CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA WATER DEPARTMENT

STORMWATER SPECIAL RATE HEARING

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2016

10:35 A.M. - 10:50 A.M.

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING

LOCATION: Villas Del Caribe 167 West Allegheny Avenue Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

REPORTED BY: SUSAN A. HURREY, RPR

HELD BEFORE:

NANCY BROCKWAY - HEARING OFFICER
BERNARD BRUNWASSER - CHAIR
SONNY POPOWSKY - BOARD MEMBER

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC. (215) 504-4622

Page 2 Page 4 1 1 customers and community garden benefits. 2 2 PROCEEDINGS So the rates process. So it's great to 3 3 have the public participate in this process. I 4 MS. BROCKWAY: Good morning. My name 4 don't know if everyone knows, back in 2012 voters 5 is Nancy Brockway. I'm the Hearing Officer 5 approved the creation of the Water, Sewer and Storm 6 appointed by the Philadelphia Water Rate Board to 6 Water Rate Board. So whenever we have a proposed 7 7 conduct hearings for them, including this public change in our rates, even something like a proposed 8 hearing at Villas Del Caribe. And this hearing has 8 stormwater fee exemption, that goes before the rate 9 9 to do with the request by the Water Department to board who makes the final determination based on 10 change the stormwater rates for community gardens. 10 the information that's provided to the rate board 11 11 The Mayor, in June, signed an ordinance and also based on public testimony. That's why 12 12 passed by the Council that would allow the Board to it's really important to have the people who are 13 grant a discounted rate for stormwater management 13 engaged and come to give us an opinion and hear 14 14 services to these gardens and the Department filed what's going on. 15 for a complete discount, a hundred percent 15 The rate board consists of five members 16 discount. Their technical requirement is to be a 16 appointed by the Mayor, approved by City Council. 17 community garden. And here we're taking public 17 They have their own Website, so if you're 18 comment about whether this is a good idea. 18 interested, you can go to 19 With me at the bench, I guess, are the 19 phila.gov/water/rateboard. A lot of great 20 Chair of the Board, Bernie Brunwasser, and one of 20 information about the previous rate change and also 21 the members of the Board, Sonny Popowsky. And what 21 about what is occurring regarding the stormwater 22 22 we are going to do is we're going to let the Board fee exemption. give you all a presentation, a little bit about 23 23 Actions you can take. So we certainly 24 what their proposal is, and then we'll take public 24 want citizens to be engaged. Citizens can send a Page 3 Page 5 1 1 comment. And I hope if you wanted to comment letter to the rate board at the address that is 2 2 publicly that you check the little box on the listed below, you can do what you're doing today, sign-in sheet, that would be very nice. But in any 3 3 attending a public presentation, you make formal 4 4 event, I think we can manage this. Okay. testimony, you provide testimony to the rate board 5 5 I also want to introduce Debra McCarty which becomes part of the public record. But, 6 6 who is the Commissioner of the Water Department. again, we always encourage our ratepayers, citizens 7 7 Be my guest. to be involved as much as they can be. 8 MS. DAHME: Good morning, everybody. 8 So the background of the proposed 9 My name is Joanne Dahme. I'm the Public Affairs 9 stormwater rates for community gardens. City 10 10 Manager for the Water Department and we're doing a Council passed an ordinance this past summer which 11 very short presentation to give you an overview 11 established a special discounted stormwater charge 12 about what the proposed discount on stormwater fees 12 for urban gardens that meet the criteria. That 13 13 is all about. I also want to mention, does anyone exemption or that discount can go up to a hundred 14 need a Spanish interpreter? Because we do have an 14 percent of the stormwater fee. The Mayor signed 15 15 interpreter available. Just raise your -- okay. that ordinance on June 28, 2016. In July we 16 Just wanted to make sure. 16 received a letter from the garden representatives, So we're going to give you a general 17 17 Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Neighborhood 18 overview of what this is all about. Very brief. 18 Gardens Trust to initiate this rate proceeding 19 So we're going to talk about the rate process 19 because we wanted to see this move forward. The 20 itself, talk a little bit of background about where 20 ordinance states the exemption should become 21 the proposed sewer discount -- the origin of it, 21 effective on January 1, 2017, so it's sort of a 22 what it entails. Community gardens criteria 22 short process. So this is a part of that process. 23 23 information that support those gardens who would be This is the second public meeting out of four that 24 up for the exemption. The rates impact of the 24 will be held.

