

ALLEGHENY COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

- - -

BEFORE:

Patrick Catena	-	President, District 4
Robert J. Macey	-	Vice-President, District 9
Samuel DeMarco, III	-	Council-at-Large
Bethany Hallam	-	Council-at-Large
Jack Betkowski		District 1
Suzanne Filiaggi	-	District 2
Anita Prizio	-	District 3
Daniel Gryzbek	-	District 5
John F. Palmiere	-	District 6
Nicholas Futules	-	District 7
Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis	-	District 8
DeWitt Walton	-	District 10
Paul Klein	-	District 11
Robert Palmosina	-	District 12
David Bonaroti	-	District 13

Allegheny County Courthouse
Fourth Floor, Gold Room
436 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

March 5, 2024, 5:04 p.m.

SARGENT'S COURT REPORTING SERVICE, INC.
429 Forbes Avenue, Suite 1300
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
(412) 232-3882 FAX (412) 471-8733

IN ATTENDANCE:

Jared Barker - Director, Legislative Services

PRESIDENT CATENA: Good evening, everyone.
We're going to get started. I'd like to call this meeting
of Allegheny County Council to order. Please rise for the
Pledge of Allegiance.

(Pledge of Allegiance.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: Please remain standing for a
Moment of Silent Reflection (Silent prayer or
reflection.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Please be seated.
Jared, please take roll.

MR. BARKER: Mr. Betkowski?

MS. BETKOWSKI: Here.

MR. BARKER: Mr. Bonaroti?

MR. BONAROTI: Here.

MR. BARKER: Mr. DeMarco?

MR. DEMARCO: Here.

MR. BARKER: Ms. Filiaggi?

MS. FILIAGGI: Here.

MR. BARKER: Mr. Futules?

MR. FUTULES: Here.

MR. BARKER: Mr. Gryzbek?

MR. GRYZBEK: Here.

MR. BARKER: Ms. Hallam?

MS. HALLAM: Here.

MR. BARKER: Mr. Klein?

MR. KLEIN: Here.

MR. BARKER: Mr. Macey?

MR. MACEY: Here.

MR. BARKER: Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis?

MS. NACCARATI-CHAPKIS: Here.

MR. BARKER: Mr. Palmier?

MR. PALMIERE: Here.

MR. BARKER: Mr. Palmosina?

MR. PALMOSINA: Here.

MR. BARKER: Ms. Prizio?

MS. PRIZIO: Here.

MR. BARKER: Mr. Walton?

MR. WALTON: Here.

MR. BARKER: President Catena?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Here.

MR. BARKER: Fourteen (14) members present.

PRESIDENT CATENA: 12948-24?

MR. BARKER: A Proclamation recognizing the week
of March 3rd through 9th as Women in Construction Week.
Sponsored by Council Members Hallam, DeMarco, Betkowski,

Prizio, Catena, Gryzbek, Palmiere, Futules, Naccarati-Chapkis, Macey and Palmosina.

MS. HALLAM: All right. Hello, everybody. Thanks for coming out to County Council tonight. We are going to lead this meeting off with a really important recognition of Women in Construction Week, which Allegheny County Council is designating as March 3rd through the 9th here in Allegheny County. So with us, we have Sherry Thomas and Amanda Kraft, and I'm really excited to present you with this Proclamation, which I am now going to read. A Proclamation declaring Women in Construction Week.

WHEREAS, Allegheny County, as well as the region of Western Pennsylvania, continues to strive for higher levels of construction and development growth; and

WHEREAS, Allegheny County is committed to reaffirming the goals of fair opportunities for women and minorities in the construction industry; and

WHEREAS, the National Association of Women in Construction is a nonprofit and international organization that promotes and supports the advancement and employment of women in the construction industry; and

WHEREAS, the National Association of Women in Construction, founded in 1955 in Texas, now serves approximately more than 4,000 members in 115 chapters in the United States and Canada, as well as affiliates in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and South Africa; and

WHEREAS, the Pittsburgh Area Chapter 161 of the National Association of Women in Construction was first chartered on March 20th, 1969, with 33 founding members, and now includes women who are actively employed in all aspects of the construction industry, such as business owners, managers, consultants, tradeswomen, operators, architects, engineers, accountants and attorneys; and

WHEREAS, during the week of March 3 through 9th, 2024, the National Association of Women in Construction Chapters throughout the United States and Canada will be holding special events to celebrate the Annual Women in Construction Week.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, Allegheny County Council Members, Bethany Hallam, Samuel DeMarco, Jack Betkowski, Anita Prizio, Patrick Catena, Dan Gryzbek, John Palmiere, Nick Futules, Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis, Bob Macey, Bob Palmosina, do hereby recognize and commend the women who participate in the construction

industry throughout our region. And we proclaim the week of March 3rd through 9th, 2024, to be Women in Construction Week in Allegheny County. Congratulations.

MS. THOMAS: I'd like to thank County Council and Council Member Hallam for presenting us with the process nation today to recognize the Women in Construction week. So my name is Sheree Thomas, and I am the President of the Pittsburgh Chapter of NAWIC, National Association of Women in Construction. And I am also the Founder and President of SB Thomas, which is a WDVE Advisory Construction Management Firm here in Pittsburgh.

National Women in Construction Week is upon us and it's time to celebrate and recognize the remarkable contributions of women in the construction industry. During this week, I think it's important for us to think about the strength, resilience and knowledge that women bring to this vital career field. The theme for this year's Women in Construction Week is Keys to the Future. It's a celebration of the powerful role women play in shaping the construction industry's trajectory. Just like keys unlock doors, women are unlocking opportunities, innovation and progress in construction.

Why celebrate women in construction? First, diverse perspective. Women bring unique perspectives, problem solving skills and creativity. Construction projects our presence enriches the industry and fosters innovation. Second, trailblazers. From architects to engineers, project managers to skilled tradeswomen, we have broken barriers and paved the way for future generations. We hope our courage and determination is an inspiration to others. And third, empowerment. By empowering women in construction, we empower the entire industry. When women succeed, we all succeed.

Part of our mission at NAWIC Pittsburgh is to increase the number of women in the construction field. One of our annual initiatives is Camp NAWIC, which is a free week-long camp for girls in grades eight through twelve to provide hands on experience so they can learn about opportunities in construction. Last year, the campers spent a day at the Carpenters Unit Union Hall where they learned to build a wooden toolbox. They also spent a day with the iron workers where they learned to tie rebar and weld. This year the camp will be held from June 24 to the 28th and we have received amazing support from construction companies and trade unions for the camp.

Remember, the future of construction is bright and women hold the keys. Thank you for being a part of our journey. Together we build, not only structures, but also a legacy of progress and equality. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(Pictures taken.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: The other Proclamation will be read into the record. 12950-24.

MR. BARKER: A Proclamation recognizing Jon Burnett's 42-year career in television and his dedication to giving back to the communities. Sponsored by Council Members Catena and all other members of Council.

PRESIDENT CATENA: 12950-24.

MR. BARKER: A motion of the Council of Allegheny County providing for time limits on public comments to be offered at the March 5th, 2034 Regular Meeting of Council, pursuant to the Rules of Council Article II, Section 1.2.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Would someone like to make that motion?

MR. MACEY: So moved.

MR. GRYZBEK: Second.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Motion has been made and second. Any discussion?

Before we begin, I'd just like to say one thing. I just want to be clear about why I placed this motion on the Agenda tonight. We have 279 individuals signed up to speak this evening and all of the comments on Agenda items pertain to the ceasefire motion. Three minutes each. This equates to 14 hours of public comment and our meeting would run approximately 'til (sic) 7:00 or 8:00 tomorrow morning. That sort of meeting duration would cause a variety of logistical issues for all of consulate staff, the courts, the share of public commenters are places to be and the need for us to live stream our meetings and keep people informed.

In situations like this, we must strike a balance between representative democracy, traditions regarding public input and in being fair to all speakers, transparency and our obligation to conduct our business in an orderly fashion and address the items on our Agenda. The Commonwealth Sunshine Act and our Rules of Council both explicitly allow us the flexibility to strike this balance. In this instance, I don't know that there's a one-size that fits all solution. That said, I personally

do believe that shortening the speaker's time limit is the fairest way to hear from the largest number of speakers possible in an efficient manner before we vote on the ceasefire motion. I introduced this motion in order to give all Members of Council opportunity to participate in this decision because not everyone will necessarily agree with me and I completely understand that.

Lastly, please note that regardless of the outcome of this vote, because all of the Agenda item speakers relate to the ceasefire motion, we will be conducting all other Unfinished and New Business before getting to the public comment and voting actually on the ceasefire motion. Public comment on general items will follow that vote. Council Member Betkowski, I believe you have your hand up?

MR. BETKOWSKI: I do. Thank you, President Catena. The first casualty of war is the truth. Nothing that's going to be said tonight is going to change everyone's mind. No evidence that's presented tonight is going to cause someone to reconsider their position. The die is cast and President Catena, I recommend that we simply move on with it.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Anyone else have any additional comment? Hearing none, Jared, please take a roll call vote.

MR. BARKER: On the motion to approve, Mr. Betkowski?

MR. BARKER:	Mr. Betkowski?
MS. BETKOWSKI:	Yes.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Bonaroti?
MR. BONAROTI:	Yes.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. DeMarco?
MR. DEMARCO:	Yes.
MR. BARKER:	Ms. Filiaggi?
MS. FILIAGGI:	Abstain.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Futules?
MR. FUTULES:	Yes.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Gryzbek?
MR. GRYZBEK:	No.
MR. BARKER:	Ms. Hallam?
MS. HALLAM:	No.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Klein?
MR. KLEIN:	Yes.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Macey?
MR. MACEY:	Yes.

MR. BARKER: Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis?
MS. NACCARATI-CHAPKIS: Yes.
MR. BARKER: Mr. Palmier?
MR. PALMIERE: Yes.
MR. BARKER: Mr. Palmosina?
MR. PALMOSINA: Yes.
MR. BARKER: Ms. Prizio?
MS. PRIZIO: Yes.
MR. BARKER: Mr. Walton?

(No response)

MR. BARKER: President Catena?
PRESIDENT CATENA: Yes.

MR. BARKER: Ayes 11, noes 2, with one member not present. The motion passes.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Okay. We'll move on to Unfinished Business, which is 12915-24, and before you read it, I'm going to refer that back to Committee, but read it for the record, obviously.

MR. BARKER: An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, amending Article 209 of the Administrative Code of Allegheny County entitled Office of Property Assessment, Section 5-209.05, entitled, Chief Assessment Officer Duties and Responsibilities, in order to establish a mechanism for ensuring continuity in the Chief Assessment Office position. Sponsored by Council Member Catena. And that would be Committee on Assessment Practices.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Correct. Liaison Reports, any liaison reports this evening?

Hearing none, we'll move on. New Business, Ordinances and Resolutions. will move on. New Business Ordinance and the restoration 12951-24.

MR. BARKER: An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania extending the County Real Estate Tax discount deadline from March 31st, 2024 to April 30th, 2024 and the gross/face period deadline from May 1st, 2024 to May 31st, 2024. Sponsored by Council Member Catena.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Typically, we've done this in the past. I was wondering if there was an inclination tonight to waive the second reading and pass this tonight? Go ahead, Council Member Betkowski?

MR. BETKOWSKI: Just understanding the situation with assessment tax collection. I really do think that we

could at least have a third discussion of this before voting on it.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Okay.

Is there anyone else that has a comment?

Okay.

Then this will go to Budget and Finance.

12952-24.

MR. BARKER: And Ordinance of the County Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, providing for the development of the Complete Streets Plan by the Department of Economic Development, in cooperation with the Department of Public Works, no later than December 31st, 2024. Sponsored by Council Member Naccarati-Chapkis and Gryzbek.

PRESIDENT CATENA: That will go to the Committee on Economic Development. 12953-24.

MR. BARKER: An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, amending and supplementing the Allegheny County Code of Ordinances by the creation of the new Chapter 572, entitled Litter, in order to provide specific guidelines for enforcing littering offenses within Allegheny County. Sponsored by Council Member Palmiere.

PRESIDENT CATENA: That will go to Sustainability and Green Initiatives. 12954-24?

MR. BARKER: A Resolution of the County of Allegheny amending the Grants and Special Accounts Budget for 2024, Submission Number 01-24. Sponsored by the Chief Executive.

PRESIDENT CATENA: That will go to Budget and Finance. And then we have New Business, and we'll start receiving public comment on the Agenda Item. Let's call them up, I think in groups of 15, please.

MR. BARKER: The first 15 are Kate Daher, Kenneth Mostern, Dan Hackett, Andrea Basta, Yvonne Sorovacu, Amethy Weikel-Sandstrom, Faraaz Shah, Ali Asad, Emma Gamble, Anna Hale, Stephanie Pavlick, Nick Marco, Tanisha Long, Sabrina Maines and Allie Levin.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Before you start the time on that, I typically go through my rules of Council or my rules of public comment for the evening, so don't want to differ from that, obviously, because we have a lot of comment here tonight. So first and foremost, I want to thank everyone for presenting comments to Council, whether in-person this evening or otherwise, regarding the

ceasefire issue. Obviously, we have a large number of public commenters this evening. My goal is to be as efficient, as fair as possible. Throughout that end, I will be applying the local Council governing public comments very strictly. Remain quiet, obviously, and respectful at all times. Don't applaud, boo, heckle or otherwise disrespect the proceedings. Obey the time limits for public comments, do not speak beyond the time limit, please. If a speaker is not present when their name is called, they will forfeit their turn.

Individuals who are not County residents or who did not sign up at least 24 hours in advance of this meeting will not be permitted to speak. Speakers may not give any or all part of the time to others. But if any group would like to appoint an individual to speak on anyone's behalf, that is permissible, so as long as it falls within the single speaker's time limit. Obviously don't obstruct the view of anyone. I don't see any signs or anything like that, so I don't think that's going to be an issue. Do not attempt to engage Council Members or other speakers in discussion at debate. The purpose of public comment is for you to make your opinions known to us.

Please remain behind the behind the barriers at all times. If you have materials that we would like to distribute to Council Members, a staff member will accept those materials from you. And lastly, but not least, obey all instructions from myself, Council staff, obviously, and the deputy sheriffs. I absolutely do not wish to prevent anyone from speaking, but these proceedings must be as orderly as possible. Violation of any of these rules may result in removal from the building.

The speaking order is posted throughout a variety of locations in this building. The list will give you a general idea of where your name is likely to be called. Obviously, we've called the first 15 names up at this point in time, when you hear a name, please line up near the microphone in the order that you were called. When you begin speaking, state your name for the record and your address. You're not required to take your full time. If you would simply like to express your approval or agreement with all or part of something a another speaker has already said, feel free to do so.

Lastly, please bear in mind that if you should leave the building at any point in time, you may not be

able to reenter. The Allegheny County Sheriff's Office is handling all matters related to security this evening, and access to the building will be entirely at their discretion. So with that, let's begin. Thank you.

MS. DAHER: So my name is Kate Daher. I live in Wilkinsburg. Since we appeared here on February 20th, 100,000 disgusted Michigan voters registered uncommitted in the Democratic Party Primary against our President, Joe Biden. We know why. We know what those uncommitted voters wanted. They want a ceasefire, just like us. Starving Palestinian babies, men and women fill our social media accounts. And when the TV news decides to tell the truth, we see those same babies dying in our major media., but that's rare because they're not always telling the truth. We deliver 2,000 pound bombs to drop on Gaza that we wouldn't use. We deliver. This country delivers 2,000 pound bombs and 38,000 ready-to-eat meals on a population of two million. In what universe ---

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. DAHER: --- is that acceptable?

I have my three-minute speech I would like to give to you.

MR. BARKER: Give it to me. All right. The next speaker is Kenneth Mostern.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Go ahead.

MR. MOSTERN: I'm Kenny Mostern. I'm a Lawrenceville resident and a business owner, and I'm Jewish as far back as anyone knows. Two weeks ago, when one of the Zionist speakers lectured the room about multiculturalism, there were 47 Jewish, Muslim, Christian, white, African-American and others from across the County for ceasefire, and 11 white people living in the same square mile against it. Eighty (80) percent of democrats, including a majority of American Jews, support an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Israel is the only country where people say there are different rules for different people based on their religion and ethnicity, but it's a democracy. When someone says South Carolina was a democracy in 1960, you know better. When someone says South Africa was a democracy in 1980, you know better. What is it you don't know about Israel? The Zionists in this room are a powerful, entrenched lobby. The rest of us are the people of Allegheny County.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Next up is Dan Hackett.

MR. HACKETT: My name is Dan Hackett. I live in Castle Shannon. I stand before you today to advocate for a resolution that holds immense significance not only for our local community, but also for humanity at large. A call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza. There are people throughout the County that say, why should we in Allegheny County concern ourselves with a conflict thousands of miles away? The answer lies in our shared humanity. The suffering of innocent civilians knows no borders, and the pain inflicted upon families in Gaza reverberates across the globe. As representatives of our community and our County, we have a moral obligation to stand up for peace, justice and compassion.

Gaza has been under siege for years, resulting in dire living conditions for its residents. The blockade restricts access to basic necessities such as food, clean water and medical supplies. Children suffer from malnutrition and hospitals struggle to provide adequate care. By calling for a ceasefire, we ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Andrea Basta?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Yvonne Sorovaku.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Amethy Weikel-Sandstrom?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Faraz Shah.

MR. SHAH: Hello. Thank you for having me. Come. My name is Faraz. I'm from the North Hills. I wanted to just share my personal connection to Gaza. So before the war, my wife and I had been sponsoring an orphan, Bilal. He was an orphan before the war. He didn't have any brothers or sisters. We were helping him pay for his education and for food. Since the war, we don't know where he is. The eight organizations that we were working through don't know where he is. I don't know if he's one of the 17,000 who've been killed already, one of the kids who's under the rubble right now, one of the kids who is starving in the north, one of the kids who's had an amputation. We just don't know. And your voice matters. And I'm proud to use my voice today to try to speak for a ceasefire for kids like Bilal and other kids who don't have someone to speak up for them. And that's all the time I'll take. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Ali Asad?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. ASAD: No, here.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Oh, okay.

MR. ASAD: My name is Ali. I'm a Palestinian from the South Hills. Ask me why you do not care about us, because we are Arab. Why my community is excluded from yours? When bigots came from out of state to protest our new mosque in Carnegie, you stood in silence. When Pittsburgh protested the Iraq War over 20 years ago to save life, the local newspaper called Pittsburgh the al Qaeda hub capital of America and you stood in silence. Those wars cost American taxpayers \$8 trillion, with the T, trillion and took one million lives. Ask why, before he left, Barack Obama said, America can no longer defend the inhumanity lived by Palestinians. Why every major American or every major human rights organization in the world, every one, reported Palestinians living under an apartheid state. Their words, not mine. Including Beth Shalom, an Israeli organization.

Why President Jimmy Carter wrote a book about this. They now say that the conditions in Gaza are the worst that they have ever been in anytime, ever.

MR. BARKER: Emma Gamble?

MS. GAMBLE: Hello, I'm Emma Gamble, a Bloomfield resident, and I cannot stand idly by as our government funds genocide and the decimation of Palestine. We are complicit in this genocide that we are witnessing day in, day out. Even before October 7, the U.S. gave minimum \$3.8 billion a year and Pittsburgh contributes at least \$5 million towards that. Shame on us for remaining silent for so long and not demanding a ceasefire. We will not be the first County to pass a resolution. There is precedent, and even without that, how many people need to die in order for our County Council to act? How many deaths make it enough for people to say, this is unconscionable. Free Palestine. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Anna Hale?

MS. HALE: Hello, I'm Anna Hale. I live in Baldwin. This was a three-minute poem. It is now a one-minute poem. We live in the City of Bridges, the City of Fred Rodgers, where we learn to love our neighbors and our exhausted, overworked fathers, and mothers, and sisters and brothers and coworkers. Sorry. We're a working class

city, at least at our core, a City of chipped ham and pierogies. The strength of our city is not just in our steel, but the way we make lemonade out of bologna. So if you have love for your home, your city, your family. You can bet the people of Palestine do, too. Too much death. Enough is enough. Let's help push this fire through. That's it.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Stephanie Pavlick.

MS. PAVLICK: Hello, I'm Stephanie Pavlik. I live in Bloomfield and I've lived in Allegheny County almost my entire life. I was here a couple weeks ago and I heard a small minority of people claim that Council has no way to weigh in on this matter because they should stick to local issues. I say, is Allegheny County not in the United States, and do we not have multiple Allegheny County residents that are Palestinians in the room with us right now? Is the United States not the country that spends over \$3 billion every single year, without which Israel could never continue its occupation of Palestine? Is the United States not the country that has voted or has vetoed a ceasefire resolution at the UN?

As Allegheny County residents, as United States citizens, I think we have a responsibility and imperative to do everything within our power to end this genocide as it goes on. So I encourage you, I urge you, County Council, to do what's in your power to stop this genocide and pass the ceasefire.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Nick Marco?

MR. MARCO: Hi, my name is Nick Marco and I'm a resident of Franklin Park. I stand in favor of the County adopting the ceasefire motion, and I'm here to stand against genocide, as is my international duty. There are at least 30,000 dead and 70,000 injured in Gaza. Nearly every hospital, school, church, mosque and home has been deliberately bombed with U.S. munitions. Two million face starvation with aid funding slashed on the basis of lies. Thousands of orphaned kids have been left with irreparable mental and physical harm. Women are having C-sections with no anesthesia and miscarrying. Israeli officials openly call for the death of Palestinians in their expulsion into Egypt. And I encourage you to read Article 2 of the Genocide Convention to see the implications of

these facts. This is what standing with Israel in this moment means supporting.

It was argued by opponents of a ceasefire two weeks ago that foreign affairs aren't in the Council's purview unless it seems it is supporting Israel, as it did on October the 24th of last year. This is genocide, and our actions will be judged when the history is written on this latest chapter in the Nakba. And I refuse to stand quietly by and let my home County be complicit. Let's hope you cast the die right.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Tanisha long.

MS. LONG: You all know me. On October 24th, Allegheny County Council felt that they needed to involve themselves in international and foreign affairs. They felt that it was their duty and they felt that this was something that they needed to do because they felt so moved by the deaths of less than 2,000 people that they needed to speak up. Right now, we have over 30,000 people who are dead. And we cannot let ourselves, but Hamas our way into supporting genocide. If Allegheny County Council does not pass this resolution supporting and asking for ceasefire, something that the Vice President herself has just currently asked for, then Allegheny County Council stands to appear to not only endorse genocide, but decide that certain constituents are more important and more worthy of their advocacy than others. This isn't asking you to take a side. This isn't asking you to pick who's wrong or condemn anyone. This is asking for you to tell your government that you support their call for a ceasefire and that you believe Palestinian lives are just as important as you did believe Jewish lives were on October 24th.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. LONG: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Sabrina Maines?

MS. MAINES: Israel dominates with pure savagery, refusing the UN or media in to verify their claims because they are doing worse. Defending genocide due to fear of anti-Semitism is disturbing. The U.S. backs genocide. It's absurd that we have to say a single word beyond that. Absurd we are begging fellow humans to say, stop killing. Genocide; no worse crime against humanity. The oppressor painted a victim. The oppressed painted aggressors.

Justice is with the people and will prevail. Vicious opposition to Palestinian survival. No to ceasefire is a vote for killing and will forever be etched in history. This County needs brave, humane leaders, not silence and fear. The people before you with millions around the world, will not forget. We will not stop telling the truth until Palestine is free. You are flesh and blood and your politics cannot possibly be greater than your humanity. There's blood on my taxes and no to ceasefire is blood on your hands. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Allie Levin.

MS. LEVIN: My name is Allie Levin. I'm a Jew and I live on Shady Avenue in Squirrel Hill. I'm a member of Jewish Voice for Peace. Council Members, I urge you to join 50 other cities and counties in the country to call for a permanent and lasting ceasefire. I address today the issue of Jewish safety because it seems that's what threatens this resolution from passing in our County when in fact, a ceasefire is the only thing that brings safety to us all. It's important we understand when Jewish safety is actually threatened. Last week on the Seth Meyers Show, our President reiterated a line he said many times, were there no Israel, there's not a Jew in the world that would be safe. This statement is extremely dangerous and misguided. No solution that pits Jews against any other group will keep us well. White supremacy is the root cause of everything that endangers us. We share this enemy with our Palestinian and Arab peers, and their humanity means our safety, too. Safety only comes through solidarity. Stopping the bombing is the first necessary step towards creating a safer world for everyone. Therefore, call for a ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Line up the next 15, please.

MR. BARKER: The next 15 are Sam Schmidt, Melanie Redden, Eliana Beigel, Bobby Hillman, Zane Agra, Cory Roma, Andrea Boykowycz, Lita Brillman, Austin Dill, June Weirden, Daniel Kovalik, Karim Alshurafa, Jennifer Jayes, Bekezela Mguni, Edward Gallo.

MR. SCHMIDT: Sam Schmidt, Bellevue, District 13 Israel's violence over the last 150 days clearly amounts to genocide. With over 30,000 dead, mostly women and children, Israel is now killing more children per day than Hitler did. American legislators at all levels have more power than anyone in the world to stop this genocide.

That's why I'm urging you to join the now 70 plus cities across America to vote yes and pass an immediate ceasefire resolution. We are embarrassingly ignorant on this issue while hundreds of civilians are murdered every day. Condemn the violence, demand an end to the illegal occupation and demand humanitarian aid reaches those in need. Know that if you are sympathetic toward Israeli occupying forces today, you would have held the same beliefs toward Nazi Germany. International leaders will hold the perpetrators of this violence accountable, including the U.S. government. I urge you to be on the just side of history. The U.S. sends \$3.8 billion annually to support Israel's violence, more than our entire County budget. Defend Pittsburgh's taxpayers, retain the five million tax dollars we send to Israel each year and demand an end to this today.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Melanie Redden.

MS. REDDEN: Melanie Redden, Bloomfield. There are a lot of people today who know a lot more about exactly how many of our tax dollars go to fund this genocide or what could be accomplished in Allegheny County with that money. Instead, I came here to ask, how do you all sleep at night? How do you sleep at all knowing that even one dollar of our money is being diverted to fund blowing human beings, blowing them into, you know, death? Knowing you were so quick to speak out about the precious lives lost on October 7th with no hesitation, and yet, you haven't spoken one word to condemn 30,000 human beings dead, starvation being used as a weapon, orphan children, missing parents and limbs. How does anybody witness such horrors and go about their day without screaming out anyone who will listen? Please, you are all complicit, but you have a chance to change that. Vote yes for a ceasefire. And to the Council Member who said that nothing tonight will change minds of anyone, what a joke you are.

PRESIDENT CATENA: thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Eliana Beigel.

MS. BEIGEL: Eliana Beigel. I live in Pittsburgh, I'm Jewish and I support the ceasefire motion. The world's humanitarian organizations agree that an immediate, permanent ceasefire is absolutely necessary to save lives. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Doctors without Borders, all of them. But the anti-

ceasefire folks would rather forget about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and focus on the fact that some Stand with Israel yard signs got defaced and that somebody spray painted free Palestine on a sidewalk. They seem to think that we should be more scandalized by incidents like that than we are by the senseless deaths of 30,000 Palestinians. And somehow they also seem to think those incidents justify the continued deaths of more than 100 Palestinians every day. Well, Council, I hope to God that you recognize that a yard sign in Squirrel Hill is not more precious than the life of a child in Gaza.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Bobby Hillman.

MR. HILLMAN: I live in Arlington, represented by Paul Klein. And while I disagree with the Resolution to cut our time to speak to one-third today, I understand it. It's human nature to want to go home at night. For this reason, I ask you to imagine that half the people of Allegheny, Washington, Beaver, Butler and Westmoreland Counties were all told we had to leave our homes indefinitely while bombing campaigns struck the land their homes lie on. All this while our power, our water and access to outside food are being cut off. Now imagine that 2.2 million of us, all of us, have to relocate again to an area roughly around the portion of Pittsburgh that lies between the rivers.

