to haul away
10 many cartloads of discarded tinware, household
11 waste, and the like that is thrown there.
12 The matter was brought to the attention
13 of the board by the receipt of a notice from the
14 highway bureau to reset the curb in front of the
15 burial ground, preliminary to the pave -- paving
16 of the street.
17 William Wilkie, William Coupe, and
18 Charles Super were appointed to the committee to
19 determine what should be done with the potter's
20 field. According to old records, the Germantown
21 potter's field contains a hundred and forty
22 perches and was bought by the Balltes Reser at
23 sheriff's sale in 1755 for five pounds, ten
24 shilling, it having been part of the estate

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1 of George Arnold. It was set apart as a burial
2 place for all strangers, Negroes, and Mullatoes
3 that died in any part of Germantown forever.
4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Forever.
5 MS. WARD: Good evening, everyone, I'm
6 Nicole Ward. This article is also from 1912, it's
7 titled Seeking the Owner of Potter's field.
8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can you give the
9 source, please. I need the source you're reading
10 from.
11 MS. WARD: It is, um, the
12 (unintelligible) --
13 MR. JOHNS: We believe the information
14 came from, it was called, I think the Germantown
15 Gazette --
16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Crier.
17 MR. JOHNS: -- Germantown Crier.
18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Germantown
19 Crier.
20 MS. WARD: The harder the members of the
21 Germantown Poor Board try to determine what to do
22 with the foresaken plot of ground on Queen Lane
23 west of Pulaski Avenue that has been used as a
24 potter's field for a century and a half, the more

1 they became convinced that they cannot do anything
2 with it.
3 The matter was again discussed at the
4 monthly meeting of the board on Wednesday. At the
5 October meeting complaint was made about the
6 disreputable appearance of the tract because it is
7 used as a dumping ground for refuse. At the
8 meeting on Wednesday a communication was received
9 from Stanley Yarnall, principal of the Coulter
10 Street Friends' School, suggesting that the plot
11 of ground be converted into a playground for Negro
12 children.
13 However, when the deed covering the sale
14 of the potter's field property, in 1755, was
15 consulted, no evidence was found therein that the
16 burial ground is the property of the Poor
17 district. The property was sold at the sheriff's
18 sale, Samuel Mor -- Morris being then sheriff of
19 Philadelphia.
20 Balltes Reser was the purchaser, and it
21 is specified that the land is to be used for
22 stranger ground, or potter's field, for all
23 Germantown to serve as a burial place for all
24 strangers, negroes, and mulattoes as die in any

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1 part of the Germantown forever.

2 No subsequent deeds pertaining to the

3 property are on record, nor is it known whether

4 Reser, the buyer, was acting in his individual

5 capacity, or as a representative of the people of

6 Germantown.

7 MR. GRANDERSON: This is a continuation

8 of the same article. Burials of the homeless and

9 indigent persons were made, there is a contingable

10 number until the State law giving the bodies of

11 such persons to the State Anatomical Board be

12 passed. Since then only the bodies of infants

13 have been interred in the grounds.

14 It was proposed at the Poor Board

15 meeting that the board dispose of the potter's

16 field and buy another tract for a burial ground.

17 Some of the members, however, pointed out that it

18 would be exceedingly difficult to obtain land

19 anywhere within the city limits for the use of

20 burial purposes.

21 It was also intimated that the people

22 living in the neighborhood of the potter's

23 field, while they are not particularly pleased

24 with the present conditions of the ground, would

1 probably prefer that not having a playground
2 for negro boys established there.
3 Finally, when the members realized that
4 the problem was too big for them, they decided to
5 refer to Mr. Yarnall's suggestion that all the
6 other suggestions about potter's field to Paul
7 Reilly, the City Solicitor of the board, await
8 his opinion as to the ownership of the tract.
9 Another legal question that confronted
10 the board was that its meeting on Wednesday
11 of that time for the organization. The solicitor
12 informed the board that instead the yearly
13 reorganization to here or -- hereto -- here
14 therefore, the board, was under new laws enact
15 in connection with the abolishing of the
16 February election, would be reorganized only for
17 their other year and odd-numbered years.
18 The present board was organized in
19 December of 1911. The present officers will serve
20 until 1913.
21 MR. BLUNT: Good evening, Steve Blunt.
22 This article was written in 1913.
23 Another effort is to be made to utilize
24 the old Germantown potter's field on Queen Lane

