

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

- - -

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Saturday, May 9, 2009
10:25 a.m.

- - -

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNA C. VERNA
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN JACK KELLY
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO

BILLS 090212, 090213, 090214, 090215, 090218,
090219, 090220 and 090221
RESOLUTION 090226

- - -

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
3 morning, everyone. This is a continued
4 public hearing of the Committee of the
5 Whole.

6 We're going to try to lower the
7 noise, because it's too much competition.

8 Our first witness this morning
9 will be Tracey Gordon.

10 (Witness approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
13 morning.

14 MS. GORDON: Good morning. How
15 are you?

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
17 They're going to lower that noise.
18 Please proceed. Identify yourself for
19 the record first.

20 MS. GORDON: Okay. My name is
21 Tracey Gordon. I'm a resident, block
22 captain and committee person in your
23 district in Southwest Philadelphia.
24 Thank you all for coming. It's kind of
25 different here on Saturday.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 I just want to give you just a
3 little brief history of my residency in
4 Southwest Philadelphia. I was able --
5 I'm a single parent of four, and I was
6 able to purchase my home in 1994, a row
7 house on a very beautiful block. I was
8 the first to integrate the area. It was
9 Irish Catholic, working class, very nice.
10 People would get up and sweep the front
11 of they properties, mow they lawns. It
12 just was automatic. That's how I grew
13 up.

14 I group up in West
15 Philadelphia, and I'm in my upper 40's,
16 and I remember on Saturdays the neighbors
17 just would clean up. This was just
18 something that we did. And so around
19 about 1998, the population moved out of
20 Philly, for whatever reason. They left
21 Southwest Philadelphia, and I just
22 noticed that the pride in the property
23 started to go down.

24 So I got information and I
25 learned -- I became a block captain,

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 because I noticed that people wasn't
3 mowing they lawns, and I didn't know what
4 to do about it, because at one point I'm
5 living on a beautiful block and everybody
6 is mowing they lawns and then four years
7 later, you know, when Irish Catholics
8 move out and then I have a different
9 population moving in of African Americans
10 and now we have a big influx of Africans
11 from a diaspora are moving in and there's
12 a lot of rentals that's coming, and I'm
13 noticing that people aren't mowing they
14 lawns and sweeping and everything. So I
15 became the block captain and got
16 information from your office.

17 And long story short, I've been
18 able to maintain the quality of life in
19 my block. We won two prestigious awards.
20 We won the Philadelphia More Beautiful
21 Award in 19, I believe, '99, and then we
22 won just last year Keeping Philadelphia
23 Beautiful Award just for having a nice
24 block. And so as I'm looking around, I
25 start recruiting block captains in my

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 neighborhood.

3 So it's been a fight. It
4 really has been a fight. There's a lot
5 of violence here, hours that I'm doing,
6 and I feel almost defeated. But I can't
7 be defeated because I can't afford to
8 move. If I could afford to move or hit
9 the lottery, I would, because what I'm
10 noticing in my area, Southwest Philly and
11 South Philly, or wherever I drive around,
12 I just see trash all over the place, and
13 sometimes I get out my car and pick it
14 up, or if I'm on the street, I'm picking
15 it up, and I'm almost getting more like
16 obsessed with it, because I don't think
17 that it costs a lot of money to sweep the
18 front of your property.

19 Why are you abandoning a tire?
20 You know, this was your tire. Why would
21 you leave this tire here? I had the
22 kids -- we had the first clean-up and
23 they gathered over 27 tires just in my
24 two-block radius. I had the kids do it.
25 And now that Mayor Nutter has abandoned

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 tire removal, even on a block clean-up
3 day, they left 26 tires there, and when
4 Councilman Rizzo addressed that, they
5 did -- by the time I got home and I
6 addressed it, they picked up the tires.
7 And then when the Commissioner Clarena
8 Tolson testified that she hasn't seen a
9 problem with the elimination of tire
10 removal and elimination of street
11 cleaning and also bulk trash, she said
12 she hasn't seen that as a problem. I'm
13 trying to figure out, what neighborhood,
14 one, does she live in. I already know.
15 So it may not be a problem in upper
16 Wynnefield, but some parts of Wynnefield
17 it is. And down near Southwest Philly,
18 those eliminations that the Mayor did is
19 becoming a problem.

20 We live in row houses, so we
21 live next door to each other. So, you
22 know, you can't ignore your next-door
23 neighbor who wants to put they trash out
24 on Monday when it's Friday and, you know,
25 the rodents and all that kind of stuff.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 So quality of life is really
3 going down in Southwest Philly and I
4 would hope that, if possible, we can
5 expand the CLIP and the Whip program.
6 The CLIP is in Northeast; the Whip is in
7 West Philadelphia, and if we can expand
8 the CLIP program.

9 Another quick thing I wanted to
10 say, the BRT assessments and the
11 nightmare that's going on in Philly, it's
12 going to be very hard to assess my
13 property, because my property value -- I
14 have no abandoned properties. The last
15 house just sold for 125, but within a
16 block and a half, you couldn't give one
17 of the houses away. So I'm trying to
18 figure out, a block and a half, how is
19 the BRT going to assess a block where you
20 got a stable block and then a block and a
21 half away, you got a very, very unstable
22 abandoned property, drug block?

23 Absentee landlords, we have a
24 big problem in this city with renters.
25 They are not registering. I just happen

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 to call on a property on my block because
3 the window is just out and he's just
4 totally negligent. I called Marianne,
5 looked it up, come to find out he's
6 renting a single-family home, he made it
7 into three apartments. Never should have
8 done it, but it was there when I moved in
9 in 1994.

10 How are people allowed to break
11 a house into -- a single-family home,
12 break it in and then rent it and then
13 register? That's where a lot of our
14 money could come from, too. We need to
15 come up with a serious rental overseer
16 whereas if an owner wants to rent out the
17 property -- because a lot of times, not
18 all renters, but a lot of times renters
19 are the problems in our neighborhood.
20 Why aren't they registering these
21 properties and why aren't the City
22 getting the fees to the property that
23 will help us maintain it?

24 Lastly, I noticed -- I got this
25 resolution that you all seemed to

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 approve. I think Mayor -- Governor
3 Rendell -- Resolution 090365, and it's a
4 resolution approving into law Abandoned
5 and Blighted Property Conservatorship
6 Act, HB 2188. I think this is a good
7 idea. The only problem that I see with
8 it possibly -- an addendum should be put
9 in here -- is, we don't want the slum
10 lords to buy to get these properties,
11 because the slum lords tend to have the
12 money, and then they buy the properties
13 and then they rent it and it becomes like
14 a nightmare, because what's happening in
15 Philadelphia is, they're doing a lot of
16 piling on in Southwest, because the
17 Africans from the diasporas, the ones
18 that have the money, are renting property
19 and then they're putting like 40 people
20 in a house. That's how the kids got
21 burned down right there on Elmwood
22 Avenue. It was like six families in
23 there, and that's how six people died.
24 It was on CNN, because they piled -- they
25 didn't have no stairs. It was a rental.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 It wasn't registered for rental.

3 So I was just saying that I
4 feel very -- I'm very upset and I feel
5 very bad living in Philadelphia now,
6 because it's filthy dirty, and most of us
7 aren't filthy dirty, but what -- I sweep
8 my whole block every week. That's just
9 something I do. But is it one or two
10 individuals' responsibility to keep the
11 City clean? What is the City doing to
12 make sure that if they find the people,
13 they collect fines?

14 They're not collecting the
15 fines. I looked it up. 2007 data shows
16 that they only collected a third,
17 one-third, of the penalties that they got
18 from the fines of people who neglecting
19 they properties. The other two-thirds
20 never got collected. Why? Because I
21 figure if we put the Parking Authority in
22 charge of that, they will collect it.
23 Now, you might can't get a boot on your
24 house, but somehow they'll figure out to
25 collect it, because they got to keep the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 patronage jobs over there. I don't mind
3 patronage jobs if they get the job done.
4 Because if we writing tickets and people
5 are just throwing the tickets and tearing
6 it up and they not even trying to mow
7 they lawns and everything, it's just to
8 no avail.

9 So I just wanted to come here,
10 take my time on a Saturday --

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

12 Tracey, thank you. I really appreciate
13 your coming in, and I think the issue
14 about full valuation is for another day,
15 and I know that you'll be very involved
16 in that.

17 MS. GORDON: Yeah.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: I

19 want you to know that the Administration
20 is trying to make the CLIP program
21 citywide.

22 Further, you mentioned about a
23 neighbor putting trash out on a Sunday
24 and it's not collected until Monday or
25 Tuesday. Then I think it behooves you to

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 call the sanitation officer in the police
3 district to have that person cited and
4 let them understand that they're not
5 allowed to do that.

6 MS. GORDON: Well, that works,
7 but getting down to the rental, you cite
8 the property owner, not the renter. So
9 the renter don't care, because they're
10 not getting cited. The property owner,
11 who lives in Florida or down south, is
12 not there and we're not collecting the
13 money. So they're just say, Oh,
14 whatever. They throwing the tickets
15 away.

16 I think we should increase the
17 citing or whatever, but, like you said,
18 it's another day. I just want to say
19 that I'm just not very proud of our city.
20 Like Mayor Nagin from New Orleans said,
21 that it's a filthy mess. We have to come
22 up with a solution about the trash.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
25 you so much.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 Are there any questions or
3 comments from members of the Committee?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

6 Again, Tracey, thank you, and thank you
7 for all the work that you do.

8 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
9 witness is Cathy Scott.

10 (Witness approached witness
11 table.)

12 MS. SCOTT: Good morning --

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
14 morning.

15 MS. SCOTT: -- Madam President
16 Verna. I just want to point out that
17 there is a proofreading error in my
18 testimony and some of the millions were
19 left out.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Oh,
21 okay.

22 MS. SCOTT: So we'll submit
23 some revisions to it, but as I go
24 through, I'll be citing millions.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Very

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 well.

3 MS. SCOTT: Good morning,
4 President Verna and members of City
5 Council. My name is Catherine Scott and
6 I am President of AFSCME District Council
7 47. I welcome the opportunity to provide
8 testimony today.

9 As we all are aware,
10 Philadelphia, like the rest of the
11 country, faces many challenges over the
12 next few years. How we approach these
13 challenges will say a great deal about
14 what we value, what principles we hold
15 important when we face adversity, how we
16 treat our most vulnerable residents, and
17 our vision for Philadelphia.

18 Last year, the Mayor said that
19 two issues were driving the budget
20 crisis, the investment performance of the
21 Pension Fund and the reduction in the
22 business privilege tax receipts. There
23 appeared to be very little analysis of
24 the City's taxing policies and City
25 services. The Mayor's, quote,

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 "rebalanced," end quote, budget was
3 focused on halting planned tax cuts and
4 cutting City services. At that time, the
5 Mayor stated, quote, "everything is on
6 the table - program reductions, changes
7 in services and scheduled wage and
8 business privilege tax cuts," unquote.

9 Unfortunately, when the Mayor
10 presented this FY 2010 budget, it became
11 clear that everything was not on the
12 table. Increased sales and property
13 taxes were on the table. Cutting
14 employee jobs and benefits were on the
15 table. Cutting City programs were on the
16 table.

17 What wasn't on the table was an
18 honest discussion of our taxing policies
19 which got Philadelphia into this fiscal
20 crisis. Talking about the historic
21 underfunding by the City of its pension
22 plan and what would be an honorable way
23 to address resolving the issue was not on
24 the table. So I would like to suggest
25 some points for discussion by City

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 Council as it deliberates the FY 2010
3 budget.

4 For more than a decade, the
5 City has pursued a plan to reduce both
6 wage and business taxes, but I will limit
7 my remarks concerning the cumulative
8 effect to the period FY 2000 through FY
9 2009. The cumulative loss in wage tax is
10 \$914.2 million. The gross receipts is
11 335.9 million, for a total of \$1.25
12 billion. As I understand it, these
13 reductions are based on the premise that
14 they will stem the tide of loss of
15 residents and businesses. I would ask
16 the Administration and City Council to
17 define what success is. How do you know
18 if wage and business tax reductions are
19 working?

