

Jim Kenney, Larry Kane and a Great Evening at Plays & Players

By Harvey C. Sacks, VP, Government Relations

On the stage of Plays and Players – one of the oldest continuously running theaters in the US – amid an old saloon stage set, legendary TV news anchor Larry Kane (a total of 36 years on all three major network stations) made Mayor Kenney feel at ease as he peppered His Honor with questions.

Topics covered (Mayor’s answers in parentheses): homelessness (great deal of new resources in the pipeline); the Budget, new taxes (nope); DROP Program (serious issue, but not an immediate priority, shouldn’t be for elected officials, promises not to take it himself); the murder rate/ comparison to Chicago, and public safety in general, including Rittenhouse Sq. vs. poorer neighborhoods (major priority, new officers being added due to less onerous academic criteria); Philly as a Sanctuary City and potential loss of federal funding, a timely subject as earlier that day Donald Trump issued executive orders preliminary to withdrawing federal funds from such cities (not clear how much and/ or which funds we might lose); relations with the local media (they’re not fake news, do a good job); soda tax will be the Mayor’s greatest legacy (health reasons well documented, people eventually will give up wasting gas driving elsewhere to



Mayor Kenney, center, takes questions from Larry Kane, as CCRA VP Harvey C. Sacks looks on.

buy beverages and revert to their usual routines, extra costs will be spread over many items and not just sugary drinks, lasting lifetime value of pre-K); his relationship with law enforcement, the loss of privacy that comes with a police detail, shopping at BJ’s, and many more.

All this in one hour and ten.

In my role as VP, Government Relations, I offered two thoughts for the Mayor:

- While CCRA must prioritize issues affecting its residents, it truly does weigh in on issues affecting other areas of the City for the betterment of those neighborhoods and all of us.
- We are delighted with the responsiveness of every City department, Commissioner and their staffs, and, in particular, the Managing Director and his staff in taking the lead on the serious matters involving the CSX trains, which have plagued the City for a long time.

Park It Here

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Early in January, new signs were installed in Rittenhouse Square prohibiting sitting on the balustrade. According to Friends of Rittenhouse Square, this new policy was put into effect in conjunction with the office of Parks and Recreation and the Philadelphia Police Department, in response to reports of increased vandalism on the historic balustrades and marijuana smoking in the area by the young people who frequently gather there.

On January 14, Mayor Kenney tweeted, “Sit where you want” and later “Along with my liberal view of park use, please don’t litter or graffiti the walls or smoke

weed so obviously that you scare olds my age.” According to the City, there are no fines or penalties for sitting on the walls. The penalty for possession of marijuana is a \$25 fine, the same citywide.

Three days later, the “No Sitting on Wall” signs were removed from Rittenhouse Square. People gathered at a “Sittenhouse” on Tuesday, January 17, to celebrate the victory.

(Sources: Friends of Rittenhouse Square letter to members and Inquirer article, Jan. 14, 2017.)



The short-lived sign.