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1 west of Pulaski Avenue as a public park or a
2 playground. William H. Hall of Germantown, Chief
3 of the Bureau of City Property has taken up the
4 matter and at his suggestion the City Forester,
5 Raymond Pond, called on Jacob C. Bockius, Special
6 Representative of Germantown and Chestnut Hill
7 Improvement Association, to discuss the project.
8 The neglected condition of the ground
9 has long been a source of complaint. Some time
10 ago the Germantown Poor Board, in whose custody
11 the property is supposed to be, was asked to give
12 its consent to have the grounds covered into a
13 playground, but Paul Reilly, solicitor of the
14 board, declared that the place had been set
15 apart in the eighteenth century as a burial
16 ground for the poor and homeless, to be used for
17 that purpose forever, and, therefore, it was
18 impossible to use it for a playground.
19 Mr. Ball has now submitted the question
20 to Michael J. Ryan, City Solicitor, and will
21 be guided by his opinion as to the future use of
22 the site.
23 If it should be decided that the
24 playground is the property of the City and could

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1 legally be converted into a park, it is the
2 intention of Mr. Bell and Mr. Pond to plant trees
3 and shrubbery on the tract and to beautify it in
4 other ways and throw it open for the use of the
5 public. A feature of the plan is that one of the
6 pergolas erected on the Parkway under Mayor
7 Rayburn's administration is to be placed on the
8 grounds.
9 The Improvement Association Committee on
10 parks and playgrounds, of which Charles A. Zeigler
11 is chairman, will cooperate with the city
12 authorities in their efforts to make use of the
13 old burial ground for the benefit of the public.
14 MR. KUHAR: My name is Tom Kuhar. This
15 article is titled, Potter's Field, a Desolate Spot
16 from 1915.
17 One of the places to which the attention
18 of the City's special cleaning force will be
19 directed, if it ever reaches Germantown, is the
20 old potter's field on Queen Lane west of Pulaski
21 Avenue.
22 Several weeks ago City authorities
23 promised to send a large party of men, engaged
24 under the Emergency Relief Appropriation, to clean

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1 up any places in Germantown which the regular
2 highway forces do not reach. In anticipation of
3 this visit, Jacob C. Bockius, Special
4 Representative of the Germantown and Chestnut Hill
5 Improvement Association, has been looking about
6 for spots requiring attention. He has decided
7 place the potter's field at the head of the list.
8 From Queen Lane a high terrace prevents
9 a view of the grounds, so that persons passing are
10 spared a shock to their nerves. When entrance is
11 gained to the grounds they present a scene of
12 desolation and dishevelment.
13 First the visitor will wonder how
14 so much broken glass could possibly be collected
15 in one place. Apparently, the boys of the
16 neighborhood who use the place as a playground
17 have a habit of collecting bottles and using them
18 as targets. Hundreds of milk bottles have been
19 smashed into fragments, besides various other
20 kinds of bottles, jugs, and jars.
21 MR. ABDUL-HAMID: My name is Ismail
22 Hamid. The article continues, In addition to the
23 broken glass, the field is littered with all kinds
24 of old tinware and household rubbish, running from

1 tomato cans to bedspreads. Chickens, ducks, and
2 cats roam about when the boys are at school.
3 At frequent intervals are depressions,
4 indicating graves. A few graves are marked by
5 rough stones. There is just one stone bearing the
6 lettering, This marks the grave of George Brown,
7 who died in 1840, at the age of 16 years.
8 Between the potter's field and Penn
9 Street is a settlement of old houses intertwined
10 with courts, the place bearing the euphonics name
11 of Devil's Pocket. Two of the houses face the
12 burial ground. The fence here, as well as
13 otherwise on the boundaries of the burial ground
14 having disappeared. It is for this side that the
15 boys obtain access to the grounds.
16 It continues, and I might have to take
17 my glasses off. Burials are still occasionally
18 made in the potter's field, the corpses generally
19 being those of negro infants which are placed in a
20 hole in this ground, without rites or ceremony of
21 any kind. Only the past week in this desolate
22 spot an interment took place, without mourners or
23 clergy, and with a few boys of the vicinity as the
24 only spectators.