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Page 6 Page 8 1 So community garden criteria 1 farmed provides a stormwater benefit. Gardens can 2 2 information. So there is criteria. Not every also provide an amenity to the community. They're 3 3 vacant land that has something growing on it ensuring that blight does not occur. These public 4 qualifies for this exemption. An urban garden by 4 spaces are being maintained so that the community 5 definition, the property's principal use has to be 5 is not being impacted in an adverse way by 6 for growing crops. That can be for edible and 6 abandoned properties. 7 7 nonedible. The community group or nonprofit needs That's pretty much it. So it's a very 8 to operate the garden for the public benefit. So 8 short presentation with a very short overview. 9 9 it's not a profit-generating venture. But most Turn it back to the rate board. 10 importantly from the view of the Water Department, 10 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you. Thank you 11 the stormwater on the site has to be sustainably 11 very much. Before we get further, is there anybody 12 12 managed, meaning that 80 percent of that property on the telephone? No. I don't have the sign-in 13 13 sheets. Maybe Becca could you -- so we'll just will be considered impervious, covered by soil, 14 14 covered by vegetation so that if it rains, rain take people in order. Thank you very much. And 15 water can infiltrate through that soil. Doesn't 15 there are exactly one person who says that he would 16 have buildings, concrete, that sort of thing. 16 like to testify. So we'll hear from Justin Trezza. JUSTIN TREZZA: Yes. 17 Community garden criteria info. So we 17 18 estimate -- and this is based on information we 18 MS. BROCKWAY: Please let us know what 19 have received from our garden advocates that there 19 your thoughts are. 20 are approximately 300 potential urban gardens that 20 JUSTIN TREZZA: I'm going to just read 21 are out there. We are aware of 231 gardens that 21 from my notes since I did not memorize them. Good 22 22 are not owned by the City at this time. There are morning, Water Commissioner -- do you want me to 23 23 55 gardens that we do know are on City-owned vacant stand? 24 24 land. So they're already exempt from the fee MS. BROCKWAY: You don't have to, but Page 7 Page 9 1 because of that. The 231 parcels are the ones that 1 if you like to. The other thing -- Mr. Trezza, the 2 2 we are aware of that would be up for the new garden other thing that it would be nice if you would do exemption once they go through the application 3 3 would be to Word or PDF that into the rate board process. This is only part of the information for 4 4 and they'll post it. 5 5 people's rates, impacts to other customers. The JUSTIN TREZZA: Okay. Yeah. Happy to 6 6 lost revenue resulting from the urban garden do so. 7 7 exemption for eligible community gardens, and this MS. MCCARTY: Maybe you want to spell 8 is if it's at one hundred percent, for fiscal year 8 your name for the stenographer. 9 '17 approximately \$46,000 and approximately \$48,000 9 JUSTIN TREZZA: Yes. Justin Trezza, in fiscal year '18. These costs would not impact 10 10 T-r-e-z-z-a. 11 or would not increase our current fiscal year 17/18 11 Good morning, Water Commissioner, 12 rates which were recently approved by the 12 members of the Water Rate Board and public. Thank 13 stormwater -- the Water, Sewer and Stormwater Rate 13 you for affording me the opportunity to testify Board if this exemption is granted. 14 14 before you all this morning in support of 15 15 The benefits of community gardens. So stormwater fees being discounted one hundred 16 there are many benefits from the Water Department's 16 percent for community gardens. As explained, my name is Justin Trezza, and for the last four years 17 perspective. This is where we see the merits in 17 18 the exemption for the stormwater fee for urban 18 I have been the Executive Director of the Norris 19 gardens. Certainly the preservation of open space. 19 Square Neighborhood Project, a grassroots arts and 20 Gardens have the potential to reduce the amount of 20 culture and gardening organization that for the 21 stormwater which enters the sewer system, able to 21 last 40 years has served residents, primarily youth 22 take stormwater runoff from public right-of-ways 22 identifying as Latinx in the 19122, 19133 and 19140 23 into those gardens, but also the fact that there 23 zip codes. 24 are open green spaces that are being tilled and 24 Since the 1980s, Norris Square