Then, after over 30,000 of us have been killed and the rest of us continue to be starved, we are now being bombed in the area were once told we would be safe in. As you yearn for your home tonight during a long night of work, I ask you to think about those who have no home, no shelter and nowhere to go. Displaced, lost and dying. Please vote yes on a ceasefire resolution.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Zane Agra.

MR. AGRA: Zane Agra, District 7. As my heart fills with anxiety, please look me in the eyes. I hope you remember my name and why I'm here. I hope you remember that I'm 16 years old and was the only person under 18 to be here two weeks ago. I shouldn't even be here. I should be worrying about my SATs and doing my homework, but I'm now here, representing the over 15,000 children that have died due to bombing and starvation. I feel the obligation to represent them as nothing has changed. Your job is to represent us, the people of Allegheny County,

and I think that we clearly are telling you what we want. If you do not pass this Resolution, it will be clear that your hearts are not with the people, but in your own interests. In about a year and-a-half, when I am able to vote, I will remember your decisions.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Cory Roma.

MR. ROMA: Good evening, Council. My name is Cory Roma. I am a resident of District 12 and of Crafton Borough, and I am here to urge you with every fiber of my being to vote yes on this ceasefire resolution. You have the opportunity to join dozens of other major cities, in the opinion of over 60 percent of Americans, in calling for the Biden Administration to stop being complicit and demand a ceasefire. This should not be controversial. A ceasefire is only the first step in the long process of establishing a lasting peace for the region. It would halt the wanton destruction of Gaza, allow significantly more humanitarian assistance to enter the region, and give time for honest negotiations to begin for the release of hostages. The goal of a functional Palestinian state, free from occupation and capable of determining its own future, cannot be achieved through bombing, but through dialogue, truth and reconciliation. I appeal to your conscience. I appeal to your humanity. I ask you to listen to the overwhelming voices of your constituents, your neighbors and your fellow citizens, to stand up to the federal government and in solidarity with the Palestinian people and pass this resolution.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Andrea Boykowycz?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Lita Brillman.

MS. BRILLMAN: Hello, I am a Squirrel Hill native and active lifelong member of the Jewish community, something most of you are not, But you still insist on telling me what is and is not anti-Semitic. I went to preschool at Tree of Life. I became a bhat mitzvah at Temple Sinai. So I was raised with Zionism. I echo the concerns of those who are worried about a rise in antisemitism because Zionists have worked very hard to conflate Zionism with Judaism and now all Jews are seen by some as complicit in the genocide of Palestinians. If you want to curb antisemitism, stop assuming that all Jews have a primary loyalty to a foreign nation, an old antisemitic trope. If

you want to curb antisemitism, stop framing Jews as being against peace. If Zionists wish for the release of the hostages which is in this Resolution, read it, And to improve the feelings towards Jews, a ceasefire is the first step.

When asked what you did during a genocide. And all you have to say is, I voted against peace and raised tensions against my own community, the Jews in my own community, in order to show solidarity to a foreign nation, I feel very sorry for you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Austin Dill.

MR. DILL: My name is Austin Dill and I'm a resident of Lawrenceville. I'm here to speak in favor of a ceasefire motion. Those here in opposition will focus on the idea that this is outside of the purview of County Council because it isn't a local issue. They argue that this has nothing to do with Allegheny County. A foreign policy issue is local when it's the local people of Allegheny County paying for a genocide. The people in this room had nothing to do with arming Hamas, but every one of us had our tax dollars go towards Israel maiming and murdering Palestinians. Since the federal government has decided to ignore the popular support for a ceasefire, we have no choice but to make this a local issue. This is a simple moral choice because it's our government that is enabling the killing of our Palestinian brothers and sisters. You are supposed to represent all of us. Thank you for your time.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: June Wearden.

MR. WEARDEN: my name is June Wearden. I'm a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1776 and a Pittsburgher all my life. One aspect of Israel's genocidal violence towards Palestine that needs to be discussed is the use of artificial intelligence by Israeli forces to pick targets. The name of Israel's AI target generation system is Habsora, which can be translated as the gospel. In the past few months, we've all gotten a crash course in what artificial intelligence really means, and it is not the infallible word of God. The AI we have are unthinking programs trained by humans on human built datasets with all the biases and prejudices of their creators recreated in the results they spit out.

Israeli officials will tell you not to worry, because a human is still pressing the button to kill at the end of the day. But as one Israeli military source told the Guardian, working in the gospel unit means working at a mass assassination factory. We work quickly and there's no time to delve deep into the target. The view is that we are judged according to how many targets we manage to generate. AI isn't lowering the death and destruction, it's increasing it, as it creates a constantly flowing stream of essentially random targets to be shelled, bombed and struck by the IOF.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Daniel Kovalik.

MR. KOVALIK: Hi, Dan Kovalik. I live downtown. Former Associate General Counsel of the Steelworkers and Adjunct Professor of International Human Rights at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, I urge you to vote in favor of the ceasefire resolution. I am convinced that what's happening in Gaza is a genocide right now. About a week ago, the UN said that about half a million people in Gaza are a step away from famine. I think they've now crossed over that line.

I have friends that I met who were in Gaza. Some were my students at the University of Pittsburgh. They were foreign exchange students and I check in on them every day. People are eating grass now. They're eating animal feed that isn't even fit for animals. People are dying. 100 children are being killed a day in Gaza. This is staggering. I also want to mention one other thing, given that I'm an instructor, and that's the question of education, Israel's destroyed every university in Gaza. One at least through controlled demolition, with 315 ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Karim Alshurafa.

MR. ALSHURAF: Dear Councilmen and women, my name is Karim Alshurafa. I am Palestinian American from Gaza. I'm here to share my sincere plea for a ceasefire. My family still lives in Gaza. And last week I was here telling you that I lost 22 family members, and today I tell you that last week we lost our 23rd. He works for communications company and in a clearly marked truck going to fix a communication tower because people are cut off from the world, to be able to share their stories on the ground. Israel has targeted him with a missile and killed

him inside the truck before he can get to the communication tower to repair it.

There's over 400,000 to 500,000 people still stuck in the north of Gaza without any way and cut off from the rest of the world with food, no food supply. I urge you to pass a ceasefire to help people that are voiceless. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Jennifer Jayes.

MS. JAYES: Hello, my name is Jennifer Walkup Jayes. I live in Edgewood. I'm a Jewish person and also a researcher of counterterrorism tactics. My most recent paper on that topic was published by Brown University. We have heard many times that Israel has no choice but to use military force to protect itself from Hamas. That's not true. There are many nonmilitary counterterrorism approaches, and in fact, the war model has been consistently shown to be one of the least effective tactics of counterterrorism. In historical studies, only seven percent of terror groups that ended did so as a result of military intervention. In contrast, 83 percent have ended because of negotiation or local policing. More often, war-making strengthens the recruitment capacity of terror groups. When Israeli forces destroy homes, communities and infrastructure in Gaza, violent resistance becomes the only option. We know because we've waged a failed war on terror for 20 years.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. JAYES: This this will not bring safety to Israel or the Jewish people.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Bekezela Mguni?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Jared, sorry, before you begin. The request was made when you make the announcement, if you can speak up because I guess it's muffled in the other room.

MR. BARKER: Fair enough.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Go ahead, I'm sorry.

MS. MGUNI: My name is Bekezela Mguni and I live in the Lincoln Larimer Community. I'm here to ask that as representatives of this County, you use your power and listen to the people of Pittsburgh asking you to vote for a permanent and lasting ceasefire to end the genocide in Gaza. Over 1,000 Pittsburghers of every background came out this weekend to demand a permanent ceasefire to end

the slaughter of thousands of Palestinians and the forced displacement of two million people by the Israeli military. Our tax dollars fund this genocide and this is our responsibility. Over 30,000 people have been killed and nearly 70,000 injured due to indiscriminate bombing. There are no more safe zones for civilians and Palestinians are being starved because of food. Because food, fuel, water and medical aid are being denied entry into Gaza. 50,000 people are faced with delivering in these --- 50,000 pregnant people are faced with delivering in these inhumane and dangerous conditions. As a human rights city, it is imperative for us to demand a permanent ceasefire and call for an end to the human rights violations against Palestinians and crimes against humanity that we are bearing witness to.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. MGUNI: We ask that you choose your humanity and vote to pass the resolution for a permanent ceasefire.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Edward Gallo.

MR. GALLO: My name is Ed Gallo. I live in District 12 and I am Jewish. I'm speaking in support of a motion to call for a ceasefire in Gaza. I have heard the argument that this Council should not be commenting on foreign policy and that is why this motion should not pass. However, on October 24th, the same Council passed a motion condemning the October 7th attack, and I, quote, supporting justice and safety for the Israeli and Palestinian people and expressing deep condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives as a result of this senseless act of violence.

On February 20th and today I heard from members of our community whose families are currently, as we speak, being endangered and wiped out by truly senseless acts of violence. We are not asking foreign policy expertise. We're asking for consistency and compassion. Why was it so simple for you on October 24th? Why is it now beyond your purview? Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: The next 15 are Amirah Alzahrani, Julie Paris, Osman Jouejati, Brian Nuckols, Walid Khoury, Marjorie Manne, Brian Schreiber, Aviva Lubowsky, Natalie Kamra, Felicia Thomas, Jeremy Kazzass, Joseph Hogle, Jodi Hirsh, Rebecca Elhassid and Chaim Genack.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Okay. Julie?

MS. PARIS: Good evening, my name is Julie Paris. I live in Squirrel Hill. I'm asking Council Members to vote no on a ceasefire motion tonight. In this room two weeks ago, and tonight as well, I've sat and listened as lies were spread about Israel. Over and over I've heard how Israel is committing a genocide and ethnic cleansing. That October 7th was fabricated so that Israel could commit war crimes. That Israel is a settler colonial state that does not have a right to exist. That the International Court of Justice ruled that Israel was committing genocide, that a ceasefire vote is a call for peace and justice. Israelis and Jews are warmongers. Israel is like Nazis and apparently tonight, Zionists are a powerful lobby. Most importantly, I've heard antisemitic undertones in nearly every call for a ceasefire.

I soon realized that this bringing of the resolution to County Council was not about helping victims of war, but rather a debate of whether or not Israel has a right to exist. Israel's on trial and those of us who support the Jewish state remain on the front lines of our local communities and we cannot allow these lies to continue to spread. I hope you will have the courage to stand up to these lies this evening and vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Osman Jouejati.

MR. JOUEJATI: Hello. My name is Osman Jouejati and I live in Wilksburg. We are here to demand a permanent and immediate ceasefire. We must pass the ceasefire resolution. Our community members here in Allegheny County are being directly affected by what is happening in Gaza right now. This has everything to do with Allegheny County and its residents. Our hard earned tax dollars are funding a genocide in Gaza as we speak. While we can't keep our schools nor our homeless shelters open here in this County, we don't even have a high school in Wilksburg. Isn't that absurd? Why is it so easy for us to fund Israel but not our communities?

All our County and city talk about is, well, there isn't enough funding, specifically when it comes to benefiting our communities in terms of affordable housing and free health care for all. We are funding Israel with billions of tax dollars yearly. Over 70,000 people are injured and over 30,000 murdered. How many more will it take to pass this resolution? We are all forcefully

complicit in this genocide and we are all here to demand our County that cares about us so much to pass this resolution.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. JOUEJATI: Can we honestly say we're doing all we can for resident ---

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. JOUEJATI: --- if we have money tied up in foreign times.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Time's expired. Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Brian Nuckols.

MR. NUCKOLS: Hey, Council. I'm Brian Nuckols. I live in Wilkinsburg. I'm a therapist at the Spark Free Clinic for the people. And I'm here calling on you to pass the resolution demanding a permanent ceasefire. I'd like to talk about the mental health burden of genocide. According to Yara M. Asi, who I've emailed y'all her research, the diagnostic code PTSD, no longer applies to what's going on in Gaza. It's insufficient. And to really move --- it's really moving and difficult research to read.

The public health is a mandate for the Council and the health of our siblings and neighbors in Palestine. And those who have relationships with people in Palestine matter. And they're your constituents. We owe them for therapy and healing to be successful, there has to be a focus on truth. Healing can't begin until we tell the truth. That's why in South Africa, they had truth before reconciliation. We have to tell the truth about genocide before healing can spread from the river to the sea. Pass the resolution. Free Palestine.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Walid Khoury.

MR. KHOURY: My name is Walid Khoury. I'm a resident of District 12 and I urge this Council to call for a ceasefire. I'm sure by now you've seen the numbers. 30,000 killed, mostly civilians, including more than 13,000 children. Human Rights Watch has said that the Israeli government is using starvation as a weapon of war. This is collective punishment and genocide as the ICJ noted. If these facts don't move you, then maybe seeing them will. I cannot unsee the horrific images that I see on a daily basis, but I urge you not to look away from these atrocities. By supporting a ceasefire, this Council has the power to proclaim that our city stands firmly

against the perpetration of such atrocities. This is not simply a geopolitical issue. It is a humanitarian and human rights issue. In fact, it is a local issue that resonates within our communities and is funded by our citizens. You have heard firsthand accounts of Palestinian people in your community who are directly impacted by this. Please, please, have moral courage and be on the right side of history. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Marjorie Manne.

MS. MANNE: Thank you. My name is Marjorie from Squirrel Hill. This motion is deeply flawed. It is based on misinformation and formalizes antisemitic lies in the name of this Council. First, Israel does not target innocent civilians. Second, this motion fails to mention Hamas, which murdered, raped and kidnapped, which seals the majority of aid sent to Gaza, which uses its civilians as human shields, and which has rejected numerous ceasefire proposals. Third, saying hostages in Gaza and Israel means that innocent Israelis taken from their homes and held hostage by Hamas are considered the same as incarcerated Palestinians who have committed violent crimes. Sixty-seven (67) percent of Americans do not support a ceasefire without the return of hostages and the surrender of Hamas. The people supporting this Motion are extreme. They chant ceasefire now and intifada, a call for a violent uprising in the same breath. Please reject this Motion. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Brian Schreiber.

MR. SCHREIBER: Thank you for your service. I know it's not easy. I'm Brian Schreiber, a 32-year County resident living in the city of Pittsburgh. Two weeks ago, you heard testimony on the danger of weighing in on geopolitical conflicts. Another saying that a Council resolution passed on October 24 did just that. I watched that meeting. Your express motivation in October was to show solidarity with similar resolutions in Congress and the PA legislature. Its wording mirrored those resolutions. Not one member of the public commented on it. This motion is a hundred percent the opposite, designed to pressure the federal government to change policy. What precedent is this County setting? Have you ever adopted a motion to urge change in foreign policy? I want a negotiated ceasefire, too, but this motion only

isolates and further endangers the Jewish community here simply for supporting Israel's right to exist. I urge you to reject it. If you want action, propose a new motion that contempt's antisemitism and Islamophobia and urges County residents to combat it. I'm all in. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Aviva Lubowsky.

MS. LUBOWSKY: Thank you, Council Members, for hearing from us again tonight. My name is Aviva. I live in Squirrel Hill. My ancestors made their way from Israel to Eastern Europe, endangered by pogroms in the 1800s, they left everything they knew, leaving their homes and giving me the privilege of standing here now, before you, to exercise this right. However, now my children are starting to face the same dangers in Pittsburgh that their great grandparents faced in the shuttles. Antisemitism is palpable. In fact, we hear the familiar themes of it in this room tonight. If any of us wondered how the Nazis came to power in the 1930s, which led to actual genocide, we are seeing it right before our very eyes. Antisemitic acts in the United States have jumped exponentially, and three blocks from my house, a boy was assaulted because he was wearing a kippah. I am describing life in 2024, not 1934. Council Members, remember that Jews have the right to defend ourselves and vote no on a ceasefire resolution. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Natalia Kamra.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Felicia Thomas?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Jeremy Kazzaz?

MR. KAZAZ: I'm Jeremy Kazzaz. I reside in Council District 11 Abdullah Barguti (phonetic) is a Hamas bomb maker responsible for the deaths of 67 civilians. He designed devices that suicide bombers detonated in four attacks during the second intifada. He was arrested by Israel, tried in a court of law, was provided legal representation. The Red Cross has access to him. Kihfir Bibas, at nine months old, was dragged from his crib in Israel into Gaza. He has preexisting conditions. Hamas refuses to allow the Red Cross access to Kihfir (phonetic). His condition and his location are unknown.

This resolution uses the word hostage to describe both the terrorist and murder of Barguti and the baby, Kihfir Bibas. And it calls for the release of Barguti, who has the blood of so many American citizens on his hands, in exchange for Bibas. Council, this false equivalency is exactly what Hamas wants. The language in this Resolution is extreme and it is dangerous. It delegitimizes a sovereign nation while legitimizing a belligerent terrorist organization.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Joseph Hogle.

MR. HOGLE: Hi, my name is Joe Hogle. I'm from Troy Hill. A few weeks ago, while walking my dog in Troy Hill, a local neo-Nazi called me a, and I'm sorry to use this language, fucking terrorist, and pulled a gun on me because I was wearing a kufiyah. I'd like to remind the room that the far-right nationalist anti-Semites in Pittsburgh are also Islamophobes. A failure to call for a ceasefire sends the following message to such people. It's okay to hold your double standard for human life. Just devalue the right kind of lives and we'll look away. We must not send that message to Pittsburgh. We must call for a ceasefire. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Jodi Hirsh.

MS. HIRSH: Hello, my name is Jodi Hirsh and I live in Highland Park. I am not a nervous public speaker, and I'm not afraid to speak truth to power, but I was deeply anxious when I spoke here two weeks ago. The Jewish community in Pittsburgh is tight knit. Many of us share the bond of having grown up in the shadow of the Holocaust. All of us share having faced the worst antisemitic attack on U.S. soil. Standing up here and breaking that bond is not easy, but I did it anyway, and I'm doing it again because I, too, have nightmares of being gassed, of being summarily executed, of Nazis stealing my children, of having to flee my home. That inherited trauma is what motivates me to be here squaring off against many of my friends and colleagues. And I'm not alone. I'm here with many of my fellow Jews who polls show are in the majority of Americans who want a ceasefire.

A ceasefire motion will not make it more unsafe for a Jewish family to walk to a school in Squirrel Hill, but it

could help make it more safe for a starving Palestinian family to walk to a breadline in Rafah.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. HIRSH: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Rebecca Elhassid.

MS. ELHASSID: Rebecca Elhassid, District 11. One minute is not enough time to consider that this motion came to you through a nationally-coordinated campaign with origins that run through Iran, Hamas and anti-Jewish anti-American extremist groups right here at home. It's not enough time to parse why anyone would reference a UN resolution sponsored by North Korea and Russia in a County Council motion as you did. It is certainly not enough time to explain that every single person who is here today to ask Council to reject this motion wants a ceasefire in Gaza. But as Vice President Kamala Harris said this weekend, we want a ceasefire in which Hamas, which has promised to repeat the attack of October 7th over and over again, is no longer able to steal Palestinian aid or steal Jewish babies from their cribs. That ceasefire offer is on the table as Vice President Harris said, Hamas just has to accept it. I ask that you listen carefully to the hallmarks of demonization that you hear in the remarks tonight. This is how the Nazis did it. They started with lies, escalated to demonization, legitimization and then violence. You are being asked to be part of that legitimization today. Please say no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Chaim Genack.

RABBI GENACK: Hi, my name is Rabbi Chaim Genack of Shaare Torah, a congregation of 500 people in Squirrel Hill. I studied two weeks ago, and I shared my pointed opposition to a ceasefire resolution with this Council. After my comments, I returned to my seat in the back row and I stayed 'til (sic) the end of the meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting, I turned to the person sitting next to me who had spoken on the other side of this issue, and I introduced myself. I expressed to her that I wanted to build more understanding, and we exchanged emails and we later met for coffee for over two hours. We discussed our personal stories and our views on the tragedies in Israel and in Gaza, and we didn't arrive at a unified position. We didn't arrive at a unified position, but we left respecting each other as people.

Council members, I know that some of you are asking yourselves if this resolution is in the interest of our neighbors. Is this resolution going to move us forward or backward? We cannot build a community with a divisive wedge like this resolution in our community. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Before we go on, Jared, we're going to take a five-minute recess. We're having some audio issues in the other area. So five minutes.

(Short break taken.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: Everyone, if you could. If you could return to your seats, we're going to get started momentarily.

MR. BARKER: The next set of 15. Robin Clarke, David Work, Jay Walker, Rabbi Seth Adelson, Bryan Neft, Kenneth Boas, Beverly Manne, Rick Wice, Bryna Siegel Finer, Kathie Fitzgerald, Karen Gal-Or, Hannah Gunderman, Candace Wagner, Chaim Strassman and Lauren Baldel.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Who's the first?

MR. BARKER: Robin Clarke.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Robin? Not here.

MR. BARKER: Next up is David Work. I'm CFO for the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh. It's my honor to speak on behalf of our Chair and Director of our Community Relations. This type of resolution will have no tangible impact on the war in Gaza. It serves only to deepen and polarize our community, erode trust in our institutions, and strain intercultural relations. We saw this not only in the extended testimony two weeks ago, much of which was riddled with falsehoods, but also in the rampant rise in antisemitism that is displayed through people unable to differentiate their feelings about the war with their Jewish neighbors.

After members of the Jewish community, grandchildren, Holocaust survivors, spoke last week about growing antisemitism they are experiencing in our neighborhoods, people here in this room mocked them and accused them of weaponizing fear. So while the desire to address international conflicts is understandable, this Council must weigh the limited effect of such resolutions against the critical harm they can cause to community members here at home.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. WORK: Please vote no. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Jay Walker.

MR. WALKER: Hi, my name is Jay Ting Walker. I'm a resident of District 11. I want to lend my voice in support as an individual of the County Council passing a ceasefire resolution. My belief is that such a resolution would apply political pressure to our area's congresspeople, our state senators, and our president, Joseph Biden, to bring an end to an ongoing genocide. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Rabbi Seth Adelson.

RABBI ADELSON: Rabbi Seth Adelson of Congregation Beth Shalom, District 11. Every person in this room wants peace. I lead a congregation of 600 families representing far more of your Jewish constituents than the few Jews here who support this motion. In fact, when the Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle asked in a poll if an immediate ceasefire would put Jews in jeopardy, almost 90 percent said yes. Hamas broke the existing ceasefire on October 7 by murdering, torturing, raping and dismembering Jews and Muslims. And we can achieve a better peace than what came before that date.

It's very simple. How do we do it? Hamas returns all hostages and surrenders. Israelis and Palestinians would all benefit immediately. And isn't that what we all want? Not this motion, which would leave Hamas in power and leave Israelis and Palestinians subject to the genocidal activities of terrorists. Please vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Bryan Neft?

MR. NEFT: Members of Council, my name is Bryan Neft, and I'm a proud Jew from Mount Lebanon. As Pittsburgh-born journalist Barry Weiss recently wrote, we have lost our sense of right and wrong and good and bad. When an unprovoked massacre of Israelis is called resistance, a genocidal chant is called for freedom and Israeli self-defense is called genocide. The International Court of Justice did not find Israel guilty of genocide. It also did not call for a ceasefire, but rather required Israel to do what it was already required of it under international law.

On October 7, Hamas committed a depraved massacre of Israelis that beheaded Israeli babies, murdered Israeli parents in cold blood in front of their children,

kidnapped Israelis and Americans, including children and the elderly, committed arson of private homes, shot unarmed Israeli civilians point blank in their homes, gunned down Israeli teens at a music festival, raped, gang raped, and sexually tortured and mutilated Israeli women.

What would any of you expect of your government if your children, your parents were the victims of these same atrocities? I urge you to vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Kenneth Boas.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Beverly Manne.

MS. B. MANNE: Honorable President Catena and Honorable Members of Council, thank you for hearing me tonight. I'm Beverly Manne from District 11. Nazi leader Joseph Goebel said, if you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. Those supporting the resolution believe that if you repeat the lie of genocide often enough, it will be true. The UN Convention of Genocide defines genocide as a crime committed with intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. The allegation that Israel's committing genocide or intentionally targeting civilians is contradicted by the facts. That's the intent. Genocide is the intent of Hamas to eradicate Jews from the earth. That was the intent of the Nazis when they murdered my grandparents, my aunts, and my uncles.

Major John Spencer of the U.S. warfare study said Israel has taken more steps than any to avoid harming civilians than any other military in history, including the United States.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. B. MANNE: I urge you to vote against this resolution.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Rick Wice.

MR. WICE: Rick Wice from District 11. I want to say that no to this resolution, Hamas is a terrorist organization. I hear people saying, stop the genocide, but Hamas is dedicated to genocide. The destruction of the State of Israel from the river to the sea is basically saying, kill the Jews, drive them off. I've heard people mention in here it's a white settler colony. Thirty (30) percent of the Jews and citizens of Israel are from Ashkenazi European background. Thirty (30) percent are

Sephardim. There are still, I think, 1 or 2 million Arabs living there. It is not an apartheid state. I am tired of these lies and misconceptions that are being pushed by many of the people that have spoken tonight. And as Rabbi Adelson said, you want to end this genocide which it's not, free the hostages, Hamas surrender and somehow the international community come up with way to manage the Gaza which has not been occupied, Israel left in 2008 2005. Vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Bryna Siegel Finer.

MS. FINER: I'm a Professor of Rhetoric and I believe that words have tremendous power. I'm going to share some words that I think most, if not all, of us, can agree on. I do not want war. I do not want people to die. I mourn for all the lives that have been lost recently and throughout the decades in the Middle East. But peace will not happen until the words of Palestinian leaders reflect acceptance of the lives of their Israeli neighbors. Instead, the words of the Charter of Hamas call for the destruction of Israel and the death of Jews. So let me end by using words that are both true and clear. The actions of Hamas started this war, and their actions are causing it to continue. Council members, please use your words wisely. Vote no on a resolution that will have no tangible impact in the Middle east and will only hurt Jews who have literally already been terrorized here in Pittsburgh.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Before we have the next speaker, I just want to remind everyone, if you're not here when your name is called, you will be forfeiting your turn. Those are the rules of Council this evening. So your speaking time will be forfeited. So go ahead, Jared, with the next one.

MR. BARKER: Kathie Fitzgerald.

MS. FITZGERALD: Kathie Fitzgerald, Northside. I'm a member of the Socialist Workers Party, and I'm here to speak against the resolution before the County Council. At the heart of the October 7 massacre by Hamas, backed by Iran, is Jew hatred, which is a life or death question for the labor movement and all working people. The mass pogrom had one objective clearly stated, to kill as many Jews as possible. It had absolutely nothing to do with the national aspirations of the Palestinian people. Israel, a refuge for the Jews, was borne out of necessity

when, before, during and after the Holocaust, Washington and London slammed and shut their borders to Jewish refugees fleeing death. A permanent ceasefire would be a victory for Hamas, freeing it to regroup for the carnage they say is their aim. Vote no.

MR. BARKER: Next up is Karen Gal-Or.

MS. GAL-OR. Good evening, my name is Karen Gal-Or and I'm from Squirrel Hill. My cousin, Eli Zisser, was murdered on October 7 in Kfaraza. He was murdered by Hamas terrorists who walked into the kibbutz filled with families, grandparents and women and children, and murdered and mutilated them. He was one of the first soldiers to arrive at the kibbutz to rescue the families and civilians. He was outnumbered and he was murdered. He was 27. He had just gotten married. He planned to go to college next year. He wanted to be an engineer.

When we told my grandmother, a Holocaust survivor, what happened, she responded, we now know what Israel would look like if it had no army. And Hamas has made no secret of what Israel would look like with no army. They have said the al Axa flood (phonetic) is just the first time, and there will be a second and a third and a fourth. This Council, one of whose members openly celebrated the October 7 atrocities on social media, has no authority. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Hannah Gunerman.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Candace Wagner?