20 What we do know is that basic
21 City services are being reduced and at an
22 alarming rate. Phil Goldsmith, a former
23 City Managing Director, clearly laid out
24 the reduction in City employees in City
25 departments in an article earlier this

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 year. Also, we know that tax reductions
3 do not work in attracting businesses and
4 residents unless services do not
5 decrease. We know that City services are
6 being significantly reduced. Library
7 services are the most obvious, but there
8 are many others. Since 1975, the City
9 has lost 17 percent of its residents, but
10 reduced City employees by 25 percent.
11 For the pundits who allege that the City
12 has not reduced its workforce, these
13 statistics belie those assertions.

14 District Council 47 has made
15 many suggestions about raising revenue,
16 collecting money which is owed and saving
17 money which the City can ill afford to
18 waste. Let me cite a few examples.

19 First, the City could increase
20 its cash flow by making payments more
21 taxpayer friendly. It should stop
22 charging a fee to pay bills by credit
23 card. It should permit taxpayers who opt
24 to do so to pay their real estate taxes
25 on a monthly basis. This would eliminate

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 the need to borrow in the fall of each
3 year at high interest rates to have
4 sufficient money to keep the City
5 running.

6 Two, the City is owed in excess
7 of \$400 million in back taxes. It should
8 develop an aggressive plan to correct
9 what is owed and identify what is
10 uncollectible. What is uncollectible
11 should be written off, and it should
12 collect what is collectible. In excess
13 of \$1 billion is owed in unpaid bail.
14 The City should develop a plan to
15 identify what is collectible and take the
16 necessary action to collect what is owed.

17 Third, the City, with the First
18 Judicial District, should consider
19 releasing non-violent sentenced offenders
20 to probation with the appropriate
21 rehabilitation needed. This would reduce
22 prison overcrowding, unsafe working
23 conditions and costs by more than \$20
24 million a year. By hiring 11 probation
25 officers at a cost of \$600,000,

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 non-violent offenders would be supervised
3 and could become productive taxpaying
4 residents, adding additional revenue
5 beyond the savings cited.

6 The City should cease
7 contracting out, especially where it is
8 more expensive to contract out than hire
9 City employees. For example, the City
10 could save over \$12 million per year in
11 the Health Department alone by hiring
12 Civil Service employees to do work
13 presently contracted out. City Council
14 could transfer out of Class 200 to Class
15 100 the amount of these contracts, which
16 would force the Administration to act on
17 this issue. Further, the City could
18 mirror the rest of the healthcare
19 industry and hire physician assistants
20 and nurse practitioners rather than only
21 physicians and save even more money than
22 the \$12 million I cited.

23 Five, the City could streamline
24 its revenue collection procedures and
25 coordinate the issuance of building

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 permits and other licenses with
3 guaranteeing that businesses have
4 business licenses and that they are
5 current on their taxes. Estimates are
6 that between \$5 million and \$20 million
7 could be raised each year if this were
8 done.

9 Six, the City loses almost \$100
10 million per year in revenue presently
11 because non-profit companies are exempted
12 from paying real estate taxes for
13 property which they own. It should
14 develop a plan to lobby the state
15 Legislature to permit Payment in Lieu of
16 Taxes, PILOTs, for non-profits. If
17 PILOTs were implemented at 40 percent of
18 the present taxable amount, the City
19 could be paid \$37.5 million per year. As
20 large non-profits such as the University
21 of Pennsylvania, Drexel University and
22 Temple University continue to acquire
23 real estate, the real estate tax base
24 shrinks and it shifts more of the burden
25 onto homeowners who cannot afford large

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 real estate tax increases.

3 These are a few of the
4 suggestions our union has made to the
5 Administration and City Council members
6 to raise revenue, collect revenue more
7 effectively or save money. Sadly, none
8 of these suggestions have been agreed
9 upon by the Administration nor acted
10 upon.

11 On Monday, May 4th, the City
12 had its initial meeting with our union
13 and presented its contract proposals.
14 These draconian proposals would place the
15 balancing of the City budget on the backs
16 of its workers. A brief summary is no
17 wage increase for four years, reductions
18 in pay through layoffs, furloughs, no
19 longevity payments, no step increases,
20 increased contributions to existing
21 pension plans, a new pension plan with no
22 specifics, undefined reduction in health
23 benefits and increased cost to employees
24 for those benefits, and work rule changes
25 with no explanation for why they are

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 needed. In his budget, the Mayor listed
3 \$25 million annual savings from the
4 employee benefits. When asked, the City
5 stated that District Council 47's portion
6 was three and a half to \$4 million
7 annually. However, the City team stated
8 that even if those savings were achieved,
9 there was no assurance that our union
10 would benefit from them since, quote,
11 "other factors," end quote, may require
12 the City to apply those savings to other
13 than our contract.

14 When asked what savings the
15 City would achieve from its proposals, on
16 each item the City stated it has not
17 costed it out and it would have to get
18 back to us. And this expires June 30th.

19 I commend City Council members
20 for asking probing, focused and
21 thoughtful questions of department heads
22 as they presented their budgets. I
23 believe the media has not covered your
24 hearings with the attention they deserve.
25 The City is at the crossroads of

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 important tax policy decisions about who
3 funds City services and what are the
4 appropriate levels of services. Should
5 rolling back the wage tax to the 2007
6 rate of 4.25 percent, which would cost
7 \$165 for a person making \$50,000 a year,
8 be off limits? Should rolling back
9 business privilege tax rates to 2007
10 rates of 0.1540 percent, which costs \$154
11 for a business grossing \$100,000 a year,
12 be off limits? My answer is a resounding
13 no, especially when in just one of its
14 contract proposals the Mayor is asking my
15 members to give up longevity payments of
16 between \$625 and \$2,225 each year for
17 four years.

18 Our members who work for the
19 City or the First Judicial District are
20 all City residents. As taxpayers, voters
21 and consumers of City services, we have
22 an interest in the financial health of
23 the City as well as the City's commitment
24 to its residents. I have 3,500 letters
25 from our members to you as their elected

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 officials expressing their concerns. So
3 your budget choices will say what your
4 values are. Our members and all of
5 Philadelphia is depending on you to be
6 fair and equitable in your vote and not
7 to support an unknown contingency budget.

8 Thank you for the opportunity
9 to testify, and I'd be happy to entertain
10 questions if you have any.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
12 you very much, Ms. Scott.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: One
15 moment, Ms. Scott, please.

16 At this time, the Chair
17 recognizes Councilman Jones.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
19 Madam President.

20 I would be remiss if I didn't
21 say to my colleagues that are mothers
22 happy Mother's Day, and the gift that I
23 will give you is that I will ask few
24 questions because of the volume of people
25 that are here today, but I would be

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 remiss if I didn't take advantage of the
3 opportunity to talk to Ms. Scott.

4 First, I would say and ask the
5 same questions I asked District Council
6 33 yesterday when they testified, and
7 first say thank you for you and your
8 members working with Council to give us
9 good information so that we could ask the
10 probing questions and not just take
11 everything from the management side and
12 point of view, but from the workforce
13 side of the people who actually have to
14 implement the budgets that we pass, and
15 that was very helpful to me as a
16 freshman, and I shared that with all of
17 my colleagues on Council.

18 Secondly, I guess I would
19 ask -- you raise some interesting points
20 in your testimony. One of the statistics
21 that's always given us is the City's
22 population loss versus the size of City
23 government, and in your testimony, you
24 kind of refute that. Could you elaborate
25 on that?

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 MS. SCOTT: Yes. As a matter
3 of fact, we had a researcher look into
4 that assertion that has been going on for
5 a long time, that the City workforce is
6 not shrinking and the population is
7 shrinking and, therefore, the City has to
8 right-size its number of employees. And,
9 clearly, the number of City employees
10 that are providing basic departmental
11 services is shrinking and has continued
12 to shrink. One of the things that I
13 think frequently is overlooked is that
14 the City is both a county and a city, and
15 when we look at the functions that are
16 being provided and the increases, they
17 are really county functions. If you look
18 at the increase in departments, it's the
19 Department of Human Services, which is a
20 county function, Mental Health and Mental
21 Retardation area is a county function. I
22 would argue that the Prison System is a
23 county function. So the basic City
24 services clearly are shrinking, and I
25 think former Managing Director Goldsmith

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 laid that out very clearly.

3 What we see the increases in
4 are things that are generally funded by
5 state and federal government money. You
6 know, the state funds the majority of the
7 Department of Human Services. The Mental
8 Health is funded mainly by federal and
9 state money. Unfortunately, the Prisons
10 is being completely carried by the City,
11 and that was one of the reasons why we
12 addressed some ways of saving money at
13 the Prison, because we think that the
14 policy for the Prisons is really wrong to
15 be sending all these people to prison --

16 (Applause.)

17 MS. SCOTT: -- as opposed to
18 having them in the community and trying
19 to deal with their problems.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are you
21 familiar with the concept of community
22 courts, and do you support that?

23 MS. SCOTT: Absolutely.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: I just
25 wanted it on the record.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 MS. SCOTT: Absolutely. Yes.

3 As a person who formerly worked at the
4 Prisons before I became a full-time
5 employee of the union, I know very well
6 that Prisons are really not meeting the
7 needs of people that we're sending to
8 prison.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: And,
10 finally, you made a number of suggestions
11 by way of cost savings that the City
12 could realize if we implemented them.
13 Has there been an ongoing dialogue with
14 the Administration about where those
15 savings are and whether they are, quote,
16 "valid" and whether they could be
17 implemented? Has there been that kind of
18 working group, if you would?

19 MS. SCOTT: We have presented
20 this information to the Administration.
21 I wouldn't say there's an ongoing
22 dialogue. I think that there is
23 tremendous resistance on the part of the
24 Administration to doing this.

25 For example, we have had

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 meetings with the Health Department, the
3 Commissioner, Deputy Mayor Schwarz.
4 We've talked to the Managing Director.
5 It's even been raised with the Mayor
6 about the savings that could happen in
7 the Health Department, and they
8 acknowledge that it is more expensive to
9 pay contract workers than City employees.
10 However, they have taken no action to do
11 that.

12 They also acknowledge -- and I
13 did not put this in the testimony -- that
14 in addition to the salaries and other
15 administrative expenses that they would
16 save, the City pays the malpractice
17 insurance of physicians that are on
18 contract. If they were City employees,
19 the City would not be paying that
20 malpractice insurance and would be --
21 again, that's an additional saving.

22 We have raised with the
23 Department also the idea of having
24 physicians' assistants and nurse
25 practitioners, and the City does not even

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 have physicians' assistants in their
3 Medical Evaluation Unit where they give
4 physicals to people returning -- either
5 being hired or returning to work from
6 medical leave.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: There was an
8 analysis that I saw that showed how we
9 could actually save money by hiring the
10 physician versus the situation where we
11 have a contractual relationship with a
12 doctor who has a relationship with a
13 hospital during the day.

14 MS. SCOTT: Yes.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: And is it a
16 cause and effect that therefore we have
17 three-month, six-month waits to see a
18 doctor? I'm wondering who is watching
19 and analyzing that kind of cause and
20 effect.

21 MS. SCOTT: I don't really
22 think there is analysis going on. The
23 amount of money that could be saved by
24 having City-employed physicians as
25 opposed to contract physicians, that's --

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 and other contract workers. It's not
3 just physicians. There is a lot of
4 contract now in the Health Department.
5 But to then not use professionals that
6 the state has increased their ability to
7 perform more work because they've
8 expanded what physicians' assistants and
9 nurse practitioners can do without having
10 a physician there, for the City to not
11 take advantage of this and have the
12 waiting list that they have at the health
13 centers, it's ridiculous. It really is.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
15 Madam President.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
17 you.

18 Ms. Scott, I don't know if
19 you're in a position to tell me how many
20 doctors we have working at the health
21 centers.

22 MS. SCOTT: City doctors? I
23 don't believe there are any.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: How
25 about the doctors who were --

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 MS. SCOTT: The contracted
3 doctors?

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yes.

5 MS. SCOTT: I'm not exactly
6 sure, but we could get those numbers. I
7 know we did an analysis of that. They're
8 all contracted doctors.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
10 if my memory serves me correctly, I think
11 last year during our budget hearings most
12 of the doctors that were working at the
13 health centers did have waivers because
14 they do not live in the City.

