

Broad Street Brief: Clarke Introduces \$400 Million “Neighborhood Preservation Initiative,” Council President Looks to Revamp City Zoning Board

CITY HALL

Clarke Introduces \$400 Million “Neighborhood Preservation Initiative”

On Friday, Council President Darrell Clarke introduced legislation that would borrow nearly half a billion dollars in an effort to increase affordable housing and improve the quality of life for low-income Philadelphians. The legislation includes \$118 million to increase the stock of affordable housing in neighborhoods and \$56 million to help low- and middle-income residents buy their first homes. The bill, titled the “Neighborhood Preservation Initiative,” enjoys broad support from councilmembers.

Council President Looks to Revamp City Zoning Board

Council President Darrell Clarke is seeking to retool the city’s zoning board, which handles appeals and exemptions from developers related to the zoning code. As proposed, the board would increase from five to seven members and be required to have “an urban planner, architect, zoning attorney, a real estate finance expert, and two members from community organizations” as members. Philadelphia’s zoning board has been the focus of controversy in recent years and also hears (and approves) far more zoning appeals than any such board in the country. A referendum would be required to implement these changes.

City and FOP Agree to New Police Contract

Philadelphia police officers will have a new three-year contract, which increases their overall compensation and introduces some disciplinary changes to the officer code. The new contract, decided by a three-panel arbitration board, includes a limited number of reforms sought by Mayor Kenney. These changes include making punishments for certain offenses harsher, reconfiguring the Police Board of Inquiry (which handles discipline), and restarting a rotation program for officers in the narcotics and internal affairs departments.

Kenney Signs Johnson’s Airport Worker Wage and Health Care Bill

Last week, Mayor Kenney signed Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson’s bill increasing compensation, providing health benefits, and ensuring sick leave for many airport workers. The bill was passed by City Council before its summer recess.

Tackling Mold and Asbestos Issues in Philadelphia Schools, Council Looks to Set Building Condition Standards

Councilmember Derek Green introduced legislation that would require an inspection and set minimum standards for the city’s Department of Licenses and Inspection to issue special



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certification for school buildings. It would also create a school safety advisory group. The legislation comes after reports of unremediated asbestos and mold at several schools caused protests at the start of the school year.

Councilmember Gilmore-Richardson Looks to Reduce 'Tangled Titles' Through Bill and Hearings

So-called “tangled titles,” or when the ownership of a property is unclear, are getting legislative attention this fall thanks to a bill by Councilmember Gilmore Richardson, which would require disclosure between funeral homes, the Department of Records and Register of Wills over probating estates. Gilmore-Richardson said tangled titles trap “over a billion dollars in generational wealth” in the city. She is also seeking to hold hearings on the issue with West Philadelphia Councilmember Jamie Gauthier.

Majority Leader Parker Looks to Make 15 Percent Cap on Delivery Fees Permanent

Council Majority Leader Cherelle Parker introduced legislation that would make a 15 percent cap on delivery fees enacted earlier in the pandemic a permanent feature of Philadelphia law.

Hite Says School District is Working with Amazon and National Guard to Fill Staffing Shortages

Philadelphia School District Superintendent William Hite says he has made requests to the Pennsylvania National Guard and Amazon to help with transportation staffing shortages riddling the return to school. A shortage of bus drivers means many students are forced to take longer routes or make private arrangements to get to school. Hite contends that Amazon (which is in the midst of an area hiring spree) or the National Guard could help plug shortages for the time being.