MS. WAGNER: Candace Wagner, Brighton Heights. I'm the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress, 12th District. I'm a union hotel worker. Many workers I speak with are appalled by the October Hamas attack and do not support the idea of forcing Israel to stop. Some of those calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza today deny the facts of what happened. The silence is deafening around the rape and mutilation of women and girls. Women were a special target. The Hamas attackers body cams live streamed this violence. Hamas backers the Iranian regime, are leading an axis of resistance against Israel. They all share the Iranian ruler's hatred of Jews. In Iran, women's freedom is a critical fight. In 2022, massive, sustained protests broke out following the death and custody of Zena Amini (phonetic), charged with violating a dress code law requiring women to cover their hair. The

regime then killed 500 demonstrators. If Hamas is not destroyed, this will give encouragement to all these reactionary forces.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Chaim Strassman.

MR. STRASSMAN: Good evening, my name is Chaim Strassman from Squirrel Hill. I want to be clear to those using the term genocide in the UN to justify this motion. The ICJ has not found Israel as committing genocide. The court declined to order an immediate ceasefire or an end to the military offensive against Hamas, despite South Africa's initial request. Again, the ICJ did not find that Israel was committing genocide order Israel to stop its military offensive. Do you know what the ICJ did order? It ordered Hamas to release the hostages, which has yet to be accomplished. This is a fact conveniently omitted by so many two weeks ago, along with tonight. Also omitted is the fact that Hamas started this war and the fact that Hamas has been consistently refusing ceasefires over the course of this conflict. I urge everyone on the Council to vote no on this resolution.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Lauren Baldel.

MS. BALDEL: My name is Lauren Baldel and I live in Squirrel Hill. I am here this evening to express my opposition to a ceasefire resolution. It is uninformed, inaccurate, and overly simplifies a long history of tragedy and conflict. This resolution fails to even mention Hamas or that it started this war with widespread murder, torture, rape and other brutal acts of sexual violence which still persist for those remaining in captivity. Symbolicating (sic) Hamas with the call for ceasefire is woefully naive. If an invasion of rape and murder happened on U.S. soil, with the perpetrator vowing to do it again, this Council would not only expect, but you would demand that our government act to keep us safe. Israel is fighting a moral war targeting terrorists in Gaza in order to safeguard its citizens. Like any sovereign nation, Israel has the right to self-defense. Hamas has the ability to surrender and return our hostages. That is what world leaders must call for. That is what will end this war and save lives.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next? Next group?

MR. BARKER: The next group; Mor Greenberg, Rebecca Fuhrman, Marina Goodman, Jodi Russ, Eyas Azzuni, Stafanie

Small, Richard Calabrese, Jr., Moshe Nadoff, Elena Davis, Jeremy Goodman, Michele Woltshock, Jon Tucker, Leah Kamon, Jonathan Jablow and Julia Bernier.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Who's the first one?

MR. BARKER: First up is Mor Greenberg.

MS. GREENBERG: My name is Mor Greenberg and I'm from Squirrel Hill. I'm an orthodox Jewish mother of five. On October 7th there was a ceasefire in place and Israel had no interest in entering Gaza. On October 7th, Hamas broke that ceasefire. Israel does not want war, but it must protect its people from rape, torture and murder, which, to be clear, is not justified resistance. But let's put politics aside for a minute and focus on our shared humanity. As a Jewish mother and wife, my heart skips a beat at the sound of every siren. Unfortunately, this fear is not unfounded. Six years ago, our worst fears came true, and the mounting sounds of sirens were indeed antisemitic shooting around the corner from our house. I'll never forget that Saturday morning, unsure if I would ever see my husband and children again. Recently, my 12-year old son was harassed on the way to school for wearing a yarmica and sworn at while running a lemonade stand. One thing is for sure, passing a ceasefire resolution today unfortunately won't improve the lives of the Palestinians living in Gaza. But it will put at risk the wellbeing of your Jewish neighbors, who, like you, just want to live in peace.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Rebecca Fuhrman.

MS. FUHRMAN: Good evening. Thank you. My name is Rebecca Fuhrman. I'm an American living here in Allegheny County. I'm a mother of two. I'm a citizen of the State of Israel. I am a victim of terror. On March 23, 2011, terrorists blew up my bus on my way to work in Central Jerusalem. My life changed forever. They did not know me. They planted that bomb to murder and injure Jews. When I consider this war, my heart breaks. I think about my friends and family living in Israel. I think about Shiri Bibas and her children. They are the same age as my children. They went to bed on October 6th knowing that despite a ceasefire, a rocket could land in their home and murder their family. In the morning, Hamas terrorists kidnapped her and her children. Hamas terrorists slaughtered, mutilated, raped, kidnapped thousands of

people of human beings for being Jews. Do not support terrorism.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Marina Goodman.

MS. GOODMAN: My name is Marina Goodman. I live in Squirrel Hill. The definition of a ceasefire is when you ask all parties in a war to cease their fire. Over 12,000 rockets have been fired into Israel since October 7 between Hamas and Hezbollah and the Houthis. Not a single person who was calling for ceasefire is asking Hamas to stop their rockets or Hezbollah. Houthis just downed a ship. Nobody is asking them to stop. Therefore, this ceasefire has nothing to do with seizing fire. It is simply asking Jews to quite politely step aside so that they could more conveniently be murdered. As a granddaughter of holocaust survivors, I say never. We will never do that. Never again.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Jodi Russ.

MS. RUSS: Jodi Miyira (phonetic) Russ, District 11. Twenty (20) years ago, I was in a room similar to this one in Somerville, Massachusetts. I was there to speak about a resolution the alderman had put forth about Israel. I spoke briefly and returned to my seat at the conclusion of the evening. As I put on my coat, a woman who had spoken on behalf of the resolution approached me and said, go back to where you came from. Members of the County Council, I assure you that sentiments and viewpoints such as that are present among those who support resolutions like the one before you. Online supporters of tonight's resolution celebrated the pogrom of Jews on October 7, calling the massacre self-defense and an act of Palestinian resistance. At a previous meeting here, a speaker denied the murder of Jewish people on October 7 and denied the rape of Jewish women. Make no mistake to support this resolution. A resolution that will do nothing to alleviate actual Palestinian suffering says to the people of Allegheny County that it is okay to align oneself with hate. We deserve better.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Eyas Azzuni.

MR. AZZUNI: I want to start by thank you for taking this time taking this time, for hearing us out. They say this is a divisive issue. This is not true. Look at the faces of the people supporting the ceasefire resolution.

There is no cause more unifying than this cause. Now look at the faces of the people who support genocide and oppose the resolution. Not divisive; try isolating. This resolution is not just about the ceasefire. Your role is to guard the best interests of Allegheny County. What you see is the future of democracy in this County. Don't let the trust in democracy die. If you let this amount of civic engagement go ignored and vote against the resolution, then you will have done your role in smothering the American democracy. You will have sold your country for a foreign power. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Stefanie Small.

MS. SMALL: Thank you, Council. I'm Stefanie Small and I live in District 11. This motion makes no mention of Hamas, which broke a ceasefire on October 7 and refused one just this week. The motion is being sponsored by a Councilperson who publicly celebrated Hamas's attacks on October 7, and it shows its extreme nature by comparing Palestinian prisoners in jail in Israel to hostages held in tunnels in Gaza. Here is an example of one of the Palestinian prisoners Hamas is asking to receive and who is classified as a hostage by this motion. Ibrahim Hamed was the commander Hamas's military wing in the West Bank and was behind many terror acts. He was convicted for the murder of 46 civilians and was given 54 life sentences.

Here is an example of an Israeli hostage kidnapped by Hamas on October 7, whom Israel wants to get back; Noah Argamani, a 22-year old Israeli woman whose mother is from Wuhan, Pittsburgh's sister city in China. Her crime? Attending a music festival that was brutally attacked by Hamas on October 7. Voting for a motion that equates Noah Argamani with mass murderers will only embolden the extremists among us. Please vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Next up is Richard Calabrese, Jr.

MR. CALABRESE: My name is Rich Calabrese, and I am a freshman at the University of Point Park in Downtown Pittsburgh. Today, I want to share a poem I wrote called, Have You Ever Heard a Child's Cry? Have you ever heard a child's cry as the innocence of their heart spills from the wound in their chest? Have you ever heard a child's cry as they look amidst the rubble and wonder what humanity is left? Have you ever heard a people's cry, so desperate and so pleading as they watch a world

indifferent to their pain and to their bleeding? Have you ever, or have you chosen to ignore? You can hear these cries in Gaza, but I can hear them from my dorm. We can hear them from our phones. And trust me, we have heard them all. So the people of Pittsburgh will not stand as we watch our siblings fall. And if you will not hear the children's cries, you best answer to our call. Pittsburgh demands a ceasefire and there is no more time to stall. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Moshe Nadoff. My name is Moshe Nadoff, and I was born and raised in Squirrel Hill. We are all aware of the horrific events that took place on October 7th; the murders, rapes, mutilation and kidnapping. Since then, there has been an ongoing and deliberate campaign of misinformation. They attempt to portray the attackers as victims and victims as perpetrators. That Hamas is an organization that champions the rights and safety of the Palestinian people, rather than being the genocidal organization that stole their hopes and dreams for a peaceful future. Hamas has stated on numerous occasions that they are willing to sacrifice the future and lives of the Palestinians on the altar of their genocidal aims.

In the last few weeks, Hamas has rejected several ceasefire offers from Israel that included the following a three month ceasefire, a greatly increased humanitarian aid exchange of all the remaining innocent hostages, with Israel releasing Palestinian prisoners convicted of violent crimes at a three to one ratio. At this time, they were refusing to even provide a list of hostages that remain alive. Hamas began this conflict by breaking an existing ceasefire with the most brutal and devastating single day in the history of the modern State of Israel. They seek nothing less than the complete destruction of Israel. They have stolen 18 years ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. NADOFF: Thank you very much. Please vote no.

MR. BARKER: Elena Davis? Jeremy Goodman?

MR. GOODMAN: Good evening. As a resident of District 11, I want to let this Council know that since the horrific attacks on October 11th --- October 7 in Israel, I've had my property vandalized with spray paint because I support Israel's right to defend itself and because I'm Jewish. I've also had die Jew yelled at me from a passing car. The war in Israel has opened up the

floodgates on antisemitism, both obvious, like the examples I just mentioned, and subtle, like groups who have never made statements on international affairs suddenly demanding a ceasefire because when it comes to Israel and the Jews, the rules are different. I urge legal counsel to this body to not allow this Resolution to move forward, as it has no place in Allegheny County and does not fall within the duties of the County Council dictated by the County Home Rule Charter. I urge the members of this Council to vote against it if it does go forward, as it will do nothing to change world politics and only serve to divide our community further. I want to urge this Council to build productive forums for respectful dialogue similar to what Rabbi Genak previously described, so we can move Allegheny forward. This is definitely within your Charter. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Michelle Woltshock.

MS. WOLTSHOCK: Good evening. My name is Michelle Woltshock, and I live in the 10th District. As a citizen of Allegheny County, I deserve to feel that my family is safe in our home, in our synagogue and on the streets. Since October 7th, we have not felt safe. We've seen a resolution drafted by people who know little about the situation in Gaza and even less what it means to live as a Jew anywhere on earth. We've seen protests on Shabbat and vicious lies told in government meetings. This resolution, while doing absolutely nothing for Gazans or Israelis, does everything to ensure we will continue to not feel safe.

As a constituent and a parent, I urge you to vote no before the lies spoken here tonight about Israel turn into actions in the future toward the County's Jewish community. I also urge Ms. Hallam to stay off of her phone and pay attention to what people are saying tonight.

MS. HALLAM: Yeah, I'll do that, but there are people being denied entry right now, so just so you know what I'm texting about right now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: John Tucker.

DR. TUCKER: Thank you for listening. I'm Dr. John Tucker, a Resident of the 14th Ward. I'm a fourth generation Allegheny County resident. I'm not a political newcomer, having been deeply involved for the past 30 years with politics at the local, state and national

level. Vote no in this resolution. It is simply political grandstanding and will injure this County. My grandfather came here from the Ukraine. He was forced out by the pogroms. My family made their lives here and contributed greatly to this community. My grandfather was the Steelers first play-by-play announcer, my father, a judge, and my mother, a founder of community day school. My parents were married at the Tree of Life Synagogue. Our family has always considered Allegheny County to be a welcoming place for us as Jews. Unfortunately, the domestic antisemitism associated with the ceasefire now movement hijacked any laudable elements of such a resolution. It only promotes antisemitism. It paints targets on the backs of local Jews in Jewish establishments. Nothing is to be gained. Please vote no.

MR. BARKER: Leah Kamon.

MS. KAMON: Hi, I'M Leah from Squirrel Hill. According to a New York Times report, Iran, Russia and China have all used the world's major social networking platforms to support Hamas, undercut Israel, and denigrate the United States. While they each have a different motivation in backing Hamas over Israel, these countries have pushed the same pro Hamas theme since the war began. They're mounting overt and covert disinformation campaigns. Officials and experts who track disinformation extremism have been struck by how quickly and extensive their message has spread online. It has been boosted by extensive networks of bots and official accounts belonging to state media in Iran, Russia and China. So much of the anti-Israel information provided here two weeks ago and today is based on misinformation pushed by U.S. adversaries. We have authoritarian regimes attempting to delegitimize and demonize Israel and so dissent in our society in a coordinated effort. We are seeing their effort bear fruit in this room tonight. County Council cannot be used as a pawn in adversary propaganda. Vote no. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Before you begin, you're done. I'm sorry, but before you begin, any of the speakers moving forwards, try not to be on top of the mic. Obviously, we have a large number of speakers and there's no room big enough, Obviously, to hold, everyone. So as you see the TVs, we're live streaming them and the audio downstairs, Unfortunately, when you're on top of the mic, it's not very clear. It's kind of mumbled, so please be

aware of that when you're speaking. So we want everyone to obviously participate as much as possible, and we're trying to do our best, but the communication issues are obviously a little bit of an impediment at this point in time. So just don't get on top of the mic and try to speak as clearly as possible so everybody can possibly hear. Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Jonathan Jablow.

MR. JABLOW: Good evening, Jonathan Jablow. I live in Council District 11. The U.S. is one of the largest funders of aid that has been delivered to Gaza, which in turn has been stolen, unmassed by Hamas for the last couple of decades. Hamas has stolen enough building materials from the Palestinians to construct over 300 miles of tunnels that run over every city in Gaza. Hamas stole water supply pipes to turn into rockets. Hamas stole enough fuel to fire approximately 12,000 of those rockets at Israel since October 7th. And to power their underground tunnel network, Hamas has embezzled billions of dollars from the Palestinians so their leadership can live in luxury in Qatar. The failure of this resolution to mention Hamas one single time is unacceptable. This terror organization's intentions are clear. To destroy the State of Israel by any means necessary.

How can you draft a resolution to call for an end to the war without naming a terrorist organization that launched the war? I pray that Hamas is removed from power and is unable to launch their campaign of terror brutally. I pray for a long lasting peace in all of Israel. Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Julia Bernier.

Ms. BERNIER: Julia Bernier, District 13. I'm a Professor and Historian who studies and teaches slavery and abolition. And one thing I've learned from my work is that it is incumbent on every single one of us to act against injustice and moral wrongs whenever, wherever and however we can, which is why I'm here tonight to ask you to County Council to pass a ceasefire resolution and to call for the end of genocide being conducted in Gaza by Israel with the help of the United States. As a historian, you may think I'm here to remind you of the radical history of Pittsburgh, to stand on the right side of history, or to warn you about how history will remember you if you don't.

However, I'm here to ask you something much more important, which is for you to stand on the right side of right now before it's too late. Please act now by adding the County's voice, our voice, and the majority of Americans who want this genocide to end, which is what everyone still alive on earth should want, and call for a ceasefire. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Please line up the next group.

MR. BARKER: The next group, Theron Gilliland, Jr. I'm sorry, Isabelle Cajka, Theron Gilliland, Jr., Carlos Thomas, Natalie Valen, Kathleen Logan Pawlikowski, Abby Schachter, Laura Kessler, Matthew Nemeth, Ronnell Williams, Beverly Block, Zack Block, Jaclyn Moldovan, Aaron Herman, Stephen Laskaris and Jessica Semer.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Isabelle?

Ms. CAJKA: Hi, my name's Isabelle Cajka. I'm from Javosburg, Pennsylvania. I'm a very proud union member, library worker, and mother of an 18-month old, 17-month old named Hector. I think there have been wonderful comments for the ceasefire resolution today, but I really just wanted to speak as a mother and as someone who has had to see terrible images of children being starved, bombed, orphaned with their limbs blown off. And I want to speak to the adults in the room.

There are issues within Allegheny County, such as childcare, healthcare, issues that County Council sees all the time. That could be a better use putting the money towards that than towards funding Israel and giving them carte blanche to bomb and kill Palestinian children. When I raise my children, and I've worked with children for the past ten years, I teach them limits and boundaries and how to be kind to others. If on an individual level, anyone did this to another person ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. CAJKA: Please vote yes.

MR. BARKER: Theron Gilliland, Jr.

MR. GILLILAND: Theron Gilliland Jr., Northside.

One consequence of being the 77th speaker is that many people have already taken my talking points. But I want to draw attention to; I don't know why some of you are on the County Council. One of you has already said that you're not going to change your mind. Another is appalled that we are here talking and then another is not even here. He'll turn his chair or fall asleep. Why are you

here? Are you going to represent us, the majority of whom are in favor of ceasefire? Or are you here to protect people who you think might need protection? In that case, the Institute for Social Planning and Understanding has said that 50 percent of Jewish Americans support a ceasefire. Only 34 percent are against it. As has already been said here, conflating Zionism and Judaism is a basis for antisemitism., because I don't know why people against the ceasefire. As a scientist, what's the mechanism for that? Do we think that anti-Semites are going to look and say, oh, Allegheny County Council voted against it and then no more?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Carlos Thomas. So, hi. I have no intention on stopping in one minute. I'm going to reclaim my time in three minutes and if you want to remove me, that's fine. However, Mr. Jack Betkowski, I don't think that it was appropriate for you to denounce everybody's public comments before they even got up here. It made it seem like you had already made your decision, which doesn't show representation. Much like Councilman Walton, who isn't even here. It shows that you're not representing the people's voice in this matter, because if you're representing that, then you're putting what people are saying before your own thoughts, and it seems like you already made your thought as if some of you already have as well.

I don't really understand how we got here, in a sense of, you know, we all know this is bad. We've reclaimed war since --- or we denounced war since George W. Bush was in office, and now we're back almost in the same time span, and we can't get out of the Middle East. It's kind of becoming problematic to a United States citizen, especially as a black man ---

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. THOMAS: --- especially as a black man ---

PRESIDENT CATENA: I'm kindly asking you to ---.

MR. THOMAS: --- who hasn't --- is being forced out of the room and who hasn't ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you, next on the list?

MR. BARKER: Natalie Valen.

MR. THOMAS: At this point, you all are not being real.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Okay.

MR. THOMAS: All right, cool.

MS. VALEN: Hi, my name is Natalie Valen and I'm from Squirrel Hill. I am the granddaughter of holocaust survivors that ultimately sought refuge here in Pittsburgh. In 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip and removed every single Israeli citizen and soldier. After 2005, Hamas and Israel have agreed to 15 ceasefires, all of which have been violated by Hamas. On October 7, Hamas broke its ceasefire with Israel in the most violent way possible. A seven-day ceasefire was reached last November, ending just after midnight on December 1, with rockets being launched into Israel by Hamas. Hamas rejected three ceasefire proposals from Israel between December and January. Just last week, Hamas rejected yet another ceasefire proposal. Yesterday, Israel again said they will accept a proposed ceasefire, but Hamas has not agreed. Hamas could have ended this war already. The motion at issue does not mention Hamas or the countless deals they have rejected. It does not call for Hamas to surrender.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. VALEN: Please vote no on this motion.

MR. BARKER: Kathleen Logan Pawlikowski.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Before you begin, I'd just like to remind everybody that obviously the time requirement is one minute. I'm kindly asking you to stop after one minute. If you don't stop, you will be removed. I made that perfectly clear at the beginning of the meeting. So I'm kindly asking everyone to please respect the rules that we put in place, moving forward. Thank you. Go ahead.

MS. PAWLIKOWSKI: My English is not my native language. Maybe I have a little bit slowly reading?

PRESIDENT CATENA: You can have a minute. That's what it is.

MS. PAWLIKOWSKI: Okay.

So I am a union member of the SEIUUE. I am a healthcare worker in Pittsburgh, our union president, the diversity of healthcare worker and citizen of the County, including Jewish and Palestinian member. I am originally from Iraq and I know what it means to have bombs dropped on me. I know the feeling of pure fear. No water, no food, no electricity, no hospital. Just dropped. Just pumps and rocks and hopelessness and the endless grief of losing loved ones. I also want to be clear that calling for ceasefire and stop genocide is not antisemitic. I

have fellow union members who are Jewish. I work with Jewish organization who call for peace. As union members, we know it's not --- with my Jewish siblings. It's all of us working people together versus the people.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. PAWLIKOWSKI: Can I say just last sentence?

PRESIDENT CATENA: No. I'm sorry, I can't. next?

MR. BARKER: Abby Schacter?

MS. SCHACHTER: Good evening. I'm Abby Schachter. I live in Wilkinsburg. I'm represented on this Council by Mr. Walton of District Ten. If you don't understand this already, I'm going to explain something new to you. This effort to pass a ceasefire resolution has nothing directly to do with the war against Hamas in Gaza and it has nothing to do with Israel. It's an effort, a campaign, to hijack the Democratic Party from its traditional values and mission. Radical members of our community want to hijack the democratic party to embrace a platform of grievance and blame. I'm going to repeat that. Radical members of our community want to hijack the democratic party to embrace a platform of grievance and blame. Don't let them do it. Do not vote for this resolution.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Laura Kessler.

MS. KESSLER: Thank you. I'm Laura Kessler from Baldwin and Jewish and my people are also survivors of pogroms and genocide. My Jewish history taught me to never look away when a group of people is being dehumanized and oppressed. Such wrongs ultimately escalate to ethnic cleansing and genocide. My history taught me that I have a responsibility to speak out and act up when I see it repeating. Today, Israel is engaging in genocide against Palestinians. This genocide can only be stopped by a permanent ceasefire. This is about recognizing the humanity of Palestinians. This is not about accepting the false narrative that Palestinians need to be oppressed, forcibly removed from their land and erased from existence to protect Jews. That narrative was invented to justify one nation stealing another's land and denying an indigenous population their fundamental rights and freedom. Israel founded on settler colonialism, military occupation, ethnic cleansing and now genocide does not speak for me.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. KESSLER: Vote yes for ceasefire now.

MR. BARKER: Matthew Nemeth?

MR. NEMETH: Hello, my name is Matt Nemeth. I live in McCandless and I am speaking to urge County Council, particularly my representative, Council Member Filiaggi, to vote yes on the ceasefire resolution. Coming here to urge you to pass this resolution was not the first step I've taken to try to get my federal government to stop aiding the five month long murder of Palestinians. I've emailed, called and social media messaged my senators Casey and Fetterman, as well as my representative Deluzio numerous times about supporting a ceasefire.

My efforts to contact them resulted in either silence or a statement of intent to continue sending arms to Israel. After using the socially-accepted methods I was taught in school, I decided to join in marches, rallies and pickets outside their offices. All of these actions were met with silence. I am not alone. The reason I and many others are here demanding this ceasefire is that our federal government representatives have failed to do their job to represent us. The support for a ceasefire is overwhelming. The sheer amount of people who showed up urging for this resolution last meeting ---

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. NEMETH: --- is a testament to that. Will you support a ceasefire ---?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Ronell Williams.

MS. WILLIAMS: Hi, I'm Ronell from Wilkinsburg. I stand with my fellow healthcare workers and union members of SEIU Healthcare, Pennsylvania. Together, we are proud to care every day for the people of Allegheny County. As a union, we must stand for peace. We call for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine and for our County to stop resourcing this war. As healthcare workers, we are called to serve. We do not believe that further violence, mass bombardment, will bring peace and health to Israelis, Palestinians or the entire region.

Every day the healthcare crisis gets worse. Hospitals are being bombed, Palestinians having surgeries without anesthesia, mothers are giving birth without support, children are dying from starvation, and people are being massacred as they wait for flour. As healthcare workers, we know how important it is for governments to invest in healthcare and basic human needs. As with all wars, this conflict is generating ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you for your time.

MR. BARKER: Beverly Block?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Zack Block?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here. Jacklyn Moldovan.

MS. MOLDOVAN: Hello. My name is Jacqueline Moldovan. I live in Squirrel Hill. On October 7, Hamas used mass rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war against Israelis. Victims' bodies were found mutilated and bound with sexual organs, brutally attacked. In some cases, weapons were inserted into those organs. Many dead women were found with broken pelvises. Victims of violent gang rape. The body of a young woman was found with no pants or underwear, legs spread apart. Her vagina appeared to have been sliced open. One of the videos posted by Hamas showed the naked, unconscious body of Shani Luke, a 20 year old German woman, being paraded through Gaza. People spitting on her and shouting, Allahu Akbar. Imagined if this happened here, hundreds of American girls and women brutally raped and then murdered by terrorists, and imagine the world telling us to lay down our arms, let these same terrorists go on existing just miles from our border. Would that be acceptable to you? I urge you to vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Aaron Herman.

MR. HERMAN: Hi, Aaron Herman from Squirrel Hill. I'd like to take a moment just to go to 30,000 feet. Do you see how much emotion is in this room? Do you see how people feel on both sides of this issue? And there's a fire raging in the Middle East. There's also a fire raging right here in Allegheny County, in this building, in this room. I hope you can see the fire that's raging in front of you. And when there's a fire raging in front of you, we know from firefighters. Thank you, Councilman Gryzbek, for your service, you better make sure that what you are spraying on that fire is water and not gasoline. You only have one liquid here. That's a resolution. That liquid, in my opinion, and I think in many people's opinion, is gasoline. So you're going to cause a greater fire. The first rule is Hippocratic oath, please do no harm. You're going to do harm with this resolution to people here in Allegheny County. So it's not because of one side or the other side, you're going to fan the flames. That's not what you're here for. Wisdom, please.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Stephen Laskaris?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Jessica Semer?

MS. SEMER: Hello, my name is Jessica Semler. I'm a resident of Aetna Borough. I'm in County district three and I also serve on Aetna Borough Council. Since your meeting two weeks ago, Israel has murdered at least 1344 more Palestinian civilians. As County Council members, you have an ethical responsibility to use your platform. As elected officials, we aren't supposed to be mirrors of our constituents. We're supposed to be leaders. Calling for a ceasefire is obviously the right thing to do. And it also happens to be what the majority of your constituents want you to do. We are funding Israel's assault on Gaza, which means we are complicit. Several years from now, everyone will say they were against this genocide. Everyone. When my nieces and nephews ask what happened, I cannot tell them that I did nothing. And I know many of you feel the same way. Please vote with integrity and bravery. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. We're going to line up the next group all the way to 110 and then we'll go to recess.

MR. BARKER: Okay.

Nathan Azagury, Marcie Solomon, Charles Saul, Sarah Kendis, Christine Stone, Dennis Roddy, Jon Rubin, George Waksmunski, Ruth Mostern, Barbara Finch, Sharon Saul, Talya Lubit, Rachel Whelan, Meryl Ainsman, David Ainsman, Rachel Firestone, Mark Sindler, Nathaniel Scholnicoff, Caleb Jackson, David Horvitz.

Nathan Azagury?