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1 Mr. Bockius was told that following a
2 recent interment the custodian of the grounds
3 failed to fill in the grave, and after some lapse
4 of time a man living nearby climbed the fence and
5 filled up the grave.
6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could you just
7 not pass this article around. Right. I mean,
8 we're wasting time.
9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Basically, you're
10 wasting all our time. Yeah.
11 MR. JOHNS: (Unintelligible).
12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I mean, we
13 appreciate --
14 MR. JOHNS: No, I think -- yes, we will
15 do that. We will do that. But, um, as I stated
16 when we started this, I felt that it was -- we
17 felt that it was important to hear a little bit of
18 the history as opposed to me standing up here and
19 saying --
20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can read -- we
21 can read --
22 MR. JOHNS: Yes. But there are a lot of
23 people in here, and we wanted to make sure that
24 people understand it. So, I'll move forward with

1 the presentation, and then we can get to the
2 charette, which is what this meeting is about.
3 Thank you.
4 This is the pot -- the original potter's
5 field. These are the properties that surround the
6 potter's field. These are the original houses
7 that line the potter's field. This is the current
8 site of where the highrise is. As you can see,
9 the current site is over a portion of the former
10 potter's field.
11 This is the -- a proposed plan that the
12 Housing Authority had done for the redevelopment
13 of affordable rental housing on the site. It
14 included a portion of the land that had originally
15 been -- or currently where the highrise is.
16 And, just briefly, we had always
17 intended to honor the potter's field by both
18 ceremony and by some type of monument. That was
19 always our intent.
20 We heard the voices of the community.
21 We heard the concerns. And in particular, the
22 young lady, I know she said she couldn't make it
23 here tonight, but she was very poignant in the
24 last meeting that we were -- we had.

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1 And although we had thought diligently
2 and had thought thoughtfully about the plan that
3 we had proposed and the way that we can honor the
4 potter's field and not disrespect our ancestors.
5 When this young lady stood up and said -- the
6 other week, she said to me, as I was at the mic,
7 she said, you know, I understand what you're
8 doing, but we believe that in 1955 when the
9 highrise was originally put on the site that the
10 ancestors were disrespected. And although your
11 plan is to put houses on where the current
12 highrise is, and potentially there are no remains
13 left there, it still does not address the
14 disrespect that was -- that was done to our
15 ancestors back in 1955.
16 That hit all of us. And when we came
17 back -- sometimes you have to think about things
18 differently. We thought we were doing the right
19 thing. We thought we had a great plan. We
20 thought we were -- we were honoring our aun --
21 ancestors by creating affordable housing on what
22 was a lot that was for a potter's field, because
23 of the sore need of affordable housing, rental
24 housing. But when this young lady said that very

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1 eloquently, we had to take back. And we said, you
2 know what, maybe she's right. Maybe we need to
3 look at this a little bit differently. Maybe we
4 do need to open the potter's field land up. Maybe
5 we do.
6 And so we went back and we said we're
7 relaying this site. We are going to open this
8 land up, we are going to honor the ancestors that
9 were here. We're going to open this land
10 publicly, open to Queen Lane. And this meeting
11 tonight, this charette is about why -- how should
12 we honor them. How should this land be developed
13 for this parcel, this potter's field, with
14 affordable housing surrounding this land.
15 This -- if you look at the original site
16 and this current plan, this is the plan that was
17 there in 1817, this is the plan that we propose
18 today, so that this land can be open to the
19 public. It can be something that everybody can be
20 proud of, including The Housing Authority,
21 including the residents, and including our
22 ancestors who should be proud of us.
23 So, what we're going to do tonight is
24 we're going to move into a charette. And what it

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1 is, we've got architects and planners here,
2 they've got boards. We've got, um, pencils and
3 markers. And they're going to work with us, get
4 into groups, and we're going to talk about what we
5 believe as a community, what you believe as a
6 community, that parcel of land should be or should
7 house to honor our ancestors.
8 What should that parcel of land be.
9 Should it be a quiet place for respite and
10 reflection. Should it be a place where
11 children play. Should it be a monument placed
12 there. What should that be. That's what this
13 meeting is about.
14 So, I can turn it over right now to all
15 of the architects and planners. I don't know,
16 Councilwoman, if you want to make any remarks.
17 I'm sorry. Oh, the architects, well they just
18 spoke, so they have -- oh, we -- you want to
19 take -- that's right, we're going to take
20 about ten minutes of questions, and then we're
21 going to move into the charette.
22 So, if somebody could put the mike
23 there. People could stand in line and take about
24 ten minutes of questions and then move into the

