

Broad Street Brief: City Wraps Up FY24 Budget Hearings; Mayoral Candidates Locked in Five-Way Statistical Tie

CITY HALL

City Council Hears Testimony From School District Leadership on FY24 Budget

On Tuesday, City Council heard testimony from School District of Philadelphia officials regarding the city's proposed FY24 budget allocations, which included updates on recent asbestos-related closures, details about an unanticipated decline in enrollment, and Superintendent Tony Watlington's vision for creating financial incentives to attract qualified teachers and staff to Philadelphia.

Upcoming Committee Hearings

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

- The Committee on Commerce & Economic Development will be holding a public hearing on Friday, May 5 at 9:30 a.m. to discuss a potential exemption to the Cashless Retail Prohibition in the Philadelphia Code for gym membership transactions and the approval of multiyear agreements with FIFA and related parties in preparation for the 2026 World Cup.
- The Committee on Transportation & Public Utilities will be holding a public hearing on Monday, May 8 at 12 p.m. to examine the Philadelphia Water Department's request to increase water, sewer, and stormwater rates and charges and its impact on the citizens of Philadelphia.
- The Committee on Public Safety will be holding a public hearing on Tuesday, May 9 at 5:30 p.m. at Russell-Conwell Middle School to examine the open-air drug market and other barriers to clean, safe, crime-free streets in Kensington.
- The Committee on Education will be holding a public hearing on Wednesday, May 10 at 1 p.m. to discuss the potential of using an independent authority to bond and manage school facilities modernization efforts.

ELECTION UPDATE

Top Five Democratic Mayoral Candidates In Statistical Five-Way; Ranked-Choice Voting Increasingly Popular, Though Still Relatively Niche

The results of the first independent opinion poll of this election cycle were released by the Committee of Seventy and its partner organizations last Friday, revealing a tight race among the top Democratic candidates. Though former City Controller Rebecca Rhynhart leads the pack slightly with 18% of those surveyed having selected her — followed closely by former District 9 Councilmember Cherelle Parker with 17%, former Councilmember At-Large Helen Gym with 15%, former Councilmember At-Large Allan Domb with 14%, and grocer Jeff Brown rounding out the top five with 11% — a credibility interval of +/- 3.8 percentage points means all five are in a statistical tie. One in five voters surveyed is still undecided.

In light of the highly competitive race, the Committee of Seventy also investigated Philadelphians' political appetite for switching to a ranked-choice voting system as a means of electing a candidate with more consensus. Though nearly half of the participants hadn't heard of ranked-choice voting prior to being polled, the data show that 53% of self-identified likely voters support the idea. You can read more about the poll [here](#).



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Progressives on National Stage Embrace Former Councilmember Gym for Mayor

While former Councilmember At-Large Helen Gym is no stranger to endorsements from her fellow progressive colleagues in Pennsylvania — including State Senator Nikil Saval, State Representative Elizabeth Fiedler, and Councilmember Jamie Gauthier — and even Hollywood celebrities like Jane Fonda and Mark Ruffalo, in the final days of the election, she has attracted high-profile endorsements from major figures on the national political stage as well, most recently from U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont. Only time will tell what impact — if any — these outside-Philadelphia endorsements will have on the outcome of the May 16 mayoral primary.

Sanitation Workers' Unions Break With Umbrella Union to Endorse Former Councilmember Parker

Fairly early on in the race, grocery store magnate Jeff Brown secured the coveted endorsement of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees' (AFSCME) District Council 33, the largest labor union for city workers. Now, two unions under the AFSCME District Council 33 umbrella — Local 427 and Local 403, which represent city employees of the Streets Department in the Sanitation Division — are breaking with that endorsement, favoring former District 9 Councilmember Cherelle Parker for mayor instead. The unions allege that Brown's campaign implied through its "pick up the damn trash" messaging that lackadaisical work by sanitation employees is responsible for the increase in trash volume rather than severe understaffing.

AROUND TOWN

"Straw Buying" Presents Challenge to Efforts to Combat Philadelphia Gun Violence

"Straw buying" — the practice of purchasing a gun with the intent of giving or selling it to people barred from buying guns — is exacerbating Philadelphia's rampant gun violence problem, as state legislators have declined for years to implement policies that would impede such purchases.

New Study Reveals Effects of Philadelphia's Plastic Bag Ban

A recent study commissioned by the city and conducted by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh and Swarthmore College shows that Philadelphia's ban on single-use plastic bags has been effective in significantly reducing the number of such bags being used.