MR. AZAGURY: Good evening, members of the Council. My name is Nathan Azagury. I'm a sophomore studying computer engineering at Binghamton University. When my family moved to Pittsburgh in 2016, we were escaping the antisemitism so strongly felt in France. When the Tree of Life shooting occurred just two years after we moved, my family strongly questioned the chosen to move to Pittsburgh. The reaction to the shooting and the show of strength and unity of the Pittsburgh community was an overwhelming sign that we had made the right decision to choose Pittsburgh as our home. By attempting to pass this motion and warding it as if Israel doesn't have the right to defend itself against the ever-present threat of a

terrorist organization, and considering the hostages held in nightmarish condition in tunnels in Gaza for over 151 days now, as mere afterthoughts, you are undermining all the healing this community has done the last five years since the shooting. Stronger than hate. We become a thought of the past, not the present. As a representative of our community, I urge you to not allow hatred to divide our beautiful home. Before you make a decision, really consider this. Are you pushing for a ceasefire? Are you pushing to start a fire within your County? Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Marcie Solomon.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Charles Saul?

MR. SAUL: Charlie Saul, Squirrel Hill. 2700 years ago, in the land of Israel, the Jewish prophet Isaiah spoke about the day when they will beat their swords into plowshares. This is what Jews throughout the world pray for every single day. Hamas; they built and beat plowshares into over 12,000 missiles and counting since October 7. Hamas does not believe in a permanent ceasefire. It's hard to understand why people don't understand that. They don't believe in it. They've violated it 12 times, over 12 times in the past few years. They believe in pauses where they can regroup, rearm and re-fire, each time with even greater lethal weapons. A ceasefire will have the opposite effect of what we want, which is a lasting peace. A ceasefire will mean they will come, as will come back with more lethal weapons, and Israel will have to defend itself with even greater destruction.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. SAULT: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Sarah Kendis.

MS. KENDIS: I'm Sarah Kendis from the wonderful squirrel hill, and thank you for this minute, as I'm glad to have a chance to address those making such a sinisterly disguised demand. What narcissism must be possessed to think one is worthy of dictating how a sovereign, democratic nation defends itself against guaranteed terror. How inflated is one's ego to claim that you, and utterly removed privilege, know better than the ones who live each day next to those who have tried and will try again to wipe them off the planet. You, who had never and likely never, will face this reality, yet feel compelled

to demand others bend to your ignorance. When you call only for a ceasefire now, you admit a lack of morality and betrayal of humanity by either passively making peace with or actively desiring the unending continuation of terror against Jews in Israel. You're already aware that a ceasefire now only means Israel ceases while Hamas still fires. Hamas and all other terror factions remain not only alive, but in control. Nothing changes, including the truth that ten seven will be repeated, just as Hamas has promised us. So this reality, the calculated and preventable slaughter of Jews, is what you find either tolerable or deliberately seek.

MR. BARKER: Christine Stone.

MS. STONE: Thank you. My name is Christine Stone. I, too, live on Shady Avenue in Squirrel Hill. Today I ask you to vote against this resolution. The draft resolution makes mention of the United Nations. In considering your vote, Council should keep in mind that the U.S. has vetoed a UN Security Council resolution for a ceasefire three times, arguing it would undermine negotiations over a hostage deal. The reference to the UN also draws attention to another matter. Nowhere in your resolution do you denounce Hamas for the atrocities that occurred on October 7. Just yesterday, the UN's Special Council on Sexual Violence and Conflict issued a finding that there were indeed reasonable grounds to believe sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, occurred at several locations during the October 7th attack on Israel by Hamas militants. A resolution that lacks condemnation of Hamas should not receive your vote.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Dennis Roddy.

MR. RODDY: Good evening. My name is Dennis Roddy. I'm resident of District 5. Years ago when Teddy Kollek was the Mayor of Jerusalem, he had a delegation representing the three great Abrahamic religions, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian in his office and they fell into an argument that went back almost to Moses, certainly the last 2,000 years. And after a long last, Kollek looked at them and he said, gentlemen, spare me your sermons and I will fix your sewers. Now, if Teddy Kollek, Mayor of a city that was in the middle of the ongoing strife that exists in the Middle East, could see his job clearly amid all of that, surely the Council could recognize that this is what they're supposed to do. Fix the sewers, pave the

streets, do practical things. And, ladies and gentlemen, I'm pretty sure you're all nice people, but you're not diplomats.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. RODDY: Fix what's broken here.

MR. BARKER: Jon Rubin?

MS. MOSTERN: Hi, my name is Ruth Mostern. I live in Lawrenceville. I'm a history professor and a union member. I'm here calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. I'm a fourth generation Jewish Pittsburgher, born and raised in Squirrel Hill. Like other Jews, I live with the legacy of antisemitic violence. And I was alarmed last month to learn that a reactionary student group at Pitt had invited James Lindsay to speak on campus. Someone who exploits the memory of the Holocaust for the purpose of anti-vaxxer propaganda and who supports the same white replacement conspiracy theory as the Tree of Life shooter. Yet the only people who protested his visit were a small group of trans and gender non-conforming Pitt students. Somehow the same people who weaponize claims of antisemitism to shut down legitimate criticism of Israel have no problem giving actual anti Semites a pass when they come town.

I call upon Council and everyone in this room to stand up to antisemitism, where it is really happening, not to attack neighbors who oppose genocide and to support a ceasefire. Now, thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Thank you. Before proceeding, are Jon Rubin or George Waksmunski here?

MR. WAKSMUNSKI: Yes.

PRESIDENT CATENA: You're next.

MR. WAKSMUNSKI: My name is George Waksmunski from Polish Hill, 3034 Wiggins Street. I stand in support of this resolution. Some folks say this is going to require courage. I don't see that this is a right and wrong issue. You stand for peace or you stand for murder. You stand for peace or you stand for genocide. You will be judged by this vote. And did you support a ceasefire or do you support continued murder? I know I will judge you. The vast majority, Guinea County, will judge you.

I mean, this is not about what happened on November 7. This is about day in, day out bombing of innocent civilians in Gaza, starvation, war crimes. It's disgusting and I'm sorry for what folks have endured from

the other side, and I feel for you, but this is about bombs we see dropping. They talk about 1,300 missiles. I don't see 1,300 missiles dropping on Israel every night on TV. Day in, day out, month in, month out. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Are you Barbara?

MR. BARKER: Barbara Finch?

MS. SAUL: Sharon.

SISTER FINCH: Sister Barbara Finch and I do have a statement on the corner of the table that I left there for all of you. It's from the Association of Pittsburgh Priest. I'm the Vice President of the group. I'm also the facilitator of Pax Christi and we espouse to nonviolence. And I'm really asking you to vote yes for this ceasefire. And to my sisters and brothers of the Jewish community, I've been involved interfaith Ministry for decades. This is not anti-Jew. This is about saving our world. Local is global and we need to stop the violence. There is no way that there will ever be a political solution unless everybody puts down their arms. And we have to remember as a country that we took the land away from our indigenous brothers and sisters. Israel has a right to exist. So does Palestinians. And so we need to be able to sit down. We can't give up. We need to sit down at a table, stop the arms and try to work out a solution, but that will never happen unless we stop the violence. Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Sharon Saul?

MS. SAUL: Sharon Saul, Squirrel Hill. I'm a Psychologist specializing in the treatment of trauma. After the Tree of Life massacre, I met with dozens of Allegheny County Jews who came for emotional support. A very common concern for them was the deep fear that it wasn't safe to be a Jew in the Pittsburgh area anymore. One of the points I was able to make to settle their trauma was that the broader community, and especially area representatives, supported us. This support helped many in their struggle to settle their trauma and anxieties about lack of safety. Since October 7, the trauma resurfaced. The fear escalated since the proposed resolution promoting a ceasefire was introduced. This Council has a mandate, first and foremost, to advance the welfare of its citizens. This proposed resolution most certainly has the power to foment fear, anxiety and trauma among the Jewish citizens of this County. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Talya Lubit?

MS. LUBIT: In response, I just want to say I'm afraid that massacres are being said that is somehow protecting Jewish people. If anyone thinks backing daily massacres of Palestinians and sending my Israeli cousins to their death is protecting Jews, I have to wonder what you think Judaism and safety is about. I'm proud to follow a long tradition of Jewish dissidents. People are using the hostages to defend Israel, but most hostage families are against it. Last week, a prior hostage was shot with a water cannon by an Israeli soldier for protesting. I want a bilateral solution, but we're focused on Israel because the U.S. is sending arms to Israel, not to Hamas. If this is a war, it did not start on October 7, although October 7, of course, was horrible.

Brave Israeli whistleblower from --- have risked everything to tell us that we never left Gaza and will tell you Israel's real motives. I'm asking for a ceasefire and I don't want to hear anyone say I stand with the Jewish people while dishonoring my family's legacy. People who knew what it was like to lose everything. Don't let Israel continue to destroy Gaza in our name. Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Rachel Whelan.

DR. WHELAN: Good evening. My name is Rachel Whelan. I'm a Physician and a Pittsburgh native. I wanted to take an opportunity to read to you from a letter written by London Breed, the mayor of San Francisco, when she was presented with a similar resolution that you all are considering here this evening, because it's more eloquent than I.

Since the board of supervisors introduced their Gaza ceasefire resolution, and certainly since they passed it last week, our city has been angrier, more divided and less safe. Sadly, that may have been the point. This exercise was never about bringing people together. It was about choosing a side. If the women who were murdered, raped or otherwise brutalized by Hamas weren't Israeli women, but Bay area women, or in this case, Allegheny County women, would we allow their friends and relatives to be shouted down as liars, or would we say, no? That's too far. We can disagree, but that's just wrong. No one in these crowds seems to be saying that.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Meryl Ainsman.

MS. AINSMAN: Hi, my name is Meryl Ainsman. I'm a lifelong resident of Squirrel Hill. Israel did not fire on an aid convoy last week. That is a lie being perpetrated by a terrorist organization. Since October 21, the IDF has facilitated the delivery of 62.8 thousand tons of food, water, medical supplies, and fuel into Gaza to aid the civilian population. Hamas has been stealing up to 60% of that aid, killing civilians that get in their way. To prevent this, last week, the IDF began escorting aid trucks from the border into northern Gaza. On the fifth morning of this process, thousands of Gazans rushed the trucks and caused a deadly stampede. Many were killed when truck drivers, who were private contractors and not Israeli, drove to avoid the stampede. In a separate incident, after firing warning shots, troops open fired on several Gazans who moved towards soldiers and a tank at an IDF checkpoint, endangering soldiers after they had rushed to the last truck in the convoy further south.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. AINSMAN: Please vote no.

MR. BARKER: David Ainsman.

MR. AINSMAN: David Ainsman, Squirrel Hill. One of the lies told at the last Council meeting was that the Israeli hostages are the equivalent of the Palestinian prisoners. Some extremists, such as Jewish voices for peace, even go so far as to call both of these groups hostages, and that is carried over in this motion before you today.

Here's an example of one of the Palestinian prisoners that they want to be released and is referred to as a hostage by this motion. Abbas alSaeed (phonetic), the commander of Hamas's military wing in Tulkarm. He planned a 2002 Park Hotel suicide bombing in Natanya during a Passover Seder, killing 30 mostly elderly Israelis. And injuring 140. The deadly terror attack of the second deadliest terror attack of the second intifada.

Here's an example of Israeli hostage kidnapped by Hamas, whom Israel once released. Kifir Bibas, who just turned one in captivity.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Rachel Firestone.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Mark Sandler?

MR. SINDLER: When I first signed up to speak tonight a couple of weeks ago, I wasn't aware that County Council

had experience international affairs. And I think that most of you, if not many of us in this room right now, understand that is not the case. We have more pressing problems here in the County that are more consistent with what your job is. The dearth of medical care at the Allegheny County jail, the excessive deaths of people who are serving time at the Allegheny County jail, rampant homelessness here in not just the city of Pittsburgh, but other parts of the County as well. I was in Israel on October 7. It was the most terrifying time of my life, but more importantly, there was a ceasefire the day before, and the ceasefire was broken by a stateless actor whose name we all know. Yet the onus remains on Israel, where Hamas's strategy is to place civilians in maximum danger and trust the international community of which you are part.

PRESIDENT CATENA:

MR. SINDLER: Please vote no.

MR. BARKER: Next is Nathaniel Scholnicoff.

MR. SCHOLNIKOFF: Well, good evening. My name is Nathaniel Scholnikoff. I'm a resident of Mr. Klein's district. I grew up in New York City, and I got to Allegheny County as soon as I could. The motion before the County Council stems from a nationwide, coordinated antisemitic and anti-Israel effort, which includes the Jewish Voice for peace organization. Two weeks ago and this evening, the County Council heard from several JVP members supporting the resolution. I wish to point out that JVP's name is a misnomer. JVP is an anti-Israel activist group which demonizes both Israel and American Jews. It does not represent Jewish people and does not support peace. Its base philosophy is antithetical to even left leaning Jewish practice.

It has openly celebrated figures convicted of terrorism both pre and post. October 7, 2023. On October 8th, while terrorists ruling Israel and Israeli forces were struggling near recaptured torched villages in Kibutzim, JVP was accusing Israel of genocide. Do not believe JVP as honest actors.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Caleb Jackson?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here. L

MR. BARKER: Last up in this room is David Horvitz.

MR. HOROVITZ: Thank you, David Horowitz of Squirrel Hill. I'm not going to stand up here and pull out your

emotions. You've had enough of that this evening already. Rather, I'd rather talk about facts. The fact is that Council Members were elected to deal with issues facing Allegheny County, not to deal with international matters that have no direct bearing on Allegheny County. Voting in favor this resolution will have no impact other than to cause more divisiveness among community members and further stoke the flames of anti-Semitism in Allegheny County. Adopting this resolution will signal to the general public that Council members are more than willing to spend their very limited time and energies focusing on global conflicts rather than the many local concerns that are right here in Allegheny County. As you cast your vote, be cognizant of the fact that Hamas has broken all prior ceasefire agreements and has promised to repeat the atrocities of October 7. The proposed resolution makes no mention of Hamas, and any ceasefire that does not call for the ultimate dismantling of Hamas will not resolve this foreign conflict. Passing this resolution will confirm Hamas's practice of starting wars and committing unimaginable atrocities. Please vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. At this point in time, we're going to take a 15 minute recess in order to get the other groups of speakers up here. We're using two overflow courtrooms in the County courthouse, so we need to coordinate this a little bit. So thank you. We'll reconvene in 15 minutes; 7:35.

(Short break taken.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: All right. I'd like to call the meeting back to order. Jared, go ahead. Next up is speaker 111, Ilay Dvir. She's here. She's here's speaker 112, Nina Butler.

MS. BUTLER: Nina Butler, Squirrel Hill. Antisemitism. It's helpful to know what statements tonight are likely to be heard as antisemitic. Here's some examples. If you blame Israel for the lack of aid into Gaza, but fail to condemn Hamas for stealing the majority of that aid, if you say innocent Israeli citizens ripped from their homes and taken hostage are in the same category as Palestinian murderers who are held in jails because they're crimes, if you hold Israel responsible for the large number of civilian deaths that were actually directly caused by Hamas, using Palestinian civilians as human shields, if you call for ceasefire, denying Israel's right to defend itself while not calling Hamas to

surrender and release the hostages, if you use words like genocide in describing Israel's attitude toward Arabs, yet you ignore that 2.5 million Israeli Arabs, 21 percent of Israel's population, enjoy full citizenship and civil rights in Israel. Those accusations may be antisemitic. It's all about a double standard.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Charlene Tissenbaum.

MS. TISSENBAUM: My name is Charlene Tissenbaum, a proud Jew living in Mount Lebanon for the past 30 years. I am incredibly disappointed, sad and frustrated with our County. What has happened to we are stronger than hate? I urge you to vote no for this resolution. This resolution for ceasefire will further divide and decay our city. It will encourage hate and antisemitism. This ceasefire resolution is siding with evil. Hamas, a terrorist organization. Elective officials, please do your job. Is this the side of history you want to be on, siding with Hamas? Or do you want to stand on the right side, bringing our communities together, standing side by side during hard times, and demonstrating that, indeed, we are stronger than hate? Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: David Palmieri.

MR. PALMIERI: David Palmieri, District 5. On October 7th of last year, Hamas, a terrorist organization, committed an evil act, pure, unadulterated evil. More than 1200 people were brutally murdered. They raped and sexually assaulted Israeli women. More than 200 hostages were taken. Today, 160 days later, more than 130 remained captive. I'm the father of four children. I imagine most of you have children yourselves, and I ask you, is there anything you wouldn't do to secure the safety and security of your children? Anything? I suspect there isn't. And yet here we are discussing a resolution calling for Israeli mothers and fathers to cease fire against Hamas, to cease what they need to do for the release of their children. To be clear, my opposition to this immediate ceasefire resolution is solely based on the release of all hostages taken by Hamas. Hamas must ceasefire discussions be considered. Vote no. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Lou Weiss.

MR. WEISS: Hi. I'm Lou Weiss, lifelong Squirrel Hill. I'd like to give a few more examples of

antisemitism on display. Remember antisemitism by during the MeToo (sic), hashtag, MeToo, sex abuse scandal and, hashtag, believe all women, but after the Hamas massacre, demanding to see rape kits. Like for the woman who was gang raped by Hamas, who, when the last terrorist was still inside of her, was shot in the back of the head. Yesterday, the UN acknowledged the gang rapes. I guess it's hashtag, MeToo, unless you're a Jew. Antisemitism by questioning Hamas' atrocities when they proudly livestreamed them. Antisemitism by claiming to care about LGBTQ rights, but failing to call out Hamas for torturing and murdering people who are gay.

Antisemitism by opposing ceasefires after 9/11, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and probably Pearl Harbor if they had the chance by advocating for a ceasefire after the greatest slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust. Antisemitism. By not calling on Hamas to surrender and free the hostages. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Mavra Stark.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Eric Woltshock?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Benjamin Davis?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Dorit Sasson?

MS. SASSON: Dorit Sasson, former IDF lieutenant, Israeli American Squirrel Hill. Archibutz (phonetic) is currently under fire by Isbala. My family is fighting in Gaza. I'm here to do my part and protect them. As a mother, protecting my infant son during rocket fire, I only had 30 seconds to get to a bomb shelter. I witnessed how Israeli citizens like myself couldn't reach one in time. Teachers and parents had to lie in ditches, protecting children with their bodies. These rockets are fired at schools, homes, hospitals, Jewish Muslim neighborhoods. Israel has invested in a tremendous amount in protecting civilian population. That does not excuse the ongoing terror inflicted upon it by Hamas and other terror organizations in Gaza. It does not forgive the daily attacks that people have gone through for the past 20 years. As far as I am aware, in the past 20 years of unending rocket fire from Hamas into civilian populations, this Council has not called for them to cease fire.

Please vote no on this motion with its undeniable bias and lean toward extremism.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Sara Barac.

MS. BARAC: My name is Sara Barac. I am a resident of Arlington and I am also a Bosnian refugee child. Today I see the atrocities I heard growing up from my community and my family on the news. Different faces, but the same stories. Displacement, torture, starvation, indiscriminate killing, all for political aims, human beings being used as collateral damage. I will not allow fear mongering to ensure my complacency and justify the extermination of Palestinian people. I will not sit on my hands as the very country that granted me asylum forces me to be complicit in genocide. I implore you as our representatives to conduct yourselves with integrity and agree that enough is enough and that we must do better. The time to pass a ceasefire resolution is now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Tracey Freeman?

MS. FREEMAN: Tracey Freeman, Bloomfield. I challenge Israel supporters to show sources for their claims. Where are the alleged atrocity live streams showing sexual violence and mutilation? They don't exist. Yet, Zionists continue to repeat what they know has been disproven. In contrast, here's the audio of missiles striking a field where children were flying kites. Here is the audio the moment a missile struck a hospital.

(Audio is played.)

MS. FREEMAN: Here is the audio the moment a missile struck a hospital.

(Audio is played.)

MS. FREEMAN: Here is an audio of a child pleading with his mother to stop crying after one of his siblings was murdered by Israel.

(Audio is played.)

MS. FREEMAN: Cease fire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Aniruddh Ajith.

MR. AJITH: I am an aspiring pediatrician working to resolve violence in Pittsburgh. I've seen firsthand the trauma inflicted on our youth. Our Pittsburgh approach, champions, unity and community healing. Now it's crucial that we extend our Pittsburgh unity to support the people of Palestine. Please harness our collective strength to

demand a ceasefire. I know Pittsburghers stand united against the loss of innocent lives, especially children. Even before October 7, 2023, was the deadliest year for Palestinian children because of Israeli violence. So Council members, call for peace and ceasefire. Show the world that Pittsburgh leads by example in championing the rights and safety of all children everywhere.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Tammy Hepps.

MS. HEPPS: Tammy Hepps, District 11. Simukad Greyman (phonetic), a ZAKA volunteer, testified before the UN. I saw in front of my eyes a woman laying down. She was naked and she had nails and different objects in her female organs, Gazi Chamad (phonetic) spokesman said on television, we must teach Israel a lesson. The al Aqsa deluge is just the first time, and there will be a second, a third, a fourth. Nachman Deikstena (phonetic), a ZAKA volunteer, testified in Kibbutz Be'eri, I witnessed bodies of two women with their hands and legs tied to a bed. One of these bodies was found sexually terrorized with a knife stuck in her vagina and all her internal organs removed, Hamad said on television on October 7, October 10, October 1 million, everything we do is justified. Daikshena testified, the shelters were filled with piles of women. Their clothing was torn on the upper part, but their bottoms were completely naked. Piles and piles of women, dead bodies lying this way. You saw a single shot straight to the brain of each, Hamad said on television, does this mean the annihilation of Israel? Yes, of course.

County Council, you are voting for Hamas if you vote for this resolution, you are voting for October 1 million. Vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Moshe Sherman.

MR. SHERMAN: Good evening, Council. Thank you for having the courage and leadership to bring this resolution to the floor. I appreciate your efforts. I am here in support of the ceasefire resolution. I'm an elected official myself and Edgewood Council and democratic committee, and we all know this County stands for peace and justice. It's important that you pass this resolution so you can show the other counties how to lead. You can show the state that our people don't support our hard earned money going to bombs so young children and innocent

people can die. We believe in peaceful resolutions for Israelis and Palestinians, not violent genocide. So please represent us, represent our hard-earned money, and represent our morals And thank you so much for your service and your commitment.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Tony Lane?

MR. LANE: Tony Lane from Beachview. I'm a union food service worker and member of the Socialist Workers Party. I think it's very important for working people to make our voice heard on these questions. When opposed to the ceasefire resolution, I support efforts to get the truth out on the Hamas attack and appreciate some of the presentations being made this evening Would have done that.

The question here is a question of true hatred. The call to force Israel to stop fighting Hamas will only give it more time to rearm and organize more murderous attacks like Hamas has proclaimed it will do. They say that the defeat of Hamas will open political space for working people who are Palestinian , Jewish, Christian and workers of all nationalities and religions in the Middle East, creating better conditions to build united struggles against the exploiting classes and governments that serve them. Most of the world has moved on after October 7, but to Israelis, every day will remain October 7.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: The next set of speakers will be Reverend Dr. John Welch, followed by Aaron Kuhn, Ed Grystar, Erik Lux, Nicole Cmar, Dalel Khalil, Chad Collins, Charlie Baron, Shabana Reza, Elizabeth Steiner Milligan and Rachael Neffshade. Reverend Dr. John Welch is up.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Did they not make it up here yet?

MR. BARKER: Okay.

Aaron Kuhn?

MR. KUHN: Brighton Heights, I'm speaking in support of the resolution. The Jewish principle of tikkun Olam is not just to repair and rectify the world, but also that every moment of your life is an opportunity to participate actively in the repair and the rectification of the world. We are all of us here, witnessing oceans of blood drowning Gaza today. This is a genocide. It is the goal of the Israeli government not only to eradicate Hamas, but also to eradicate Palestinian existence in the Gaza Strip.

This much is obvious. They destroyed everything, and you all said nothing. They pushed them down to the south and they starved them in the north, and you're saying nothing? They're moving them out of the land and you're saying nothing? You say something. It's up to us to speak. Every time we fail to call for peace, we are complicit in the slaughter. It's the duty of every one of us to proclaim loudly that no nation should ever be allowed to exterminate another. Vote yes on the ceasefire resolution.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Ed Grystar?

MR. GRYSTAR: Greetings, Council. Thank you for holding this hearing. It's a very important issue to take a position on. I'm from Oakmont, Pennsylvania. I rise in support of this resolution. It began for me back in 1970, when I was about 20-years old, when a friend of mine returned from Israel, and we talked about what was going on. And he said, look, Ed, the situation for the Palestinians is horrendous. They are being dispossessed. Their land is being stolen. They're being dehumanized. That is the real issue before us. That was 1970. Do a little research on it. People who are oppressed have the right to resist. Israel is an illegal occupier of the land. They're taking people's homes, they're stealing the lands, and they're selling them. Even in Canada today, they're selling occupied lands to Canadian citizens.

In 1980s, I became the president of the Butler Labor Council. I brought people here from Central America, from Nicaragua, from El Salvador, from Guatemala, from Honduras. They were being oppressed by the Israeli government.

MS. HALLAM: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Eric Lux.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Nicole Cmar?

MS. CMAR: Hello, Nicole Cmar, resident of Shaylor Township and I'm here as an independent graphic designer and illustrator who works within Pittsburgh's arts and humanities community. I work alongside local educators, artists and activists. And so it is in an act of solidarity that I'm speaking to you about the increase of targeted attacks we are witnessing on the humanities workers and educational institutions of Palestine. Along with healthcare workers and journalists, we are seeing

Palestinian educators, writers and artists being killed at unprecedented rates. According to the ICJ, Israel has damaged or destroyed at least 352 Palestinian schools, and children of Gaza have not attended school since November, which is tragically the least of their worries as they are currently facing an ethnic cleansing campaign that's being funded in part by our tax dollars.

Why am I telling you this? One, because it's unacceptable and people need to know. But two, because Pittsburgh claims to be a big supporter of the arts and humanities. If this is truly the case, our city should condemn these acts and support a ceasefire resolution like many other U.S. cities have already done. Please do not ignore the calls of Allegheny County's many humanities workers and cease fire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Dalel Khalil.

MS. KHALIL: My name is Dale Khalil. I am the owner of Khalil's restaurant. I am a Syrian American Antiochian Orthodox Christian. Our family has a beautiful history with our Jewish cousins, but ain't (sic) a damn thing antisemitic about what I'm going to say today to you all. This did not happen on October 7th. It is not about Hamas. It is not about self-defense and everybody knows that. Nobody in this room is stupid. Israelis officials openly celebrated the plan to resettle Gaza with Israelis. This has always been their plan. You don't kill 70 percent of women and children in a war because your soldiers can't target well. You kill them when you want to prevent the next generation from existing.

You demined condemnation for October 7th, but where's your condemnation for Sabra and Shatila in 1982, where for three straight days and three straight nights, 3,500 Palestinians were massacred by Ariel Sharon (phonetic), 42 years before Hamas existed.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Chad Collins.

MR. COLLINS: Good evening. I have some words from one of my favorite Pittsburghers. I hope you're not offended. It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood. A beautiful day for a neighbor. Could you be mine? Won't you be mine? Some of my favorite words from the book of Leviticus says in Chapter 19, Verse 16, God commands that we cannot stand idly by while we see our neighbor bleed. These are holy words from the Torah. And I'm sure some of

you know the story of the Good Samaritan from the New Testament. We are called to love our neighbor. Our neighbors don't just live in Pittsburgh. We are called to be merciful. And truly, you all have a role to play. Please do not stand idly by and allow anyone to bleed. This is about human rights. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Charlie Baron.

MS. BARRON: Charlie Baron, District 10. I'm a proud Jew. I have many of the same connections to Israel that other Jews have, including family who live in Israel and family who survived the Holocaust. But I will not allow my personal connections to cloud the view of this unfolding genocide in Palestine. I urge you to pass this ceasefire resolution. There's no defense to the atrocities Israel has committed over the past 150 days, which include bombing refugee camps, hospitals, schools and mosques. To allow this to continue is to disregard the sanctity of human life and to disregard international law. Please do what is in your power. Stand on the right side of history and pass this resolution. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Shabana Reza?