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Page 10 Page 12 1 Neighborhood Project has been collaborating with 1 The other benefit is the non-profits 2 2 community residents to advance the neighborhood like Norris Square Neighborhood Project and the 3 3 through the revitalization of vacant spaces and hundreds of urban gardens throughout the City. 4 their transformation to culturally-relevant 4 This action demonstrates Philadelphia's dedication 5 communal garden spaces. Beginning in 1983 and 5 as a city to modelling sustainability. By 6 6 thanks to the valiant efforts of the women of Grupo eliminating stormwater fees for gardens, you are 7 7 Motivos, a collective of neighborhood women, NSNP acknowledging their ecological and social benefits, 8 was able to establish its first urban Garden 8 including increasing habitats for beneficial 9 9 Raices, which quickly grew into five additional insects and birds, reducing runoff and creating a 10 10 more just food system. And most importantly, gardens over the years. 11 MS. BROCKWAY: Let's, for the 11 preserving the sustainability of sacred spaces such 12 12 as Las Parcelas. Thank you. stenographer's benefit, make sure that we spell the 13 13 things that are not in English. So grupo is MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you. Really, I 14 14 have no one else who said that they -- who signed g-r-u-p-o. 15 THE WITNESS: Yeah, g-r-u-p-o 15 up to say they would like to speak. But is there 16 m-o-t-i-v-o-s. Then Garden Raices, r-a-i-c-e-s. 16 anybody else who would like to speak? All right. 17 And then Garden Las Parcelas, 1-a-s 17 Lady in the green shirt. 18 p-a-r-c-e-l-a-s. El Batey, e-l b-a-t-e-y. Jardin 18 SYLVIA METZLER: My name is Sylvia 19 de La Paz, j-a-r-d-i-n d-e l-a p-a-z. Butterfly 19 Metzler, S-y-l-v-i-a M-e-t-z-l-e-r. I have been on 20 Garden and Villa Africana Colobo, v-i-l-l-a 20 the board off and on for probably 20-some years of 21 21 Norris Square Neighborhood Project that Justin was a-f-r-i-c-a-n-a c-o-l-o-b-o. 22 just speaking about. I also live in the community 22 Each of these gardens is fundamental to 23 23 the community, providing culturally relevant and and have been maintaining a garden in Las Parcelas 24 24 affordable produce to the community, sharing a for about 20-some years and have worked with other Page 11 Page 13 1 1 story and history of the neighborhood and most gardeners in the neighborhood. Our neighborhood is 2 2 importantly, preserving Boricua and Latinx mostly Puerto Rican and African American. And so 3 3 the community is really important to support the cultures. B-o-r-i-c-u-a. 4 4 culture, the kind of crops that people bring from NSNP strongly supports stormwater fees 5 5 being discounted by one hundred percent for Puerto Rico and plant in our gardens to educate 6 6 community gardens and farms here in Philadelphia. each other, support each other. And besides the 7 7 The elimination of stormwater fees will not only gardens, another of our projects is -- one of our 8 reduce the financial burden posed by stormwater 8 main projects is working with the youth in the 9 billing on gardens such as Las Parcelas, financial 9 neighborhood. You can tell from the zip codes that 10 10 burdens that cannot be easily covered by grant it's a neighborhood that challenges the youth, and 11 applications or traditional funding sources, but 11 so we try to work with them to keep them in school, 12 also benefit the Philadelphia community as a whole. 12 keep them out of trouble and using the gardens and 13 For example, further intensify stormwater 13 the environment as a way to work with them. 14 mitigation, beautification of neighborhoods and 14 Instead of concrete, they have a chance to get out 15 15 access to organic produce. into the dirt and the greenery and some of the 16 In the case of NSNP, an organization 16 young people are just amazed at how things grow 17 with a budget of half a million dollars and a staff 17 other than picking up a can in the grocery store. 18 of eight, this bill will relieve us of several 18 Really didn't have a concept of how you plant a 19 thousands of dollars in stormwater fees. The sum 19 seed and watch it grow and harvest it and care for 20 of money that can easily be reinvested in a program 20 it during the process. So this program is very 21 like Raices de Cambio, a youth garden 21 important for our youth, very important for the 22 apprenticeship program aimed to employ high school 22 environment and as most non-profits, struggles 23 youth while developing their leadership skills and 23 financially. So everything that we can do to 24 critical thinking. 24 invest our money in our young people and our

