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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, March 3, 2008
10:10 a.m.

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PRESENT:

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COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO, CHAIR

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COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL

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COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO

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COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.

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COUNCILMAN WILLIAM GREENLEE

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COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.

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COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY

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BILL 080136 - An ordinance authorizing the
Free Library of Philadelphia, on behalf of the
City of Philadelphia, to accept a grant from
the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of
Education for renovations to the Central
Library Branch...

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V A R A L L O Incorporated

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Litigation Support Services

Eleven Penn Center

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1835 Market Street, Suite 600

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

215.561.2220 215.567.2670

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COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Good

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morning. I'd like to call the Committee

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on Finance to order and note that there

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is a quorum in the presence of Councilman

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Kenney, Councilman DiCicco, Councilman

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Greenlee, Councilwoman Blackwell and

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Councilman Goode.

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We ask the Clerk to read the

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bill.

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THE CLERK: An ordinance

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authorizing the Free Library of

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Philadelphia, on behalf of the City of

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Philadelphia, to accept a grant from the

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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department

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of Education for renovations to the

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Central Library Branch of the Free

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Library at 1901 Vine Street, pursuant to

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terms and conditions established by the

20

Commonwealth.

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COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you

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very much.

23

Who is here to testify on

24

behalf of the Library?

25

(Witness approached witness

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2 table.)

3 MR. McPEAK: Good morning.

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Good
5 morning.

6 MR. McPEAK: Committee Chair
7 Councilwoman Tasco and members of the
8 Committee on Finance, I am Joseph McPeak,
9 Interim President and Director of the
10 Free Library of Philadelphia. I am
11 pleased to have the opportunity to appear
12 before you this morning to discuss Bill
13 No. 080136, which was introduced by
14 Councilman Clarke and which authorizes
15 the Free Library to accept a grant of
16 \$500,000 from the Commonwealth of
17 Pennsylvania. These funds will allow us
18 to undertake much-needed renovations to
19 the public elevators in the Central
20 Library, and I respectfully encourage
21 your approval of the bill.

22 We've renovated all of our 52
23 branches throughout the '90s and into the
24 year 2000. We brought upgraded
25 facilities and technology in all our

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2 branches. Now, as you may know, we've
3 turned our attention to the Central
4 Library located on the Benjamin Franklin
5 Parkway. We've been working diligently
6 to raise funds to build that extension to
7 that library, but at the same time, we're
8 looking to also renovate and restore our
9 beautiful Beaux Arts building on the
10 Parkway, which was built in 1927. To
11 this end, the main library has been
12 renovated. The roof has been replaced.
13 We've had some technology upgrades in the
14 Central Library and also have upgraded
15 some of our offices.

16 But the next project is to
17 renovate our public elevators, which
18 serve our five floors. They are really
19 one of the major passageways -- it is the
20 major passageway to our public
21 departments and also to our Rare Book
22 Department, and also it's the major way
23 in which you can reach our public access
24 computers, which 175,000 people use them
25 a year. Overall, more than one million

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2 people visit the Central Library, and we
3 serve not only the region but also we're
4 the neighborhood branch for Spring
5 Garden, Fairmount Park and the Logan
6 Square neighborhood.

7 While there have been
8 improvements and upgrades over the years,
9 the original elevators have never been
10 replaced.

11 And, actually, I'll deviate
12 from the testimony a little bit. Over
13 the past month, we've had some
14 breakdowns. They've been out of service,
15 and I believe we had two people trapped
16 in them. So it's become not only a
17 problem with the building, but a safety
18 issue as well.

19 We are delighted that the
20 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has awarded
21 the Free Library a grant to renovate the
22 public elevators. The Keystone
23 Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund,
24 administered by the Department of
25 Education's Office of Commonwealth

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2 Libraries, is designed to fund
3 construction and renovation of public
4 library facilities. It is a highly
5 competitive grant and only 18 awards were
6 made this round, and it provides
7 much-needed funds for capital
8 improvements.

9 There were two conditions for
10 accepting the grant: A dollar-for-dollar
11 match, which we did meet, and also an
12 ordinance, which we have before you this
13 morning.

14 So I respectfully request your
15 support of Bill No. 080136 and ask for a
16 suspension of the rules so that the bill
17 may receive first reading at the next
18 session of Council. And thank you very
19 much for the opportunity to introduce
20 this measure. If you have any questions,
21 I'd be happy to answer.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
23 very much.