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1 charette, because we really want to get
2 everybody's input in terms of what -- what we
3 should do there. Thank you.
4 MS. WILSON: Please, at the microphone,
5 please state your name and say where you live, how
6 close do you live to the Queen Lane Apartments.
7 Also, there are index cards and pens on
8 tables, so if you don't have an opportunity in the
9 next ten minutes to ask your question, please
10 write your question and we will catalog those, and
11 in subsequent meetings we'll make sure that we're
12 responsive to them.
13 Thank you.
14 MR. HEPSTALL: Good evening, everybody,
15 my name is Mark Hepstall. I live three blocks
16 from here, all my life.
17 My -- I have -- real quick, try to get
18 it real quick. One thing is is that -- that that
19 video you had was fantastic, but the bottom line
20 is it's a burial ground. So, that's all good
21 you're a fantastic builder, but we got to think
22 about what's across the street.
23 Another thing, when you talk about the
24 clean up services that were done before, when --

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1 before we really got this issue, I think that we
2 need clean up services today, so.
3 And another thing is is that we didn't
4 have civil rights until 1964, so we really didn't
5 have any kind of say as a black community. We
6 really didn't have any say as to what goes there
7 at that particular time. This is --
8 MS. WILSON: Speak into the mike,
9 please.
10 MR. HEPSTALL: This is the particular
11 time when we should be concerned about our
12 ancestors. We're the only people -- and I thank
13 Michael Ward for being here, because he told me --
14 one little quick story and I'm off the mike.
15 He said that he knows his -- he knows a
16 friend of his that he knew that that friend knew
17 his grandfather's grandfather's grave site. Knew
18 his great-grandfather's language. The house he
19 grew up in in Italy. We can't go no further than
20 Virginia or South Carolina.
21 So, whatever we got we should try to
22 keep. I got a million things, but I don't want to
23 take up your time.
24 Thank you.

1 MR. WATERFORD: Good evening. I hate
2 to be repetitive but, um, this is probably my
3 third meeting and --
4 MS. WILSON: Name, please.
5 MR. WATERFORD: John Waterford. And my
6 concern, and my community's concern, okay, and
7 I -- and I do not want to diminish the bone story,
8 for lack of a better word, okay.
9 However, I think that everybody in this
10 room will concede that that building has been
11 standing there since 1955, and nobody in this room
12 was concerned about any bones until three weeks
13 ago, or four weeks ago. Okay. That's my first
14 point.
15 My second point is this, okay. My
16 concern and my community's concern, my immediate
17 community's concern is not about bones, like I
18 said I hate to diminish it, okay, however, our
19 concern is our plumbing and our structure. Okay.
20 If we live within three to 4,000 feet of
21 this structure, and you're talking about blowing
22 it up, then we want some kind of guarantee in
23 regards to when you blow it up, that our pipes
24 ain't going to be broke and we're not going to be

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1 faced with a six or $7,000 bill. And that's
2 our concern.
3 And they're realistic concerns. And
4 like I said, I can't say it enough, I do not want
5 to diminish the bone problem, but that building
6 has been down there for 50 years or more, and
7 ain't nobody talked about no bones until four
8 weeks ago.
9 MR. MERRETAZON: Good evening, my name
10 is Ari Merretazon --
11 MS. WILSON: Can you spell that for our
12 stenographer.
13 MR. MERRETAZON: First name, A-r-i.
14 Last name, M-e-r-r-e-t-a-z-o-n. I'm the national
15 co -- national chair -- co-chair of the National
16 Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America.
17 MS. WILSON: And where are you from?
18 MR. MERRETAZON: I'm from Philadelphia.
19 I used to work here in this area for about five
20 years, Germantown (unintelligible). I used to
21 live here at Alden Park Apartments. And now I
22 live in Mt. Airy.
23 And a lot of our members, possibly over
24 time, have lived in these apart -- these projects