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| | stified at the last meeting on behalf of |
| 2 really, really appreciated. So if we didn't have 2 N | eighborhood Gardens. But I just want you to be |
| | ware that I submitted my testimony in writing |
| | ter the hearing and it still isn't on the |
| | Vebsite. |
| 6 you. 6 | MS. BROCKWAY: Okay. Well, we have our |
| | eb guru here, so we'll make sure that that |
| | appens. Thank you. |
| 9 PAUL HORNER: Hi. Good morning. I'm 9 | MR. BRUNWASSER: Do you have another |
| \mathcal{E} | opy with you? |
| garden. I started a community garden in 11 | JENNY GREENBERG: No. I had left hard |
| | opies and then I sent it via e-mail to |
| code. And we are two years in and it's just been 13 | MS. BROCKWAY: She's out today and she |
| | as really busy last week. So I apologize, but we |
| | ill get on it. |
| 16 concept of having cultures with relevant crops, 16 | JENNY GREENBERG: Thanks. |
| 17 different heirlooms and different stuff from 17 | MR. POPOWSKY: I have a copy. |
| 18 Mennonite and African American traditions. And I 18 | MS. BROCKWAY: Oh, and we have a copy |
| | ght here. |
| 20 question or a comment. I didn't know about this. | Ma'am. |
| 21 I'm the Spanish interpreter. I didn't realize this 21 | MARIAN DALKE: Good morning. My name |
| | Marian Dalke, M-a-r-i-a-n D-a-l-k-e. I'm the |
| | ban gardens Manager with Norris Square |
| | eighborhood Project as well. I wanted to thank |
| PAUL HORNER: It worked out well, yeah. 24 N | eignborhood Project as well. I wanted to mank |
| Page 15 | Page 17 |
| 1 Decided to bid for the job and hear about stuff 1 y | ou all for your time and consideration of this |
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| 2 that is going on in the City. I didn't realize 2 in | mportant issue. I just have two questions based |
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| | Page 18 | | Page 20 |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | sounds as if they're growing to sell to restaurants | 1 | the City and we had a big parcel of land that we |
| 2 | or other venues. I don't think and I'm looking | 2 | had to maintain. Just grass at the time. And we |
| 3 | at the how the ordinance is written. I don't | 3 | were approached by this organization and we had a |
| 4 | think it precludes selling locally, but I don't | 4 | demonstration project. We allowed them to farm on |
| 5 | think it would be a profit-making venture. | 5 | half an acre on that parcel. And a young couple |
| 6 | MS. BROCKWAY: That's a really | 6 | who were interested in urban farming and were |
| 7 | interesting legal question. I'm not a Philadelphia | 7 | interested in this methodology called SPIN farming, |
| 8 | lawyer. We have the lawyer for the department here | 8 | I don't know if any of you are familiar with it. |
| 9 | and our lawyer who is not here will see the | 9 | They actually, in their third year, sold \$70,000 |
| 10 | transcript. So I don't think we can give you a | 10 | worth of vegetables from that garden, mainly to |
| 11 | hard and fast answer right now. | 11 | restaurants and to some folks they would market it, |
| 12 | MR. POPOWSKY: The ordinance says that | 12 | you know, one afternoon a week. And it was |
| 13 | it must be I'm sorry, Sonny Popowsky. It says | 13 | possible, they showed it was possible inside the |