24 Who will apply for the grant on
25 behalf of the City? The Library?

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2 MR. McPEAK: The Library. We
3 have already applied for it, received it
4 with this condition. So at this point,
5 the monies are about to be released,
6 provided the ordinance is passed.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: The
8 ordinance is passed to say that you have
9 the 500?

10 MR. McPEAK: That's correct.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I noticed
12 you say that you hope to break ground on
13 the expansion in the spring. Is that --

14 MR. McPEAK: If that is in
15 there, that is a mistake. It should be
16 the end of this year.

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: By the end
18 of this year?

19 MR. McPEAK: The end of this
20 year, yes.

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Does that
22 mean you're on schedule?

23 MR. McPEAK: Yes. Yes, we are
24 on schedule. We have a \$15 million match
25 that we think we're about to meet soon,

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2 and with that, we'll be very close, if
3 not at groundbreaking. So we're very
4 optimistic.

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

6 Are there any other questions
7 from members of this Committee?

8 Councilman Curtis Jones.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
10 morning, sir.

11 MR. McPEAK: Good morning.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: First of
13 all, congratulations on receiving the
14 grant, and I'm excited for you by way of
15 its ability to beautify the Parkway and
16 also provide a lot of folk who depend on
17 the Library for their source of
18 information.

19 The question I have is, in the
20 renovations, to what degree are you going
21 to have access -- is that going to have
22 increased access to computer terminals
23 for people and to what degree is the
24 Library online?

25 MR. McPEAK: Yes. We have 80

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2 public computers in our Central Library,
3 and the majority of them, the vast
4 majority of them, are on the second
5 floor, and the major access besides the
6 steps and for people who are older, who
7 are handicapped, the major access are
8 those elevators. So the elevators take
9 you right up to the hallway where the
10 bank of computers are.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: The second
12 part of my question was, how much of the
13 books have been committed to be accessed
14 online? What kind of information is
15 available to particularly young people
16 and our seniors online that can't travel?

17 MR. McPEAK: Well, there are
18 approximately -- and I should get back to
19 you on the number. I believe it's over
20 100 subscribed databases that we have
21 that you'd have to purchase to get at
22 home, so you can't really get them at
23 home. In terms of children, children and
24 teens, we have a number of databases
25 serving just children and teens. And for

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2 seniors, we have an interesting database
3 called Generations Online, which assists
4 seniors to learn how to use a computer,
5 how to use a mouse, how to navigate the
6 web. So it's a particularly interesting
7 website.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: What are
9 your free services online?

10 MR. McPEAK: Oh, they're all
11 free.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Subscription
13 means --

14 MR. McPEAK: We, the City, pays
15 for them, that's correct. Then we offer
16 them to the public for free. And also
17 with a library card, they can access them
18 from home for those who have access to
19 the Internet at home.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

22 Are there any other questions?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Is there
25 anyone else here to testify on this bill?

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
4 very much for your testimony.

5 MR. McPEAK: Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: We'll now
7 go into our public meeting.

8 The Chair recognizes
9 Councilwoman Blackwell to report the bill
10 out of Committee.

11 Do you need a suspension?

12 MR. McPEAK: Yes.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Madam
14 Chair, I move that Bill No. 080136 be
15 reported out of Committee with a
16 favorable recommendation and also a
17 recommendation for a suspension of the
18 rules so that this may be heard at our
19 next session of Council.

20 (Duly seconded.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: It has
22 been moved and seconded that Bill 080136
23 be reported out of Committee with a
24 favorable recommendation and a
25 recommendation that Council suspend the

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2 rules so that this bill can have first
3 reading at the next Council session.
4 All in favor will say aye.
5 (Aye.)
6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Is there
7 any opposition?
8 (No response.)
9 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: There
10 being none, the motion is carried.
11 Thank you very much and good
12 luck.
13 (Committee on Finance adjourned
14 at 10:20 a.m.)
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CERTIFICATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY that the

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proceedings, evidence and objections are

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contained fully and accurately in the

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stenographic notes taken by me upon the

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foregoing matter on March 3, 2008, and that

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this is a true and correct transcript of same.

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MICHELE L. MURPHY

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RPR-Notary Public

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