15 MS. SCOTT: That's correct.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
17 think your suggestion is a very good one
18 and I think that many of us will be very
19 happy to look into that.

20 MS. SCOTT: Thank you very
21 much.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
24 you.

25 The Chair recognizes Councilman

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 Goode.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Point of
4 information.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yes.
6 The Chair recognizes Councilman Rizzo.

7 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Madam
8 President, I believe I recollect the
9 Health Commissioner stating that there
10 were four full-time doctors, that they
11 made 96,000, where the part-time doctors
12 made one hundred and --

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: 25.

14 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: One hundred
15 and twenty-five thousand. So there are,
16 I believe, four doctors, not including
17 the Health Commissioner, that are --

18 MS. SCOTT: I don't believe
19 that they are -- they may be managerial
20 people.

21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Yeah, and
22 they're doctors.

23 MS. SCOTT: Well, yes, but
24 they're not necessarily providing direct
25 service to people.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: That could
3 be, but there are -- again, I'm doing
4 this from memory. I think there are
5 four.

6 MS. SCOTT: Oh, I'm sorry.
7 There are four. There are four
8 physicians, Civil Service physicians.

9 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: See, we
10 listen to this testimony.

11 MS. SCOTT: Yes. But -- yes,
12 and hiring contract doctors is much more
13 expensive. However, the City could also
14 have a waiver for Civil Service doctors
15 just like they have -- as a matter of
16 fact, those doctors probably have
17 waivers.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm
19 sure they do.

20 MS. SCOTT: And if I could just
21 add, contract employees are not required
22 to complete any of the disclosure
23 information that City employees are
24 required. In addition to the -- I know
25 people talk about the residency issue,

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 but many of our members are required to
3 file state financial disclosure forms
4 because of the work that they do. I'm
5 not suggesting doctors do. But when you
6 have contracted employees, they are
7 really outside of the purview of the
8 review of government, and I don't think
9 that that is always taken into
10 consideration either. It reduces
11 transparency and I think it also reduces
12 Council's ability to actually find out
13 what is happening when work is contracted
14 out.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
16 you.

17 COUNCILMAN Rizzo: One more
18 point of information.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Yes.
20 The Chair recognizes Councilman Rizzo --

21 COUNCILMAN Rizzo: Also --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: --
23 for another point of information.

24 COUNCILMAN Rizzo: Also, it
25 wasn't clear to us whether or not the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 malpractice insurance was paid for.

3 That's not transparent, nor is there a
4 benefit package provided to the part-time
5 doctors. We're not sure of that. And
6 that's been a question that -- especially
7 the residency waivers. I said all along
8 that I think we have a lot of fine
9 physicians that would love an opportunity
10 to live in this city to work part time
11 for the City. So I just don't get it why
12 we can't find people that are residents
13 of the City of Philadelphia.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
16 you.

17 The Chair recognizes Councilman
18 Goode for the second time.

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
20 Madam President.

21 Good morning, Ms. Scott.

22 MS. SCOTT: Good morning,
23 Councilman.

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I have two
25 questions for you, both of which you're

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 familiar with.

3 The Mayor proposed roughly a
4 \$3.8, \$3.9 billion budget. Do you
5 believe that that is the right
6 appropriation level or should it be
7 higher or lower?

8 MS. SCOTT: Well, we think that
9 the appropriation level should be higher,
10 and the reason we say that is because in
11 the Mayor's budget, there are still
12 significant reductions in City services.
13 We have been notified by the City that we
14 are facing layoffs that are effective
15 July 1st. And beyond that, this budget
16 does not restore the cuts in library
17 services, and we are extremely concerned
18 about the libraries and what is going to
19 happen there.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So do you
22 have a recommended appropriation level?

23 MS. SCOTT: Well, we think that
24 the City should be appropriating the
25 amount of money that will restore the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 services that have been cut.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Okay.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: The reason
6 why I ask the second question
7 specifically in terms of what the
8 appropriation level should be is because
9 you've identified several different
10 savings within your testimony, and
11 there's been savings identified by other
12 people, including Councilmembers as well.
13 My question is, where should those
14 savings go? In other words, should it go
15 to fund the \$3.8, \$3.9, \$4.0 billion
16 budget? Should it go directly into labor
17 contracts? In terms of savings you've
18 identified, where do you think they
19 should go?

20 MS. SCOTT: Well, I think it
21 should be a combination. I think that it
22 is important for the City to restore
23 services, but I think it is also for the
24 City to be fair to its employees. And as
25 I cited in my testimony, the proposals

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 that we've received from the City of
3 Philadelphia would really significantly
4 cut our members' pay. We're not talking
5 about just a zero in benefits or in
6 wages. We're talking about taking money
7 out of people's pocket. And, you know,
8 that is of a serious concern to us.

9 So we think it should be a
10 combination of both.

11 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So the
12 follow-up to both questions, what is your
13 final recommendation in terms of what
14 Council should do? Knowing that if we
15 set an appropriation level with, let's
16 say, \$3.9 billion, that money is already
17 spent before contracts are negotiated.
18 So I'm sure you're not asking us to set
19 an appropriation level that uses up all
20 the potential tax revenue and uses up all
21 the potential savings that have been
22 identified. So at the end of the day,
23 what are you recommending Council do in
24 terms of appropriation level?

25 MS. SCOTT: Well, as I said, I

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 think the appropriation level should be
3 higher. Now, you know, I did not come
4 prepared to give a specific number. But
5 beyond that, we believe that there are
6 significant savings here. Our concern is
7 that unions are not going to get credit
8 for any of the savings. If we want to go
9 in and negotiate a contract with the
10 City, we have to believe that we have a
11 partnership there where if we find
12 savings that could go to wage increases
13 or benefit increases for our members,
14 that we will be credited with that.

15 In my meeting with the City, we
16 were clearly told that that was not the
17 City's approach, and for us, we see that
18 as very problematic. This Administration
19 has expressed no interest in doing
20 redesign in government initiatives, where
21 we think that even more savings could be
22 identified, because one of the things
23 that I'd like to emphasize here is, these
24 are savings we found without the City's
25 cooperation. We think that if there were

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 cooperation with the Administration, that
3 we could actually find a lot more savings
4 and a lot more efficient ways of
5 providing City services. But no union
6 leader is going to negotiate against
7 themselves, and that's really what we
8 would be expected to do if we came in and
9 found savings for the City and then the
10 approach that was taken was, Thank you
11 very much and, oh, by the way, we're
12 going to lay you off and you're not going
13 to have any salary increases. So that is
14 not going to benefit my members, and I
15 would like to see our members get credit
16 for savings that they come up with so
17 that they, like everybody else, can keep
18 their jobs, provide good City services
19 and have decent wages and benefits.

20 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
21 Ms. Scott.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
24 Madam President.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 Chair recognizes Councilman Clarke.

3 MS. SCOTT: Oh, I'm sorry.

4 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: That's
5 okay.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Ms.
7 Scott, you're not finished.

8 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I actually
9 am going to be very brief, because
10 actually Councilman Goode asked the
11 questions. It was along the lines of the
12 questions that I was going to ask with
13 respect to your last statement about
14 Council not voting for a contingency
15 budget, because, in fact, we have
16 submitted a proposal that allocates, from
17 our perspective, the necessary revenues
18 to support the Mayor's 3.8 budget.

19 When you make the statement not
20 to support a contingency budget, I guess
21 now you're saying based on the amount of
22 appropriation power and not the fact that
23 it's contingent upon state authorization
24 of sales tax and pension restructuring,
25 things that are not directly in our

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 control? I just wanted a little clarity
3 on that, because I think I heard you in
4 response to Councilman Goode.

5 MS. SCOTT: Yes. We're very
6 concerned about a budget that is so
7 reliant on sales tax and the amortization
8 legislation being approved by the state
9 Legislature, and obviously they are on a
10 different legislative schedule than the
11 City is for their budget versus the City
12 budget. And we're particularly concerned
13 about any budget that would be passed
14 without the sales tax and the
15 amortization bills being approved by the
16 state Legislature. That would really --
17 which is one of the reasons why we are
18 strongly suggesting that the wage tax and
19 the business privilege tax not be off the
20 table. I think there is enough analysis
21 that is being done that to roll it back
22 to 2007 levels really is not onerous for
23 businesses or for wage-earners.

24 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Okay. I
25 actually agree with that.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 One quick question with respect
3 to doctors. In some instances I know
4 that there is a scenario where doctors
5 get waivers for their student loans,
6 because I have a family member that's a
7 doctor, and the biggest problem with
8 ultimate employment coming out of
9 internship and all that is the fact that
10 you got this gigantic student loan and
11 you have to pay it back regardless of
12 what you make, unless you work in a
13 particular program. If you work for a
14 government entity, is there any sort of
15 waiver or reduction in the obligation to
16 repay the student loan at the particular
17 schedule?

18 MS. SCOTT: I'm not familiar
19 for physicians. I think for nurses there
20 may be some -- we can provide that
21 information to you. There are some
22 forgiveness programs for nurses, and I
23 have someone here, actually Bob Coyle, he
24 could probably come up and answer the
25 question for you.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Well, the
3 reason I ask that about the doctors,
4 because you talked about having
5 physicians' assistants and the difference
6 in cost versus nurses, and I think that
7 based on my conversations with this
8 family member and actually the concern
9 about the national agenda reducing the
10 pay of doctors, like the European model,
11 the cost associated with student loans is
12 dramatically less, so, therefore, doctors
13 will be willing to work for less. But in
14 this environment when you're coming out
15 of medical school with a \$150,000,
16 \$200,000 student loan, you have to pay
17 that back on the schedule regardless of
18 what your situation is.

19 MS. SCOTT: I understand
20 exactly what you're saying.

21 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: That's
22 really the problem.

23 MS. SCOTT: That actually could
24 be legislation that I think that the City
25 could push at the state level and see if

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 physicians who work for the City, just
3 like school teachers and other workers
4 who get forgiveness because of doing
5 government work, it would be, I think,
6 probably a very good enticement to bring
7 doctors to work for the City.

8 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Doctors are
9 committed people.

10 MS. SCOTT: But that, I
11 believe, would be something that we would
12 have to suggest to the state Legislature.

13 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: No. I
14 understand. If we can do it locally, I
15 think we would have done it already. But
16 that would be something that your union
17 would be supportive of?

18 MS. SCOTT: Absolutely. Yes.

19 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you.

20 Thank you, Madam President.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
22 You're welcome.

23 The Chair recognizes
24 Councilwoman Sanchez.

25 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 you.

3 I want to thank Councilman
4 Jones for not asking a lot of questions
5 the day before Mother's Day.

6 Cathy, one of the things that
7 concerns me in your presentation -- and,
8 in fact, it's the tone of today's Daily
9 News editorial around, Let's get it
10 together -- I'm concerned about you're
11 saying that you have put forth some
12 potential savings and that this
13 Administration is not entertaining them
14 or they are entertaining them but they
15 don't want to give you credit? I just
16 want to know in terms of are we dealing
17 in good faith here?

18 MS. SCOTT: I think that the
19 approach of the Administration is a
20 similar approach to the suggestions that
21 City Council members have made, which is
22 essentially they look at what suggestions
23 you make, they say, Thank you very much,
24 they go off and decide what they want to
25 do, and then they say they did it and

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 they never give you any feedback about
3 other suggestions that are made and why
4 they may not have acted upon it.

5 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Is this
6 any different than previous
7 Administrations or do you find this to be
8 better or worse in terms of when the
9 union has tried to come up with savings
10 for the City?

11 MS. SCOTT: In my opinion, it's
12 worse. We did have some -- even though
13 it was not used to the extent that it
14 could have been used, we did have under
15 the previous Administrations some
16 redesign in government initiatives, where
17 we collaborated with them and we
18 attempted to have three wins, a win for
19 the Administration, a win for the workers
20 and a win for the citizens. We did
21 manage to streamline functions or have
22 operations work better.

23 For example, the first redesign
24 in government initiative we engaged in
25 was the meal program in the Recreation

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 Department, which brought in money to the
3 City, provided meals to children, and our
4 members were very happy with the work
5 that they were doing.

6 So there have been some
7 significant successes in the past. I
8 have raised repeatedly with this
9 Administration trying to do a redesign in
10 government initiative. Any redesign in
11 government initiative would be helpful,
12 and their response in contract
13 negotiations was to eliminate the no
14 layoff clause in the redesign in
15 government initiative provision in the
16 contract.