MS. REZA: Council Members, I'm a resident of Wexford and I'm a mother of a deaf child. I urge you to please vote in favor of the ceasefire resolution. To date, the Israeli army has killed over 29,000 Palestinians in Gaza, including more than 12,300 children. We've seen this in real time. Council Members, I don't know how you sleep at night, but seeing these images of children being blown to bits haunts me. And as a mother of a deaf child, can you imagine what it would feel like if you were deaf or blind and you suddenly had to deal with a bomb? Where would you go? What would you see? It would be complete panic. In addition to the carpet bombing and white phosphorus and sniper attacks, Palestinians are being starved, All because of Israel's collective punishment and total siege of Gaza.

All this brutality is being funded by the United States. I'm here to tell you, Council members, we as Americans do not want our tax dollars funding genocide. We do not want to see this ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Elizabeth Steiner Milligan.

PRESIDENT CATENA: After this one, let's line up the next ten.

MS. MILLIGAN: Good evening. I'm here to speak on the ceasefire resolution and urge you to pass it. A yes vote on the proposed resolution would mean that Allegheny County is saying they believed that people, not people

--- I'm sorry, people, babies and children in Gaza and Israel should not be killed. On the other hand, if this is a no vote, if yours is a no vote, it's saying okay to killing babies and children. If you vote yes, Allegheny County will join more than 70 other cities that have passed these fire resolutions. Those cities include Chicago, Atlanta, Seattle, San Francisco and Minneapolis. Palestinians and Israeli babies and children are not numbers. They are flesh and blood. They deserve safety. It's that simple. Please vote yes and be on the right side of history. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Next up will be Rachael Neffshade, followed by Alison Karlin, Keven Arndt, Rabbi Jeffrey Myers, Eva Resnick-Day, Hasan Alqannah, Susanne Slavick, Andrew Johnson, Alexandra Dobell, Ilyas Khan, Elizabeth Arafat

PRESIDENT CATENA: If you could line up, please, if your name's called.

MS. NEFFSHADE: Okay. Yep (sic). Good evening. My name is Rachael Neffshade. I am a resident of Plum Borough and a member of the Green Party of Allegheny County. I am here to urge the Council to vote yes for the ceasefire resolution. Doing so will put further pressure on state and federal government bodies to also call for a permanent ceasefire, as the multiple and well-attended marches for Palestine in our County have shown, the majority of people in Allegheny County want an immediate and permanent ceasefire. So please vote yes.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Alison Karlin?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Kevin Arndt?

MR. ARNDT: Kevin Arndt, District 11. Everyday Israeli officials openly call for the extermination of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. But it's as if the most ardent offenders of Zionism are incapable of listening to Israeli Zionists when they're perfectly honest about what they want. This has always been the

case, and if the Palestinian death toll over the last century can't squeeze out the drop of human decency required for you to vote for this resolution, then you've already decided the Palestinian lives are worthless to you. Instead, I suggest you think of the Israeli hostages. If you care about getting the hostages home safely and quickly, a ceasefire is the only option. Over 100 hostages have been released through ceasefires and hostage swaps, and based on information from both Hamas and Israel, more hostages have died due to Israeli airstrikes than have been rescued by Israeli forces. Israel is killing more hostages than they are saving.

So if your aim is to bring the hostages home, the answer is clear; refusal to support this unilateral ceasefire and hostage release deal means that you value the deaths of Palestinians more than you value the lives of Israelis.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Rabbi Jeffrey Myers.

RABBI MYERS: Good evening. Rabbi Jeffrey Myers, Tree of Life, swirl hill. I was here two weeks ago. I didn't think I should have to be here again, but yet I am. I would have thought that upon hearing the comments from the last time, the sensible thing would have been to see what can we do to lower the temperature in the community? How do we put out the fire? How do we build bridges? We've got 446 bridges in Pittsburgh. You didn't build bridges. You put up a wall. That was the wrong step to take, because now you've divided a community. You haven't repaired a community that seriously needs repair.

This is not the place to discuss this issue. They're doing it in Paris right now. That's where the discussion belongs, where there have been three ceasefires put on the table. Hamas has rejected two of them already. We're waiting to see if Hamas will reject, once again, a third one. You should build bridges, not walls. You should put out configurations.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Eva Resnick-Day.

MS. RESNICK-DAY: Hi, I'm Eva from Swissvale, and I urge County Council to adopt this resolution calling for a ceasefire and return of the hostages. I'm Jewish. I grew up in Squirrel Hill with my bus stop across from tree of life. I was bought mitzvah. And when I was 16, I went to Poland with a Pittsburgh Holocaust survivor and went to

visit death camps. I stood in a gas chamber where thousands has died in front of a mound of ashes as big as a football field. And I was taught and felt never again in the deepest parts of my bones. My Jewish upbringing taught me that never again should any people be dehumanized and targeted for who they are. That the result is always horrific beyond belief. Dehumanization in Israeli officials saying point blank that the goal is for there to be no Palestine.

In the words of Netanyahu, utterly destroy all that they have, slay both men and women, infant and suckling oxen, sheep, camel and ass. This is rhetoric of annihilation. And to date, over 30,000 Palestinians have been murdered by Israel, breaking international law, targeting civilians with our tax dollars. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Hasan Alqannah?

MR. ALQENNAH: Good evening, Hasan Alquannah. I'm going to talk facts here. Number one, everybody opposed the ceasefire. Talk about massacre on October 7, but they never talk about the ongoing five month massacre. Number two, plain and simple, Natanyahu overplayed Biden. Let's help Biden with passing the ceasefire motion tonight. Number three, Netanyahu was very upset with the ICJ decision. ICJ directed Israel to protect civilians, which never happened. Number four, for those who oppose ceasefire because they want to finish Hamas. I tell them Hamas does not exist in West Bank, but Israel Army and illegal settlers are killing and imprisoning Palestinian children without trial. This unconditional support for Israel will never give them peace. Only justice gives them peace. And finally, only Israel can kill women, children, stop water, food and energy, and still claim they are the victims. Stop that. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Susanne Slavick.

MS. SLAVICK: Susanne Slavick from Ross Township. I'd like us to imagine ourselves in the place of Gazans right now. The Gaza Strip is about one-fifth the size of this County. It has about the same population as the Greater Pittsburgh area. So can you imagine yourselves, your children and neighbors starving, without fresh drinking water, fuel or medical facilities, if any even remain? Can you imagine being shot or run over trying to get food for your kids? Can you imagine evacuating from

Southpark to Wexford, only to be bombed there and then told to move again? Can you imagine one-ton bombs which are four times larger than the ones we dropped on ISIS in Iraq, dropped on our densely populated neighborhoods like Squirrel Hill? Or losing 30,000 and counting of our citizens, the majority, women and children? This is what is happening now with American aid and weapons. It's got to stop. We have to stand on the right side of history for peace and human rights, for Jews, Palestinians and everyone.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. SLAVICK: Pass this ceasefire.

MR. BARKER: Andrew Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: We make the bombs. We pay for the bombs. We provide the bombs. We facilitate their dropping. We condone the killing. We promote the policies of apartheid, denigration and intolerable suffering in the world's largest open air ghetto prison. U.S. political will could immediately curtail the murder killing through deprivation and traumatizing of generations. This body's adoption of the ceasefire resolution alongside those of cities across the nation is a step toward that end. It's not antisemitic, it's pro human rights.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next.

MR. BARKER: Alexandra Dobell.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Ilyas Khan.

MR. KHAN: Good evening, everyone. Usually I would make a joke, but today is my 20th birthday and thank you. Instead of celebrating my birthday, I have to be here to talk about people who never got to make it to their 20th birthday. Many of you have children. Some of you have grandchildren. Can you imagine if they never got to go to college, can you imagine if they never got to have their first kiss, first love, get married, have a life, have something, anything? I am 20-years old today. But today I have to mourn the people who never got to be 20 instead of celebrating the fact that I am. Can you understand the guilt that is living to 20 while others die at zero? Please, for all young people in your life, pass this resolution. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Next up we have Elizabeth Arafat, followed by Chokri Guetaru, Nadav Furgang, Rebecca Figlio,

Zachary Michaels, Martine Saul, Kit Baril, Simone Saul, Jacob Klinger, Kyle Verma, Donna Coufal, Sergio Zambrana.

MS. ARAFAT: Good evening to the Council and everyone that's here. I have a question for you. If you are against the killing of innocent men, women and children in Israel, please raise your hand. If you are against the killing of innocent men, women and children in Palestine, please raise your hands. If you are not against the killing of any people, then you have a problem within yourself. Those people who are saying they are against a ceasefire and are saying it will make them unsafe. To them, I say mass murder and genocide perpetrated in your names is what makes no one safe. We must all keep in mind that history will look --- People in the future will look back at history, which will be us. They will look back and they will dust off the records. They will hear these tapes and they will watch the videos. Will you too be guilty of supporting genocide? We should vote no on --- vote yes on the ceasefire and a no to genocide. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. BARKER: Chokri Guetari?

PRESIDENT CATENA: And we're not applauding.

MR. GUETARI: Hi, thank you for listening to me. My name is Chokri Guetari. I'm from South Bayat. I'm here to urge you to support the permanent ceasefire in Palestine. And the reason I want you to do that is because I want the United States to continue to stand for democracy, for justice, for liberty and humanity. Spending billions of dollars of our money, your money, supporting this genocide in Palestine is not justified by any means. Supporting a permanent ceasefire will give the United States the opportunity to counsel Israel, to put some sense into them, to make sure that they do the right thing. The Ukraine War has been going on for two years. It claimed 11,000 lives, Ukrainian lives. This war ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Nadav Furgang?

MR. FURGANG: As a Jew, I'm here to tell you that any talking point you hear arguing about this resolution being antisemitic, how it's a vote against Jewish safety, all of that is a dangerous lie. I know that because I grew up thinking that way and surrounded by friends, family and teachers who still think that way. I remember how it felt

to interpret any sort of pro Palestinian sentiment as a threat. Looking back, I wasn't using my heart and I wasn't using my brain. I was working from a state of fear that kept me from pursuing the truth. What a shame, because it's this rejection of logic and compassion, this conflation of Judaism with Zionism that draws a wedge between us when what we really need is unity. So I'm asking you that when you listen to constituents who pit Jewish safety against Palestinian liberation, use your heart and use your brain, a vote for this resolution is a vote for Palestinian life, for an end to this genocide, and for a future where all of us can live in dignity. Free Palestine.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Rebecca Figlio.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Zachary Michaels.

MR. MICHAELS: Hello, my name is Zachary Michaels. I'm not great at public speaking. I live in Shadyside and I just wanted to encourage you to support this resolution. I do believe that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. I think I got that mixed up. But I don't think that we can build unity and peace in Pittsburgh if we ignore the ways that our national level systems are broken. So I think that this is a place to try to move forward, to try to build peace across the world. And I think that is very clear that the war in Gaza is an act of collective punishment. It doesn't serve any legitimate defensive purpose at this point. And thank you for giving your community a chance to speak and to vote for peace.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Martine Saul.

MS. SAUL: I live in Overbrook, represented by Summer Lee, Wayne Fontaine and Jessica Benham. I'm Jewish and I was raised as a reconstructionist Jew at Congregation dor hadash and currently belong to the Society for Humanistic Judaism. I'm also a grief and trauma counselor. I am asking you to vote for this resolution for ceasefire. As a Jew, I grew up hearing about the Holocaust and was taught that it is my duty to speak out against genocide of any group of people to prevent another Holocaust from happening. I am standing up for Palestinians who are facing atrocities of ethnic cleansing from the Israeli and US governments. As a mental health professional, I have a

deep understanding of how severe trauma and grief can affect people's entire lives, including their mental and physical health.

The costs from this genocide will impact surviving Palestinians lives for generations to come, just as the Holocaust has impacted multiple generations, even after 75 years. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Kit Baril.

MS. BARIL: Good evening. I would like to urge the Council to ceasefire now and to pass this resolution. I'm a United Food and Commercial worker with Local 1776, as well as a member with the answer coalition. And every single day, there are people that come into the coffee shop looking for a place to be warm because we're spending all of our money on wars and violence. And I really urge you, Council Members, to think about that, especially because of the houseless issue growing here. Why are we, you know, thinking about supporting an apartheid state like Israel? That is a settler colony, and they're white supremacists. That is their ideology. And I urge you to vote against that and for the ceasefire. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Simone Saul?

MS. SAUL: Hello. My name is Simone. I grew up in Squirrel Hill and have been a member of Congregation Dor hadash. I'm here to beg you to please vote and pass this resolution, because County Council people are telling you that you don't have any business dealing in foreign politics, But when it comes to atrocities, this insane human rights violations, this intense, every single one of us has to use every bit of power, any influence, anything that we can do, all of us. And so I beg you to do what you can and let this resolution resound across cities and across the world, because we have to stop this. And people have said that, you know, this ---. I'm sorry.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. SAUL: That's my time. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Jacob Klinger.

MR. KLINGER: Hi, all, District 13 in support.

Israel doesn't keep anyone safe anyway. It only endangers, expands, and erases, including antizionist Jews like me. Israel is, among other things, a real estate project. It's calling for natural resources. It's, you

know, a government, which is why we didn't know what your limits are. Because when there's a group of people on a piece of land in the County that a real estate company or a gas company or any number of sponsors or members of this government want gone, is there, in fact, any limit to how much violence you would witness upon them? How many would you have killed and then stay silent? Opponents of this resolution find themselves aligned with Christian nationalists, election deniers, and others who, like always, claim irrelevance, powerlessness, divisiveness, split hairs about actual genocide and say, never again a genocide unless they get to do it. If you join them now, we don't have to imagine what to expect from you next.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: No applauding. If you can't control yourself, you're going to be asked to leave.

MR. BARKER: Kyle Verma? Donna Coufal?

MS. COUFAL: Members of Council, my name is Donna Coufal and I've lived in Squirrel Hill for over 30 years. I'm a member of the Jewish community and a past president of Congregation dor hadash. I'm speaking on behalf of myself and not as a spokesperson for any congregation. Dor hadash contains members with a wide variety of views, including differing opinions about the conflict between Hamas and Israel. I grew up loving Israel and believed it was a special, safe place for Jews. I no longer believe this is true. The Israeli government and IDF have lost their principles as a result of multi-generational trauma and the not unfounded fear that Israel could be annihilated. The Israeli government and much of the world have dehumanized the Palestinian people. We must untangle the complexity of history, although we feel afraid. It takes courage to face bitter truths, to challenge our views of the world and our beliefs. But this is ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Next up will be Sergio Zambrana, followed by, followed by ---.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: He's at work. He says vote no.

MR. BARKER: Followed by Claire Moclock.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Amitai Bin-Nun, Gayle Kraut, MacKenzie MacFarland, Robert Ross, Bennett Farrell, Rachel Greene, L. Stern, Alexander Sax and Judith Adelson. With Mr.

Zambrana not here, we will be going with Claire Moclock next.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Claire?

MS. MOCLOCK: Hi, Claire Moclock, District 13. I've spent two and-a-half years as an archivist ensuring the attack at Tree of Life Synagogue, the scale of its emotional and psychic trauma will be thoroughly documented and memorialized. I am also here in support of a ceasefire. Through my work, I've learned that true Jewish values don't align with the hate or genocide of any people, including Palestinians. The attack on 10/27 and the current genocide have something in common. They're fueled by a profoundly toxic hatred that was built into the foundation of our country. If Pittsburgh wants to live up to the claim of being stronger than hate, you'll vote yes on a ceasefire resolution. If not, your inaction will be remembered, just as I've ensured 10/27 will be. Doing nothing does not make us stronger than hate. It makes us complicit in it. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Amitai Bin-Nun?

MR. BIN-NUN: Amitai Bin-Nun from Squirrel Hill. The Bible says there is a season for everything under the sun. There is a time for war and a time for peace. Last October, Hamas decided that it was a time for war, and this conflict will only end when Hamas decides that it is a time for peace. President Biden just said a ceasefire is in the hands of Hamas right now. Vice President Harris has said Hamas claims it wants a ceasefire. There is a deal on the table. Hamas needs to agree to that deal. Tragically, Hamas continues to embrace war. The unbalanced resolution in front of the Council will not contribute towards peace. As Senator Fetterman has said, Hamas owns this calamity. We must demand that they free the hostages and surrender. So I urge the Council to vote no on this unfair resolution, which does not call out Hamas and emboldens them to continue to choose one.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Gayle Kraut.

MS. KRAUT: Hi, my name is Gayle Kraut and I'm from Squirrel Hill. I'm here to ask you to vote no on this resolution. This motion is not in the purview of the kindly Council and is divisive and harmful to all Jewish, the whole Jewish community, which you represent. As a member of the Jewish community and a lifelong

Pittsburgher, I'm personally devastated by the recent dramatic increase in antisemitism. I grew up as an American patriot, believing that America and Pittsburgh were places of tolerance. I am now afraid that this motion will make me and the Jewish community feel unsafe in our own community. Like you, I want to see the end to this war and to the loss of innocent lives, both Israeli and Palestinian. But I don't believe this motion promotes goals of lasting peace, especially since Hamas has promised to repeat October 7th atrocities and has advocated for unending war. Additionally, the language of this motion equates the release of terrorists arrested by Israel with hostages taken by Hamas.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Next, MacKenzie MacFarland.

MS. MACFARLAND: Hi, I'm a resident of Garfield. On my way here, I was listening to the testimony of a doctor who had gone to Gaza and volunteered to help in hospitals there. She described a scene where, because of the lack of supplies, all she could do was hold the hand of a young man who was dying on the floor of the hospital with his leg almost blown off. She describes looking up and realizing that he still had his UNRWA's vest on. He was 23-years old, the same age that I am, and he died trying to provide aid. No amount of propaganda can cover up the clear human rights violations happening in Gaza.

The targeting of hospitals, aid organizations and journalists is extremely horrifying and sets a dangerous precedent across the world. If nothing else, the ceasefire is needed to prevent the starvation of more children. All life is precious, and we should all refuse to be part of a system that collectively punishes the Palestinian people under the guise of providing security to the Israeli people. Bombing civilians will never bring peace. We have seen throughout history that civilian bombing only strengthens armed resistance. Diplomatic solutions and self-determination for the Palestinian people is the only thing that can bring peace. Please vote yes. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Robert Ross.

MR. ROSS: Robert Ross, Lawrenceville. I recently returned from a trip to Palestine with a delegation of American Christians. Upon my arrival, a woman in Jerusalem said to me, under the cover of the genocide

unfolding in Gaza, there is a quieter genocide going on here and in the occupied West Bank, where Hamas is not at all present. Indeed, we witnessed firsthand Israeli soldiers bulldozing Palestinian farmland. We stood alongside a Palestinian grandfather whose home in Jerusalem had just been demolished by the Israeli military. In the IDA refugee camp, we met with family members of some of the 7000 Palestinians who have been detained by Israel, most without any charge since October 7. We wept with a group of Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem whose siblings, uncles and aunts had been killed by Israeli airstrikes and snipers in Gaza, and they all said to us, ask your government to demand a ceasefire.

And so I ask you, Councilors, please vote in favor of this ceasefire resolution.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Bennett Farrell.

MR. FARRELL: Good evening. My name is Hunter Farrell. I'm a Presbyterian minister and I teach at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in Highland Park. Ten days ago, I returned also from a trip to Palestine with 34 leaders from across the presbyterian church USA. I was prepared to hear deep stories of pain and anguish from Israeli hostages and their families, and from Palestinians who've lost family members to Israeli attacks. But nothing prepared me for the question that I got from a young girl whose family was from Gaza. She said, how can you Americans stand by in silence as our people, day after day, are being blown apart? That question has haunted my thoughts and my dreams, and because you and I are paying for those bombs and for those bullets that are destroying the people of Gaza, every Palestinian we spoke with begged to us, please say to your governments that they can stop the bombing. They can do this.

So I have one last question for you. Thank you. 30,000 are dead ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. FARRELL: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Rachel Greene.

MS. GREENE: My name is Rachel Greene. I'm a Jewish resident of Pittsburgh. Like many speakers tonight, I have family members who are holocaust survivors and the fear of antisemitism is real to me. That is why I think it's important to consider what we mean when we talk about

antisemitism. The Jewish people and the state of Israel are not the same thing. Fighting back against a state that is committing genocide is not antisemitism. However, because Israel is an ethnocracy that falsely claims to represent me, I do feel afraid that the cycle of violence and trauma Israel is perpetuating will make the world less safe for Jews. I fear that creating thousands of Palestinian orphans who have only ever known Jews as the people who murdered their parents, who have only ever heard our holy language spoken by soldiers, will make the world less safe for Jews. Please support a call to end cycles of violence with a ceasefire and create a safer world for all of us. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: L. Stern.

MS. STERN: Hello, I'm L. District 7 and a Jew calling for a ceasefire named for my grandmother's sister murdered in the Holocaust. I speak on my own behalf as a member of the Hevra Kadisha, a sacred community of Jews that volunteer to perform Taharah, end of life rituals to prepare the dead of our community for burial. We honor the deceased, Kavod Chamet (phonetic), wash and dress the body in prayer, asking forgiveness, Mechila (phonetic), for any harm we might cause during our ritual, acknowledging our spiritual responsibility to honor sacredness of all human life, even in death.

Palestinian bodies have been harmed for nearly a century under brutal occupation and now, as Israel reduces lives to bones under rubble. In this genocide, tanks run over bodies, bulldozers turn over newly buried bodies. Palestinians are forced to carry loved ones' body parts in bags or leave them behind, running towards safety. Do Palestinians not deserve all the dignity in life and the luxury of time to die at a ripe old age, surrounded by loved ones, free to mourn safely in their homes and houses of worship in a sacred way, too? I offer these words up as a prayer for a Jewishness rooted and in service to the liberation of our Palestinian siblings and beings everywhere. Ceasefire now.

MR. BARKER: Alexander Sax?

MR. SAX: Alex Sax, Squirrel Hill. After I retired in 2014, I provided five years of basic oral surgical services for the County jail. I agree with last Wednesday's February 28th Editor's Opinion in the local Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that the County Council discussion

of international affairs is not in the realm of the Council Charter, creates divisiveness and is not part of the Council charge. In addition, the resolution is somewhat misguided as the focus of the ceasefire request should be solely placed on Hamas.

Hamas violated the ceasefire agreement on October 7. Hamas must simply state that peace is what is desired, release hostages, and be willing to have direct negotiations for a meaningful, lasting resolution. International funds misuse for the construction of terror tunnels, the usage of human shields and placement of terror. Construction under schools and hospitals is a prescription for disaster. Once this approach is recognized as a failure and evil response ---

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. SAX: --- would help. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Next up will be Judith Adelson, followed by Julia Richards, Holland Horvath, Julia Zebley, Sarah Scherk, Ahmad Amer, Nemo Farr, Brody Wojcik, Ahmed Arafat, Faye Couvrette and Claire Cohen.

MS. ADELSON: Judith Adelson of District 11, speaking against this motion because of its inherent bias. It fails to condemn Hamas, a terrorist organization so designated by U.S., Canada, EU, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, among others. Hamas started this war. It falsely accuses Israel of targeting innocent civilians. The toll on the innocent is heartbreaking, but the motion fails to acknowledge Israel is forced to fight her enemy in one of the most densely populated areas on earth. War is not a war crime, but Hamas' use of its own people as a human shield is. This motion mockingly equates Israeli prisoners with innocent women, infants, children, elderly, taken hostage violently and treated brutally by Hamas for political leverage. This motion is also political circus because the Council's powers and duties do not include determining foreign policy.

This resolution is contrary to US foreign policy and serves no practical purpose other than provoking division and hatred among our neighbors. I call on the Council to do the job they were elected to do, of improving the quality of life by ensuring equitable use of tax dollars and working towards justice and safety for all.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Julia Richards.

MS. RICHARDS: Hello, my name is Julia Richards. I live in Munhall. I'm a mother of two small children. My husband and I are portrait and wedding photographers. Our business is, We are the Richards. I also work part time as a homecare worker. I'm part of the United Home Care Workers of Pennsylvania Union. I'm saying that we need to pass a permanent ceasefire resolution. If you are moved by the loss of life on October 7, then you need to also feel the weight of the loss of life every single day since then. The amount of bombs that have been dropped on Gaza is 65,000 tons, which is more than the weight and power of three nuclear bombs like those dropped on Hiroshima. Dr. Ephraim Galaria, an American doctor who was in Gaza, said, this is not a war, this is annihilation. Entire families have been erased from the civil registry in Gaza. A child is killed every 15 minutes in Gaza. 12,000 dead children is not self-defense. I watched a video of a child in Gaza say, I wish I had died, too. It would better for me ---

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. RICHARDS: --- because everyone I loved is gone.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Holland Horvath.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Julie Zebley.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Sarah Scherk?

MS. SCHERK: Sara E. Scherk, Bloomfield. I'm your constituent. I am a proud Jew. I'm a religious school teacher at Congregation Dor kadash. I want you to know that as a Jew, called to recognize the holiness of every human life, I support a ceasefire. I implore you to do the same. As a Jew, I tell you this is not antisemitic. As a Jew, I will feel safer in this County, this state, this country, this world, when everyone is safe, full stop. What's divisive is conflating the actions of the state of Israel or supporting the state of Israel with supporting all Jews here and elsewhere.

Now, my neighbors here have shared amazing statistics and stories, but I'm here to share that not all Jews in Allegheny County feel unsafe or targeted by that which will save human lives in Gaza. I'm here to remind you that stronger than hate, that amazing catchphrase, requires us to look beyond the people who are most like ourselves and protect all human life.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. AMIR: Ahmed Amer.

MR. AMER: My name is Ahmed Amer. I live in Lawrenceville. I am an Arab and a Muslim, and I am proud to be here today in solidarity with my Jewish brothers and sisters and many more beautiful souls of principle and conscience who demand a ceasefire. There is only one side of this issue that is advocating for less violence, and that is the side, the righteous one, that says we should not be supporting genocidal bombing and intentional starvation of Palestinian men, women and children. We are here to demand of you the bare minimum. And you should thank us. Because if you vote no, I promise, years from now, when the international consensus is settled and you vote no, your conscience will torture you for the rest of your life. Please act with the courage and humanity that historic moments like this demand. If you have young children or grandchildren, consider how they will see your vote years from now. This is an easy one. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Nemo Farr.

MR. FARR: Nemo Farr from Squirrel Hill. I'm here to add my voice to the powerless, to speak to the powerful. Ten years ago, I went to university for conflict resolution. I studied the Palestinian conflict, and at that point I believed that through communication and understanding, there could be a resolution and I was wrong. And I'm here to urge you to call for the ceasefire. You have the power to do so. We've been trying everything that we possibly can to reach the powerful. So, on behalf of the powerless, please vote yes for this ceasefire. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Brody Wojcik.

PRESIDENT CATENA: No Brody?

MR. BARKER: Ahmed Arafat.

MR. ARAFAT. Good evening. My name is Ahmed Arafat. I'm from Churchill. I am here in support of the ceasefire. I would like to talk to you today about one of my other friends. His name is Abdul Salam al Astal. We're best friends. We went to high school together. We spent four years together. My tax dollars killed over 100 of his family members. Today, I'm going to try to read the names of the 36 nieces and nephews that were killed. And I assure you, not a single one of them is a Hamas member. Salam Walastol (phonetic), less than a year old.

Ryana Lal (phonetic), less than a year old. Mayhana (phonetic), less than a year old. Maria (phonetic) less than a year old. Jaman (phonetic), less than a year. Elaf (phonetic), less than a year, Ali (phonetic), two. Hamzah (phonetic), three. Jarad (phonetic), four. Jaman (phonetic), four. Hazar (phonetic), four. Hazar (phonetic), six. Hala (phonetic), six. Yasim (phonetic), seven. Sahma (phonetic), eight.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. ARAFAT: Call for a ceasefire, please.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Faye Couvrette.

