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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

4

AND HUMAN SERVICES

5

- - -

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Room 400, City Hall

7

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

8

Wednesday, May 11, 2005, 2:15 p.m.

9

10 BILL 050166 - An Ordinance amending the
11 Ordinance of April 22, 1975 (Bill No. 1796),
12 establishing the Prison Industries Revolving
13 Fund and providing for the administration
14 thereof, by establishing a mechanism to
15 authorize charges for goods and services
16 produced by Prison Industries...

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PRESENT:

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COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

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COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

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COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.

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COUNCILMAN JUAN F. RAMOS

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COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER

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COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL

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1 5/11/05 - Bill 050166 - Public Health

2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: The
3 Committee on Public Health and Human Services
4 is called to order. We have a quorum in the
5 form of Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown,
6 Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller and Councilman
7 Wilson Goode, Jr.

8 The Chair calls Leon King, Esquire,
9 Prisons Commissioner, and his staff to come
10 forward.

11 And we ask Derek Green to read the
12 title of the bill.

13 MR. GREEN: Ordinance No.
14 050166, an ordinance amending the ordinance of
15 April 22, 1975, Bill No. 1796, establishing
16 the Prison Industries Revolving Fund and
17 providing for the administration thereof, by
18 establishing a mechanism to authorize charges
19 for goods and services produced by Prison
20 Industries, by authorizing expenditures from
21 the Fund for personnel costs, repair costs and
22 other services required for the operation of
23 Prison Industries, and by authorizing sales by
24 Prison Industries to all City agencies and
25 authorities and to non-profit agencies with

1 5/11/05 - Bill 050166 - Public Health
2 whom the City has contracts, all under certain
3 terms and conditions.

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
5 very much.

6 Good afternoon.

7 MR. KING: Good afternoon.

8 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Would you
9 identify yourself, please, and begin your
10 testimony.

11 MR. KING: I'm Leon King,
12 Prison Commissioner, and I'm sitting here with
13 Mr. Freeman, who is the Director of our Prison
14 Industries, Deputy Commissioner Tomaszewski,
15 who has responsibility for this, and our
16 Director of Administration Services,
17 Mr. Rakowski, who I think is behind me.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Proceed.

19 MR. KING: Good afternoon,
20 Councilwoman Tasco, other Council members
21 present today. I am pleased to have the
22 opportunity to testify on behalf of Bill
23 050166, Prison Industries Revolving Fund. I
24 would like to thank City Council for
25 considering the revision to City Council

1 5/11/05 - Bill 050166 - Public Health
2 Ordinance No. 5, which established the Prison
3 Industries Revolving Fund.

4 This 30-year-old ordinance has
5 become obsolete and does not permit the
6 Industries Fund to operate in a cost-effective
7 and competitive manner in today's environment.
8 The requested revisions would allow the
9 Correctional Industries Division to assume
10 more of its operational costs by permitting
11 the inclusion of Class 100 expenditures.
12 These expenditures would be paid from
13 PhilaCor's revenues rather than from the
14 Prisons General Fund, thereby resulting in a
15 savings to City taxpayers.

16 PhilaCor, which is a trade name,
17 which stands for Philadelphia Correctional
18 Industries, has a mission to operate in a
19 business-like manner while providing real-life
20 work experience to inmates, focusing on the
21 production of quality goods and services
22 delivered in a timely manner and at minimal
23 cost to the Philadelphia Prison System and to
24 the Philadelphia taxpayers.

25 The PhilaCor division is comprised

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2 of 13 industrial shops and programs structured
3 to provide inmates incarcerated in our system
4 with marketable skills, designed to reduce
5 recidivism and also to assist them to seeking
6 viable employment upon release from custody.

7 The industrial shops include -- and
8 I'm just going to read the list as opposed to
9 describe each one.

10 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Right.

11 MR. KING: The Barricade Shop;
12 the Culinary Arts Program; the Dry Cleaning
13 Plant; the Furniture Plant, which includes the
14 Carpentry Shop, Finishing Shop and Upholstery
15 Shop; the Graphics Plant, which includes a
16 Print Plant, an Engraving Shop and a Garment
17 Shop. We also have a General Products Plant,
18 Laundry, Office Maintenance and a
19 Transportation and Delivery section of
20 PhilaCor.

21 At a time when the Philadelphia
22 Prison System is launching various efforts to
23 improve the chances of successful prisoner
24 reentry, revisions to the outdated ordinance
25 would allow the PPS to increase inmate

1 5/11/05 - Bill 050166 - Public Health
2 participation in this industrial training
3 program by expanding PhilaCor's customer base
4 for prison-made goods by authorizing sales to
5 all City and other governmental agencies and
6 to tax exempt and non-profit agencies which
7 are contracted with the City. This would
8 permit these entities to purchase items for
9 sale at a lower overall cost, ranging from 10
10 to 14 percent below market rates, with the
11 dollar savings of upwards of --

12 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: 10 to 40
13 you have in your -- you said 10 to 14 or 10 to
14 40?

15 MR. KING: Ten to 40 percent
16 below market rates, with dollar savings of
17 upwards of several hundred thousand dollars
18 per year.