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1 here. And some current members still live in this
2 particular neighborhood, and home owners, et
3 cetera.
4 Our concern is primarily this. When we
5 was contacted by the Northwest Neighbors, our
6 concern was to honoring our ancestors in this
7 potter's field that was identified. And they said
8 that we'll have such a charette. But this
9 charette is pretty -- is more bullying going on
10 here tonight than anything else in terms of,
11 there's not a lot of equal time, equal input.
12 There's not a lot of respect for the residents'
13 input. You all are suggesting that we give you
14 the ideas, all right, and going forward --
15 (unintelligible)-- and you all going to be the
16 ones that make the decisions.
17 I think that it should be a good
18 starting point that we all agree that we all have
19 common interest, and that we all will be engaged
20 in this decision making process. And so I just
21 wanted to share that.
22 But also, I would also give a lot of
23 respect to the current ideas that's on the table
24 and position that PHA has taken to honor -- to

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1 take time out to honor our ancestors, and put that
2 on the ground as a very leading point of their
3 approach to this potter's field. And I'd just
4 like to make sure that through this process that
5 you include and respect the residents and other
6 concerned citizens from the beginning. Don't
7 bully us with your resources, with your ideas, and
8 your capacity. Give an understanding that many of
9 us don't have those type of resources that you
10 have.
11 You came in here with this PowerPoint
12 presentation, came in here you're reading
13 documents. Those documents could have been
14 passed around to us so we can absorb what's being
15 said in the document.
16 So, that's my only concern right now.
17 And (unintelligible) consulting party on this
18 process as it moves through the process, and we'd
19 just like to say we would like to join with you to
20 make sure our ancestors are honored.
21 And I want to also just point out the --
22 this document here, when I first made contact with
23 the Northwest Department, I shared with them, by
24 way of E-mail, what NCOBRA helped bring about up

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1 in New York City in Manhattan with the ancestral
2 burial ground --
3 MS. WILSON: Say the name of the
4 organization again.
5 MR. MERRETAZON: NCOBRA, National
6 Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America.
7 MS. WILSON: Okay.
8 MR. MERRETAZON: I'm the national
9 co-chair. And I'm glad, whoever printed this out
10 and made this possible, because I think this is a
11 good guiding point in terms of the level of
12 respect that needs to be the foundation of our
13 approach to our ancestors. We don't know what we
14 going to find in this potter's field. But we know
15 it is a potter's field.
16 So the utmost respect -- I just
17 encourage that PHA make sure that y'all study this
18 and look at all the possibilities. This is a much
19 larger space than the potter's field here. So at
20 least the same level of -- of respect can be given
21 to our folks.
22 And I really appreciate you giving us
23 some indicators that you all would be 100 percent
24 reliable in engaging our direction in such a way

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1 that they feel that they're comfortable to get up
2 and stand up and speak, you see, and share their
3 views about what happened to them.
4 So, I'm going to again congratulate you
5 and the black architects for taking the lead.
6 Appreciate it.
7 MR. JOHNS: Thank -- thank our
8 architects for pulling out that information for
9 us.
10 MR. PAMIER: My name is Greg Pamier.
11 I've lived in the community for 53 years. I
12 concur with many of the thoughts that were just
13 shared. The history of this community is very
14 important to me. Was a member of the Wissahickon
15 Boys and Girls Club growing up. I was introduced
16 to many people in this community through the
17 Wissahickon Boys and Girls Club, and through
18 playing on the Wissahickon playground, which is
19 part of this parcel.
20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yep.
21 MR. PAMIER: Excuse me. I was
22 instrumental in getting the State marker for the
23 Wissahickon Boys and Girls Club, recognizing the
24 significance of that club. And I'm right now

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1 working on a State marker for potter's field,
2 because I believe that's very important that we
3 recognize the historical significance of that
4 piece of property.
5 I'm a member of the Germantown Monthly
6 Meeting, where Stanley Yarnall, whose name was
7 mentioned in one of the articles, resided, was a
8 member, and helped to have potter's field become
9 potter's field. And I'm still a member of that
10 meeting, and very much support potter's field and
11 very much support the playground.
12 I very much support low and moderate
13 income housing. And I know very much the need for
14 low and moderate income housing, and appreciate
15 what the Philadelphia Housing Authority does.
16 For 33 years in this community with
17 members of the -- neighbors that are right in this
18 community, with their help I've been renovating
19 abandoned houses with the very neighbors sitting
20 in this room, in this community, and providing low
21 and moderate income housing for 33 years. I
22 started a Habitat for Humanity affiliate, and we
23 renovated 18 houses, right along Priscilla Street.
24 Right directly across the street from 301 Queen