MR. COUVRETTE: Councilors, if the children of Gaza must wait every day between the sound of missiles launching and bombs dropping to wonder if this time that indiscriminate death will land on them, if elderly women in Gaza must wait in the rubble of hospitals bleeding out from fatally precise sniper wounds to learn if any doctors remain alive in their neighborhoods to save them, if Palestinians in Pittsburgh must wait every day, every hour, for correspondence confirming their families continue to survive in the world's largest concentration camps, how long will we wait to pass the ceasefire resolution? If Zionists want to compare the scale of violence, then let's get into it.

Is indiscriminate bombing not terrorism? Are mass executions of schoolchildren by IDF soldiers not war crimes? Is the violent expulsion of Palestinians from their own homes not a pogrom? Are 30,000 lives and counting acceptable collateral damage for mass revenge upon a population when those lives are Arab?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. COUVRETTE: Free Palestine.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Claire Cohen, will be followed by Andrea Goldschmidt, Ehud Hershkovich, Rebecca Harrison, Mark Martin, Jaimie Barca, or Jaimie (changes pronunciation) Barca, I apologize, Nathan Ragunathan, Michael Milch, Justin Laing, Todd Rosenfeld and Jessie Male.

MS. COHEN: I'm Claire Cohen from the Highland Park neighborhood of Pittsburgh. As of this date, 82 cities and counties around this nation have passed ceasefire resolutions. None of these places have become less safe places for Jews to live. We hear about the disturbing increase in the incidence of antisemitic hate crimes, but

what about anti-Islamic and anti-Palestinian hate crimes? According to Reuters, incidents of such hate crimes in the US have risen by over 180 percent to over 3,500 incidents in the first three months since October 7th. Is the safety, humanity and rights of Palestinians considered less than that of Jews? If so, isn't that called racism?

Pass the ceasefire resolution now. It is the morally right thing to do. It will put this Council on the right side of history against what the ICJ and over 1200 human rights experts and lawyers, including many Jewish ones, have declared as plausible genocide.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Andrea Goldschmidt.

MS. GOLDSCHMIDT: Andrea Goldschmidt from Squirrel Hill. My husband is a physician who traveled with a convoy of volunteers from the U.S. and Israel. From the U.S. and Switzerland to Israel the week after October 7, as a volunteer to help identify bodies and causes of death of the victims, he spent a week at the forensic institute in Tel Aviv. There, he saw a constant influx of victims' bodies, most of which arrived in pieces, charred with multiple gunshot or shrapnel wounds. My husband and his colleagues had to examine the bodies for tattoos, remnants of medical devices, scars or other clues to their identity. He saw a child's charred foot that arrived alone with just a tag. He saw a man from Thailand, identified only by his tattoos because of how often he'd been shot. He saw entire families with charred skin. After testing their lungs, it was found that many families had burned alive. I feel it is the job of the County to educate and inform the community and create a welcome environment for all. Because the recent discussion of a resolution has provided a platform for denialism. I vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Ehud Hershkovich.

MR. HERSHKOVICH: Ehud Hershkovich from Lebanon. This motion should be rejected. It is very easy to call for a ceasefire. On October 6, there was a ceasefire. On October 7, Hamas broke it and launched one of the most horrific attacks on humanity in modern times when Hamas terrorists murdered over 1200 innocent civilians, including entire families, raped women before killing them, and took over 200 innocent civilians, hostages, including babies, children and women. This was the

outcome of a ceasefire that gave time for Hamas to develop its satanic plans and attack Israel yet again. If a ceasefire is implemented now, before Hamas is eradicated, it is only serving Hamas, ensuring its survival, and that these atrocities will happen again. The federal government does not need this motion to make informed decisions that serve U.S. interests.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. HERSHKOVICH: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Rebecca Harrison?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Mark Martin?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Jaimie Barca?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Nithin Ragunathan?

MR. RAGUNATHAN: Hi, all. My name is Nithin Ragunathan and I am a resident taxpayer of Allegheny County, born in Allegheny County. I reside in David Bonaroti's District 13. So I want to take my time just to dispel a couple of myths that have been propagated here and throughout the media. First, the idea that there was a ceasefire on October 6 is patently false. Two weeks before October 6th ---. This isn't funny. Please stop laughing. Two weeks before October 6th, the IDF engaged in three days straight of bombing. On October 4th, Palestinian peaceful protesters approaching the wall between Gaza and Israel were shot in the ankles. This is patently false. There was no ceasefire. Second, Israel pulled out of the Gaza Strip in 2005. This is also not true. They continued to occupy the Gaza Strip by blockading it --- blockading all medical supplies inside, all food inside, all pharmaceuticals ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Michael Milch.

MR. MILCH: Thank you, honorable members of this Council, for this platform. My name is Michael Milch, and I'm a fifth generation Pittsburgher. My children and I, as well as my parents and grandparents, live in Squirrel Hill. My grandparents grew up in East End and my great grandparents were raised on the Hill. Respectfully, these last few hours have been maddening. The misinformation, the blatant lies, the lack of understanding of the Middle East and a deliberate refusal to care to become educated leaves me saddened and worried. But my belief in this

Council and the proud men and women on this dais remains strong.

The current administration in Washington, as recently as yesterday, has made it abundantly clear that they want a six-week ceasefire and await Hamas to agree to terms already agreed upon by Israel. This six-week pause would allow for dire humanitarian aid for innocent civilians in Gaza in exchange for the release of innocent Israeli civilians who have been held captive for 151 horrific days. This is a moment of moral clarity and clear choices. Now is the time to band together and support our administration, not a time to create and add divisiveness by announcing a resolution that is critical of President Biden's current effort to secure a ceasefire with the contemporaneous release of hostages. Vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Justin Laing.

MR. LAING: Good evening. The military mission led by Hamas and the Palestinian resistance of October 7 was taken up in no small part because over the course of more than 100 years, the U.S. itself, a settler colonial state, Britain, Israel and the Zionist movement have demonstrated an unyielding commitment to colonialism, imperialism, which are by definition, institutionalized violence. It is unwillingness to negotiate, to be reasonable, to live in community that marks the colonist and makes violence a viable strategy.

Tonight you have an opportunity to be fair and reasonable and distinguish us in Allegheny County from the US sponsored maniacal onslaught. Clearly, the strategy of Israel is to clear the land of the Palestinian people, as some of my English ancestors did to the indigenous people of Tiran Island.

A vote for a ceasefire is a vote to take a small step towards peace in Palestine and in Pittsburgh, it's a vote to reject the blatant white supremacist tropes of the violent, unreasonable, non-European people who live simply savagely for the spilling of European blood, with no mention made of the century of history and legitimate claims to national liberation. These troops of the tradition of historical colonialism, of white supremacy, of Allegheny County, reject it.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Todd Rosenfeld.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Next up will be Jessie Male, followed by Matthew Rubin, Lisa Valanti, Julie Arnheim Emily Barlow, Jason Lovell, Khadija Djellouli, Laura Tompkins, Helen Gerhardt, Juliet Phillips and Benjamin Weilerstein.

DR. MALE: Hi, my name is Dr. Jessie Male. I'm a resident of Shadyside. I'm a Jewish woman, and professionally, I'm a teacher scholar of disability studies. There are few experiences more disabling than war. This has always been the case, but never have we encountered such a crisis point for a singular population. Listen. Every single surviving person in Gaza will be disabled, whether from traumatic stress, malnutrition, pregnancy or birth complications, limb amputations, or an array of other horrors committed against mind and body. According to UNICEF, more than 1000 children have had one or more legs amputated due to Israeli attacks, many performed without anesthesia. Diabetics are unable to access insulin. Kidney transplant recipients are going weeks without taking their medication. Asthma patients do not have the inhalers they so desperately need, as the smoke from the bombing makes it impossible to breathe. Please vote for a ceasefire.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Matthew Rubin?

MR. RUBIN: I'm Matt Rubin from Beachview. Israel is committing genocide, armed and funded by the U.S. government. But we've been told tonight that Israel is so unsafe that the murder of over 12,000 Palestinian children, the destruction of every hospital in Gaza, is somehow justified. But right now, any Jew 26 or younger can go online and book a free propaganda trip to Israel, funded by Israel, with cool, fun-themed trip options like indulge Israel content creators, and I kid you not, adrenaline rush. While two million people are being displaced from a city that was their home, Jews who've never been to Israel can go there for free, for fun party trips. And since I'm Jewish, I could fly to Israel, a country I've never been to and have no connection to, tomorrow. I could walk into a Palestinian's home with a mattress and declare that my home and the IDF would protect me and my right to that property from the people whose homes I just stolen.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Lisa Valanti?

MS. VALANTI: I'm Lisa Valanti from Upper St. Clair. I came here tonight thinking that this motion that you're considering was kind of a milk toast motion, because all it asks for is it urges government to work cooperatively toward an escalation and ceasefire, which seems to me almost everybody is, including Biden and Harris. Right now, everybody's asking for it. So this is not an issue of who is the most horrific. I'm also Jewish. My grandmother, who had the numbers on her arm and buried all her relatives in the Holocaust, she taught me about Nuremberg. She taught me about international law. These are very important things that are not just about who is getting blown up or who's killing who or whatever. We need to maintain and support the idea of law. We need to support collaboration between nations.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Julie Arnheim.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Emily Barlow.

MS. BARLOW: My name is Emily Barlow, and I grew up on Wilkins Avenue. On my way here this evening, I saw a billboard with a photograph of Nelson Mandela, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who used to be known as a terrorist, a word that oppressors will always use for those resisting it. I stand before you, Council as a first year nursing student and not a public speaker with aspirations of working for MSF. I am outraged at the overwhelming evidence of human rights violations. For five months later, we are now seeing the effects of starvation in the north of Gaza, just as we're seeing the unabashed massacres of Palestinians scrambling towards trucks bringing bags of flour. And as a future medical professional, I also want to indicate to the methodical targeting of doctors and nurses.

In the past 150 days, more than 350 medics have been killed in every single hospital in Gaza bombed. I'm not sure why such an incomprehensible acts of outright war crimes are permitted to continue under the pillars of an international law, but I hope that you will have not only the opportunity in this motion to be on the right side of history, but a duty to uphold what is just. Ceasefire, please.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Jason Lovell.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Khadija Djellouli.

MS. DJELLOULI: Hello, Council. My name is Khadija Djellouli and I live in Beachview. I am here because in 2024, I have to beg the County Council to vote for a motion to call for a ceasefire. It is 2024, and I have to tell people that indiscriminately bombing innocent civilians and children is wrong. It's 2024 and I have to explain to people that broadly classifying an entire country of Arabs as terrorists is wrong. But in the interest of time, I will say that it's vitally important for local governments like this Council to pass resolutions like this in order to put pressure on higher elected officials who have the power to change something like this, to use that power. Some people I have heard claim that this is not an issue for a local Council, but those same people seem to have no issue with the resolution that was passed by this Council last fall. So I would like to ask today, please vote yes on the ceasefire. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Laura Tompkins.

MS. TOMPKINS: My name is Laura Tompkins. I live in District 13 and I'm a ten-year member of the labor movement. As we all know Pittsburgh is a union town. I belong to Local 3657 of the United Steel Workers. My local represents over 255 staff of the union. This Thursday, my local joined union bodies representing over 9 million workers and signed the labor for ceasefire petition. In addition, over 230 labor bodies, nine major national unions and five central labor councils have called for a ceasefire. And finally, the AFL-CIO released its own ceasefire statement on February 8th. I want the Council to know that calling for a ceasefire is now the mainstream position of the labor movement. I believe the hearts of labor are big enough to hold the grief of all people in this conflict. I hope your hearts are tonight, too. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Helden Gerhardt.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Juliet Phillips?

MS. PHILLIPS: Hi, I'd like to speak tonight about antisemitism. I'm a 33-year old Jewish American from Brooklyn, New York, living in Pittsburgh now for six years, I've encountered my fair share of antisemitic

remarks, most of which were actually said to me here in Pittsburgh. And of course, the horrific acts of violence at the Tree of Life in 2018 occurred in the name of antisemitism. So antisemitism, I know, is very real. I also know that critiquing the State of Israel and its political actions is not antisemitic. To excuse or promote the genocide that's occurring in Palestine to ensure Jewish safety is a lie told to perpetuate violence. The control and destruction of Palestinian lives, homes and families does not make me feel safe, and I don't believe it makes anyone feel safe.

What keeps Jews safe abroad, in America and here in Pittsburgh is the same thing that keeps every single human being safe. Freedom.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Benjamin Weilerstein, followed by Katherine Nicholson, Amina Ammoura, Jeremy Sabo, Lill Prosperino, JoAnna Schmidt, Jack Wiant, Arthur Tiemann, Lilian Traviato and Cheryl Kleiman.

MR. WEILERSTEIN: Ben here from District 11 asking you to vote yes for ceasefire. Obviously, a ceasefire is essential to save Palestinians suffering genocide, and that should be reason enough. But a ceasefire is also the only way to secure the release of the remaining Israeli hostages. Over 110 hostages were freed through negotiations, only two by military action, as ceasefire is the only path to safety for Jews in Israel and here in Allegheny County, 16 year old's in Gaza have lived through five Israeli bombing campaigns, each killing hundreds and now thousands or tens of thousands of civilians. We are told that these massacres are necessary for a Jewish future, and this is wrong and this is antisemitic. The horrifying events of October 7 did not come from nowhere, but from decades of Zionism, besieging, killing and displacing Palestinians. We can only stop October 7 from happening again through freedom and safety for all Palestinians and Jews. Please vote for a ceasefire now. Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Katherine Nicholson.

MS. NICHOLSON: Good evening. I moved to Pittsburgh in 2019. What struck me about this city was the kindness and camaraderie of the people here. This made perfect sense to me, given that this was the home of Mr. Rodgers. Beyond loving and caring for our neighbors Mr. Rodgers preached the magic of children and childhood. He believed

wholeheartedly that every child, regardless of their ethnicity, their religion, their gender or sexuality, is deserving of love, care, safety and respect. Since October 7, approximately 12,000 Palestinian children and 40 Israeli children have died. Every one of these children deserve to live as adults. It is our responsibility to create a world that is safe for our children and we are failing them miserably. An immediate and lasting ceasefire is the necessary first step towards creating a world where the life of every single child is valued. Ceasefire now. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Amina Ammoura?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Jeremy Sabo.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Not here. I came up for him. He said vote yes.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Lill Prosperino?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Joanna Schmidt?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Jack Wiant.

MR. WIANT: All right. Can you hear me? Good evening. My name is Jack Wiant. I'm a Resident of Millvale and I'm a member of West PA-CPUSA, the Pittsburgh Housing Justice table, and a friend of Pittsburgh DSA. To the best of my ability, I'm not going to be redundant tonight. I would like to present the Council this Petition I wrote with a friend of mine in DSA. It has the signatures of 55 people, many of whom cannot be here tonight, but nonetheless, they support the ceasefire motion. The majority of the working people in this County support this position. Stop the bloodshed, free Palestine and rest in peace Aaron Bushnell.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Arthur Tiemann.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here. I'm sorry, that's you. Okay.

MR. TIEMANN: Arthur Tiemann, District 11. I live in Squirrel Hill. I'm asking the Council to vote to pass the ceasefire motion. This is a humanitarian emergency. I'm speaking as a union member. I'm speaking as a member of the local Jewish community. I'm speaking as a former school teacher's aide. It is our local responsibility to

each other and to our children to stop lashing out at so-called barbarians at the gate. If my individual voice is not strong enough, then I know that the voices of my fellows here today will be stronger and hopefully we can move this Council to act. If not out of courage for valuing human life, then at least out of shame.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Lillian Traviato.

MS. TRAVIATO: As a human being who's walked around Auschwitz and vowed to honor the legacy of those who lost their lives to a ruthless, genocidal regime, one question rings clear as history repeats itself before our eyes. Is it never again for everyone? For five months now, we have witnessed not only the brutal massacre of tens of thousands, but the total destruction of Gaza's universities, hospitals and places of worship. Even if this wasn't a genocide, which it clearly is, there is no denying that Israel has committed an endless stream of war crimes with impunity. As the world collectively fails once again to cease the vicious mechanisms of apartheid and ethnic cleansing, another question comes to mind. Why is it that so many international institutions refuse to acknowledge the world's genocides until after they've ended, until the opportunity to stop them has passed?

It's easy to write books and build memorials long after the political and social consequences of speaking out have ceased to be a threat, but history demands that we act now. Associating all Jews with the State of Israel is the true antisemitism we face today. The Jewish people have served as the western world scapegoat for thousands of years, and this is no exception. It is the United States of America ---

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. TRAVIATO: --- that is funding this genocide, and the Jews will pay for it.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Jared, we have another --- before we go on, another group you're going to line up, I think. Another ten?

MR. BARKER: Correct.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Okay.

Let's take a recess at this point in time for 15 minutes, and we'll come back at 9:20, and then we'll get the next group. That leaves us with about 70 more speakers, roughly. Thank you.

(Short break taken.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: Ready, Jared? Let's go.

MR. BARKER: Next up will be Cheryl Kleiman, followed by Danielle Kranjec, Jocelyn Inlay, Bryan Shuman, Mary Ann Steiner, Pat Sharp, Mahmoud Al-Rifai, Margaret Fischer, Hay Kassis George, Daisy Gonzalez, Fatima Igbal.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Who's the first speaker? I'm sorry.

MR. BARKER: First is Cheryl Kleiman.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Cheryl Kleiman. Cheryl, are you here? No. Go with the next one.

MR. BARKER: Next is Danielle Kranjec.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: She said vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Next is Jocelyn Inlay.

PRESIDENT CATENA: No.

MR. BARKER: Next will be Bryan Shuman.

MR. SHUMAN: Good evening, members of the Allegheny County Council. My name is Brian Shuman. I live in Squirrel Hill. I've lived here for the last 15 years. I call it my home, though I did not grow up here. I respectfully urge you, the assembled members, to reject the motion calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. There are three reasons why you should do so.

First, the motion is neither within the scope of your Charter, nor within the realm of your expertise. Second, should the bill pass, it will not change American foreign policy. It will have an impact here in Allegheny County in the form of additional divisiveness and increased anti-Semitism in our neighborhoods that I have witnessed and on our campuses, which I've heard from student friends. Finally, this hypocritical and lopsided resolution makes no attempt to distinguish between the evil that Hamas perpetrated and the necessity of Israel to defend its populace against an enemy that values human life only as cannon fodder and marketing material.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. SHUMAN: Please vote no.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next.

MR. BARKER: Mary Ann Steiner.

MS. STEINER: Hi, I'm Mary Ann Steiner. I live in Oakland. I keep hearing all the concerns about safety. We live in a country that's armed to the teeth with guns for fear of some other. So fear not. Feeling safe worrying about somebody else who isn't like us. Racism is real, and it needs to be actively addressed here, no

matter what happens, but it's not to be conflicted with occupation and apartheid. As has been said, how can the violence of a superpower on a confined, besieged population ever lead to peace or safety for any of us? I want an Allegheny County and our country to be a neighbor in the world that demands never again for anyone. I beg you to pass the ceasefire resolution, urge our representatives in Congress to fund humanitarian aid and end military aid, and to tell the world Allegheny County does not support genocide. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Pat Sharp.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Mahmoud Al-Rifai?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: He said yes to ceasefire.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Margaret Fischer.

MS. FISCHER: My name is Margaret Fischer and I'm from Squirrel Hill. My grandparents came to the U.S. in the year 1900 from Turkish Palestine and were descendants of an uninterrupted line of Jews living under the Otoman Empire. I'm a Jewish Palestinian. They've been there since the 17 hundreds. Many of my relatives are still in Israel. Every family member knows someone who was raped, burned alive, tortured or taken captive by Hamas. My Israeli niece said, why do they hate me? They don't even know me. By asking for a ceasefire, you're asking for Hamas to succeed. You will not protect the children of Gaza either, who are used as pawns in the death cult of Hamas, who, based on my brother-in-law's observation as a medic in Gaza, line up women and children and throw grenades over them and dare the Israelis to shoot back. You who ask for a ceasefire are not justice warriors. You are just warriors aiding and abetting terrorism.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Hayah Kassis George.

MS. GEORGE: Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm a tax paying resident of Allegheny County living in Marshall Township, and I'm here to discuss a resolution calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. I'm a Palestinian Orthodox Christian whose family has suffered the settler colonialism of Israel in the West bank and in Old City Jerusalem, and with plenty of friends and family who have direct blood connections to Gaza, in last four months, we have watched over 30,000 Palestinian men, women

and children die. This does not count the 8,000 to 10,000 more projected lost under the rubble, starving those suffering of illnesses, complications of injuries, infectious diseases, maternal complications due to a complete collapse of the health care system. Why does this matter? Because of \$135,997,800 of our Pennsylvania's dollars are being used. As a mother of three very small children being raised in the same way as their Palestinian cousins, I urge a ceasefire. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Daisy Gonzalez.

MS. GONZALEZ: For the past 75 years, we have ignored the displacement of Palestinians, but we cannot continue to do so. We are complicit to the genocide when our taxes pay for the weapons that are being used against Palestinians. For the last 150 days, we have seen horrors in Gaza. How can we continue to let 1.9 million people starve and be displaced? How many more kids must die? Is 13,000 not enough for the Council to see the dire situation that Palestinians are living through? How many men must be demonized, run over by tanks, killed as they run to the only aid truck that is allowed to enter Gaza. How can we continue to turn a blind eye when kids are being stripped of their childhood and dying of starvation?

How can we continue to ignore women that give birth with no medication when hospitals are overwhelmed and have no supplies? We must not forget that Israel continues to break international laws. Or will the people here ignore the phosphorus bombs which have been bombed are illegal? Does international law only apply to indigenous people? Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Next up will be Fatima Iqbal, followed by Christopher Caras, Angelo Collins, Grace Kumble, Ahmad Rifai, Samuel Rivilis, Irene Tandoc, Elise Pinter, Edmund Olszewski, Kate Fissell and Caroline Sefcik

MS. IQBAL: Good evening, Council. I'm here to ask for a ceasefire in Ghazan. I'm adding my voice to their numbers. My name is Fatima Iqbal. I'm a physician. I ask where the humanity has gone? I ask, when did the compassion for our fellow person die? I ask why the people of Palestine are seen as less than human. People are dying. Children are dying from bombs, from guns, from the wheels of tanks, from starvation. Hospitals have been destroyed. The few aid trucks that have been allowed

entry into Ghaza have become unwilling decoys for massacres to occur as people simply try to get flour to feed their families. Yazan al Kafani (phonetic), a ten-year old boy died yesterday because his family was unable to get the medicine and food he needed to survive. I ask that you condemn these crimes against humanity. I ask that you condemn these acts of genocide. I ask that you demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire to stop further atrocities from occurring in this region. Ceasefire now. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next.

MR. BARKER: Christopher Caras?

MR. CARAS: Thank you. My name is Chris Caras. I live in District 7 and I am the Religious Director of the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh. I support a ceasefire for nearly all the reasons other speakers have voiced, but what I really want to express is my personal shock and confusion at those concerned about the rise of antisemitism, yet simultaneously supporting that which escalates tensions and stokes suspicions and hatred. The continued disproportionate Israeli response. If 30,000 dead are not enough for Netanyahu's government, then neither will 50,000 nor 100,000, nor even a million. And if you believe criticizing Israel is criticizing the Jewish ethnicity, their right to exist and defend themselves, conflating those things, then you become your own worst enemy, essentially saying that your existence depends on the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians who exercise their right to defend themselves against an occupying military apartheid state. Nothing is going to breed more antisemitism than the path that you are upon and because Netanyahu's working definition of Hamas seems to be any non-Jewish male in Gaza who can throw a rock, we can be sure that they will not stop until our all are gone.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next.

MR. BARKER: Angelo Collins.

MR. COLLINS: Hello, my name is Angelo Collins. Angelo Chacone de Collins. I'm 17 years old and I'm from Garfield, Pittsburgh. I grew up here and I enjoy music and I'd like to go into a career in comedy and entertainment. Tafik Ashok (phonetic) is a 17-year old Palestinian boy who was murdered. He will never be able to pursue anything he dreamed of. He'll never be able to continue anything he wanted to continue. He'll never be

able to talk to any of his family members ever again. He was murdered because of racism and he was murdered because of an apartheid state that we continue to fund. I urge you to endorse and vote for the ceasefire as this is the way forward and the way that we can stop murder. Viva Palestina.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Grace Kumble.

MS. KUMBLE: Hello, my name is Grace and I am a Jewish woman, and I come today to urge this Council to call for a ceasefire, because a ceasefire is the only way to stop the brutal killing of the people of Gaza and bring home the hostages. During the time I have lived in the city, I've come to see how amazing it is. Today this Council has a choice to either stand by and watch as this genocide continues, or to be a voice calling for peace. So I beg you, do not let the legacy of this amazing city be that it stood by and watched the genocide of the Palestinian people and did nothing. Let the rest of the country know that Allegheny County will not stand idly by while genocide and violence is perpetuated, but instead join other counties in doing what is right. So, please, be a voice for calling for peace and call for a ceasefire. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. RIFAI: Good evening. My name is Ahmed Rifai. I moved to Pittsburgh 1990, and I'm proud Palestinian American. A couple years ago, the Putin, the Russian invaded Ukraine and the whole world stood up and never settled, asking and demanding Putin to cease fire against the Ukrainian soldiers. In all our school district, we teach the horrific acts of what Hitler did to the Jewish people. Now we have a similar situation. 30,000 killed, 70,000 injured, more than one and-a-half million getting displaced. I'm asking the Allegheny County Council tonight, how is your name going to go by history? How are we going to teach our children about, in the future, about what is going on right now in Gaza? Are we going to vote, say, hey, let's continue with this ongoing killing, or we're going to vote tonight and say, let's end and let's cease fire. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Samuel Rivilis.

MR. RIVILIS: Good evening, members of the Allegheny County Council. My name is Sam Rivilis, a student from

the University of Pittsburgh, a proud member of our local Jewish community, and the President of the Phi Delta Chapter of the Alpha Epsilon PI Fraternity at Pitt. I stand before you to express my deep concern regarding the proposed ceasefire resolution. Since the resolution's introduction, incidents echoing anti-Israel sentiments have escalated, creating an environment of fear and division. Just this week, Jewish students at UC Santa Barbara were threatened by name, and at UC Berkeley, Jewish students were physically assaulted and had to be taken to the hospital. This troubling trend extends beyond our locality to campuses and online platforms nationwide. Because of this, the atmosphere on our campus and in our city has been tainted by the divisive rhetoric this resolution encourages; from vandalized property to targeted harassment, the repercussions are real and deeply felt.

In times like these, we urge our elected representatives to prioritize the fundamental values of inclusivity and safety that define our community. Rejecting this resolution is imperative to fostering an environment where all residents feel supported and secure. Thank you for your attention and dedication to the welfare of the Allegheny County.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Irene Tandoc.

MS. TANDOC: Hi, my name is Irene Tandoc. Right now I'm going to list two Ordinances that Pittsburgh has passed. First, the pregnancy accommodation ordinance passed in 2019, which protects employees that are women and their partner before, during and after pregnancy. This is Haya (phonetic), who's nine months pregnant, and her kids. She has never received a single checkup on her baby, and around this time she will probably undergo a C-section without anesthesia. Second, the Lead Safety Law passed in 2021, which requires extra safety measures in spaces where children are to prevent the dangers of lead exposure. This is the body of Sahir al Zibda (phonetic), a baby who died of dehydration and malnutrition due to the lack of food and clean water. These two are reflections of what over 1.9 million Palestinians are facing, where more than 70 percent of the death toll are women and children. The City of Pittsburgh has passed laws protecting the safety of people, so please reflect those

same values here and practice what you preach. Show us your humanity. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Elise Pinter.

