COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND THE HOMELESS

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, June 8, 2006
2:15 p.m.

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PRESENT:
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN JUAN RAMOS
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

BILL 050871 - A resolution calling on the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless to hold public hearings on the administration's proposed reorganization of housing agencies.

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COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon.

(Standing ovation.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We love you. Thank you very much. I know it's been a long day. Thank you for all the days you are here, and certainly we couldn't continue the struggle without you. Thank you. We love you and we thank you.

(Applause.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We love you more.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

We will now have the Clerk read the title of Bill No. 050871, and we are formally beginning our hearing.

THE CLERK: Resolution 050871, calling on the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless to hold public hearings on the Administration's proposed reorganization of housing agencies.

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COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

Again, it's been quite a day, and we believe it's obvious that the issue of folks losing jobs on July 1 is out. We all know that. We've heard that.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me note that to my right is Councilman Juan Ramos, Vice-Chair. To my left, Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown.

(Standing ovation.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Again, I want to say thank you. Thank you, union leadership, all of you. I know it's not easy taking your time and taking time off and logging out when you haven't known where your next dollar comes from or if after July 1, if that would happen. But we know now that for now at least the Community Development Block Grant application that deals with housing has in it the housing agencies

where you work now. So we don't have, no disrespect, Kevin Hanna, we don't have Office of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation. We have Office of Housing and Community Development.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Now, we fully understand that the Mayor told me as recently as this morning that he's committed to housing reorganization. We know that. They have their jobs and they're committed to that, but we also know we're committed that we don't want housing reorganization, and we're going to keep fighting for our position.

We just believe that there's enough money after really going through all this stuff and exploring every piece of paper I could, I've learned it's not really about money. We found that out. We know it's about the Administration's interest in trying to reorganize.

I've talked to you from hearing one. You're saying you're willing to

talk about your benefit package, what that is, from our first hearing on November 15th. We've all said we're willing to improve where we can the organization of housing agencies and do what we can for efficiency's sake. We've all said that from the beginning. And albeit this is Hearing No. 8, God is blessing us. So we're still here and nobody is losing their jobs, at least now.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We have talked to the Mayor, again, as recently as this morning, and the Mayor has said that what they want to do is to look at and interview all of you with your housing jobs and talents.

And certainly you can, from the Administration, correct me if I say something that you didn't hear or if I leave something out.

The Mayor has said they will interview everybody, talk about what

their job titles are and talk about vacancies in the City. We have consistently said that discussion is always open. Why don't we come up with incentives. Why don't we come up with a little extra money or some pay. There are a lot of things we can discuss if it is put on the table.

So, again, what we want to do is assure you that we're with you. We don't know what will happen toward the end of the summer. We know that, as Joyce Wilkerson, Chief of Staff, said today, that they'll come back to Council and that we can continue any dialogue, any discussion in this regard and they know that we're here for you. We'll always be here for you, and we thank you for your commitment in trying to protect your jobs, your co-workers' jobs and continue to do a good job in spite of the struggle.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: As

always, we're happy to have any discussion. Is there someone who would like to make a statement? I think you all heard the Mayor's letter. We read that earlier today. And what I think it's in our best interest to do is, after today, since we recess next week -- I'm always around. I don't take vacation, so I'll be here all summer -- is, we'll probably recess subject to the call of the Chair so that when we need a hearing, we'll advertise it since it will be summer pretty soon and then we'll move on from there.

But, again, we want all of you to know that we appreciate your commitment. We appreciate your support, and we know that God made us all and we are our brother's keeper. We are all brothers and sisters under God, and that if we work together, hopefully God will bless us and in the end, we can be successful.

So thank you very much. If

there are no further issues, if anyone wants to say anything, you're welcome. If not, Ms. Pankey. Let's give her a hand. Welcome. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much. Good afternoon.

MS. PANKEY: Good afternoon, Councilwoman Blackwell, Councilman Ramos and Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown.