1 Lane and the Wissahickon playground. Many
2 neighbors and tenants of 301 Queen Lane actually
3 purchased houses through the Habitat for Humanity
4 affiliate that I helped to found with neighbors
5 in this room. So, I know a little bit, and the
6 neighbors here know a little bit about the need
7 for housing in this community. And we support it,
8 very much so.
9 Unfortunately, 301 Queen Lane was not
10 managed very well. And as a result of that it had
11 quite an effect on our community. And so all of
12 us think that it's time for the building to come
13 down. We also see a real need, and we have a lot
14 of vacant lots and a lot of vacant houses, many of
15 which are owned by the Philadelphia Housing
16 Authority and the City of Philadelphia.
17 And here we are home owners, some of
18 us tenants, living around the very houses and
19 vacant lots that are tearing our community down,
20 including the highrise.
21 So we're all for redevelopment. We're
22 all for seeing these spaces become, rather than
23 negatives, positives. And so I'm glad that the
24 Philadelphia Housing Authority sees a need to do

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1 some development in our area.

2 My question is, my question is this, we

3 have a playground that serves a very important

4 purpose in this community. That has -- for as

5 long as I can remember, and for as long as many

6 people in this room have been alive, it also is

7 largely part of potter's field, and, thus,

8 possibly the reason why it has been such a mecca

9 for our community is because of that, because of

10 its history.

11 And so why would The Philadelphia

12 Housing Authority consider building on top of not

13 only an historically significant piece of property

14 that many of our ancestors and relatives and all

15 of us --

16 MS. WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Pamier, but

17 we -- we are not going to build on the potter's

18 field.

19 MR. PAMIER: I just -- okay, I'll wrap

20 it up --

21 MS. WILSON: (Unintelligible) minutes.

22 MR. PAMIER: Okay.

23 MS. WILSON: We said 10 minutes, and you

24 have just eliminated all those people standing

1 behind you, we're not going to be able to hear
2 their questions.
3 I'm very sorry.
4 MR. PAMIER: Quick question. How come
5 The Philadelphia Housing Authority isn't
6 renovating the abandoned houses they own in our
7 community, and building on the abandoned lots that
8 they own in our community?
9 MR. CALDWELL: Well, as the general
10 manager of operations, let me say that every unit
11 that we have that's vacant that doesn't require
12 substantial rehab is occupied. We have a 99 point
13 9 percent occupancy rate in all of our public
14 housing, so we don't have any units that are
15 available for occupancy.
16 As you are aware, we are looking to
17 dispose a lot of those units that are no longer
18 viable, so that's an ongoing assessment. But, you
19 know, right now this particular initiative is
20 about Queen Lane, and I'd like to keep it focused
21 on Queen Lane.
22 We can have discussion, but we allowed
23 ten minutes for feedback, and we're kind of over
24 that. We need to start, but at the end of the

1 program we will again have question-and-answer
2 session. But we need to move this process along,
3 all right.
4 Thank you.
5 MR. CALDWELL: Let this one gentleman
6 here in the -- come up and overall make your
7 question. If you could please keep it brief, and
8 if you have to come back after we're done we will
9 be happy to bring you up.
10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hi, my name is
11 (unintelligible) I'm a committeeman
12 (unintelligible). I just came in. My first time
13 at the meeting.
14 I'm trying to figure if this ground
15 has already been, what you say, dis --
16 disrespected or whatever, by anything. I never
17 knew of a potter's field.
18 Maybe they should name the building or
19 the street Potter's Field. Put a housing -- put
20 a plaque along with other buildings whatever
21 it is you build, but it needs to be recognized
22 (unintelligible). Some type of development and a
23 a little house or something that people can come
24 and visit along with community groups.

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1 That's all I have to say.

2 MR. JOHNS: Thank you, everybody, for

3 your questions and comments. We're going to

4 take -- we have --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: My question is

6 real simple. I was born and raised around here,

7 when Mom's Bakery was here (unintelligible) when

8 old man Jones was around here. I lived at 202

9 (unintelligible) Queen Lane, okay.