MS. PINTER: Good evening. I'm here not to urge, but to beg Allegheny County Council to pass a permanent ceasefire resolution. Over 70 U.S. cities have already passed ceasefire resolutions. These 70 cities have reconciled with America's part in the genocide of the Palestinian people at the hands of the apartheid State of Israel, and have made a tangible move towards peace. In making sure history looks favorably upon them, Allegheny County has the opportunity to join them in saying that we see a brighter future. A future where so called human shields are treated with humanity. A future where entire bloodlines aren't wiped out and where the indiscriminate murder of over 12,000 children is called what it is, a genocide. To echo us, Airman Aaron Bushnell, many of us like to ask ourselves, what would I do if I was alive during slavery or the Jim Crow south or apartheid? What would I do if my country was committing genocide? The answer is, you're doing it right now. So what will Allegheny County do? How will history remember us? Ceasefire now and free Palestine.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Edmund Olszewski.

MR. OLSZEWSKI: Good evening. My name is Edmund Olszewski. I reside in Shader Township. I have a son in law whose father is Jewish, a son in law whose father is Muslim, and they both urged me to be here. My parents were born on Polish Hill, son and daughter of Polish immigrants. My father was a captain of the United States army and was with the troops that liberated Dacau. He was location, could talk about anything, but could never speak about what he saw at Dacau. Several years ago, my wife and I and one of our daughters got to visit or visited Auschwitz and Birkenau. And even standing there among those death camps and the furnaces and the exhibits, I could not get my hand around. What happened there 70 years ago was ancient history. Today, I don't have to imagine anymore. I can see it every day. We see it in real time. This has to stop. We have to talk about it. Please, ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. BARKER: Kate Fissell.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Again, I'll clear the room if I need to. So if that's the path we're going to go down, I highly recommend we don't do it, because we still have speakers to get through and we still have a vote to take tonight. So thank you for your cooperation.

MS. FISSELL: Hello, my name is Kate Fissell. I live in the city of Pittsburgh, Council district eleven. I have no ethnic or religious affiliation to either side in the Israeli Palestine conflict. I must begin with a plea for the hostages held in Gaza. They are not forgotten, and I think their safety and release must be everybody's top priority. And I am asking County Council to pass the resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. As horrific as the October 7 attack on Israel was, it does not merit the scale of destruction unleashed on 2 million people in Gaza. It does not merit continuing the 100 year effort to eradicate the indigenous Arab population of Palestine. It will not bring peace or justice. Someone has to say, stop. This is most definitely America's business as we fund Israel's military.

Although County Council is not involved in national foreign affairs, I ask you to speak up now. Public opinion matters enormously. The voices of peace and sanity must be heard. Please vote yes.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Next up will be Carolyn Sefcik. I'm a Jewish County resident living in Bloomfield. I watched the recording of the previous Council meeting in which our neighbors spoke for over three hours, the vast majority of whom spoke about the horrors of the genocide happening in Palestine and in support of a ceasefire resolution. And it gave me hope. And I am so glad that tonight's meeting is even longer, with the majority of us once again speaking in support of a ceasefire. I urge you to respect our voices. At the previous meeting, President Catena mentioned that Council Members are not experts in geopolitics. Most of us are not, but we are all experts of our own lives. We know ourselves and to date, the Israeli military has murdered over 30,000 experts. And as I speak, more and more experts are being killed. We don't need to be experts in anything but ourselves to know that what is happening must stop. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Mackenzie O'Connor.

MS. O'CONNOR: Mackenzie O'Connor. I live in Wilkinsburg. Since October 7th, I've been challenged daily by my students who cannot reconcile the luxury of making theater in Downtown Pittsburgh with the atrocities being committed by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people in Gaza. How I keep their morale up while they are witnessing a genocide unfolding through their smartphones has become part and parcel of my profession, a daily task where I remind them of the importance of storytelling and the arts in general. According to Oxy International, over 29,000 Palestinians have died since October 7, making the daily death rate of 250 Palestinians the highest death rate of any recent 21st century conflict. With this statistic, I ask them how many stories are lost. Poets, theater makers, writers, journalists, not to mention regular people have perished and alongside them, their stories. On December 12th and 13th, the Israeli military raided and vandalized the freedom theater in Janine in the West Bank. Why do this if not to stamp out the history of an entire people?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Anton Reed?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It's a yes.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Okay.

MR. BARKER: Niv Shachaf.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Sara Haj-Hassan.

MS. HAJ-HASSAN: My name is Sara Haj-Hassan. I live in Manchester. My older sister Tanya, is a pediatrician who did her residency at Chop in Philadelphia and who works for Doctors without Borders. Over the past decade, she has made several trips to Gaza with a group of doctors and professors from Oxford University to give lectures to medical students there. She currently receives daily reports of the dire situation in health facilities and the systemic targeting of hospitals and medical professionals. Here are a few of quotes from those doctors now I am a starved surgeon who takes care of starving, injured patients. Salam Hope, all is well. I want to let you know today that we have lost a second Pathologist, Dr. Hassam Hamada (phonetic), killed after being shot by a sniper. We only have five pathologists in Gaza, two of

them killed and two of them retired. Hospitals and medical staff are not targets.

I was just informed that my sister is going on a medical mission to Gaza next week. While I'm proud of her bravery and selflessness, it terrifies me knowing that the risk is not merely that she may be collateral damage, but rather that she may be a direct target. I beg you, please stop this nightmare.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Trieste Devlin.

MS. DEVLIN: Hello, I'm Trieste Devlin from Lawrenceville, District 13. County Councilors, Councilor Bonaroti, speaking as yet another antizionist Jewish Pittsburgher, I ask you to vote yes on the ceasefire resolution. In the future, freed from the mandatory obscuring language of current politics, this will be described as a genocide. The yays and nays recorded for this meeting will forever mark which of our representatives were on the right side of history and which ones were either a racist and antisemitic, or were kowtowed by a loud minority. So many of us came out to let you know that this isn't a partisan issue. This isn't about Jews versus anyone, about physical safety in Pittsburgh, about keeping politics local. This is only about antisemitism. Inasmuch as saying that Israel stands for all Jews is antisemitic, they do not represent me. They are murderers. They have desecrated the star of David. They are literally salting the land and pushing an oppressed people into the desert. The movement won't end with tonight's decision. I hope the next step will be divesting from Israel, but if it has to be making ---

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. DEVLIN: --- more comments, we'll be back again. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Rachel Reed.

MS. REED: Hi, my name is Rachel Reed. I am a Jew living in the east end of Pittsburgh for the past eight years. I was raised a nice Jewish girl in Queens, New York, but Pittsburgh is where I fully learned and experienced Judaism and Jewish community beyond and outside of Zionism exists here now, has always existed. Pittsburgh is where I learned the true meaning of safety and solidarity. I had something else written with facts prepared. Most of those have been stated already, so

instead I have this to the County Council. The people have spoken.

The majority of Pittsburgh's and Americans support a ceasefire. Voting for a ceasefire resolution is the literal least that can be done. Voting against a ceasefire is both a moral travesty and the misuse of your power as elected officials. And to my fellow Jews, as someone who has dealt with antisemitic harassment, as someone who lived here on 10/27/2018, I see you are scared. I share that fear. I am telling you there is another way out of this. I am telling you. And I am also telling you if after five months of endless cruelty in Gaza, if, after hearing the words of antizionist Jews here tonight, if you cannot see that we are all created in the divine image of God and that applies to Palestinians.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. REED: Free Palestine.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Benjamin Fisher.

MR. FISHER: Members of the Allegheny County Council my name is Benjamin Fisher. I am a student at the University of Pittsburgh and a brother of the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity. I'm here today to ask you to vote against this flawed ceasefire resolution. While I, like many, pray for peace and yearn for a time when our two peoples can live together in harmony, I am also a realist. The reality is that this peace resolution will have negligible, if any, impact on the war and will in all likelihood only increase community division within Allegheny County. Whatever language is used, the resolution will only increase the discourse within Allegheny County, with radical members of both sides seeing it as justification for rash and likely violent action. Statements made here won't change the outcome of the war between Israel and Hamas, but they will directly impact Jews here.

As a Jewish student, I have already seen a rise in hatred. Some of my peers have begun hiding anything that identifies them as Jewish out of fear of being targeted. Hillel the Jewish Center at Pitt has been blockaded by anti-Israel protesters. Flyers raising awareness of hostages still held in captivity by amass have been torn down and Jews are scared. Your people are scared. Passing this resolution will only reaffirm our fears. Thank you for listening.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next.

MR. BARKER: Next will be Ronee Christy, followed by Eileen Kraus, Shannon Haupt, Shaelyn Parker, James Larsen, Aden Erlikh, John Oreto, Elijah Cohen, Steven Martinez and Benjamin Sgroi.

MS. CHRISTY: I'm Ronee Christy. I'm a Presbyterian Minister from Bellevue and a part of a delegation of 25 pastors that were from across the United States two weeks ago, I was in Jerusalem. We were in the West bank. We saw a lot of things. A lot of things have been keeping me awake since I got back. I saw the face. I see the face of a young mother who, three days before we got there, was asleep in her room when the Israeli military broke into the house and took her son because they thought he had been coerced and talked to Hamas. He was ten years old. She doesn't know where he is. She doesn't know if he's okay. Palestinian children often sleep in their clothes because they have fears of being taken at night. I saw the face of women who talked about their relatives being killed in Gaza. One woman especially, whose father was 91 years old and had kidney disease. The hospital was bombed. He died.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Eileen Kraus.

MS. KRAUS: Eileen Kraus, I live in East End and for over 20 years, I've been a member of a local synagogue. I'm here to urge you to support this resolution. I think it will make all Jews here safer so that people don't have to look at us and think we're cheering on this incredible massacre. At the very least, disproportionate response. I want to make a few points first. Israelis themselves are now doubting the war's continued value. In a poll released on Friday, 53 percent of Israelis said that they believe Netanyahu is extending the war for his own political survival, and only 35 percent think it's continuing for legitimate reasons. I want to say also that even the respective Israeli research institute, the ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. KRAUS: Okay.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Shannon Haupt.

MS. HAUPT: My name is Shannon Haupt. I'm in District 10. I am an attorney and a union member in Allegheny County. I'm here today to voice my steadfast

support for a County ceasefire resolution. I believe that we as residents of the United States have a moral and ethical obligation to oppose oppression and genocide, especially when it is funded by our government and our tax dollars. Ruth Wilson Gilmore says, where life is precious, life is precious.

I would like to believe that a body composed of public servant representatives of our County also believe that life is precious. The only life affirming option today is to vote yes for a ceasefire resolution. We need a permanent and immediate ceasefire in Gaza and in the West Bank. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Shaelyn Parker.

MS. PARKER: I'm Shaelyn Parker. I live in Squirrel Hill. I'm here today to urge the Council to pass the motion to urge the federal government to call for an immediate de-escalation and ceasefire in Palestine for the past 150 days. We've been living with the guilt and grief of seeing more than 30,000 Palestinians, including 12,000 children, murdered by the Israeli military in response to this livestream genocide. Thousands of us have taken to the streets to stand up for a free Palestine and to show solidarity with our mourning Palestinian, Arab and Muslim community members. Although painful, these community rallies have been the one place where we're reminded that we're a coalition. But why do we as individuals slip into the false notion of feeling isolated in our activism?

Part because several of our federal representatives, who have direct influence on our national response to this humanitarian disaster and who have the platforms to make us feel heard, have turned their backs on us. Fetterman, Casey and Deluzio have all turned their backs on the people of Allegheny County, and I ask you as our Councilors to not repeat their mistakes and speak for the people. Free Palestine.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: James Larsen.

MR. LARSEN: Hi, I'm James Larsen. I'm a resident of downtown. Olivia Bennett is my representative --- and I say ceasefire now. I'm tired of the open celebration of brutality done in Palestine by the Israeli military that is funded by my tax dollars. And I'm tired of hearing of the massacre last Wednesday when over 100 starving Gazans were met with machine guns crowded around an aid truck

trying to get flour, of seeing kids emaciated and dying, of infants rotting in the ICU after the destruction of Gazan hospitals, of Rind Rahab, who pleaded for her life for hours after her entire family was killed by an Israeli bomb and was later found dead. All I want to say is the only way for there to be peace is for there to be justice, and that justice can only come through a ceasefire. Ceasefire now. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Aden Erlikh.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Aden Erlikh is against.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Okay. Next.

MR. BARKER: John Oreto.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here. Next.

MR. BARKER: Elijah Cohen.

MR. COHEN: Members of Allegheny County Council, my name is Elijah Cohen, another voice from the University of Pittsburgh's Jewish community and an 80 PI brother from Pitt. Today I implore you to consider the broader implications of the ceasefire resolution you're considering. The introduction of this resolution signaled a warring shift in the Council's focus away from local governance and toward international conflicts that fall well outside of scope. While I understand how important peace overseas is, your duty lies with the immediate concerns of Allegheny County's residents.

Since the announcements of this resolution, we have felt its impact on our campus and in our neighborhoods. Incidents echoing anti-Israel sentiments have escalated, creating an environment of fear and division. Across the nation, Universities have become battlegrounds for such political strife affecting students' wellbeing and academic focus. Just as we've seen elsewhere. Resolutions like these have emboldened actions and rhetoric that isolate and intimidate Jewish students, compromising our sense of belonging and security. Please prioritize our collective peace and unity over divisive statements that can cause communal conflict. Thank you for considering.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Steven Martinez.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Next up will be Benjamin Sgroi, being followed by Matt Tobin, Liana Manneese, Sravani Yagalla,

Elayna Tell, Alan Hart, Caleb Unterlack, Veta Piscatella, Anna VanDusen, David Levine and Michael Jacobs.

MR. SGROI: My name is Ben Sgroi. I live in Manchester on the Northside. As someone that's lived his entire life in the US, I've always tried to view the US as foreign policy actions, as either benevolent in the best possible light or pragmatic in a more moderate light, but Israel's war against Palestine has changed all of that for me. The scope of the depravity and unrelenting cruelty Israel has inflicted on Gaza is beyond description. This is a scale of evil and suffering virtually unknown to the modern world. And nearly every bomb and every bullet used to perpetrate this genocide is paid for by the United States.

Despite top human rights organizations in the world and every other country in the UN Security Council calling for a ceasefire, Israel and the United States do as they please. What our federal government has shown us is that human rights, American values and even democracy are negotiable when it comes to providing cover to its political ally, no matter how --- that ally behaves.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Matt Tobin.

MR. TOBIN: Councilman Paul Klein, hi. I live in your District, so I looked you up recently and saw you were quoted in a WESA article last year that how Council responds to conditions at the county jail is a real test of our humanity. Well, how Council responds to the horrifying conditions at the open air prison of Gaza wrought by bombs that we paid for. Council, this ceasefire resolution today is also a test of your humanity, and if you fail to support it in spite of all those here who are pleading for peace, you have failed that test. I'd like to read the poem called Travel Tickets by Palestinian poet Samiya Kisim from 1990. On the day you kill me, you'll find in my pocket travel tickets to peace, to the fields and the rain, to people's conscience. Don't waste the tickets. Permanent ceasefire now free Palestine. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Liana Maneese.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Liana votes yes.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Sravani Yagalla?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: She votes yes for ceasefire.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Elayna Tell.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: She's a yes, too, and she ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Okay.

Who's next?

MR. BARKER: Alan Hart.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Alan Hart said ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: I'm sorry, she's here.

MR. BARKER: Elayna?

MS. TELL: Yes. My name is Elayna and I live in the City of Pittsburgh. I'm here today because I sat through four hours of public comment last meeting, and now hours more here listening to denials of atrocities, denials of truth, condoning of terrorism, and peddling of centuries' old antisemitic conspiracy theories wrapped up in the language of justice and resistance. Yes, other cities and municipalities have passed ceasefire resolutions. Others have not, choosing to focus on the matters that affect their communities most directly. The argument is that a resolution sends a message, and it does. It sends a message that Jews are not welcome here in Allegheny County. That Jews, unless that you personally approve of them, will not be protected from the hatred and divisiveness that these resolutions only perpetuate in our communities. Let me be frank. The language of hatred and demonization is the same that led a man to burst into tree of life and murder our brothers and sisters. Our community has suffered enough. We claimed, as a city, to be stronger than hate. Now is your chance to prove that we still are. Please vote against the resolution. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Alan Hart?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Alan Hart supports the resolution.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Caleb Unterlack.

MR. UNTERLACK: Allegheny County Councilors, my name is Caleb Unterlack, member of the Alpha Epsilon PI fraternity and a student at the University of Pittsburgh. I question the impact of the current resolution. While we all yearn for an end to the ongoing conflict and peace, this resolution extends beyond the Council's purview and lacks tangible results for our community. Instead, the Council must prioritize initiatives that offer direct

support services for those affected by the conflict or with loved ones impacted by it.

Furthermore, the resolution inaccurately equates hostages held by Hamas with convicted terrorists detained in Israel. We must recognize that this conflict stems from Hamas' brutal attacks. Let's reconsider the resolution and focus on initiatives that offer real support and promote a meaningful path towards peace. Please vote no on this fall resolution. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Veta Piscitella?

MS. PISCATELLA: In school, In school, I remember reading in history books of Jewish people in the 30s coming here from Germany to relay the horrors that were occurring and of the American response of disbelief and inaction until the bombs reached our own shores. I wondered how on earth this could be possible in our country that stands for liberty and justice for all. Now I know. Not only are we not listening to Palestinian voices that are crying for help in the face of atrocity, but we are watching as these voices are silenced and distorted and the Palestinians are eradicated as a people. Eradicated as a people. That is the definition of genocide. A ceasefire resolution is the bare minimum or this is no longer the country my great grandfather fought for in 1941. The people have spoken. Act accordingly or history will remember you as a coward.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Anna VanDusen?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: David Levine?

MR. LEVINE: Good evening, Council. Very long night. I applaud your service. David Levine in Mount Lebanon. Mr. Gryzbek, I'm one of your constituents. I urge you, Mr. Gryzbek and all of Council Member, not to do this. Vote no. Don't support this charade of antisemitic hatred and lies. It's masquerading under your very noses as some kind of political activism. Don't take my word for it. Educate yourselves. Read the Hamas Charter. You only have to get to the first line. It reads, Israel will exist until Islam obliterates it. Israel, the home of Jewish people. It is a false construct for people to suggest that the obliteration of the land of Israel doesn't also call for the obliteration of Jews. That's antisemitism. Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Next up is Michael Jacobs, to be followed by Adona Iosif, Clara Weibel, Eryk Ve, Howard Stein, Megan Najji, Bailey Brown, Mari Iromo, Rebecca Gruener, Sajeda Kamal and Michelle Feingold.

MR. JACOBS: Hi, I'm Michael Jacobs, proud Jew in Squirrel Hill. I moved here with my family 15 years ago to what I thought was a safe and secure area to raise my Jewish family. Since then, I've been targeted by local Nazi Hardy Lloyd (phonetic), who is currently behind bars serving his third sentence. I witnessed the most significant antisemitic attack in the U.S., the murders at Tree of Life Synagogue in just 30 days after the attack, the most deadliest attack in Israel on Jews by Hamas. My business was attacked for posting a support Israel sign by a violent, hammer-wielding person to destroy my business. Voting yes to this resolution will create a continuing anti-Semitic sentiment in Allegheny County. We, the people, pay taxes for you to focus on running the business of the County. Do what we elected you to do, please.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Adona Iosef.

MS. IOSEF: My name is Adona Yosef. I'm a resident of Greenfield and a member of Jewish Voice for Peace. I'm here as yet another Jew urging you to call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. The horrific massacres Israel is committing against our Palestinian siblings are against all Jewish values. Israel using starvation, thirst and disease as weapons of war. They are claiming they only target Hamas whilst undeniably subjecting all 2.2 million Gazans to collective punishment, which is a war crime. And they are intentionally targeting journalists, artists, professors and doctors to prevent us from seeing their actions. I also want to address the author made argument that there was a ceasefire on October 6. On October 6, Gaza was under an illegal military siege with Israel counting calories allowed in and permitting the water in Gaza to become undrinkable. Nearly 80 percent of people lived in poverty. Almost half the population were unemployed. Fourteen (14) year old children in Gaza had already lived through five Israeli bombing campaigns by October 6. October 6 was not a status quo we should be looking to return to. It was unbearable oppression. And so I beg you to please vote yes on the ceasefire resolution.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Clara Weibel?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Not here.

MR. BARKER: Eryk Ve.

MR. VE: I stand today to voice my family's support for the proposed ceasefire resolution. This is a complicated situation. Politically. It is not complicated at all morally. My great grandparents were Irish Ashkenazi Jews who fled Ireland to escape another manufactured famine by supremacist imperialists. I am certain they would be horrified to hear anyone call apartheid, starvation, ethnic cleansing and genocide Jewish values for any reason. Anti-Zionism is not antisemitism. What is happening in Palestine is obviously, clearly wrong. And it's wrong to call for unity at the expense of doing the right thing. That merely attempts to silence the truth, that there can be a solution that takes care of everyone. It is a false premise to say that only one side can be safe. Only one side can have peace. That is so wrong. I can't believe I've heard this for five hours right now. Children peril. Stein don't know if their plane they hear above them as bringing death or morsel of food. Humanity stands at the crossroads. Our own collective shadows looms over us. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Howard Stein?

RABBI STEIN: Howard Stein I live in Squirrel Hill. I think that in many cases, this resolution asks the wrong questions. It fails to place blame where it belongs. The problems in getting aid are in Hamas stealing what they can. The millions of dollars that have been put into Gaza over the past years have gone to Hamas's purposes and not to feeding and caring for their people. In a recent Harvard Harris poll, 67 percent of Americans are in favor of a ceasefire, but only if all of the Israeli hostages are returned and Hamas is removed from power and its infrastructure dismantled. That is absolutely essential for anything close to peace to be achieved in this world.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Megan Naji.

MS. NAJI: Hello. Paul Klein. I live in District 11. I want to address the so-called Palestinian terrorists or prisoners or hostages that Israel supporters don't want to see released. These have been tens of thousands of Palestinians, including over 10,000 children

who have been held in military detention within the past 20 years. These are people who can be held without any formal charges for any amount of time under an Israeli policy known as administrative detention. Existing since 1967, innocent civilians have been targeted by Israel long before October 7, not to mention the over 30,000 Palestinians who have been murdered by Israeli forces since then, a number that can't even be officially calculated because the people of Gaza have not even had the peace to count all of their dead. Does the Council need this precise number to take a stand? What more do you need to hear to remind you of your humanity? We are a part of what is happening, and I'm asking you to take a stand for peace and know that it will be remembered.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: Bailey Brown.

MS. BROWN: Bailey Brown, Etna Borough. I am yet another Jew, born and raised in Pa, here to implore you to vote yes on the ceasefire resolution. I am disgusted every day for five months at the slaughter and now starvation of the Palestinian people. I am also appalled at the system of occupation, apartheid in place for the better part of a century and its frequent lack of mention in public political discourse. Many who I'm proud to call friends of every background, old and new, in this room and out, feel the same and struggle through our daily activities between waves of grief and anger. This only continues because the U.S. empowers it to continue. As all but one of our federal elected officials ignore us and suggest that foreign policy should be left to those who receive Israeli PAC funds and trade defense stocks, please represent us. Permanent ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Mari Iromo.

MS. IROMO: Hi, I'm Mari Iromo and I live in Homewood. I've thought deeply about what I wanted to say today. I've considered what would be the most impactful and the most urgent. Should I emphasize the scale of the tragedy or narrow my focus to a single story so there's more impact? I could recount the genocidal war crimes Israel has committed in the last seven days or try to cover their entire 75-year violent colonial history. I'm overwhelmed by all this tragedy.

So I want to thank all my neighbors who have come out here to demand a ceasefire. I'm here to log my demand

alongside yours. Israel and the United States is committing a genocide against the Palestinian people. Our first demand is a ceasefire, but we will be back in these halls and in the streets to demand an arms embargo on Israel, to demand that the siege on Gaza be lifted and that the Israeli occupation come to an end. And in the words of Aaron Bushnell, a true American hero, I will no longer be complicit in this genocide, will you?

MR. BARKER: Rebecca Gruener? Sajeda Kamal? Next up would be Michele Feingold followed by Meredith Parente, Daniel Delaney, David Knoll, Izzy Shaw, Jil Stifel, Alonso Diaz, Samira Shaheen Hagerty, Laura Perkins and Melissa Mendolia.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Michelle Feingold was the first for this group. Correct? Is Michele here? No?

Next?

MR. BARKER: Meredith Parente.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Meredith? No. Next?

MR. BARKER: Daniel Dulaney?

MR. DULANEY: My name is Daniel Dulaney. I live in Shadyside and I'm asking you to vote yes for a ceasefire tonight. There was confusion earlier tonight on the ruling on genocide made by the International Court of Justice. And I want to clarify here. The chief judge of that court said that provisional measures against Israel were necessary because, quote, the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is at serious risk of deteriorating further. The international court considers this plausible genocide. All of us who've seen the images of children maimed and murdered, of entire cities flattened, we know it's a genocide.

You all heard audio tonight of Israeli missiles hitting hospitals, hitting schoolyards, you know this is unacceptable. Every major human rights organization supports a ceasefire. Two-thirds of American voters support a ceasefire. Listen to your constituents. Make the easy moral choice. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Next?

MR. BARKER: David Knoll. I first would like to say that I mourn the killing and suffering of innocence on both Israeli and Palestinian sides. I pray for lasting, enduring peace and security for both people. There are no winners here tonight, but I would like to talk about hypocrisy here tonight.

On October 7, the day of the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, when Allegheny County Jews and Jews across the world were shocked, scared and in trauma, Councilwoman Hallam, our elected official, sponsor of the spill, thought it best to post her Twitter account, a celebratory video of Hamas terrorists breaking down the security gate on their way to murder, rape, burn and kidnap Israeli civilians, including children. The video, a direct violation of today's ceasefire agreement. Other elected officials did so as well, but immediately took it down and apologized as they acknowledged that supporting the cause of the Palestinians was our tension and supporting and supporting Hamas, who openly call in their charter for the murder and genocide of Jews at home and abroad, was not. Councilwoman Hallam was not one of those elected official leaving the post up until October 27, the largest massacre of American Jews standing and supporting the grieving and shocked Jewish community ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. HALLAM: Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Next?

MR. BARKER: Izzy Shaw.

MS. SHAW: Hello, Council members. My name is Izzy Shaw. As a Jewish student at Carnegie Mellon University, it makes me nauseous to know that my engineering major friends are taking internships at weapons companies like Lockheed Martin, where they invent new types of bombs and drones. So many Palestinian journalists have been reporting in the past five months about how the weapons Israel uses to slaughter them are American made. And every time I hear a report about a new massacre, I wonder which of my friends and our alumni have helped make these weapons. This is possible because of CMU's long relationship with these weapons companies, which our current university president has encouraged. He doesn't care that 30,000 Palestinians have been murdered by Israel as long as his position and paycheck are safe. By passing the ceasefire resolution, you can help end this deadly relationship. You can help disarm Israel at the source, which is places like our beloved Pittsburgh. You've already sat on your hands for five months. There is nothing left to discuss. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Jil Stifel.

MS. STIFEL: My name is Jill Stifel. I live in Hampton. I'm here to ask that you vote to adopt a ceasefire resolution. I'm a former democratic committee member and I helped some of you get elected. I'm here tonight with so many of our community. I'm so inspired that 133 people so far have said that they want this resolution and 69 against. Like most of us, my ancestors came here seeking safety and opportunity. As an Irish American, this was following the great hunger, a crime of forced starvation, a crime that is happening in Gaza as we speak. And that was happening long before October 7, when this happened in Ireland, it killed over a million people, but it did not change their spirit, make them less Irish, or stop the resistance to colonial occupation. It will not work in Palestine as it didn't work in Ireland.

I would not be doing my ancestors proud if I did not speak to the importance of doing everything we can to stop the killing as fast as possible. Without a ceasefire, humanitarian aid cannot reach those who need aid the most. As elected officials in the U.S., you have power in this moment. You're capable of making a brave choice and standing for what is right.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MS. STIFEL: It is not antisemitic to believe human life is ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Alonso Diaz.