| 14 | it's for a community or nonprofit organization or | 14 | City limits if you had something like half an acre |
| 15 | group of individuals for purposes of operating the | 15 | you could actually sustain yourself because, you |
| 16 | garden for public benefit. It says for public | 16 | know, \$70,000 came out of that. I'm not sure about |
| 17 | benefit. | 17 | all the expenses. I think that may have been a net |
| 18 | MS. MCCARTY: You could conceivably | 18 | number actually. But they did that for several |
| 19 | sell vegetables and that money goes back into the | 19 | years. So that was a different methodology and it |
| 20 | garden. | 20 | was a for-profit demonstration project. But the |
| 21 | MS. BROCKWAY: Yes. It goes back into | 21 | department has been pretty open to these things, I |
| 22 | the garden. That's the usual way that nonprofits | 22 | know, historically. |
| 23 | are defined anyway. But, again, that's specific to | 23 | MS. BROCKWAY: Is there anyone else who |
| 24 | Philadelphia. So you might want to talk with Scott | 24 | would like to speak this morning? No? Well then, |
| | | | |
| | Page 19 | | Page 21 |
| 1 | Schwartz I know people's first names | 1 | I thank you all very much for coming. We're going |
| 2 | afterwards or get in touch with Gemela McClendon at | 2 | to close the hearing. There will be a transcript |
| 3 | the law department. I've got your address here. | 3 | available. It will be posted on the Website. We |
| 4 | Perhaps I can get in touch with her and do you | 4 | |
| 5 | have an e-mail? | | have a couple more public hearings and our final |
| 6 | | 5 | |
| O | MARIAN DALKE: Yes, it's just my name. | | meeting to approve or disapprove or amend what has the proposal is December 21st. So if things go |
| 7 | MARIAN DALKE: Yes, it's just my name. Mariandalke@gmail.com. | 5 | meeting to approve or disapprove or amend what has |
| | | 5 6 | meeting to approve or disapprove or amend what has the proposal is December 21st. So if things go |
| 7 8 9 | Mariandalke@gmail.com. MS. BROCKWAY: Okay. I'll try to get you I don't think that we are the Board is | 5 6 7 | meeting to approve or disapprove or amend what has the proposal is December 21st. So if things go smoothly, something will be in effect on January |
| 7 8 | Mariandalke@gmail.com. MS. BROCKWAY: Okay. I'll try to get you I don't think that we are the Board is not in a position to give legal advice and not just | 5 6 7 8 9 | meeting to approve or disapprove or amend what has the proposal is December 21st. So if things go smoothly, something will be in effect on January 1st. And so we'll close the meeting. Thank you. |
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| 1 | CERTIFICATION | |
| 2 | | |
| 3 | I hereby certify that the | |
| 4 | proceedings, evidence and objections noted, are | |
| 5 | contained fully and accurately in the notes taken | |
| 6 | by me on the hearing of this matter, and that this copy is a correct transcript of the same. | |
| 7 | copy is a correct transcript of the same. | |
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| 11 | | |
| 12 | SUSAN A. HURREY, R.P.R. | |
| 13 | NOTARY PUBLIC | |
| 14 | | |
| 15 | | |
| 16 17 | | |
| 18 | (The foregoing certification of | |
| 19 | this transcript does not apply to any reproduction | |
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