17 So what they want is for people
18 to think about ways of saving the City
19 money that may in fact result in them
20 losing their job, and I told them that
21 that really takes away any value in a
22 redesign in government initiative. I
23 don't think that they have been
24 responsive to any of the other proposals
25 that we have made.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Going
3 back to the point around appropriate
4 appropriations level, as you're aware, we
5 are being asked to sign off on a budget
6 and an appropriation that calls for \$25
7 million in savings in the first year and
8 then absolutely no increases going back
9 five years.

10 As union President, do you
11 think it would be responsible for us to
12 approve a budget with that? Do you think
13 the union is going to be prepared to do
14 that?

15 MS. SCOTT: Well, I have talked
16 to people in City Council that the \$25
17 million line item decrease in benefits to
18 us is unacceptable and should be removed
19 from the budget. Originally it was
20 listed as benefits under healthcare. I
21 did ask the Administration what they
22 meant in contract negotiations. They
23 said it was not just limited to
24 healthcare, it was in general savings.

25 But that is to us unacceptable,

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 because rather than even having any money
3 in there for modest increases in
4 healthcare or wages, it's a reduction,
5 and if we are not going to be provided
6 with any credit for reductions that we
7 find, it's just a cut in wages.

8 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ:

9 Obviously you understand that we are in
10 the middle of unprecedented economic
11 situations, and that healthcare costs
12 related to our budget is one that we're
13 going to have to get control of. Is the
14 union prepared as part of the
15 negotiations to say, We're going to sit
16 down and figure out how we save money and
17 break down some of the silos that have
18 existed around that? I mean --

19 MS. SCOTT: I don't think the
20 union is creating the silos. I think
21 that we have an Administration that is
22 reluctant to look at processes. Like,
23 for example, one of the things that I
24 suggested was the failure of different
25 departments to look at whether businesses

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 actually have licenses to do business in
3 the City of Philadelphia, to make sure
4 that their taxes are paid before they
5 issue permits or other work orders.

6 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: But as
7 it relates to healthcare -- because one
8 of the issues that came up during our
9 budget discussion was in some cases we
10 have married couples who work for the
11 unions who are like doubled insured and
12 all those practices that increase the
13 cost of our business. Are you, as part
14 of negotiations, willing to look at that
15 and in fact --

16 MS. SCOTT: Well, I don't think
17 people are double insured.

18 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: That was
19 one of the issues that came up.

20 MS. SCOTT: No. I understand
21 that, and I think that this is, again,
22 another red herring. If someone
23 worked -- it is not unusual for a married
24 couple to be employed -- both people to
25 be employed. Why should people who work

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 for one employer be disadvantaged? If a
3 person had insurance from another job,
4 they would be entitled to that insurance.
5 Frequently what happens is, people will
6 be -- some people decline insurance, but
7 frequently people will choose different
8 plans to be insured in. So there is a
9 premium being paid on their behalf. I
10 think that those are the kinds of
11 decisions that people make individually,
12 and I would suggest that if the City were
13 really doing a good job in healthcare and
14 their plan didn't cost more than the
15 union's plan, because it does -- the plan
16 that the City has costs more, provides
17 less benefits and has a higher payroll
18 deduction than our union's plan, and if
19 the City really was serious about its
20 healthcare and controlling its costs for
21 its plan, why are they asking the unions
22 to take our members who are in the City
23 plan back into our plan? Which is one of
24 the contract proposals. They actually
25 want to give back to the union

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 non-members who are in the City plan.
3 Now, what reason would there be other
4 than cost?

5 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ:
6 Interesting. I was not aware of that.

7 MS. SCOTT: And we asked that
8 specifically of the City, because they
9 have the same proposals for District
10 Council 33, and if it isn't a cost-driven
11 issue, I would assume that the City would
12 want to do this because they would like
13 to save money. Well, that tells me that
14 the union is doing a better job in
15 healthcare than the City is.

16 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: What's
17 the saving per -- and my last question.
18 What is the difference in premium between
19 what we're paying and what your --

20 MS. SCOTT: The City has not
21 given us their premium, but we know that
22 it is more expensive. We know that it's
23 somewhere in the area of \$1,100. They
24 provide us with \$976 per person per
25 month.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
3 you.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
5 you.

6 Are there any further questions
7 of Ms. Scott?

8 (No response.)

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
10 Seeing none, I thank you. Thank you very
11 much.

12 (Applause.)

13 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
14 witness is Vivian Drayton.

15 (Witness approached witness
16 table.)

17 MS. Drayton: Good morning.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
19 Welcome. Please identify yourself for
20 the record and proceed with your
21 testimony.

22 MS. Drayton: Yes. My name is
23 Vivian Drayton and I'm the Executive
24 Director of the Supportive Child Adult
25 Network, also known as Stop Child Abuse

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 Now, and I want to thank all of the City
3 Council members who have supported this
4 organization over the years. We continue
5 to need your support and encouragement
6 for Philadelphia's children.

7 This testimony -- I understand
8 that DHS is returning and all of it may
9 not be as appropriate today, but I do
10 want to address a few points. Thank you.

11 Our organization was founded 34
12 years ago by Dr. E. Peter Wilson,
13 pediatrician and public health
14 specialist, and SCAN has incorporated the
15 use of the multi-disciplinary approach to
16 prevent and treat child abuse in all its
17 forms, and we have a specialty of medical
18 situations for children. We maintain
19 that multi-disciplinary intervention is
20 the only way to treat child abuse and
21 neglect, meaning that paraprofessionals,
22 meaning that social workers,
23 psychologists and others, should be a
24 part of the plan.

25 As a result of our longstanding

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 philosophy regarding this issue, we
3 receive some of the most serious cases in
4 the system. This has been embraced
5 nationally and locally for many years.
6 To say we have been without problems, our
7 organization and many others would be
8 dishonest. However, we are trying to
9 assess -- we are assessing and analyzing
10 ways that we can keep children safe.

11 I have been at the agency 16
12 years as Executive Director and I offer a
13 few suggestions and recommendations to
14 improve the system to use our limited
15 funds in different ways. I know the DHS
16 budget has been an issue of concern, and
17 my concern is not only the dollar amount
18 but how we use the amount and that maybe
19 we could be more creative in how we keep
20 children safe.

21 It's important that I have
22 never -- to note that I have never worked
23 with leadership within DHS that did not
24 want to keep children safe and free from
25 harm. Never. And I've been in this

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 system, child welfare system, over 30
3 years.

4 First, I think there's some
5 inherent problems. I was here a few days
6 ago with Mothers in Charge, and their
7 courage stuck with me, and I feel that
8 there's a lack of courage in the child
9 welfare system. Partial truths to
10 enhance or protect anyone other than
11 children, the children that we serve,
12 must be addressed. If we vilify in an
13 effort to justify, it's wrong. If we
14 identify in order to rectify, I believe
15 we're right. We must be open to new
16 modalities that have been proven and
17 tested.

18 In environments that are
19 similar to Philadelphia, the courage to
20 say this is not working cannot be
21 temperate in order to maintain a
22 contract. Supporting intervention that
23 is clearly appropriate contributes to the
24 illusion that children are safe. It's
25 great to reduce the number of children in

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 the child welfare system to save and
3 reduce costs if it does not leave
4 children on hold until something major
5 occurs later. Prevention is necessary.
6 We cannot continue to believe a check-off
7 will assess the serious dynamics facing
8 families. Good cycled social histories
9 and previous records prevent backtracking
10 and save money before children are
11 harmed. Providers must have all the
12 information.

13 Training must be sufficient.

14 I'll move quickly.

15 I do feel the safety threshold
16 is too high and that we are now in an
17 effort to reduce not only the number of
18 children in the system but also to reduce
19 the costs that we're making it too high
20 before we -- in safety issues before we
21 intervene, and then we end up paying lots
22 of funds later to treat and work with
23 those families and children later.

24 So that is one concern.

25 I'm also co-founder of the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 Ujima Forum, a group of child welfare
3 providers concerned for all children but
4 especially concerned about the
5 overrepresentation of African American
6 children in the child welfare system.
7 African American children are
8 overrepresented in the child welfare
9 system in places where there's only one
10 percent of African Americans living in
11 that particular state throughout the
12 country, and some people are assuming
13 that it's all about poverty, and that is
14 not the case.

15 It's important that we also
16 look -- if we're looking at spending
17 resources, we also have to look at the
18 underrepresentation of agencies and
19 organizations of color that serve with
20 cultural sensitivity, awareness and
21 culturally specific interventions. And I
22 want to note here that if we know that
23 the outcomes are not good in child
24 welfare, then we have to understand that
25 a number of the agencies that have been

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 around for years, hundreds of years or
3 more, then they're in some ways a part of
4 that. We are not looking at the new, the
5 smaller, the community based to address
6 there are some strategies that might also
7 be useful in keeping children safe and
8 free from harm.

9 In this area, it's been rather
10 dismal. For over ten years, this
11 organization has advocated for this
12 incorporation of culturally sensitive
13 practice in child welfare. I believe
14 that if we do not address these issues,
15 assumptions, past experiences, values and
16 judgments will continue to be the
17 standard, and issues of safety will be
18 considered cultural and, therefore,
19 appropriate.

20 Communities must know that when
21 they try to protect a parent who requires
22 child welfare intervention, they leave
23 the child vulnerable. No progress has
24 been made in looking at the 85 percent of
25 African Americans in our current child

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 welfare system in Philadelphia and
3 increasing those agencies that mirror the
4 population. Instead, agencies of color
5 that do good work -- I'm only talking
6 about those -- are in jeopardy because
7 they don't have the infrastructure to
8 expand. Disproportionality must be
9 viewed not only from poverty but also
10 discrimination and racism and who comes
11 into the system and who stays in the
12 system.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. DRAYTON: Thank you.

15 DHS has supported two
16 conferences to address cultural dynamics,
17 and I've been involved in both of them,
18 and I appreciate that, and they were
19 specific to African American families.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

21 Ms. Drayton, if you could try to conclude
22 your statement.

23 MS. DRAYTON: I am.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
25 you. Because we do have a number of

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 people that we would like to hear from.
3 Thank you.

4 MS. DRAYTON: Okay. Thank you.
5 I am at the very end.

6 However, only a few
7 decision-makers were present at those
8 conferences. We must have top
9 decision-makers at the conferences so
10 they can learn and pass it down.

11 I am asking City Council to
12 consider what is being done in Texas. As
13 a result of a legislative mandate, a
14 disproportionality position was created
15 in nine regions. Their success and
16 increased community involvement and
17 reductions in placement of children
18 warrant our attention. Ms. Sheila Craig,
19 the state Director of Texas, is in
20 communication with me, and I will freely
21 share their experience with anyone
22 willing to listen. There's value in big,
23 but there's also value in small.

24 Thank you for allowing me to
25 share some of my thoughts and concerns.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
4 you very much.

5 Are there any questions of
6 Ms. Drayton?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
9 you very much. Your testimony was very
10 enlightening. Thank you.

11 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
12 witnesses are a panel: Kristine
13 Campbell, Ms. Eleanor Childs, Ms. Katrina
14 Clark, Ms. Betty Beaufort, Andrew
15 Christman and Samia Bolling.

16 (Witnesses approached witness
17 table.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
19 morning. Welcome. Kindly identify
20 yourself for the record and proceed with
21 your testimony.

22 MS. CHILDS: Good morning to
23 President Verna and to the rest of the
24 Councilpeople and their representatives
25 that are in the room today. We're glad

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 that you're here. My name is Eleanor
3 Childs. I'm here representing myself.
4 I'm a citizen of Philadelphia. I'm also
5 representing my school, Montessori
6 Genesis II, which is a non-profit, small,
7 private, independent school in the Mantua
8 community. I'm representing the
9 Coalition to Save the Libraries and I'm
10 representing the Durham branch of the
11 Free Libraries.

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. CHILDS: First of all, let
14 me just thank the Council, because the
15 last time I was here, I was with 50
16 people. It was my whole school,
17 three-year-olds all the way up to the
18 ten-year-olds, all of my staff, and we
19 were sitting in the gallery and we were
20 so happy and felt so blessed that the
21 Council voted on that day a resolution to
22 put off the closing of the libraries
23 until there was time to further discuss
24 the issue and how it could be taken care
25 of. And so we stood. We gave you our

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 applause. We were very proud of you, and
3 I wanted to thank you personally today.