MR. DIAZ: A core principle of our society is fairness. Fairness is a belief that actions will be carried out through considerations of ethics and respect. Power is the social production of an effect that determines the capacities, actions, beliefs or conduct of actors, including institutions. The relationship between fairness and power is that use of power should be fair or it is therefore abused. We all know these things, so let us not be obtuse or deliberately dense. You may not have authority over the primary eight parties, but you do have a voice and therefore ability to urge the world's only remaining superpower that exerts overwhelming power over the only nation state involved in the carnage, i.e., the federal government of the United States.

The people of the occupied Palestinian territories do not have reasonably comparable power as Israel and the U.S., and we've been witnessing astonishingly gross abuse of power by both death and destruction and violence is not

fair. But this motion is. This motion is, at the very least, reasonable. Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Samira Shaheen Hagerty? Laura Perkins.

MS. PERKINS: Hi there. I'm Laura Perkins, I live in District 10, which is absent this evening. I urge you to vote in favor of this resolution. We've heard horrifying accounts of the attack on October 7. But what about all the other attacks? April 1948. The massacre at Dar Yasin that killed 15,000 native Palestinians. For the record, Israel started this violence, which is not a war, but a systemic apartheid and genocide against the native Palestinian people, but let's talk about what we can do now. We are a human rights city and we are a welcoming city. A ceasefire is the absolute bare minimum of what we can do to save lives, and it doesn't hurt anyone. Ceasefire now.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: Last but not least, Melissa Mendolia.

MS. MENDOLIA: Yeah, I registered it, like, two minutes before the end, I think.

I've been a nurse since 2011. I spent my entire career in Pittsburgh. I've watched in horror the near complete destruction of the healthcare system in Gaza at the hands of Israel. Twelve (12) hospitals are partially functioning. 126 ambulances damaged or destroyed. Over 340 healthcare workers have been killed and 200 others have been arrested. The Al Amal hospital has been under siege by the Israeli occupation for 42 consecutive days.

I find myself thankful every shift to have access to food, water, electricity, medications, and some of the most skilled and dedicated staff in the area. I've questioned a lot whether this might have been us in 2018 when Robert Bowers was brought to AGH, where he received care from a Jewish nurse. I wonder whether the County Council or others would have found it justified for us to be bombed or besieged for performing our moral obligations as healthcare workers for a city who markets itself on being stronger than hate. We've watched acts of hate be perpetrated against Palestinians in this genocide for five months, funded by our tax dollars, which is an issue for Allegheny County. Ceasefire now lift the siege and the occupation. Free Palestine and hospitals are not targets. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you.

MR. BARKER: That's it.

PRESIDENT CATENA: That's it. Thank you.
So New Business, 12955-24.

MR. BARKER: A motion to the Council of Allegheny County urging the United States Federal Government to work cooperatively towards an immediate de-escalation and ceasefire in Israel and Palestine, as well as the release of all hostages. Sponsored by Council Members Hallam, Prizio and Gryzbek.

MS. HALLAM: Motion to approve.

MR. GRYZBEK: Second.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Motion had been made and seconded. For discussion? We're just going to go down the line and give everyone an opportunity to obviously comment before we cast our vote. I think that's the easiest way to do it at this point in the evening. So we'll begin with you, Councilor Betkowski.

MR. BETKOWSKI: I've thought all day about what I would say at this moment, and the words that I had prepared just aren't appropriate anymore. I worry about our community. I worry about tomorrow. When we leave here tonight, people are going to be disappointed. And I worry about how as neighbors, and we are all neighbors, we shop at the same stores, we eat at the same restaurants. Our children may go to the same schools. And we need to live together. And our passions on this subject are so strongly held that I wonder what tomorrow is going to bring. And I worry for us as a community, and I don't have an answer. So tomorrow we will all find out together how we as a community go forward.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Council Member Bonaroti?

MR. BONAROTI: Thank you, President Catena. First, I want to begin by saying how very sad and very tragic it is that we've reached this level of political theater that we have to introduce legislation that demonstrates we collectively value the sanctity of human life. Secondly, a diplomatic solution for this conflict is needed immediately. I am concerned that the longer this conflict continues, the likelihood that these events will be a catalyst towards global war. We've said that the casualties are 30,000. If it becomes a global war, that number will be 300 million. Two weeks ago and today there were audience members who justified, minimized and outright claimed the events of October 7th did not happen. To those individuals, you are wrong. On October 7,

innocent people were raped and slaughtered by terrorists. That is a fact.

And my final point; three weeks ago there was an event in which 22 people were shot. Eleven (11) of those 22 were children and one woman was killed. They were innocent. That event didn't happen in Israel. It didn't happen in Palestine. It happened in Kansas City at a Super Bowl parade. When looking for the motivation of why that violence took place, the shooter said he did it because someone looked at him the wrong way. The reason I bring this up is that we do not value human life in this country, and we particularly do not value the life of innocent women and children.

In this country. We still force women to give birth even though that they will die on a delivery room table. In this country, last year, we had a school shooting nearly every single day. So I wonder, with these type of events, how we have any right to lecture anyone about violence in the world. If we are going to be in the business of asking for a ceasefire, then I ask that we start with a ceasefire in this country, particularly in this County. For this reason, I will not participate in today's vote. I will be abstaining. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Councilman DeMarco?

MR. DEMARCO: Thank you, Mr. President. We've heard from a great deal, a great number of people here tonight, urging us to take and take a vote, or yes, vote, on calling for a ceasefire. But the issue is, we talked about how none of us have the expertise from a geopolitical standpoint to be able to weigh in on who's right or who's wrong in this conflict take place in the Middle East. What we do know is that this thing has been going on for many, many years. And we know that on October 7th, an horrific attack was perpetrated by Hamas on the people of Israel. We're talking about the suffering that people in Gaza are experiencing today. And that's terrible. Having served in the military, though, I understand a little bit about war, and war is not something that's nice or something that is without casualties. When you heard number of speakers talk, it's clear that there are multiple ceasefire offers that are on the table in Paris that have been made with the support of the US government and by Israel, but yet, Hamas continues to reject them.

How can we here, in Allegheny County, tell legislators, like ourselves in Israel, how they are to conduct a war based upon an attack which was the largest number of deaths of Israelites or Jews since the Holocaust? I don't know how many folks here know that this was the second largest terrorist attack on Americans since 9/11. I just can't see how I can support this resolution, which doesn't even mention Hamas. We heard from speakers talking about 30,000 casualties in Gaza, but never once mentioned the number of them that were Hamas terrorists that were killed in combat.

So for those reasons, Mr. President ---.

(Brief interruption.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: Again, again, we've been respectful of all your opinions. We have opinions as well and I'd ask you to be respectful of those people. All of these Council Members that sat through all of these hours of public comment just like you did, please be respectful.

(Brief interruption.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You are our representative. You're supposed to listen to us.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Genocide is not a fucking opinion that we need to respect.

MR. DEMARCO: Should we continue?

PRESIDENT CATENA: Again, everyone needs to be respectful this evening. Councilwoman Filiaggi?

MS. FILIAGGI: Thank you very much, President Catena, and I don't have much to say other than I have listened to the comments and every person up here on the dais has listened thoughtfully and heard your thoughtful comments. And one of the comments that was made is, how do we sleep at night? And how will we sleep at night?

We all sleep heavily on subjects like this, and we will, as a community, as Councilman Betkowski has said, how will we act tomorrow to one another? Who are our neighbors and who people that we see in our restaurants and grocery stores? Our sleep is heavy. We're here. We are respectful of your opinions, but make no mistake, no one sitting up here is making a light decision today. But we are here, and we will make a decision. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Councilman Futules?

MR. FUTULES: Pretty difficult evening. I want to thank everybody for coming in and telling us your thoughts, your prayers. Probably the most people have

ever come here in the history of this Council in 24 years. I don't believe we've ever had so many speakers in the last few weeks, including tonight. So I want to respect all of you for that.

It's very difficult because the way I see it, there is no right vote here. A yes vote or a no vote. It doesn't matter. It all depends on your just opinion, what you think, what you don't think, but when I look at this resolution, it mentions just two people, Israel and Palestine. I would like to see world peace. Let's not forget about Russia and the Ukraine, other wars that have been going on. Never seen a resolution for them. This is horrible, what's going on in this world. We're a hostile planet. We've been hostile for centuries, fighting over religion, fighting over territories, fighting over mineral rights. We're so hostile, we can't stand it anymore.

I see it in our own country. And Mr. Bonaroti pointed out the fact that we're afraid to go to a movie, we're afraid to go to a restaurant, afraid to go to a parade. This world sucks.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you're so afraid, then call for a ceasefire or get the hell out of the way.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do something.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Again, either stop it or you'll be removed. This is your last warning.

MR. FUTULES: I'm asking for world peace, but I will not support a resolution that mentions a specific country or religion. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Councilman Gryzbek?

MR. GRYZBEK: Thank you, President Catena. I want to start off by thanking everyone who took the time to discuss their deep thoughts and opinions regarding this motion with me. I greatly appreciate that perspective that you all have offered, even if we may, in the end, reach different conclusions on the merit of this item, because this comment is one that was in just about every single email we received opposing a ceasefire motion. I want to be clear that this motion does not call for an unconditional ceasefire. It calls for a bilateral ceasefire, the release of all hostages and the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. A hostage is someone who's taken as a prisoner by an enemy in order to force the other people involved to do what the enemy wants. A prisoner is not a convicted murderer.

I'd also like to address the three main arguments that we heard, the three main concerns that we heard against the ceasefire resolution. Number one, County Council has important items to address here at home, and bringing the ceasefire motion between Israel and Hamas distracts from that work. I fully agree with you that we have items that we desperately need to address here in Allegheny County that we have direct oversight over. We need to fix our local air quality, homelessness and housing affordability and the awful conditions within the Allegheny County jail.

However, taking up and voting for this resolution in no way precludes us from doing that. Last meeting, when speakers came to comment on a ceasefire, we passed several ordinances improving our reassessment processes, a tax credit to incentivize people to become volunteer firefighters and medics, and a LERTA that could have a tremendous impact on downtown and our tax revenues. This month, there are motions being introduced that seek to improve transit within Allegheny County and help combat the issue of litter.

Number two, this motion is outside of County Council's purview and only taking action regarding Israel is a concerning double standard. Urging the federal government to take action isn't something that would be new for County Council. Council has weighed in on items like the ending Agricultural Trade Suppression Act, the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and the George Floyd Justice and Policing Act, encouraging our federal legislators to take action.

More specifically to foreign affairs, Councils have encouraged the federal government to decrease defense spending, weighed in on the war between Russia and Ukraine that has happened already and most recently condemned the attack by Hamas against Israel and urged Congress to provide the state of Israel with the support necessary to ensure its safety and security. I will note that there were no comments, either by Council Members or by the public about any of these items being outside of Council's purview, and the resolution regarding Israel and Hamas was cosponsored by every present Member of Council.

Since October 7, when Hamas killed at least 1,200 Israelis, wounded more than 3,300 and took roughly 240 people hostage, the Israeli defense forces have killed over 30,000 Palestinians and wounded another 70,000 of

those killed. Like many have said or reported, 70 percent have been women and children. Per CNN reporting, at least 20 of the 22 hospitals in northern Gaza have been bombed by the IDF and hundreds of schools have been damaged or destroyed. The Associated Press has reported that over 80 percent of the Palestinians in Gaza, roughly two million people have been displaced and over 70 percent of homes have been destroyed.

We're now the point in the conflict of the lack of food and water in Gaza has resulted in children beginning to die due to dehydration and malnutrition. The situation has gotten so bad that the head of Israel's National Food Security Council has called for a ceasefire. These actions do not bring dead Israelis back, and they don't help the hostages be freed. And all of this is happening with support from the United States government, which provides Israel roughly \$4 billion in yearly military aid and has manufactured approximately 80 percent of Israeli weapons.

As we saw during our last meeting and tonight, this conflict is also having a direct impact on the residents of Allegheny County, not only among those who have family members and loved ones in Gaza and Israel, but also those who are dismayed to see the United States give billions of dollars in military aid to Israel, as well as the very bombs and ammunition that are being used to kill Palestinian civilians. Calling for a ceasefire, a release of all hostages and the delivery of humanitarian aid not only isn't a double standard, it is a moral imperative. Number three, supporting this resolution will make the Jewish community in Allegheny County less safe. I think that this is a completely reasonable and understandable fear, and it's the argument that I've weighed the most as I've deliberated on this motion.

Allegheny County is home to the deadliest attack against the Jewish community in United States history. The FBI considers Pittsburgh to be a hub for white supremacy. We've seen incidents of antisemitism on the rise in recent months, and I believe that there are certainly anti-Semites that have co-opted the suffering of Palestinians to push an agenda of hate towards the Jewish community. However, I just haven't seen evidence that passing a ceasefire motion will make the Jewish community of Pittsburgh less safe. While I know that some will conflate the two, this resolution only alludes to

criticisms of the current right wing Israeli government, not the Jewish people at large.

Furthermore, if public sentiment for Israel and the local Jewish population of Allegheny County are to be conflated, then the available polling indicates that pushing for a ceasefire would serve to help, not hurt. Recent AP Polling found that only 32 percent of Americans now view Israel as an ally that shares US interests and values, down a staggering 12 percent since immediately preceding October 7th, when sympathy and support for Israel were at an all-time high. The same poll found that a slight majority of Americans now feel that Israel has gone too far in their war against Hamas, up ten percent since November. A ceasefire, release of all hostages and the delivery of sufficient humanitarian aid will serve to improve public sentiment towards Israel and will prevent those who seek to propagate antisemitism from continuing to use Palestinian suffering as a cudgel.

For these reasons, I'll be joining numerous other human rights organizations, pardon me, roughly 70 percent of organized labor, hundreds of religious leaders and 70 other city and county councils by voting in favor of this resolution encouraging our federal government to advocate for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, the release of all hostages and delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. HALLAM: As we move forward with this motion, I want to first take a moment to acknowledge our Jewish neighbors and our Muslim neighbors and our Palestinian neighbors here in Allegheny County and how much pain this conflict has caused them and their loved ones. Whether it's because you have family in the region, because you are disturbed by an uptick in anti-Semitic and Islamophobic speech and activity both here locally and across the globe, or because we are literally witnessing terror and genocide on the news and social media in real time. As County Council and as local leaders, I want you to know that we see you and we hear you.

In the days following the October 7 attack, I retweeted a quote on Twitter by one of my favorite poets and fellow abolitionists, Asada Shakur, that accompanied a video of the fence imprisoning Palestinians in Gaza being torn down. At the time, I did not realize that the video was footage from October 7, and at that time, I did not

realize many things that were happening in Gaza. After many conversations with folks who were hurt or offended by my sharing of that video, I deleted it. And I truly, truly want to apologize for not taking the time to do the research on the history of the conflict before hitting the retweet button, but since then, I have done much research and I have educated myself and I have had many, often difficult, conversations with residents of Allegheny County about what is happening in the region today and what has happened historically.

It is a result of those conversations and thorough research that has led me to sponsoring today's motion to call on the United States government to work to end the genocide in Palestine and the indiscriminate bombings of tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children. This Council took a stand when we voted unanimously to pass a resolution condemning the October 7 attack. And it is not instead of, but especially because of that action, that is an incumbent upon us to take a stand today. In the time since we passed that resolution, the official death toll of those killed in Gaza has surpassed 30,000 people, including over 13,000 children.

The International Court of Justice determined there are plausible claims of genocidal acts being committed in Gaza, with other international organizations and experts labeling it a textbook case of genocide. And even the Biden Administration is warning that people in Gaza are starving, as aid is actively being prevented from reaching those most in need, and as hospitals, housing, universities and other critical infrastructure continued to be destroyed every single day. When we voted to pass that earlier resolution, were doing the best we could with the information that we had at that time, and now we must do so again.

The hypocrisy of some of my colleagues on this body and some of those in the audience who supported our passage of that earlier resolution, but who now expect us to stay silent in the face of genocide, is truly, truly jarring. Even just two days ago, Vice President Kamala Harris called for an immediate ceasefire, and yet many of my colleagues can't seem to find the courage to do the same.

With that being said, I, unequivocally, support an immediate release of all hostages, the cessation of the ongoing harm being done to all innocent civilians,

regardless of their ethnicity, their religion, or their nationality, a peaceful, just, endurable end to the violence and at an absolute minimum, strict adherence to the rule of international law, even during war. I vehemently reject attempts to further divide our communities by making this a political or a partisan matter. What's more, the United States government is actively using our money, our tax dollars, to fund and facilitate this genocide while homelessness increases, while working people cannot afford basic medical care, and while bridges in our backyard literally collapse before our eyes.

As a very wise man once said, they got money for wars but can't feed the poor, these dollars spent on bombs would be much better spent on books for our kids or housing for the unhoused or literally anything else. By supporting this motion, I and my colleagues who have co-sponsored this are responding to the call from residents of this County, who, by the way, tonight showed up to vote in favor, 138 to 71, overwhelmingly, despite national organizations bombarding our inboxes with emails against the ceasefire. We saw the residents of this County show up tonight, overwhelmingly for the second meeting in a row in favor of it.

We're responding to that call and we're recognizing the power the Council has in facilitating these conversations, in affecting lasting change. Additionally, any of my colleagues who choose to abstain from this vote, you are a coward.

(Applause.)

MS. HALLAM: I implore you all to take a stand one way or another, and I hope that you sleep okay at night after taking that vote.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Council Member Klein?

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, President Catena. As like everyone who has joined us over the past two weeks, and shared your stories and your experience and your journey in some way, I think that we've all tried to listen and to be attentive to what you have laid before us, and I don't think anyone here takes it lightly. I think we all bring a real soberness to what it is you are asking us to consider here tonight. As a member of Council, I represent a particular district, and it is a diverse district of about 90,000 people. And even though we are all assigned without --- except for those members who are

Council Members at-large, even though we only represent a specific district, we all have a seat at the same County table and so we have to act in the best interest of the County as a whole.

I do represent a district that is home to the second largest urban Jewish community in the country. As most of you might understand, this community does have a heightened vigilance around the matter of antisemitism. I will leave it to others to debate what is and what is not antisemitism. For this community, however, antisemitism is not an abstraction. It is the lived experience of this Jewish community, which we can't discount. We live in a world in which the desire, sometimes for simple answers trivializes the enormity and the complexity of the challenges that we actually face.

Clearly, the devastation and suffering that are so, so sadly the properties of war are on full display for the world to see in Gaza. The humanitarian crisis is real, but this crisis calls for a real response, real action by those who have the power to make a difference and not symbolic gestures.

To support this motion will not, I believe, further the goal of achieving the peace that everyone wants in the Middle East. The message that we are trying to send, that we've been trying to send, that everyone is trying to send in terms of stopping this horror in the Middle East, has been sent and has been received by those who have the power to do something about it. This crisis, this horror, calls for a real response, real action, by those who do, indeed, importantly, have the power to make a difference. And I think we will all look to them to act.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Council Member Macey?

MR. MACEY: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of Council, and invited guests, I don't believe what we say, what we do here and how we all feel about what is happening to people in other countries is going to make a difference. We all have a heart. We all want to make sure that we all live in peace and that everybody has opportunities, and that's why this great nation was formed. But I do believe that whatever way I vote, I will be criticized for either genocide or anti-Semitism. It's just what has occurred throughout these several weeks and ever since October. While you've heard from others, you've heard from both sides, so to speak.

We have things that we have to do here, and you've heard from one of my colleagues, and I'll just mention a few other things; the Schumann Center, a full complement of law enforcement. The issues at the county jail, homelessness, roads, bridges, and what about our schools and the funding of all these things? Now, I don't want to be a conspiracy theorist, but on the other hand, here we have a situation where people in this country may have come here legally, may have had all the right papers, but may have come with a hidden agenda.

(Brief interruption.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: Again, please be respectful. Again, please be respectful.

MR. MACEY: Like I said, as you heard from others ---.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Again, hold on, Councilman. Hold on, Councilman. Again, I don't want to make --- I don't want people to be forced out of this room, but if you're carry on, I mean, we can't have it. This is a discourse. We didn't interrupt you when you spoke, so please don't interrupt us when we speak. Please respect the situation. There's no right or wrong answers here. Again, again, please respect each other, because there's no respect right now. I don't feel there's any respect going on for any divergent opinions. So thank you.

Councilman Macey, go ahead.

MR. MACEY: Thank you, Mr. President. So I'm not worried about all that ---.

(Brief interruption.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: Again, Council Member Naccarati-Chapkis?

MR. MACEY: Wait a minute, I wasn't done.

This is exactly what I believe is occurring. Division and chaos. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Council Member Naccarati-Chapkis?

(Brief interruption.)

PRESIDENT CATENA: Okay.

We're moving on. Please, let's get through this. Go ahead.

MS. NACCARATI-CHAPKIS: Thank you, President Catena. So this matter is something that our community rightly feels passionately about with the utmost sincerity. I greatly appreciate hearing from the hundreds of individuals, actually over a thousand, who have spoken in person, as well as those who have sent an email or called

our offices. And I can assure you that those remarks and messages have not gone unheard.

I need to publicly state that certainly every life matters, that of our Palestinian and Jewish neighbors alike. In my district alone, I have the Muslim Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh that is housed there as well as three synagogues. The emails and the phone calls were completely divided. If we vote one way or the other, I do worry that this is perceived, that there is a winner and a loser. One voice was louder or more passionate than the other, or one side is more important than the other, and that simply is not true. I recognize that all lives are impacted by this horrific war and we have heard from --- that, from many.

That said, on March 1st, the U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin stated that more than 25,000 women and children have been killed in Gaza since October 7th. As a mother of three, I'm horrified by that information and it is frankly hard to comprehend the loss and absolute devastation of life. It has been documented that Israeli hostages in Gaza are being brutally attacked again. All lives are precious and must be protected. I'm not happy with the way that the resolution was presented to us this evening. I think that what Council Member Hallam had stated toward the end of her remarks is more appropriate and should have been more inclusive.

Action continues to be taken every day at the federal level. Just yesterday, two days ago, the Egyptian cutter and U.S. mediators met Cairo to what has been described untangled this deadlock ceasefire talk, calling upon a six week truce. Israeli work cabinet minister Benny Gantz just met with Vice President Kamala Harris, as you heard this week, during a three-day trip to Washington. The Vice President said that meetings will focus on a ceasefire deal to release the remaining hostages in Gaza. According to national news, the Vice President criticized Israel for not doing enough to ease the humanitarian catastrophe as has been described in the Palestinian enclave while talks for truce deal continued. And just last weekend, the US began a series of aid airdrops into Gaza.

It is challenging for a local government body such as ours to weigh in on an international issue. For instance, the United Nations estimates that about 18 million people are facing emergency levels of hunger due to the civil war

in Sudan, of which the US provides \$840,000,000. Hundreds of thousands of people will likely face an acute food emergency by next year. What do we do with that information? Less than two weeks ago, Pennsylvania Congresswoman Dean had recently returned from her second trip to the Israeli and Palestine territories and said the following, which resonated with me. The U.S. and the international community must find a permanent, safe and dignified pathway to a two-state solution for the future of Palestinian Israeli civilians alike.

I would hope and suspect that our electees in Congress have been following this local discourse here over the last several weeks to hear from constituents and I would hope that we would be able to share the links to these videos so these messages can also be shared with them. In closing, I will reiterate that all lives are sacred and precious. We must love our neighbors as ourselves while practicing civil discourse. We must learn about and from each other to protect the health and wellbeing of those we are surrounded by each and every day. And I do pray for peace in this matter in all those countries facing unrest and harm from war, including our own troops who are facing dangers every day. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. Council Member Palmiere, anything?

MR. PALMIERE: Mr. President, no comment. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Council Member Palmosina?

MR. PALMOSINA: Thank you, Mr. President. I have no comments, but I feel everyone's pain. It's been a difficult night. There is no winners and no losers, but ---

PRESIDENT CATENA: Council Member Prizio?

MR. PALMOSINA: --- I just want to say thank you for everybody coming down here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Make the right choice.

MS. PRIZIO: I stand as a Co-Sponsor on the ceasefire Motion 12955-24 because I refuse to be complicit in the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. An immediate ceasefire is the only way to ensure a safe return of the hostages, effectively deliver much needed aid and avert further loss of both Israeli and Palestinian lives. This scorched-earth military campaign carried out against the Gazans must stop. Enough is enough.

Since October 7, over 30,000 people have been killed. Over 85 percent of the Gazan population has been

displaced, primarily women and children. As many as 80 percent of the buildings in northern Gaza has been damaged or destroyed. The Palestinians are facing a dire humanitarian crisis lacking food, fuel, water, power, shelter and other necessities. You do not need to be an expert to recognize the immorality of killing over 30,000 innocent civilians. The motion calls on our federal government to use its immense diplomatic and appropriations power to bring a lasting peace to the region. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you, Anita. At this point, I mean, there's not much for me to say that hasn't already been said by everyone that's come out tonight. I mean, democracy is an action. It's listening to people. It's hearing people, what people are saying. It's trying to understand what people are saying and try to make tomorrow a better place and like Councilman Betkowski said, I worry about tomorrow. I worry what tomorrow brings, because I'm not sure. I mean, I see the blood on the hands and it worries me. This is really --- a subject that is truly divisive. And I know people are saying it's not divisive, but when you hear the passion on both sides of the aisle, unfortunately, it is. And we need to recognize that. And I urge people to try to work together to see where we go from here.

I was encouraged after our last meeting that two people, actually, from different views, actually, I heard, got together for lunch and it was, even though they might not have agreed at the end of the day, the fact is that they still sat down and tried to listen to each other. And that's what really needs to happen at the end of the day. Like I said at our last meeting, we have two ears and one mouth for a reason and we really need to try to listen and understand. It's an incredibly difficult subject. It is. And I realize the pain and the passion on both sides, I truly do. And I appreciate everyone coming out over these last few weeks and voicing your opinions, letting your opinions truly be known, because that's, like I said, democracy in action. So I know you people --- I know all of you have waited very long for a vote tonight, so we're going to get right to the vote.

So again, thank you. I know there's been some times of crisis tonight, but overall it was a fairly good evening and I thank you for everyone cooperate. I truly

thank you for everyone, basically, I mean, making this a good meeting. So, Jared, please call the roll.

MR. BARKER: On the motion to approve, Mr. Betkowski?

MS. BETKOWSKI:	No.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Bonaroti?
MR. BONAROTI:	Abstain.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. DeMarco?
MR. DEMARCO:	No.
MR. BARKER:	Ms. Filiaggi?
MS. FILIAGGI:	No.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Futules?
MR. FUTULES:	No.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Gryzbek?
MR. GRYZBEK:	Yes.
MR. BARKER:	Ms. Hallam?
MS. HALLAM:	Yes.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Klein?
MR. KLEIN:	No.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Macey?
MR. MACEY:	No.
MR. BARKER:	Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis?
MS. NACCARATI-CHAPKIS:	Abstain.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Palmiere?
MR. PALMIERE:	No.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Palmosina?
MR. PALMOSINA:	No.
MR. BARKER:	Ms. Prizio?
MS. PRIZIO:	Yes.
MR. BARKER:	Mr. Walton is absent.
(No response)	
MR. BARKER:	President Catena?
PRESIDENT CATENA:	And before I vote, just

as a reminder, if you did abstain, you need to get the clerk your reason for abstentions. So a valid reason for abstentions. So no.

MR. BARKER: Ayes 3, noes 9, two abstentions with one member absent. The motion fails.

PRESIDENT CATENA: Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify, as the stenographic reporter, that the foregoing proceedings were taken stenographically by me, and thereafter reduced to typewriting by me or under my direction; and that this transcript is a true and accurate record to the best of my ability.

Dated the 26th day of March, 2024

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Chelsea Curry", written over a horizontal line.

Chelsea Curry,

Court Reporter