COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE ON RULES

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, March 31, 2005, 9:25 a.m.

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040160 - An Ordinance approving the redevelopment proposal of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia for the redevelopment of the West Fairhill/East Tioga/Hunting Park Urban Renewal Area, being the area generally bounded by Wingohocking Street and Roosevelt Boulevard on the north, North Fifth Street and North Sixth Street on the east, Lehigh Avenue on the south and Broad Street and Venango Street on the west; approving the urban renewal plan and determining that such plan and redevelopment proposal conform to the general locality plan and make adequate provisions for individuals, business concerns and families who are displaced; determining the necessity for changes in and for zoning, streets, alleys, public ways, street patterns, location and relocation of public utilities; determining that the urban renewal plan and redevelopment proposal meet all non-discrimination requirements of federal, state and local laws and the regulations and policies promulgated with respect thereto; declaring that certain expressly designated and provided for condemnation is not imminent with respect to the Project; and declaring the redevelopment undertakings in the Project to be an important part of the City's program to remove and prevent the spread of urban blight.

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PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNA C. VERNA
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILMAN RICHARD T. MARIANO
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL A. NUTTER
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO

Rules - 050164 - 3/31/05

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good morning, everyone. I apologize for the delay.

This is the public hearing of the Rules Committee regarding Bill Number 050164.

The record should reflect that we do have a quorum. To my extreme left is Councilwoman Brown, Councilman Mariano. To my immediate right is Councilwoman Miller. And I'm appointing Councilman Rizzo to serve on the committee today.

I would ask Mr. McPherson to please read the title of Bill Number 050164.

MR. McPHERSON: An ordinance approving the redevelopment proposal of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia for the redevelopment of the West Fairhill/East Tioga/Hunting Park Urban Renewal Area, being the area generally bounded by Wingohocking Street and Roosevelt Boulevard on the north, North Fifth Street and North Sixth Street on the east, Lehigh

Avenue on the south and Broad Street and Venango Street on the west; approving the urban renewal plan and determining that such plan and redevelopment proposal conform to the general locality plan and make adequate provisions for individuals, business concerns and families who are displaced.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay. Good morning.

Who do we have to testify on this? Please approach the witness table, if you will.

Do we have copies of your testimony?

MR. KOONCE: Good morning, Madam Chairperson, members of the committee.

I am Michael Koonce, Deputy Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sorry. Is your microphone on?

MR. KOONCE: Good morning. I am Michael Koonce, Deputy Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Please

proceed.

MR. KOONCE: Madam Chairperson and members of the committee, I'm here to speak in support of Bill Number 050164, which is the first redevelopment proposal and first urban renewal plan for the West Fairhill/East Tioga/Hunting Park Redevelopment area and the West Fairhill/East Tioga/Hunting Park urban renewal area.

This bill would authorize the Redevelopment Authority to acquire 70 properties, consisting of 68 vacant lots and two structures.

The acquired properties would be combined with 52 publicly owned properties, for a total of 122 properties, and would be used to build 44 newly constructed permanent rental town houses and apartments for very low income women and their families.

The cite is located on the vacant land of the 3000 block of Percy and Hutchinson Streets between Indiana Avenue and Clearfield Street, just north of the Fairhill burial ground.

The developer is committed to long-term affordability, by serving very low income families for 30 years.

We recently learned this morning that one of the properties may, in fact, be occupied. And if that can be verified, then the Redevelopment Authority is prepared to, with passage of this bill, issue a letter to the owner, specifying that we have no interest nor any plans to acquire this property.

Madam Chairperson and members of the committee, I respectfully request favorable consideration of Bill Number 050164, and would also ask the suspension of Council rules to allow first reading today, March 31, 2005 at 10:00 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

I believe you indicated that there are no families or individuals that would have to be relocated.

MR. KOONCE: Our surveys, field surveys, indicated there were none. However, a Mrs. Gomez recently came forward this

morning, indicating that she resided at 3044 Hutchinson Street, which is one of the properties included in this bill.

So, in fact, there may be one occupied property. But we have no intention of acquiring a property that is occupied.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: So that will be taken off the list.

MR. KOONCE: Right.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Very well.

Now, the 44 town houses and apartments on the acquired property will be constructed for very low income women and their families. What constitutes very low income?

MR. KOONCE: I believe the numbers... Our typical number is 120 percent of median. These, I believe, would be... I'm not exactly sure of this, but I believe around 80 percent of median.

I'm sorry. I've just been told that's below 50 percent, actually.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay. Do you have any indication as to what the rents

would be?

MR. KOONCE: No. We don't have that yet, but we would have that before we -- The Council would have to pass a bill allowing conversion of the property from the Redevelopment Authority to the eventual developer, and those figures would be made known at that time.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Very well.

