

Broad Street Brief: City Council to Consider Reinstating Early Property Tax Payment Discount, Threatens to Withhold School District Funding Amid Asbestos Building Shutdowns

CITY HALL

City Council to Consider Reinstating Early Property Tax Payment Discount, Threatens to Withhold School District Funding Amid Asbestos Building Shutdowns

Philadelphia City Council is considering reinstating a previous 1% discount for early payment of property taxes, which would apply to residents who pay next year's full tax bills by the end of February 2024. The discount was suspended in 2021 in order to mitigate a COVID-19 pandemic-related revenue shortfall. If the measure moves forward, it would be the latest in a trend of attempts by city officials to provide tax relief for Philadelphians who may be experiencing undue financial burden.

Earlier this week, members of City Council also threatened to withhold funding from the Philadelphia School District unless it presents a concrete solution to its asbestos problem, as well as other capital needs. Two schools have been shut down in the past few weeks due to damaged asbestos, while several others have been closed in recent years for the same reason. Several other Philadelphia lawmakers have called for additional funding from the state to help tackle the issue.

Upcoming Committee Hearings

Philadelphia City Council holds several public hearings throughout the legislative calendar. You can watch the hearings [here](#).

- **Committee on Streets & Services** will be holding a public hearing on Friday, March 17 at 1 p.m. to discuss several proposed regulations and ordinances, including parking regulations.
- **The Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development & The Homeless** will be holding two public hearings next week — one on Monday, March 20 at 10 a.m. to discuss discrimination against households holding tenant-based vouchers, and one on Wednesday, March 22 at 1 p.m. to discuss rent control.
- **The Committee on Transportation & Public Utilities** will be holding a public hearing on Monday, March 20 at 10 a.m. to discuss a potential concession agreement with Slice Wireless Solutions for wireless services.

ELECTION UPDATE

For detailed information about the upcoming 2023 municipal elections, please see the inaugural Election Hub created by the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia.

Mayoral Forums Continue; Philadelphia Residents, Community Leaders Weigh in About Direction of the City

With more than 60 days remaining until the May 16 primary, mayoral candidates' schedules have been jam-packed with forums on policy issues ranging from the city's arts and culture industry to public transit and mobility. This week's forums allowed candidates to discuss their positions on issues affecting the tourism and hospitality industry and affordable housing and historic preservation. In addition to more traditional forums, many of the candidates have participated in



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Facebook Live interviews with Reverend Alyn E. Waller of East Mount Airy's Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church, which boasts one of Philadelphia's largest congregations.

While candidates have been working diligently to spread their campaign messages far and wide, residents and industry leaders have also been weighing in on what direction they believe the next mayor should take the city. A recent poll conducted by the Lenfest Institute for Journalism revealed that while more than half of potential voters surveyed believe Philadelphia is a good or excellent place to live, serious concerns about public safety persist. Furthermore, whether or not the individual views the city in a positive or negative light was largely dependent on their socioeconomic circumstances.

Meanwhile, Mural Arts Program Executive Director Jane Golden shared her vision for the future of the arts with the Philadelphia Citizen, urging mayoral candidates to consider creating a department of the arts with a cabinet-level director and a dedicated funding stream, among other ideas.

City Council's Only Republican Incumbent Faces Union-Backed Democratic Challenger

The Philadelphia Republican Party's presence on City Council has grown slightly more precarious in recent years, with Councilmember Kendra Brooks of the Working Families Party (WFP) having successfully chipped away one of the two traditionally Republican-held at-large seats reserved for minority party representation in 2019, and another WFP candidate vying for the other. Longtime Republican City Councilmember Brian O'Neill is being challenged as well, this time by a union-backed Democratic candidate. However, his Democratic challenger will be facing an uphill battle, as District 10 — the Far Northeast district that Councilmember O'Neill has represented for more than 40 years, longer than any other councilmember in modern history — tends to skew more conservative than the rest of the city.

AROUND TOWN

TUGSA Approves Contract Agreement, Ends Six-Week Strike

After six weeks of striking for improved pay, members of the Temple University Graduate Students' Association (TUGSA) opted overwhelmingly to ratify the university's most recent proposed contract agreement on Monday, with 98% of members voting "yes."

Philadelphia Accelerator Fund Celebrates First Affordable Housing Units

The renovation of a historic West Philadelphia property is nearing completion, the first project of its kind made possible by the Philadelphia Accelerator Fund — a two-year-old, public-private partnership dedicated to increasing the availability of affordable housing and connecting Black and brown developers to the capital necessary to create it. Eight units in the building will be available at market rate, while nine will be reserved for renters who earn 80% of the area median income or less.