On behalf of the membership of AFSCME Local 1971, "thank you" is not enough. We truly, truly appreciate you all coming out in support of our effort, of our plight and what it really is about. We clearly understand and have always committed to work with the Administration regarding their issue in this housing reorganization, and we are still committed to do that. We are waiting anxiously and patiently for the Administration to come forward to the table so that we can address the concerns and move past this issue. But as I stand

here or sit here today and speak with you, they still have not come to us. We may be at the door of September 1st still not having any type of dialogue to address this issue.

I do have the letter that Mayor Street has submitted to us and I did hear what took place here at Council today, but I still have a concern regarding additional monies. What is the issue regarding additional monies in order to cover the $7.8 million deficit?

Reorganization, as we have always said, apples and oranges have been mixed as it pertains to reorganization and the deficit that's being faced. And what we need to know is that when we come to work every day until September 1st that we are going to receive a paycheck. I did not hear and I do not have anything in writing before me -- and this letter from the Mayor that states that the deficit until such time hearings are reconvened is going to be dealt with --

to assure that our members are going to be paid until some type of monies are put in place, and that is clearly a concern for me.

This was a small victory, and we accept any victory, be it small or large, but my concern again is still the deficit that's out there. And I would just like to get clarity, if at all possible, how that gap is going to be addressed until sessions are reconvened in order to address the overall issue.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Madam President. The Mayor told me this morning that nothing would happen. They have to look at the positions that you have, as well as those in the City.

I also told the Mayor that I knew where $8 million was, which more than covers the 7.8, money that's been sitting there through administrations that still exists, and that's when he said it wasn't just about money. So I told him that we have documents to that

effect to show where money is, that the 7.8 million should not be an issue, and he committed -- and I will say this, and if Kevin Hanna or anybody from the Administration is here, if those of you who are listening in your offices, in the Administration's office, if that is not correct, then I will ask you to come into Council Chambers, because the Mayor committed to me that no one would be laid off. And I told him I knew they had $8 million that hasn't been used for many years, and we know exactly where that money is.

So we commit to you that that was his commitment to us, and we'll be here and we will continue this battle and we will continue. Hopefully we want to interact with the Administration. All summer I'm always here. Like I said, I don't take vacations. So I'll be here, and we will continue to work with the union. If you hear anything, please let us know, but the Mayor made that

commitment to us this morning, nothing would happen. No interviews have started. No assessments have been made about what's up. No programs have been made. We asked him again about all the incentives that the City could provide and could try to offer.

So we're here and we're going to stay on the battlefield.

MS. PANKEY: To show his total commitment, what Local 1971 is asking is that a letter comes from the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, as well as the Redevelopment Authority rescinding the letters that was issued to us on May 2nd and May 18th stating that layoffs were going to occur. That is the type of reassurance that we're looking for.

As we previously reported out at the hearing on the 22nd, PHDC notified us of a 50 percent budget reduction and that layoffs were definitely going to occur and that those notices were going to go out by June 30th.

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On May 18th, we were notified by the Redevelopment Authority that some 50 to 60 individuals were going to be laid off. Action has been taken in order to submit alternative to layoffs. Those alternative to layoffs were actually discussed with PHDC as late as yesterday. We're waiting for a follow-up addressed from the Redevelopment Authority to issue them the alternative to layoffs that the union has gathered. That has not been scheduled yet, and what we're looking for is a letter rescinding those letters that went out to us stating that layoffs were going to occur, and we would have a little more comfort zone, at least until September, regarding layoffs.

Is that something that we can get?

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I'm making a call.

Councilwoman Reynolds Brown, you wanted to ask a point of clarification.

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COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes, please.

Did the letters indicate a date, a layoff date?

MS. PANKEY: It did not indicate a layoff date. As a matter of fact, PHDC did not give us a letter. They verbally told us that they had a 50 percent reduction and that there was going to be a layoff and that the notices were going to go out by June 30th. And they stated that that meeting of May 2nd was their official request in accordance with our Collective Bargaining Agreement requesting alternative to layoffs to be submitted by the union to PHDC.