10 What I want to know is, as a homeowner

11 and resident of this particular community that's

12 beautiful, I was born a proud African-American. I

13 don't need you to tell me, I already know that.

14 Okay. I'm going to keep it real. What I want to

15 know is, when you tear down that building, are you

16 going to protect the home owners against broken

17 pipes? That I want to know. Are you going to

18 protect the home owners against foundations

19 cracking? That I want to know.

20 And I'm going to keep this real. When

21 the rodents come out that building, and they're

22 coming out, okay, are you going to make sure that

23 each and every one of these home owners and my

24 church and my community better not receive not one

1 bill from when the rodents come out of that
2 building. ?
3 That's what I want to know.
4 MR. JOHNS: The answer to that -- the
5 answer to that -- the answer to that question --
6 the answer to that question is yes. The answer
7 to -- the answer to that question is yes.
8 We, in fact, we're going to have
9 separate meet -- this meeting is about the
10 charette about the potter's field. About
11 (unintelligible) --
12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Unintelligible)
13 MR. JOHNS: -- about potter's field, but
14 there are going to be subsequent meetings to deal
15 with every issue and every concern that the
16 community has, be it demolition, be it rodents, be
17 it implosions. Whatever the issues are, we are
18 going to have several meetings --
19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Unintelligible).
20 MR. JOHNS: The answer is yes.
21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We want it in
22 writing, and we want it in a timely fashion.
23 MR. JOHNS: We will post things -- we
24 will post things -- you have every right -- you

1 have every right -- you have every right to expect
2 that. And we have a website on the PHA website
3 on the Queen Lane webpage that really is going to
4 have all the information so that everything that
5 we do is transparent.
6 We're going to start the charette. If
7 the architects would --
8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Unintelligible).
9 MR. JOHNS: No, we got to do this. We
10 got to do this, and then we'll come back. We're
11 going to do the charette --
12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Unintelligible).
13 MR. JOHNS: -- for 45 minutes --
14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Unintelligible).
15 MR. JOHNS: -- after -- come back --
16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We don't need
17 no -- to have no charette --
18 MR. JOHNS: You have to respect the
19 people that want to talk about and give ideas in
20 terms of what we should do.
21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Unintelligible).
22 MR. JOHNS: We will -- in 45 minutes --
23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Unintelligible).
24 MR. JOHNS: In 45 minutes we will

1 start. Thank you.

2 If the architects can start going

3 around and setting up -- and get in groups. What

4 we want to hear -- is we want to hear what your

5 ideas are about how we believe -- or how you

6 believe we should honor the potter's field.

7 That is what this meeting is about, how should

8 we honor the potter's field.

9 Please, do not leave. Please be a part

10 of this process. Please be a part of this

11 process.

12 Everybody can stay where they are, and

13 the architects are going to come around with the

14 boards (unintelligible) at your location.

15 * * * *

16 (Whereupon, there was a break

17 in the meeting for the charette.)

18 * * * *

19 MR. JOHNS: Thank you. Thank you.

20 Well, that was good. That was

21 really good. It looked like we got a lot of great

22 ideas. We are going to have to get a date -- can

23 we get a date from pastor when we can come back.

24 Oh, I don't want to put him on the spot, but I

1 want to ask the pastor -- hopefully, if we can
2 come back in a couple of weeks to kind of show
3 you -- we're going to put together -- look at
4 every -- all the comments that people made, and
5 put together something based on those comments.
6 And we're going to let you know what they were and
7 kind of move forward.
8 But I just got a hug from -- yes, I
9 did. Yes, I did. Stand up. Stand up.
10 Thank you.
11 MS. HOPKINS: Lisa Hopkins, Community
12 liaison from Northwest Neighbors of Germantown.
13 I am pleased that we came together as a
14 community in unity. Put our ideas on the table to
15 honor our ancestors. To have a playground, and
16 have Germantown to report back to its original
17 greatness.
18 MR. JOHNS: Thank you. Thank you.
19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, Lisa.
20 But I also want everybody to know that I
21 really -- I don't care what you do, as long as we
22 get our 55 -- what's the rental units from for
23 moderate income.
24 MR. JOHNS: We have one last question,