Are there questions from members of the committee?

The Chair recognizes Councilman Mariano.

COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thank you, Mr. Commissioner.

You answered my question about Mrs. Gomez. We, too, found that out this morning.

And I think there's going to be another problem. So, you might want to stick around.

MR. KOONCE: Okay.

COUNCILMAN MARIANO: You probably can alleviate with a letter. Okay?

MR. KOONCE: Sure.

COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thanks.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Are there any other questions or comments from members of the committee?

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Seeing none, do we have any other witnesses that would like to testify? Please approach the witness table, sir. I would ask that you identify yourself for the record, please.

MR. DEPORE: Good morning. I'm Robert Depore. I'm President of Team Children in Norristown. I own a property at 913 West Indiana Street.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is that a vacant lot, sir?

MR. DEPORE: That's a vacant lot, yes, ma'am.

See what I can say about this. I have a bunch of things I want to say about it. And I hope I don't bore you.

I have been going to 9th and Indiana for the last ten years. And I started out -- I'm a massage therapist and the author of the

new book of Baby and Child Massage.

And I went there initially to offer free rolfing sessions to the children at 9th and Indiana, and it turned into become a much bigger project than I ever imagined.

And what I noticed at 9th and Indiana is that not only were the kids there starving for touch and attention, they were also starving for everything else.

So we started getting books donated. We brought volunteers in. And then I started distributing computers.

And at one time I had massaged virtually every child at 9th and Indiana and given virtually every family there a computer. Since then we have helped over 5,000 families throughout the region, 90 percent of them from Philadelphia, get a computer.

And so, I think I know more about 9th and Indiana than probably anybody outside of 9th and Indiana knows.

And one of the things that I want to say that I've learned is that the people at

9th and Indiana don't like outsiders coming in to do their thing in their neighborhood.

And I'm not sure that this organization yet has been to 9th and Indiana, has -- I don't see anybody here from 9th and Indiana that even knows what's going to happen to their neighborhood.

And I think that their neighborhood should be informed of this project, and should be given an opportunity to speak about it to the Council, and have some input into what they want to see happen in their neighborhood.

One of the reasons I am opposed to giving up my property is, I've spent years going there cleaning up that vacant lot. Councilman Mariano helped me get that lot.

And at one time we had -- Took me about a year to get bricklayers to come in and build a brick fence around the lot. We actually had a swing set put up on the lot. We had the lot cleaned off, and kids were playing there for the first time.

And one of the things that I know

that that community needs more than anything else, more than more people who can't pay their rent, more than anything else, is that they need a playground. And I'm committed to building that playground.

And I've asked the gentleman over here to give me a replacement property or help me find some other property in that neighborhood to build a playground, and I'll be all for this project.

But I think to put more people in this neighborhood without doing something to seriously take a look at what the neighborhood needs is a big mistake.

And that neighborhood and the -- There's some great kids that live in that neighborhood. And unfortunately, they have been contaminated by the environment they live in.

And in the ten years I've been going there, I haven't seen one kid yet graduate high school and go to college.

So I think that the Council might want to take a look at this neighborhood as a

model for redevelopment that goes beyond just finding somebody to come in and build some new houses and bring some more low income people into a neighborhood that's already saturated with low income people, and to really take on a serious project to build a community center and a playground.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilman Mariano.

COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thank you, Madam President.

Thanks for your testimony, sir. And you do really do good work there. I just... I don't live in the community, but I don't live too far.

And there's a lot of people that do things for communities, especially when you're an elected official, that you take a lot of other people's advice, because I'm not an expert on anything. And my wife will tell you I'm probably not an expert on... very, very little. And my sons will tell you even worse, that I know absolutely nothing.

But I take my lead from the people

in the community, and I -- You know. Worst thing to do is, as you said, is go in the community and do what you think is right for the community without speaking to the community.

It's my understanding that there was about three or four community meetings here. I don't know if Mr. Koonce knows about it, but I'm sure -- I'm looking at the people from WCRP. And I don't know if they were going to testify, but I invite them to.

And I think -- My chief of staff just whispered in my ear because he knows more about this than I do. He's the point guy on all this stuff, Mr. Detrue. He said there's a community center and a playground incorporated in this development project.

Have you met with CRP?

MR. DEPORE: They've never -- I just met them about a week -- Talked to them on the e-mail about a week ago.

COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Okay.

MR. DEPORE: They said that there is, but I haven't seen any plans. I don't

know what they're planning to do or how they're planning to do it. And I don't know how big a playground or... You know what I'm saying?

COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Yeah. And I don't know the answers right now, but I'm sure they do. And we'll decide when we get through this. This isn't the end of everything. We get out here, this gets voted out, we still have... Mr. Koonce, there's still other processes. This doesn't make this happen, right?

MR. KOONCE: No. Right. Absolutely.

COUNCILMAN MARIANO: So you don't have to -- It's -- Just -- so for your safety and your peace of mind, when this is voted out of here today -- and it will be, and we'll get a favorable recommendation -- this doesn't make this project happen.

So, there's still time for you to meet with Miss Licktash and the ladies from WCRP, and figure it all out.

Because you know what? I deal with

a lot of groups, and they're all really great people. This is one of the better ones. They're nice people. They really understand. And they're... The spin against them is any time they ever try to do anything, it's like, well, you're not really from this neighborhood.

And just like you said, I'm not from that neighborhood. And you're not really from that neighborhood either. And the closest I've ever been there is my grandmother lived 30 years ago at Second and Cambria. And you can't say that that don't count.

But I trust them. But I also have talked to the community leaders, and they seem to have a rapport with them. So, I think if we get this out of here, you can rest assured that this isn't a bum rush where this will happen, and you're... you know, your views... You know, we hear them. And I trust those people.

You set and meet with them, I'm sure you'll agree with what they're saying, and we

can work something out.

And maybe Mr. Koonce can help you with switching some -- a lot, like right next to there which is outside of where they want to build, but you'll still be in the same neighborhood.

Is that doable, Mike?

MR. KOONCE: Yes.

COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Because he does a good thing; he really does.

If you go down, you go, what is going on here? And you see him down there. And he actually does what he says he's been doing a long time, without much fanfare. And he's absolutely right.

So, if we can get all these good people together, only good things can happen. Thank you.

MR. DEPORE: That's great. Thank you, Councilman.

COUNCILMAN MARIANO: You got it.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Are there any other questions or comments from the committee?

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Seeing none, this will conclude the public hearing. Are you satisfied, sir?

MR. DEPORE: Am I satisfied? I'll be satisfied when I see one family -- one kid from that neighborhood graduate high school and go to college.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Great.

Thank you so much for coming in, and for all the wonderful work that you do.

MR. DEPORE: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: This will conclude our public hearing.

(Hearing concluded at 9:41 a.m.)

Rules - 050164 - 3/31/05

CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the proceedings and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the stenographic notes taken by me upon the public hearing of The Philadelphia City Council, taken on March 31, 2005, and that this is a true and correct transcript of same.

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DAVID A. DEIK, RPR and

Commissioner of Deeds

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Rules - 050164 - 3/31/05

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
PUBLIC MEETING - COMMITTEE ON RULES

- - -

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, March 31, 2005, 9:42 a.m.

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040160 - An Ordinance approving the redevelopment proposal of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia for the redevelopment of the West Fairhill/East Tioga/Hunting Park Urban Renewal Area, being the area generally bounded by Wingohocking Street and Roosevelt Boulevard on the north, North Fifth Street and North Sixth Street on the east, Lehigh Avenue on the south and Broad Street and Venango Street on the west; approving the urban renewal plan and determining that such plan and redevelopment proposal conform to the general locality plan and make adequate provisions for individuals, business concerns and families who are displaced; determining the necessity for changes in and for zoning, streets, alleys, public ways, street patterns, location and relocation of public utilities; determining that the urban renewal plan and redevelopment proposal meet all non-discrimination requirements of federal, state and local laws and the regulations and policies promulgated with respect thereto; declaring that certain expressly designated and provided for condemnation is not imminent with respect to the Project; and declaring the redevelopment undertakings in the Project to be an important part of the City's program to remove and prevent the spread of urban blight.

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Rules - 050164 - 3/31/05

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We will now go into our public meeting.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Clarke for a motion.

COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I move that Bill Number 050164 be reported out of committee with a favorable recommendation and a request for a suspension of the rules so as to allow reading at the next session of Council.

UNIDENTIFIED COUNCIL PERSON: Second.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: It has been moved and properly seconded that Bill Number 050164 four be reported out of committee with a favorable recommendation; also, a recommendation that the rules of Council be suspended so as to permit first reading at our next session of Council.

All in favor will indicate by saying aye.

(Chorus of "ayes.")

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Those opposed?

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The ayes have it and the motion carries.

And that concludes our public meeting.

Thank you all very much. I would please request that all Council members please go into the Chamber immediately.

Thank you.

(Meeting concluded at 9:42 a.m.)

Rules - 050164 - 3/31/05

CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the proceedings and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the stenographic notes taken by me upon the public meeting of The Philadelphia City Council, taken on March 31, 2005, and that this is a true and correct transcript of same.

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