19 In summary, the proposed ordinance
20 changes would allow PhilaCor to operate in a
21 more cost-effective and competitive manner,
22 would reduce costs to taxpayers and would
23 allow other governmental agencies, as well as
24 tax exempt and non-profit agencies contracted
25 with the City, to purchase quality-made

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2 PhilaCor products and services at reduced
3 cost. It will allow the Correctional
4 Industries Division to assume more of its
5 operational costs by permitting the inclusion
6 of Class 100 expenditures, which are currently
7 charged to the Prisons General Fund.

8 Additionally, the ordinance changes
9 would allow for the expansion of the
10 industrial training opportunities for inmates
11 by as many as 100 slots to improve their
12 chances of successful prisoner reentry.

13 Presently, about 800 inmates
14 participate each year in the 13 industrial
15 training programs conducted by PhilaCor.
16 These industrial training programs are
17 designed to reduce recidivism by providing
18 inmates with real-life work experience that
19 will help them secure post-release employment.
20 This expansion would require the hiring of
21 several supervisors, who would be paid from
22 the Industries Fund.

23 Also, industries programs spend
24 money in the local economy for staff materials
25 and supplies. These industrial training

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2 programs help to increase facility safety and
3 security. Busy inmates are not sitting idly
4 by thinking up ways to disrupt facility
5 operations or cause damage. Busy and
6 productive inmates are less problematic for
7 administrators, correctional staff, program
8 and service staff and everyone associated with
9 facility operations.

10 An industry program can teach
11 inmates good work habits and, in some
12 instances, a skill that makes them more
13 productive and employable when they are
14 released and reenter society.

15 Working in an industry program while
16 confined can be the difference between
17 becoming taxpayers or tax burdens on their
18 communities. Most of the inmate workers in
19 industry shops will some day be returning to
20 society. Perhaps the greatest social and
21 economic benefits from inmate labor force
22 participation would likely come from reduced
23 future crime and recidivism resulting from the
24 improved post-release behavior of offenders.

25 I hope that you and your fellow

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2 Council members will help the prisons to
3 achieve these goals by enacting the ordinance
4 changes requested.

5 Thank you very much.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
7 very much.

8 Are there any questions from members
9 of the Committee?

10 The Chair recognizes Councilwoman
11 Brown.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
13 afternoon, Commissioner and your team.

14 You mention on Page 3 of your
15 testimony that presently there are about 800
16 inmates participating each year. What's the
17 total prison population?

18 MR. KING: We're hovering
19 around 8,200.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Forgive
21 me?

22 MR. KING: 8,200.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And
24 participation in these training programs is
25 encouraged, required? How is one put into the

1 5/11/05 - Bill 050166 - Public Health
2 pipeline for these options?

3 MR. KING: I believe it's not
4 required. There are some inmates who are
5 required to work as part of their sentence,
6 but I believe most of it is inmates who
7 interact with their social workers and they
8 get recommended to work in the program.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Upon entry
10 into prison, are they given some level of
11 orientation as to the kinds of options
12 available to them in terms of skill-training
13 so that their time there is, for what it can
14 be, productive?

15 MR. KING: Yes.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I'd just
18 like to recognize that Councilman O'Neill and
19 Councilman Ramos have joined us.

20 Councilman O'Neill, we recognize
21 you.

22 COUNCILMAN O'NEILL:
23 Commissioner, I'd just like to congratulate
24 you for taking this bold step after 30 years.
25 It sounds terrific and something that probably

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2 should have been done a while ago.

3 I have a question unrelated. It's
4 prisoner labor, but it's unrelated to this
5 issue. I believe that it's unrelated.

6 I, more recently than ever, have
7 been getting a lot of complaints from people
8 in my district that government ground, whether
9 it be the side of highways, but
10 government-owned ground just has trash all
11 over it, and I think it's overwhelming to the
12 City particularly, and I don't want to speak
13 for the state or quasi federal agencies like
14 the railroad or something, but it's very
15 visible and it kind of just is blight. And I
16 know in the City we do not use -- the City and
17 County of Philadelphia we do not use prisoners
18 for this purposes. I'm told that Bucks does.

19 My district borders Bucks and
20 Montgomery. So you can go down a street and
21 see the trash removed one day in fact very
22 close to the prison just on Mill Road, just at
23 the edge of the City, and when you get to the
24 City side, it's there.

25 I don't know if there's ever been

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2 any discussions on this or if there's anything
3 currently being discussed. I'm sure there's
4 issues with different vested groups, but I
5 would think in this day and age, the counties
6 have the same tension.

7 MR. KING: I can say that --

8 COUNCILMAN O'NEILL: It's not
9 being done by anybody, I can tell you that.

10 MR. KING: At the prison
11 campus, we do use inmates to keep our border
12 on State Road and Torresdale Avenue clean. We
13 did have an issue, I think, a year and a half
14 ago when we were clean. We try to keep
15 Holmesburg from Holmesburg all the way to
16 Rhawn Street, we try to keep that clean, and
17 we did get a little bit of input, I guess,
18 from the unions, because they felt we
19 shouldn't be doing that sort of work. And the
20 way we handled that was, I said, Submit to me
21 a schedule when you'll be doing the work and
22 that's when I'll pull the inmates. I've never
23 gotten the schedule, so the inmates continue
24 to do the work.