1 and then we're going to ask the pastor to come up
2 and give us a prayer.
3 Thursday. She got the date. Thursday,
4 two weeks from now. The 19th we will be back to
5 go over, so that everybody can see the ideas that
6 folks came up with, and some conglomerate of what
7 those ideas were. Working with the architects
8 here to -- to come up with something. Same time.
9 Same bat time, same bat place.
10 Now, I don't know about food. Now, that
11 was Lisa promised everybody on the radio that PHA
12 going to feed you.
13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: My name is Larry
14 (unintelligible). I'm a 7-year resident of this
15 neighborhood. And I know something about
16 neighborhood stability, because I'm probably one
17 of the kids that was throwing the rocks at
18 bottles in potter's field.
19 I don't like the idea, so I'm
20 going to preface my question with a little
21 statement about living in a stable community.
22 This community means a lot to me. I
23 moved back into this neighborhood after running
24 halfway around the world, all different places,

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1 living in all different kind of situations,
2 looking for something like young people do.
3 I didn't find it, so I moved back home,
4 this neighborhood. And when I started seeing
5 people -- I went back to see the woman who lived
6 on my street -- I bought my mother's house from
7 her, and rehabbed it with my wife.
8 And I went back to see the lady across
9 the street, who's the mother of the first girl I
10 went with. I said, What's the neighborhood like?
11 She said, It's a little bit better since you been
12 gone. She didn't mean it, she was glad to have me
13 back.
14 When I walk through this neighborhood I
15 have memories of fights, arguments, hugs, love,
16 religion. My great-grandfather helped establish
17 this church in 1914. It was a Presbyterian
18 church, and I'd like to see the church that's here
19 now grow with some stability in the neighborhood.
20 When our church was here we were practically
21 forced out of the neighborhood, because nobody
22 knew anybody in the transit housing. And they
23 never knew who was vandalizing their cars. They
24 couldn't catch anybody or anything like that.

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1 When I grew up in a stable neighborhood,
2 if you did something wrong in the neighborhood
3 somebody knew you, and they knew where to go to
4 talk to your parents to tell them what you were
5 doing. But if nobody knows you you don't
6 get stability in the neighborhood.
7 I would like to see these houses go up
8 for sale. Why is it we always have to have rental
9 housing as soon as you say low-income level? Why
10 can't we have low-income housing for sale? Has
11 (unintelligible) -- programs for people to buy --
12 first home buyers, all kinds of advertising help
13 you buy a home, low mortgage rates. But we have
14 to rent.
15 All you're doing is taking a highrise
16 and laying it down flat and creating the same
17 situation you had before. So, I want to know why
18 the houses can't be for sale.
19 MR. JOHNS: Well, we actually answered
20 that question at the last presentation, but rest
21 assured maybe at the next meeting we'll do that
22 first part of the presentation again so everybody
23 is really clear that there really is a critical
24 need for affordable rental housing.

1 Just heard last night on the news that
2 Boeing is laying off 2,000 workers. Do you know
3 what that means, in two months time they're going
4 to need affordable rental housing, and will be
5 moving out of their house.
6 So, it's better to show the statistics
7 that we have, because I think that shows better,
8 and we don't have that here --
9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Unintelligible).
10 MS. WILSON: Michael, the money
11 (unintelligible).
12 MR. JOHNS: And the money that we have
13 is tapped for the money -- it's for rental
14 housing. But we'll talk about it at the next
15 meeting.
16 I'm going to ask the pastor to come up
17 and close us out.
18 Thanks, everybody. We're really happy
19 to be here. We're proud to be a part of this
20 process, and we're -- we look forward to
21 continuing to work with you.
22 Thank you.
23 PASTOR HASTY: We're greatful to the
24 community, to the Housing Authority, and to each

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1 and every one for coming to our church to be a
2 part of this fruitful process for this
3 community.
4 I'm grateful that a lot of progress was
5 accomplished tonight, and more will occur.
6 Thank you, Housing Authority. Thank you
7 so much. Thank you.
8 * * * *
9 (Whereupon, the meeting
10 concluded at 7:55 p.m.)
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2 C E R T I F I C A T E

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4

5 I hereby certify that the testimony and
6 the proceedings in the aforegoing matter are
7 contained fully and accurately in the
8 stenographic notes taken by me, and that the
9 copy is a true and accurate transcript of the
10 same.

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Ronald DeShields, Notary Public

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