4 During the interim between that
5 time and now, that same school, along
6 with schools, children, teenagers,
7 adults, seniors of all races and creeds,
8 those of us who are pierced and those of
9 us who are tattooed and those of us who
10 are not, those of us who are artistic,
11 those of us who are number crunchers, I
12 mean, throughout this city there was a
13 ground swell of interest and concern
14 about the closing of the libraries.
15 People rose up. We had our pitchforks.
16 We were rebels, we were rousers, and we
17 fought to keep the libraries open, and we
18 were very pleased that Judge Fox stood
19 with us and the libraries were kept open.

20 Since that time, many people
21 have felt that, Oh, thank goodness, the
22 libraries are safe, but, in fact, we know
23 that libraries are more than buildings,
24 and so to say that we're going to keep
25 those buildings open is not adequate

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 unless we are going to give the resources
3 both in people, in skills, in material.
4 Unless those resources are going to be
5 there, then those libraries are in fact
6 not there. They are in fact, or de
7 facto, closed.

8 And so we are here today, I am
9 here today to say that my Durham Library
10 is in jeopardy. We worry about whether
11 or not our doors are going to be open.
12 We worry about whether we are going to
13 have enough staff people to do all of the
14 myriad of jobs that they do. We worry
15 about whether or not there will be those
16 resources for the people of the Mantua
17 community and the Powelton Village
18 community, who together make up the
19 community of the Durham branch of the
20 Free Library.

21 There are so many uses that
22 that library facilitate, and as I'm sure
23 most of you know by now, because there
24 have been just an uncountable number of
25 articles that have been written in our

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 major media as well as our minor media,
3 the libraries are fulfilling a need at
4 this point in time that we don't know
5 whether they were ever meant to fill.
6 They were always meant to offer the
7 freedom of information, the ability to
8 educate one's self, the ability to just
9 enjoy the word. They were always meant
10 to do those things, and as we know, there
11 are a time-tested, cost-effective
12 successful way of doing all of those
13 things. We don't have to have a special
14 hearing to prove that. We don't have to
15 have blue ribbon commissions to prove
16 that. That's a known quantity.

17 But what they are doing at this
18 point is making it possible for the
19 citizens of Philadelphia, the citizens of
20 the United States to find jobs, to follow
21 up on the procedures for getting a job,
22 to even hear back from an employee
23 whether or not they got the job.

24 What the libraries are doing
25 now is that they are offering not only a

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 safe haven for children, but a respite
3 place for adults who are under tremendous
4 stress and strain during this very time
5 of economic downturn, that they need a
6 place where they can feel safe, where --
7 I'm talking about the adults -- where
8 they can feel safe, where they can feel
9 that someone cares about them and someone
10 will help them to work through all of the
11 things that they need to do to take care
12 of themselves and to take care of their
13 families.

14 Many librarians are at this
15 point saying that they are becoming
16 stressed because so much of this job is
17 falling on their shoulders. This is not
18 the time to pull back from the libraries.
19 This is not the time to cut their
20 resources. This is the time to say thank
21 you, thank you that someone has been
22 smart enough to create an entity like a
23 public library that was flexible enough
24 to move into this area of help and
25 support for all of our citizens.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 So I'm here today to ask you,
3 number one, to be aware that when 20
4 percent was cut from the Durham Library
5 and ten other branch libraries, it was in
6 a way a decimation of our libraries, and
7 that I would wish that you would put that
8 20 percent back.

9 I'm also here --

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. CHILDS: -- today to say
12 there is absolutely no way that you can
13 take anything else out of the libraries.
14 It is not going to work to have my Durham
15 Library buddy up with another library, be
16 open three days a week and then the staff
17 run back and forth between libraries.
18 That's not going to work.

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. CHILDS: That is not going
21 to work. We need our library to be safe.
22 We need our library to be secure. And I
23 mean the library itself. We need the
24 staff, the professional librarians, the
25 materials, the books, all of the other

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 resources that a library has. We need
3 those things to be in there and
4 functioning at the best of levels.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
6 you.

7 MS. CHILDS: Can I tell one
8 story before I stop?

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Just
10 one, please.

11 MS. CHILDS: Just one, a quick
12 one.

13 One of my students, he's six
14 years old, he's in the first grade. He
15 is a mischievous little boy and gets in a
16 lot of trouble. So sometimes when I see
17 him, I have jaundiced eyes and I don't
18 know what I'm going to be facing that
19 day. But early last week, he came into
20 school. He had a handful of money. This
21 is it, \$2.50, one dollar bill and lots of
22 change, and he handed it to me and he
23 said, Ms. Childs, I want to give this to
24 the libraries to keep them open.

25 So I was asked today by Channel

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 10, Oh, well, isn't that a good way for
3 maybe the libraries to stay open, if
4 everybody gives money. Well, I would
5 like every child in the City of
6 Philadelphia to bring a penny or a dime,
7 but we know that all that would really do
8 would be a practice in allowing children
9 to learn that they can stand up for
10 things that they believed in and that
11 they in fact could contribute, but when
12 it comes down to the true funding of our
13 libraries and our other essential
14 services, it has to be us, the adults,
15 who make the decision of where to place
16 those finances in order to have those
17 services available to all of our
18 citizens.

19 Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
22 you very much.

23 Our next witness?

24 MR. CHRISTMAN: Hello. My name
25 is Andrew Christman. I'm an artist,

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 teacher and parent and voter from
3 Fishtown Philadelphia, and in the
4 interest of being brief, I'm just going
5 to read a short statement.

6 The Fishtown branch of the Free
7 Library serves a community that has been
8 hit especially hard by the latest
9 cutbacks of essential services in our
10 city. For example, we have lost a fire
11 engine and two neighborhood pools.
12 Additionally, the Northeastern Hospital
13 in nearby Port Richmond is slated for
14 closure in June.

15 Amidst these devastating and
16 demoralizing closures, our library is a
17 beacon of hope for my neighbors and I.
18 We will be depending upon our library as
19 a resource for job searches and research
20 about health issues. Children and adults
21 will be looking for engaging programming
22 and a cool place to spend the day in the
23 absence of pools. Parents will be going
24 to the library with their children to
25 participate in book clubs and to take out

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 books.

3 Nevertheless, our library is
4 already very strained due to
5 underfunding, rolling closures and
6 understaffing. For example, programs for
7 our story hour have been halted due to
8 the uncertainty of budgets and schedules
9 for service. In recent car drives, young
10 families who have recently arrived at
11 Fishtown have been our largest groups to
12 sign up for cards at our branch.

13 However, lack of materials, programs and
14 inconsistent hours may deter them from
15 becoming active library users. We have
16 several very dedicated high school
17 students who volunteer at our branch
18 because they have chosen our library as
19 the place to make a positive contribution
20 to their community. Not only are they
21 helpful to our staff, but they are role
22 models for the smaller children who come
23 to our libraries daily. It is our
24 concern that their participation in the
25 Fishtown branch will dwindle as disrupted

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 services provides fewer opportunities for
3 them to be there.

4 Twenty percent of Fishtown
5 families live below the poverty level.
6 This was a statistic generated by a
7 census before this economic catastrophe.
8 I can say with certainly based on my
9 experiences at the Fishtown branch that
10 many of our library patrons are folks in
11 need of the strained resources in our
12 branch. Our amazing and dedicated
13 library staff is always working
14 tirelessly to attend the needs of
15 everyone at this increase -- and this is
16 an increasingly difficult task when their
17 attentions are being divided between
18 other branches for assignments and also
19 they're struggling to make the best they
20 can do with the resources there.

21 It appears ironic to
22 Fishtowners that despite the efforts of
23 the City to support the construction of
24 new condominiums and casinos and local
25 economic development groups' efforts to

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 make Girard Avenue and Frankford Avenue
3 corridors for the arts, there is money
4 being taken away from essential services
5 which are assets to our community and
6 draws families and new homeowners to our
7 neighborhood. Such cuts makes fools of
8 us who have decided to live in the City
9 because we hope to raise our families in
10 communities that are vibrant, safe and
11 have amazing neighborhood services such
12 as Fishtown.

13 Recent events have deeply
14 divided Fishtowners on the issue of the
15 casino on Delaware Avenue, but I can
16 assure you that all of Fishtown is united
17 around our library, and we will hold the
18 City Council responsible if they vote for
19 a budget that cuts service from the
20 libraries.

21 Thank you very much.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
24 you.

25 Good morning. Please identify

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 yourself for the record.

3 MS. MORGAN: Good morning. My
4 name is Carolyn Morgan and, first of all,
5 I would like to say from the bottom of my
6 heart, thank you so very much to our City
7 Council for having the initiative and the
8 wisdom to give it a chance to look into
9 the situation for the funding for the
10 libraries to keep them remain open. I
11 thank you from the bottom of my heart.

12 Now, I represent Kingsessing
13 Library, member of the Coalition to Save
14 the Libraries, the Friends of Kingsessing
15 Library. I'm a retired senior citizen, a
16 grandmother and a mother. I come on
17 behalf of our libraries throughout the
18 City and my Kingsessing branch. We need
19 the support of City Council, continued
20 support. Our library needs the essential
21 tools and materials to function.

22 We have many programs going on
23 within the library. We can't look at how
24 many books are taken out to say how a
25 library is serviced, because a lot of the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 children attend different reading
3 programs, utilize the computers through
4 research. The work is done within the
5 library itself.

6 Now, our children are in dire
7 need of the library remaining open. It
8 is their resource, their haven, safe
9 haven, where they can go where they are
10 taught, because your library is also a
11 form of a teaching institution. We need
12 our librarians. Our library serves the
13 same purpose as a teacher in a public
14 school or any school classroom.

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. MORGAN: We need the books.
17 Computers are fine, yes. It carries them
18 towards the future, but we need the books
19 because the books are what help the mind
20 to grow, to learn, to comprehend, to
21 research, and without the proper
22 materials and whatnot, what would be done
23 with our children, in our census
24 speaking, it will be a form of murder
25 because the mind is not being fed. The

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 physical body needs to be fed in order to
3 be healthy.

4 (Applause.)

5 MS. MORGAN: The mental mind
6 needs to be fed in order to grow in
7 wisdom and knowledge, to learn how to
8 comprehend, how to think straight, how to
9 research, how to be able to help one
10 another. Without books, they can't do
11 it. Without the librarians, they don't
12 have the teachers to teach them to learn
13 how to research, because the schools
14 cannot do it all. And we need our
15 libraries. We need the funding that was
16 cut to be restored. We need those 111
17 positions that were cut to be refilled.
18 We need our security that was taken away
19 and placed in the prisons and whatnot to
20 come back into our libraries for the
21 safety of our children and our workers.

22 We need the help of the City
23 Council to continue to back us. Not
24 everybody is born with a silver spoon or
25 in blue grass country.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
3 you. Thank you. I would just --

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
6 would just like to remind everyone we do
7 have an awful lot of people that would
8 like the opportunity to testify. I
9 believe that when you called in, you were
10 told not to exceed three minutes with
11 your testimony. I'm asking that you
12 please abide by that.

13 Thank you. As I said, if
14 people came here on a Saturday, they're
15 here, we want to give them an opportunity
16 to testify, and, as I said, I think it's
17 wonderful that so many of you showed up.

18 Thank you. I think we have two
19 other members of the panel to testify.
20 Just remain in the front. I believe
21 there are some questions or comments from
22 members of the Committee.

23 Good morning. Please identify
24 yourself for the record and proceed with
25 your testimony.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 MS. BOLLING: Good morning. My
3 name is Samia Bolling. I am a member of
4 the Friends of the Haddington Branch of
5 the library, and I just wanted to take
6 just my three minutes to talk about the
7 history of our local Haddington branch.

8 Our Haddington branch was
9 founded in December of 1915 by Albert
10 Kelsey. Andrew Carnegie donated the
11 library, and we found out doing some
12 research. I'm not here to argue numbers
13 or crunch numbers or budgets about who
14 library saves and who should go, because
15 I don't think anyone should be put in a
16 room to decide my library or my community
17 is more important than yours.

