Legislation Text

File #: 130067, **Version:** 0

Authorizing the Committee of the Whole to hold public hearings to examine the current state of gun violence in the City of Philadelphia, and review how effectively the City spends its resources combating the issue.

WHEREAS, Gun laws at the federal and state levels of government affect how the City of Philadelphia creates its own gun regulations. The current legal environment also affects how Philadelphia dedicates its many resources on policies and programming that aim to prevent, reduce and respond to the negative consequences of their illegal usage; and

WHEREAS, For all municipal government operations, it is important to regularly evaluate how effectively taxpayer-supported expenditures are accomplishing stated goals. In light of the real and perceived threats to public safety caused by guns, it is critical to evaluate how effectively the City and School District of Philadelphia are reducing violent crime involving guns. This includes a review of school safety, juvenile and criminal justice, detention and recidivism, gangs, witness assistance, mental health, and crime prevention and enforcement; and

WHEREAS, Such a review is particularly relevant in the wake of the recent mass shooting in an elementary school in Newton, Connecticut. The nation’s opinions and laws concerning guns are currently responding, including proposals from the President of the United States, but this review does not seek to effect changes in gun laws at the higher levels of government; rather it aims to assess the current situation in Philadelphia and maximize the utility of the City’s current resources. Such an examination may reveal that some departments or initiatives require more or fewer resources, which must be considered during the City’s budgetary review process; and

WHEREAS, One such program in Philadelphia is GunStat, a collaborative effort between local law enforcement, criminal justice and community partners, which is co-chaired by the Police Commissioner and the District Attorney. Unveiled in January 2012, the program will use data analysis, citizen surveillance, technology and additional police officers on the streets to track gun violence with a focus on repeat offenders, illegal guns and high crime areas; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office is aggressively prosecuting individuals possessing illegal guns, including asking for high bail. The Police Department is using a new, systematic approach using monetary rewards to build evidence and arrest and convict individuals carrying illegal guns and individuals committing homicide. The Department has launched new programs, modeled after other cities, that allow citizens to send anonymous information by text message, email, video, and photograph. New funding has been dedicated to support the Witness Assistance Program, a new video surveillance program, and a multi-agency initiative called Pressure Point 2.0 that coordinates targeted deployment strategies and intelligence efforts at the

local, state and federal levels to reduce violent crime in high crime areas; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Committee of the Whole is hereby authorized to hold public hearings to examine the current state of gun violence in the City of Philadelphia, and review how effectively the City spends its resources combating the issue.