

Testimony of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce
On City Council Bills 070955 and 070956

Fox Chase Cancer Center Expansion

November 26, 2007

Good afternoon Chairwoman Verna and members of the Rules and Parks Committees. For the record, I am Mark Schweiker, President and CEO of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce (GPCC). It is my pleasure to come before you today to offer testimony in support of Bills 070955 and 070956, which serve to expand the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.

Bill 070955 provides the required zoning changes and Bill 070956 provides the appropriate lease agreements to effectuate the much needed Fox Chase Cancer Center expansion project.

For 100 years, the hospital of Fox Chase Cancer Center has been providing the highest level of cancer care while making important research discoveries which have contributed to the transformation of our understanding of cancer. Utilizing a current 750,000 square-foot facility, the Fox Chase Cancer Center is a world-renown comprehensive cancer center that is literally bursting at its structural seams. Fox Chase treated 740 new patients in 1980, and is expected to treat between 9,000 to 12,000 new patients in 2010. As you likely know, the problem of cancer in the Commonwealth and the nation is growing with the aging of the population. At Fox Chase, patient care now represents 40% of its mission and research accounting for the other 60%.

From the medical standpoint, let me also emphasize that a preeminent institution like the Fox Chase Cancer Research Center reflects well on Philadelphia and the entire region. Its life improving research and care is well known and attracts not only needy patients and their families but the world's finest cancer researchers. In fact, researchers at the Fox Chase Cancer Center have earned recognition and significant honors including the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

The GPCC is pleased to support this expansion project for humanitarian reasons as well as the generation of jobs—and plenty of them. It is estimated that over the life of the project the Fox Chase Cancer Center will increase its employee base by 4,000 jobs. Because of the nature of the cancer center's mission and business, these jobs will be permanent and do not lend themselves to being outsourced. In addition to these permanent jobs, the construction phases of this project will generate jobs for the building trades as well. No doubt, this significant increase in employment will yield a windfall in tax revenue to the City of Philadelphia.

The GPCC has been working with the Fox Chase Cancer Center on these plans for several years now (see my enclosed 2005 op-ed comments), and we are keenly aware that not all community residents support this expansion. However, I am convinced that the Fox Chase Cancer Center staff has tirelessly done its homework and been responsive to their neighbors.

The plan has been significantly scaled back from 35 to 19.4 acres in order to preserve as much parkland as possible. In addition, the Fox Chase Cancer Center is viewed as a good neighbor, providing security in the area and beautifully landscaped grounds. Also, employee off-street parking has been expanded to address residential parking concerns.

The Fox Chase Cancer Center has also agreed to fund maintenance and repairs to the Ryerss Museum and Library which are housed in Burholme Park at a time when available municipal resources are in short supply.

Finally, let me remind all that the Fox Chase Cancer Center was faced with two options - properly utilize parkland for expansion or relocate. It is now obvious that Fox Chase was sincere in their desire to remain in Greater Philadelphia and accommodate the legitimate interests of affected parties. As such, the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce is pleased to support the passage of both bills, today, so that the Fox Chase Cancer Center can continue to provide its care here, tomorrow.

Thank you for the opportunity to address City Council.