18 We are in an economic recession
19 right now, and the Mayor's Office is
20 funding a lot of programs that comes
21 through our local branch; for example,
22 the Reentry for Ex-Offenders program. If
23 we cut our service and our staff by, you
24 know, three days a week, that could be
25 one day that some young man or young

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 woman could come in looking for a job and
3 the library is closed. That could be the
4 fate that decided they're going to try to
5 go the right way or go back to a life of
6 crime.

7 A lot of children use the
8 library. Our library was just closed
9 this Monday due to budget. We didn't
10 have enough staff, and that affected a
11 lot of people.

12 We are living in a digital age
13 now, and right here currently in
14 Philadelphia less than half of the
15 library users even have access to a home
16 computer, home Internet service, where a
17 lot of kids are doing research now.

18 And I just wanted to give a
19 little history about preserving the
20 Carnegie libraries. And it seems to me
21 that this is just going on.

22 Andrew Carnegie in 1903 donated
23 1,681 libraries across the United States.
24 He gave out of his own pocket
25 \$41,233,853, you know, to donate to say

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 that the libraries was here. He doesn't
3 have any personal ties to our area. He
4 just decided that every great city needs
5 a library.

6 We do so much in our library
7 right now. The question that we were
8 asked to bring here before City Council
9 to speak was what would this impact our
10 communities if we were to operate on a
11 reduced staff, a reduced budget and
12 everything. So I just want to talk a
13 little bit about the programs that we do
14 in our library.

15 We have a childhood pre-school
16 story time that has been affected. We
17 have our Summer in the Science program is
18 put on hold. Our reading program is put
19 on hold. We have not had new magazines
20 or periodicals since well over last year
21 sometime. I think our last magazines are
22 dated March and April of 2008.

23 We have a lot of people that
24 volunteer. A few weeks ago we broke
25 ground for a community garden, and we are

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 still going to try to do that.

3 Our library impacts so many
4 people in our community and it goes
5 across race, economic, social, gender,
6 handicapped, sexual orientation or
7 religious background. And it would just
8 really greatly impact our community
9 because we do so much in our community.
10 We had the Maasai warriors from Kenya
11 here. We offer a multi-cultural program
12 so we can learn about diverse backgrounds
13 and cultures.

14 Our own Councilman -- I'm in
15 the 4th District -- Councilman Curtis
16 Jones sponsors a children's parenting
17 workshop every year. City Councilman
18 Curtis Jones just gave a few recycling
19 buckets to our Earth Day campaign that we
20 kicked off this past Earth Day.
21 Councilman Jones' office repeatedly comes
22 and shows his staff. They always come
23 and support any meeting we have at our
24 library, and we just wanted to say thank
25 you to our Councilman for always

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 supporting us.

3 I have on my billboard here a
4 picture that Councilman Jones took on the
5 steps with our library back in November
6 of 2008, and he said that he was going to
7 fight for us, and we're just asking that
8 not just Councilman Jones in our
9 district -- I'm not here to argue about
10 West Philly versus North Philly versus
11 South Philly. We just want full funding
12 restored to all of our libraries. The
13 children and education is our future.
14 Right now we are building more prisons
15 than schools and we're tearing down
16 libraries. So we just ask that you just
17 think of the children and think of how
18 this will greatly affect your community.
19 If these kids don't have anywhere to go,
20 they will pick up guns instead of books.
21 They will pick up crime instead of
22 knowledge. They will pick up hate
23 instead of love for a community and for
24 themselves.

25 So we just thank you, City

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 Council, for taking the time out of your
3 busy Saturday to listen to our concerns,
4 and just save our libraries, because when
5 you save our libraries, you save our
6 city, you save our communities and you
7 save ourselves and our future.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
11 you very much.

12 Please proceed. Identify
13 yourself for the record.

14 MS. CLARK: Hello. My name is
15 Katrina Clark. I'm a lifelong resident
16 of Philadelphia, both Manayunk and West
17 Philadelphia. I'm also someone who
18 chooses to live and work in the City of
19 Philadelphia when I could choose to live
20 and work somewhere else.

21 I'm amazed that we're still
22 having this conversation about just how
23 important the essential services are in a
24 time of an economic crisis. I'm
25 surprised as well to have to defend the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 importance of access to knowledge and
3 resources, and I'm astounded that the
4 City of Philadelphia dares to define
5 itself as a world-class city and is
6 willing to starve out its own citizens
7 for the benefit of big business.

8 We, the citizens of
9 Philadelphia, are not blind and we're not
10 dumb. We know the nature of politics as
11 usual. We know how lower, middle class,
12 working class and poor people have borne
13 the brunt of crises, both economic and
14 otherwise, since time and memorial. We
15 pretend that things are different or we
16 can talk matter-of-factly about what is
17 going on here.

18 Philadelphia dares to be out
19 front ahead of the game, a world-class
20 city, but our city uses antediluvian ways
21 to respond in a crisis. The way that we
22 respond in a crisis defines who we are.

23 After 9/11, the City of New
24 York, known for its cool attitude and
25 cold shoulder, pulled together, stranger

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 helping stranger. These very acts will
3 define the moral character of New York
4 forever. And now we find ourselves in
5 another crisis. It may at first not seem
6 to be on the same scale, but as the waves
7 of economic drop ripple across not only
8 cities but nations, we are looking at a
9 situation that directly affects
10 individuals across the entire world. And
11 now we, the City of Philadelphia, have to
12 ask ourselves, how are we going to
13 respond? And what hurts my heart is that
14 instead of pulling together, our City
15 government is asking us to fight over
16 scraps. I'm not so sure that that
17 behavior qualifies us to be a world-class
18 city.

19 Two hundred years ago
20 Philadelphia was actually known to be a
21 world-class city. During that time
22 before the signing of the Declaration of
23 Independence, Philadelphians were
24 striving for equality for all, from
25 demanding that all children be allowed in

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 education, to founding the first public
3 library so that those who cannot afford
4 to have libraries of their own could
5 literally share a wealth of knowledge.
6 Philadelphia has been in the forefront
7 for centuries. Yet, as time goes on, we
8 are slipping further and further away
9 from the ideals that we are founded upon.
10 We can't keep living off our old
11 reputation. It's time to step up. If we
12 want to be a world-class city, then we
13 need to treat our citizens as world-class
14 citizens. All world-class citizens need
15 equity of access to education and
16 information in order to be educated and
17 contributing members of society. Free
18 public libraries are essential in
19 striving for a level playing field. They
20 were founded on this principle, and they
21 will continue to be relevant in the
22 strengthening of our democracy. Free
23 public libraries in fact have grown in
24 importance since their inception, now not
25 only offering books and conversation, but

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 also access to technology and resources
3 that are paramount in facing the economic
4 crisis in which we presently find
5 ourselves.

6 Now, in this time of crisis, it
7 is more important than ever to reflect on
8 the core values that our city and nation
9 were founded on. It is too easy in
10 crisis mode to destroy the very
11 foundation that we love and aim to
12 protect. If we want to rebuild this
13 world-class city of ours, then standing
14 true to our mission and objectives is
15 key.

16 We cannot abandon our goals in
17 times of economic crisis. Then we would
18 only add on a moral crisis, that of
19 allowing the gap between rich and poor,
20 black and white to further widen. When
21 we look back in 10, 20 or 100 years at
22 how we responded to this economic and
23 burgeoning moral crisis, how will we have
24 defined ourselves? Who will we have
25 protected? What good will big business

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 be able to do if the very moral fabric of
3 our society has imploded? If we drop the
4 safety nets of essential services, what
5 state will we find ourselves in? What
6 irreparable damage will we have caused?

7 As we learned from September
8 11th, everyday citizens, people from all
9 walks of life can and will indeed stand
10 together to fight for a common cause in
11 the face of a crisis. I ask that City
12 Council support the City in finding an
13 equitable response to this crisis in
14 which those who have more are asked to
15 step up the same way that citizens of New
16 York did almost eight years ago, to help
17 out those who have less. It is time to
18 put down ego and greed and reach out
19 hands of humanity across this city so
20 that we can pull each other through these
21 very rough times.

22 Full funding needs to return to
23 the Free Library of Philadelphia so that
24 citizens can fully utilize the resources
25 of our city. Full hours and staffing

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 need to be restored to meet the expanded
3 need of the population. The
4 four-staff-minimum policy needs to be
5 rescinded to add more flexibility to an
6 already stressed system. To support the
7 staff that will be doing even more work
8 during these times of increased library
9 usage, the very least we can do is boost
10 morale by allowing them to do their jobs
11 fully and not punishing them by closing a
12 library when they are sick or have a
13 personal emergency.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
15 you very much.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
18 you.

19 The Chair recognizes Councilman
20 Jones.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
22 Madam President.

23 I just want to applaud the
24 advocates for the Library, but I want to
25 also point out the folk in Council that

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 stood up and did their part to make sure
3 that the libraries were open, and I want
4 to particularly acknowledge Councilwoman
5 Blackwell, Councilman Kelly and
6 Councilman Green, but I also want to
7 identify an unsung hero here and identify
8 her, Sophie Bryan, who is the Legislative
9 Director for -- stand up, Sophie. Stand
10 up.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: She went
13 into court and masterfully defended the
14 case to keep the libraries open and, in
15 particular, my branch, Haddington, which
16 is one of the Carnegie Mellon libraries,
17 and I just wanted to publicly acknowledge
18 her and say that this library card here
19 probably out of all of the credit cards I
20 possess has the ability to give one more
21 back.

22 Thank you, Madam President.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
25 you.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 I know Councilwoman Blackwell
3 had her light on, but apparently she left
4 the room for a moment, so we're going to
5 proceed.

6 Thank you. Thank you all so
7 very much.

8 Our next panel?

9 MR. MCPHERSON: Our next panel
10 consists of Deborah Caldwell, Sherrie
11 Cohen, Susan Gould, Tiara Fuller.

12 (Witnesses approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
15 morning. Kindly identify yourself for
16 the record and proceed with your
17 testimony.

18 MS. COHEN: Hello.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Hi.

20 MS. COHEN: Hello, Councilwoman
21 Verna and other City Council members. My
22 name is Sherrie Cohen, as you know, and
23 I'm the daughter of Councilman David
24 Cohen in whose honor the Ogontz Library
25 is named. The library was renamed the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 David Cohen Ogontz Library after my
3 father died in 2005 in recognition of the
4 36 years he, my mother, Florence Cohen,
5 and the entire Ogontz community fought
6 for a library to serve their community.
7 The David Cohen Ogontz Library is a
8 library borne of struggle. It is also
9 the newest library branch in the City and
10 opened in 1997.

11 The question before City
12 Council today is, do you want to pay on
13 the front end or the back end of people's
14 lives? Do you want to invest in young
15 people? Do you want to invest in our
16 communities or will Philadelphia continue
17 to suffer the ravages of disinvestment
18 and decline, high unemployment, poverty
19 and mass incarceration?

20 Our libraries are a beacon of
21 light in our communities, a sanctuary, a
22 community center, a hub of information
23 and resources. The library promises a
24 step up in life for our school children,
25 our young adults and job-seekers of all

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 ages.

3 Our libraries need to have the
4 resources, the days open, the staffing
5 that we had in November before the Mayor
6 slashed the Free Library budget by 20
7 percent. This 20 percent cut has
8 crippled our libraries at a time when
9 library visits are up 21 percent in the
10 City.

11 Our library, the David Cohen
12 Ogontz Library, is operating with
13 one-third less staff since November,
14 including the loss of our full-time
15 municipal guard who was laid off. The
16 new Free Library rule of four, which
17 requires four staff needed in order to
18 open the library, including a security
19 guard, has left our library closed on too
20 many days since November, leaving
21 community members irate because of a lack
22 of access to the community's facilities.

23 People who need the services of
24 the library are being turned away on a
25 daily basis because of unscheduled

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 closings and irregular hours. On a
3 recent day when there was an unscheduled
4 closing, children from a daycare center
5 approached the library. Their collective
6 cry, The library is closed, could break
7 your heart.