25 We have been recently trying to help

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2 out in the community with that sort of thing
3 with clean-up. I think we just had a really
4 successful event this weekend using the
5 weekender inmates to help clean in the
6 Tacony -- I think with the Tacony Civic
7 Association.

8 So we're trying to do more of that.
9 And if there are people in your district or
10 anybody's district, you have a request, you
11 should send it and we'll see what we can do.

12 COUNCILMAN O'NEILL: I
13 appreciate that, because your thinking is the
14 same as mine with the unions. They're not
15 doing it, and they haven't been doing it for
16 years. This is not work that anybody is
17 doing. So to the extent it can be done, it
18 really does make the neighborhood better and
19 it keeps some people active that otherwise
20 would not be.

21 MR. KING: Because as the
22 weekender guys were sort of frustrated because
23 I would go there on the weekend and they're
24 just sitting there doing nothing.

25 But I also think that we had some

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2 discussion with Labor Relations or somebody
3 and they told us that as long as it's a
4 community group requesting our assistance,
5 that's okay and the unions really didn't
6 have --

7 COUNCILMAN O'NEILL: I'll keep
8 that in mind. Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Other
10 questions or comments?

11 Councilwoman Miller.

12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Hi.
13 Thank you, Madam Chair.

14 I too wanted to commend you and
15 congratulate you on this program and coming
16 here today to make changes.

17 Once it opens up to non-profits, do
18 you have a catalogue? I mean, how do people
19 know what you sell?

20 MR. KING: We do have a
21 catalogue. I'm let Mr. Freeman explain that
22 in a little bit more detail.

23 MR. FREEMAN: We do publish a
24 catalogue -- my name is Leonard Freeman, the
25 Correctional Industries Director, the

1 5/11/05 - Bill 050166 - Public Health
2 Philadelphia Prison System. Excuse me.

3 We do publish a catalogue of all our
4 services and products. We update it two,
5 three times a year. And I believe we just
6 sent one to each Council person. And if we
7 are permitted to sell to non-profits, we will
8 contact them.

9 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: You said
10 you're going to send a catalogue to each
11 Council member?

12 MR. FREEMAN: We have done
13 that.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: We got
15 one.

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I have
17 one?

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Yes.

19 MR. KING: We can send you
20 another one, if you'd like.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: All
22 right. Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I received
24 it long before I got this ordinance, and I was
25 reading it. I was quite impressed with the

1 5/11/05 - Bill 050166 - Public Health
2 on this bill?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: There
5 being none, we will adjourn the public hearing
6 and go into the public meeting.

7 (Committee on Public Health and
8 Human Services public hearing adjourned at
9 2:28 p.m.)

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1 5/11/05 - Bill 050166 - Public Health

2 CERTIFICATE

3 I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
4 proceedings, evidence and objections are
5 contained fully and accurately in the
6 stenographic notes taken by me upon the
7 foregoing matter on May 11, 2005, and that
8 this is a true and correct transcript of
9 same.

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16 MICHELE L. MURPHY

17 RPR-Notary Public

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1 5/11/05 - Bill 050166 - Public Health
2 COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
3 PUBLIC MEETING - COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
4 AND HUMAN SERVICES
5 - - -
6 Room 400, City Hall
7 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
8 Wednesday, April 27, 2005, 2:28 p.m.

9
10 BILL 050166 - An Ordinance amending the
11 Ordinance of April 22, 1975 (Bill No. 1796),
12 establishing the Prison Industries Revolving
13 Fund and providing for the administration
14 thereof, by establishing a mechanism to
15 authorize charges for goods and services
16 produced by Prison Industries...

17 PRESENT:
18 COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO
19 COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
20 COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
21 COUNCILMAN JUAN F. RAMOS
22 COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER
23 COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL

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1 5/11/05 - Bill 050166 - Public Health

2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: The Chair now
3 calls on Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller to
4 report --

5 Do you want a suspension of the
6 rules?

7 MR. KING: I guess so, yes.

8 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: --
9 (continued) report out this bill.

10 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
11 you, Madam Chair.

12 I move that Bill No. 050166 be
13 reported out of this Committee with a
14 favorable recommendation, and further request
15 that the rules of Council be suspended so as
16 to permit first reading at our next session.

17 COUNCILMAN O'NEILL: Second.

18 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: It has been
19 moved and seconded that Bill 050166 be
20 reported out of Committee with a favorable
21 recommendation, with a request for the
22 suspension of the rules so that this bill
23 would have its first reading at the next
24 session of Council.

25 All in favor will say aye.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBERS: Aye.

3 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Is there
4 any opposition?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: There
7 being none, the bill is reported out of
8 Committee.

9 Thank you very much.

10 MR. KING: Thank you very much.

11 (Committee on Public Health and
12 Human Services Public Meeting adjourned at
13 2:30 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter on May 11, 2005, and that
this is a true and correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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