8 Also, our libraries' materials
9 budgets have been cut by 30 percent.
10 There is no money to purchase summer
11 reading book lists for students in grades
12 one through 12. There's no budget for
13 the summer reading programming for
14 children, teens or adults. Our
15 after-school program has seen cuts in
16 hours for after-school leaders and
17 student assistants. Program money has
18 been eliminated. Outreach activities
19 have been suspended. There are no funds
20 for Saturday overtime for staff to
21 participate in community events and
22 health fairs. Our library staff is
23 overworked, and morale is low.

24 The Free Library's new
25 five-day-a-week schedule is insufficient

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 to accommodate the large numbers of
3 people seeking to use our City's
4 libraries. For example, we have so many
5 people now using our library that
6 children can only use the computers 15
7 minutes each day and adults only one half
8 hour each day.

9 We thank City Council for
10 standing with us when the Mayor saw to
11 close our library and ten other libraries
12 by December 31st. We ask you to stand
13 with us now. Councilman Jones is
14 considering the introduction of
15 legislation to restore the \$8 million to
16 the Free Library budget that the Mayor
17 cut in November.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. COHEN: We ask you to
20 please support this legislation.

21 I'm a member of the Friends of
22 the David Cohen Ogontz Library. Many of
23 our members are active with the Coalition
24 to Save the Libraries, whose organizing
25 we credit with the saving of our 11

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 libraries from closure. The Coalition to
3 Save the Libraries is in turn a member
4 organization of the Coalition for
5 Essential Services. We support the
6 demands of the Essential Services
7 Coalition for no cuts to services and
8 fair and equitable taxation.

9 We want City Council to adopt a
10 budget that invests in our neighborhoods,
11 creates quality jobs for our residents
12 and is adequately funded by a progressive
13 tax system in which corporations, large
14 non-profit institutions and individuals
15 pay their fair share.

16 Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
19 you, Sherrie. I just can't believe that
20 it's four years that your dad has passed
21 on, and I do recall so vividly how year
22 after year after year -- and I see
23 Councilman Kelly is nodding his head
24 agreeing with me -- how he fought for
25 that library. He fought so bitterly, and

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 it seemed that every year he spoke about
3 it, but it wasn't done, and he would
4 never relent. And I can say to you, I
5 think you're a true testament that the
6 apple doesn't fall far from the tree,
7 because he would be here fighting to keep
8 the hours open as you are and that there
9 be no cuts made.

10 So thank you very much. You're
11 taking me back into the past.

12 Thank you.

13 MS. COHEN: Thank you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

15 Please identify yourself for the record.

16 MS. GOULD: My name is Susan
17 Gould. I represent the Fumo Library on
18 Broad Street between Ritner and Porter.
19 I'm a member of the Coalition to Save the
20 Libraries, and in real life, I'm a music
21 and dance critic, a teacher of Italian,
22 German and French, an editor and a
23 proofreader, none of which adds up to pay
24 the bills. But I will not go through
25 everything that I had originally

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 intended, because my colleagues have been
3 so extraordinarily eloquent. I will say,
4 first of all, that the Fumo Library has
5 suffered the same problems as the others
6 that have been referred to today when it
7 became one of the 11 expendable
8 libraries, and we have had the same
9 terrible effects on our programs that had
10 to be either cancelled or postponed. And
11 one thing that distinguishes the Fumo
12 Library, are, for instance, our monthly
13 Italian movies, which for a couple of
14 months couldn't take place, great deals
15 of programs for children, both daycare
16 center children and children who attend
17 the Fels Community Center next door. We
18 service, I think, if I'm not mistaken,
19 six public schools in the neighborhood.

20 So I will simply reiterate that
21 any -- it's already been bad enough until
22 now. The mere fact that we have
23 libraries closed on Saturdays in the
24 summer, which has been going on for
25 decades perhaps, is a huge mistake. To

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 reduce hours even further or days or
3 whichever horrible plan might be taken on
4 is inconceivable and must not be done.

5 I would like to remind
6 everybody that in the news the other day
7 on Thursday, our Pennsylvania Senate
8 presented a budget that literally
9 eviscerates the state's cultural body;
10 for instance, slashing the entire budgets
11 for the Pennsylvania Council for the
12 Arts, Pennsylvania's part of PBS, Public
13 Broadcasting System, the Office for --
14 the Film Office, which directly affects
15 Philadelphia. And what else? And this
16 really hit: The Office for Safe Schools.
17 Now, I ask you, what are the safest and
18 most inspiring and most comforting and
19 most useful havens for children,
20 especially if our government decides that
21 there should no longer be a department to
22 make sure their schools are safe -- and
23 we know how unsafe many schools are --
24 than libraries?

25 It's true that this proposal by

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 the republican majority of the Senate may
3 not take place, may not go further,
4 definitely will be argued about, but
5 there will be cuts.

6 Now, Pennsylvania, it has been
7 said -- I'm sure you've all heard this --
8 is Philadelphia and Pittsburgh with
9 Alabama in between. Now, do we want to
10 have Philadelphia end up in the same
11 status as other parts of our state from
12 whence comes some of those senators who
13 think that culture and arts and safe
14 schools are not as important as
15 additional funding for prisons, which we
16 wouldn't need if everybody could get to
17 libraries and be safe in their schools.

18 So we don't want to make the
19 same mistake. We don't want to be
20 another -- nothing against Alabama. It
21 was just that was the way the quote went.
22 But let us not let our City Council,
23 please, City Council, don't do a
24 Pennsylvania state Senate, don't pull
25 that on the Philadelphia libraries.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 Thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
5 afternoon. Welcome. Please identify
6 yourself for the record. I think it is
7 afternoon; is it not? Yes.

8 MS. BEAUFORT: Good afternoon,
9 Madam President and members of City
10 Council. My name is Betty Beaufort. I'm
11 here to represent Queen Memorial Library,
12 Point Breeze. I just want to tell you
13 the reasons why we don't want our
14 library -- we don't want any libraries
15 closed, but specifically Queens Memorial.

16 We can feed our minds and take
17 trips without leaving Point Breeze by
18 reading our books, also computer usage
19 like doing resume for jobs. Children use
20 the library for doing their homework and
21 special projects. Bottom line, we're
22 asking for full funding to restore the
23 libraries to its level of function, open
24 six days and fully staffed. And I find
25 out our pool is now going to be closed.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 My question is, what are we to do with
3 our children for the summer? Blood in
4 the street? You know the saying, And out
5 of mind is the devil's workshop.

6 We need our libraries and we
7 need our pools.

8 I also have some letters from
9 our children that go to Queens Memorial.
10 I want you to hear what the children had
11 to say.

12 Dear Councilwomen and men, my
13 name is Praise Robinson. I am 11 years
14 old. The one place I love is the Queen
15 Memorial Library. The school I go to is
16 W.G. Smith School. At the library I like
17 to read, play games, get on the computer
18 and I like to do my homework, and I get
19 help with it.

20 The library is important to me,
21 because when I have homework, important
22 projects, this is the closest place I can
23 come and do it to get it done.

24 Please don't close down the
25 library. We know how you would feel if

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 this was your home library. Sincerely,
3 Praise Robinson.

4 I also have another one from
5 Cameron.

6 Dear Councilwomen and men, my
7 name is Cameron. I really enjoy the
8 library called Queen Memorial. I am ten
9 years old, and the reason why I like this
10 library, because I'm doing my homework,
11 getting on the computer, coloring,
12 painting and reading and a whole lot of
13 other stuff. The library is very fun.

14 I have one more, because this
15 is the way the children feel in Queens
16 Memorial, because this is about the
17 children.

18 Dear Councilwomen and men, my
19 name is Samantha Robbins. I go to Vare
20 Elementary. We really need our home
21 library. Please don't close the library.
22 Kids come to the library to stay off the
23 streets and get educated. Think hard.
24 Queen Memorial is important to us.
25 Sincerely, Samantha.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 And we also have a crosscut of
3 kids. We have about six or seven schools
4 that goes and use the library, which is
5 St. Thomas Aquinas, Prep Charter, Bok
6 High School and University Institute and
7 Arthur's.

8 So we're asking, please do the
9 right thing by all the libraries in
10 Philadelphia, especially for Queens.

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
13 you very much.

14 Thank you all very much.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We
17 have other names in this panel. Are they
18 here?

19 MS. COHEN: No.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Okay.
21 Thank you. Thank you so much.

22 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
23 witness is Joseph Powell.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is
25 Joseph Powell here?

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 (No response.)

3 MR. McPHERSON: E. Darnell

4 Ryans.

5 (Applause.)

6 (Witness approached witness
7 table.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
9 afternoon.

10 MR. RYANS: Good afternoon. My
11 name is Edward Darnell Ryans and I am the
12 Executive Director of a community
13 organization called Mantua Cares. We
14 have a journalism program that resides in
15 the Charles Durham Library, which I just
16 briefly want to speak about its
17 importance.

18 Our mission, of course, is to
19 foster the self-development of the Mantua
20 community while serving as an advocate
21 for community leaders and their
22 importance to society. In a time where
23 educational reform is on the highest
24 agenda of the nation, we cannot begin to
25 strip away the very support mechanism

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 that helps to foster it. A budget should
3 reflect the values of what we as a city
4 hold most important. We may have a
5 deficit in the budget, but we can never
6 have a deficit in our efforts to further
7 education, to promote literacy and to
8 public access to technology and the
9 Internet.

10 In an environment where
11 teachers are underpaid, the inappropriate
12 resources for both students and teachers,
13 looming threats of closed libraries, high
14 school dropouts are at an alarming rate,
15 we cannot keep tugging away at the
16 foundational blocks of education for its
17 ultimate collapse and at the same time
18 promote the importance of literacy and
19 education.

20 These libraries, they provide
21 us with free access to thousands of
22 books, CDs and videos, which are
23 essential for research and homework
24 assistance for our youth. Our libraries
25 provide early literacy training and

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 foster lifelong learning. Programs such
3 as the Mantua Times, we engage our youth
4 in writing, literacy, community
5 engagement and not only giving them a
6 voice to be heard but a platform on which
7 to do it. Other programs such as our
8 Poetry Program for Spoken Word promotes
9 self-expression.

10 Our librarians provide
11 reference to services and help with the
12 Internet access and technology, which
13 provides an indirect building of a
14 technical know-how for administrative
15 support-type jobs. In our economic
16 times, where online job searches and
17 application submissions are prevalent, a
18 mother who has two part times during the
19 week and uses the weekend to search the
20 Internet for jobs is very important to
21 have those resources available.

22 Our libraries operate to
23 provide everyone with free and equal
24 access to information and to promote
25 intellectual freedom. It is that phrase,

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 the urgency of now, that still echo and
3 we must hold on to. We must not only be
4 mindful of the changes around us, but we
5 must be just as conscious of the change
6 that needs to happen within us.

7 Frederick Douglas once said, Find out
8 just what people will submit to and you
9 will find out the exact amount of
10 injustice and wrong which will be imposed
11 upon them, and that will continue until
12 it is resisted.

13 The times now have told us that
14 all things are possible and all goals can
15 be reached with the very sacred and
16 simple support of a collective effort,
17 for a tomorrow that ceases at the table
18 back to our communities to build them as
19 we see it, for a tomorrow that supports
20 our businesses and, more importantly, a
21 tomorrow that brings our young men and
22 women to a vision of success.

23 These economic times have
24 challenged not only our homes but also
25 our values on the importance of a

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 library, and to that, I think we all
3 stand and say, Not today, not this time
4 and not our libraries.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
7 you very much.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. McPHERSON: Our next
10 witness is Charles Dickens.

11 (Witness approached witness
12 table.)

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
14 afternoon, Mr. Dickens.

15 MR. DICKENS: Good afternoon.
16 My name is Charles Dickens and I'm an
17 advocate for Project HOME and the Vote
18 for Homeless Coalition, and I just want
19 to thank Council for allowing me this
20 opportunity, all of us, this opportunity
21 to testify and voice our concerns about
22 the budget.

23 A few weeks ago Mayor Nutter
24 offered a budget that minimized impacts
25 on vulnerable populations. While we are

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 grateful for his leadership and hopeful
3 that his commitment can withstand the
4 City's budget cuts until we achieve the
5 goal of 5,500 new units of permanent
6 supportive housing to address
7 homelessness, we continue to need
8 emergency and transitional housing.

9 There are 2,879 emergency beds
10 for men, women and children who are
11 homeless, without any place to go. More
12 than 300 people, twice as many in 2000,
13 sleep on our streets. If even a ten
14 percent cut happens to the City's
15 shelters, 850 homeless men, women and
16 children yearly will lose their place in
17 Philadelphia shelters. The shelter
18 system has already been cut. And the
19 University of Pennsylvania Professor
20 Dennis Coltrane, research showed that it
21 causes less to keep a person housed than
22 to allow him and her to continue to be
23 homeless. Less money for housing means
24 more money for hospital stays,
25 psychiatric cares, community and mental

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 health facilities and treatment beds.
3 Cutting the OSH budget actually incurs
4 greater costs in other places, magnifying
5 rather reducing the overall impact.

6 We urge all Councilmembers to
7 continue Philadelphia's commitment to
8 establishing permanent and affordable
9 housing. And I just want to thank you
10 for allowing me to go on record today.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
13 you very much.

14 Our next witness?

15 MR. McPHERSON: Jenny
16 Pokenpner.

17 (No response.)

18 MR. McPHERSON: Diane McDonald?

19 (No response.)

20 MR. McPHERSON: Chester
21 Skaziak.

22 (Witness approached witness
23 table.)

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
25 afternoon.

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 MR. SKAZIAK: Good afternoon,
3 President Verna.

4 I chopped my testimony up so
5 many times to keep under this
6 three-minute timeframe. So if it's out
7 of context, it's confusing. Being here
8 is confusing.

9 My name is Chester Skaziak.
10 It's S-K-A-Z-I-A-K. I'm here today to
11 support Council's bond proposal.
12 However, I am here today to voice my
13 opposition to the proposed tax hike for
14 the following reasons.

15 Recently, I sent a request to
16 the BRT for a report, which was to be
17 sent to the Mayor and City Council by
18 March the 1st, 2009. This report is due
19 over a year under City Code 1303(4)(h)
20 and has been the law since 1986. I
21 believe it is protected by the City
22 Charter, but the City Solicitor refused
23 my request, saying the Board is not
24 required to do so under Pennsylvania's
25 6567.705. I believe they are in

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 violation of the City Charter, and I
3 believe that the DA should look into this
4 matter.

5 Now, what this Administration
6 has failed to mentioned was that while
7 the City was going into financial buying,
8 the City gave over \$20 million of its
9 real estate dollars to the School Board.
10 I question how much of that money was for
11 the 80 BRT employees assigned to the
12 School Board.

13 While the Mayor was threatening
14 to close the libraries, the pools and
15 finally the closing of seven fire
16 companies last year, he was giving 25
17 property exemption from taxes totalling
18 12.6 billion. Last year's property
19 exemptions from taxes total 12.6 billion,
20 an increase of 85 million. This figure
21 accounts for 25 percent of the property
22 in the City. The abatement summary total
23 was \$2.6 million, for a total of four
24 percent.

25 I'm going to end this thing by

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 saying, it is my belief that the
3 speculators are purchasing property for
4 rental in the City, and I question
5 whether they qualify for these abatements
6 under PS 53 18-200, residents must reside
7 in the economic development district for
8 184 days.

9 You have a bill to change the
10 taxes in the City of Philadelphia,
11 090218, and that bill is going to put 66
12 percent increase to the taxpayers in
13 2010. In 2011, it's going to be
14 increased by 50 percent, and every year
15 after it's going to be 20 percent
16 increase in my real estate taxes.

17 You have a bill to change the
18 tax abatement to 80 percent over ten
19 years. Well, I say this is very apparent
20 that the citizens of this city would like
21 to see an end to the ten-year tax
22 abatement and any abatement program,
23 especially now. Therefore, I'm asking
24 City Council to pass a bill to place a
25 referendum on the ballot to give the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 citizens a choice as to what happens on
3 this issue, in keeping with the wishes
4 and not some other interest. If Council
5 doesn't have the courage to do this, then
6 at least let the citizens know that they
7 have the alternatives that by drawing up
8 a petition that will require the
9 signatures of 20,000 registered voters,
10 then it would become the voters' choice,
11 as they did in 1919 and, as Ms. Scott
12 said earlier, when the taxpayers revolted
13 then to end privatization in the City of
14 Philadelphia.

15 There are many reasons for my
16 opposition. Another in particular,
17 Philadelphia Home Buy Now program,
18 whereby an employer gives \$5,000 to buy a
19 house with no payback to an employee.
20 Where is the problem, you may ask? Well,
21 one in particular, it is a state-run
22 institution that participates. It
23 receives my state tax dollars. The City
24 also contributes \$5,000 out of the
25 Department of Commerce. The developer

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 will give the purchaser another \$7,500,
3 which are tax abatement dollars. I
4 believe the Budget Director supports me
5 in every way. And, Councilwoman Verna,
6 how else could you explain that his
7 neighborhood has never had an increase in
8 property tax or assessment in over seven
9 years, except for one homeowner?

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
11 you very much, sir. We appreciate your
12 coming in to testify.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. McPHERSON: The last
15 witness that I have is Donna Washington.

16 (Ms. Washington stepped out of
17 Chambers.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is
19 there anyone else that would like to
20 testify?

21 Please come up to the witness
22 table. Identify yourself for the record
23 and proceed with your testimony.

24 (Witness approached witness
25 table.)

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 MS. CROISIER: Yes. My name is
3 Anne C. Croisier, Ph.D. As I understood
4 it, someone from Councilman Clarke's
5 office gave me permission to testify.

6 What I wanted to speak about
7 was the wage tax, the business franchise
8 tax and the property tax.

9 As you well know, raising the
10 wage tax or the business franchise tax
11 will mean a loss of jobs. Raising the
12 City's property taxes would not. And if
13 they are to raise the property taxes, I
14 feel that they should exempt people
15 living below the poverty line or perhaps
16 homes worth less than \$100,000. And I
17 think what the Mayor is really trying to
18 do in terms of the property tax
19 reassessments is making those properties
20 that are delapidated, run down worth less
21 and the properties, those ritzy condos in
22 Center City, worth a lot more. So the
23 rich people can afford that 19 percent
24 property tax increase better than
25 impoverished individuals, and I think

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 he's trying to make the taxes more
3 equitable by the reassessment system.
4 And if it's done in a very sophisticated,
5 highly complex, highly technical way, it
6 will be objective. And the thing is, we
7 also have to look at, when they're doing
8 that, those co-ops in Center City where
9 many elderly people live. There's the
10 2101 co-op at 21st and Walnut. There's
11 two co-ops on JFK between 19th and 20th
12 and another one on Chestnut Street
13 between 19th and 20th, and these -- that
14 one is going to go condo apparently, the
15 one on Chestnut Street. I have a friend
16 in the 2101 co-op. About 10 or 15 years
17 ago, senior citizens could put down
18 10,000 and get it. Well, anyway, it
19 skyrocketed, and there's a lot of people
20 in those co-ops living on next to
21 nothing, like \$700 a month. So that
22 would hit them hard. And those condos
23 are right around Murano at 21st, a much
24 high rise condo.

25 So if they're going to reassess

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 the properties, they should really give
3 special consideration to the co-ops,
4 because so many elderly live in there.

5 And this wage tax, if you do
6 increase it, you should exempt people
7 living below the poverty line or else
8 people right at minimum wage or maybe a
9 little bit above it and do it in
10 gradations. So maybe one time the
11 poverty line to two times the poverty,
12 the small increase, two to three times a
13 bigger increase, and three to four even
14 bigger, so it's a non-linear matter you
15 increase it. And the same would be the
16 property taxes, what many are increased,
17 maybe they should go that way, too.

18 Homes worth 100,000 to 200,000, a little
19 increase, a bigger increase 200 to 300, a
20 much bigger increase 300 to 400 and so on
21 up.

22 And I also wanted to say the
23 business franchise tax, I feel like you
24 should exempt small business, because
25 they're really struggling. And you may

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 also want to consider the type of
3 business, say small mom-and-pop pizza
4 shops versus law firms or other
5 professional firms who are much more apt
6 to be able to pay the business privilege
7 tax.

8 And I also wanted to say that
9 in terms of the City borrowing, I
10 understand that quite well for myself.
11 It's like using your credit cards for
12 groceries. Basically that's what
13 happened to me with my credit cards. But
14 the City would go through the same -- it
15 would ruin the City's bond rating or
16 credit rating as well, and in the long
17 run, the City would have to pay way, way
18 more to borrow. It would really hurt the
19 City in the long run if they tried to
20 borrow.

21 And I'm hoping that you, City
22 Council, and also Mayor Nutter, you're
23 able to work together and come to a
24 compromise on this budget in a way that
25 would benefit all Philadelphians the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 greatest. And I will continue to pray
3 both for City Council and the Mayor that
4 a resolution would be made possible. And
5 I know you're very much people of
6 compassion, as is Mayor Nutter.

7 God bless you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
9 you so much. We appreciate your coming
10 in to testify.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. McPHERSON: Donna
13 Washington.

14 (Witnesses approached witness
15 table.)

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
17 afternoon.

18 MS. WASHINGTON: Good
19 afternoon. How you doing, President
20 Verna --

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Fine.

22 MS. WASHINGTON: -- and City
23 Council? I'm Donna Washington and I'm an
24 employee at 1360 Ridge Avenue Homeless
25 Shelter, the largest shelter in the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 Philadelphia area.

3 I come here just to ask that --
4 this is the City of Brotherly Love. So
5 when you do make the decisions and making
6 cuts and everything, think of the stuff
7 that will cause harm to the City, which
8 is -- y'all talked about libraries. Not
9 only do children use libraries, homeless
10 people use libraries. When they want to
11 go look for a job, they have to go to the
12 library to make resumes.

13 Also, with the bed cuts --
14 excuse me. I'm with a homeless gentleman
15 now, and he been in the system for quite
16 some time, and most people think of
17 homelessness as people who use drugs or
18 whatever, but majority of the clients
19 that I deal with are homeless because of
20 mental illness, because of having wives
21 dying and they don't know how to maintain
22 houses. So when you think of cutting
23 homelessness, think of cutting people who
24 really need housing due to difficult
25 reasons, not because of uses of behaviors

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 that's not, you know, called for.

3 But I'm just here to support
4 the Council and whoever else is
5 supporting the budget cut. Just be
6 mindful of the people who need it and the
7 ones that don't.

8 And I would like for him -- I'm
9 going to keep it one minute and let him
10 share, because he's homeless.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
13 you very much.

14 Please identify yourself for
15 the record.

16 MR. WRIGHT: My name is Tommy
17 Wright. I've been in the shelter system
18 for over 30-something years because I had
19 lost my job and I went to the shelter
20 system, and I find help in the shelter
21 system. Every time I come back, I find
22 help to get out of it.

23 I also was on drugs too, but
24 I'm not on drugs for two years, and where
25 I'm at now is a first-time refuge for the

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.
2 mentally ill. I do have a mental
3 problem, but I also know how to get out
4 of the system and get my own housing,
5 too. And all these people that are in
6 the Ridge Shelter, if you cut they jobs
7 and stuff -- I was cut my job years ago
8 and I committed crimes because I had no
9 money. And those people who lose their
10 job at Ridge Shelter are all the way
11 (unintelligible.) They losing their
12 jobs. They will go into crime to get
13 money, because that's all -- the only
14 thing that's left to do.

15 So I hope that you restore the
16 jobs at Ridge Shelter and stop the bed
17 cuts, because there are many people who
18 is homeless on the street. They will
19 start taking money on -- they will start
20 stealing if they got no money.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
23 you.

24 Are there any questions for
25 these witnesses?

1 5/9/09 - WHOLE - BILLS 090212, etc.

2 (No response.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

4 Seeing none, thank you.

5 Do we have anyone else that

6 would like to testify?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

9 Seeing no one, again, I want to thank all

10 of you for coming in. I know it's very

11 inconvenient on a Saturday, but I do

12 thank you again.

13 This Committee will stand in

14 recess until Monday, May the 11th at

15 10:00 a.m.

16 Thank you all very much.

17 (Committee of the Whole

18 recessed at 12:30 p.m.)

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1
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 9, 2009, and that this
8 is a true and correct transcript of same.

9
10
11
12
13
14 _____
15 MICHELE L. MURPHY

16 RPR-Notary Public
17
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