The union solicited the members of PHDC, and we met with PHDC yesterday afternoon -- yesterday morning and submitted to them our alternative to layoffs.

So the process is still going on, and as a result of what took place today, if in fact the Mayor is committed

to what he's stating -- and I can only say that I have heard what was said many a time from other folks, but we, the union, have not been directly addressed in terms of we being placed somewhere in City Council. No one has come to sit down and meet with us to look at our jobs to say, Maybe you can go here, maybe you can go there. We can only say that there is action being taken place at this particular time as if layoff notices are going to come out somewhere by the end of June, first part of July. And if in fact the Mayor is committed to what he stated this morning, we're asking for a letter from PHDC and from the Redevelopment Authority rescinding the layoff information that went out, at least for some period of time, and then they can reissue them again.

But at this point, we have nothing to hang our hat on, other than what we have been doing thus far. And as I sit here now, we're basically waiting

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for a call from the Redevelopment Authority to discuss with them our alternative to layoffs that we've gathered.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I asked my questions as a matter of getting a handle on the process that's being exercised. When you say "they verbally told us," who is "they" and was it done management to the membership or to the union leadership to be told to the management to be told to the membership?

MS. PANKEY: In accordance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement between Local 1971 and the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, management is to notify the union officials when there is going to be a layoff and they are to also solicit us for alternative to layoffs.

On May 2nd, a meeting was held with Anthony McIntosh, Sandra Barnhill and Pat Heron, and I was the only union representative that was available to be

present at that time. They informed me at that particular time -- there was no letter given, but they certainly asked for -- Anthony McIntosh stated, This is an official request to the union for alternative to layoffs.

Also according to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, there is a placement committee that is supposed to be formed to find jobs for anyone who is affected, but the language in the Collective Bargaining Agreement says, Upon notification of those individuals who are going to be affected, that that placement committee is formed. The PHDC wanted to form the committee ahead of time, and what I asked at that point and I asked again yesterday, if you notify me of the individuals who are going to be affected, along with their positions, then we can form this placement committee and know exactly what type of jobs we're looking for, and I was told again yesterday, as I was told on the 2nd of

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May, you'll get the notice when you get the notice.

So the placement committee isn't formed. We, the union, do not have to form that committee until we're notified, but we were certainly willing to do that had we had some more information. However, they did again reiterate this is their official request for alternative to layoffs.

I then, along with the other representatives of the union, met with PHDC membership, gave them a letter on union letterhead reiterating what was told to me in the meeting of May 2nd, 50 percent budget reduction, definitely going to be a layoff and that notifications were definitely going to come out by June 30th. I need some alternative to submit to management.

They submitted their alternatives. A meeting was originally scheduled the day after Memorial Day. Mr. McIntosh extended his holiday. We

had a follow-up meeting yesterday, and he was given the alternative to layoffs that was collected by PHDC. And his response to me then was he would get back to me.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Now, in your best estimation -- you clearly know the procedures based on the Collective Bargaining Agreement. In your best estimation, do you believe that those procedures, which I imagine are agreed upon through consensus in the past, have those provisions been honored, in your best estimation?

MS. PANKEY: Thus far --

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: In terms of process and delivery of information.

MS. PANKEY: As it pertains to this particular layoff. Because what you may not know is that we are in an arbitration for our last layoff of 2004, because they weren't in compliance.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I see.

MS. PANKEY: But to this point, they have, in accordance with the

Collective Bargaining Agreement, they've notified us. I'm not going to say that they are in complete compliance, because we have asked them for a budget. They're telling us a 50 percent -- they're telling us that their budget is cut 50 percent, but we have not gotten a detailed PHDC budget. What they gave us was a copy of the OHCD Consolidated Plan. We didn't ask them for that. They are required by contract to give us PHDC's budget. They haven't given it to us, and told us that they're not going to give it to us until OHCD's budget is approved. Therefore, we have no -- we're not able to justify the number of people that they lay off, because we don't know all the funding that's being taken into consideration. We only have the copy of the Consolidated Plan of the book from OHCD.

So that aspect of it, they're not in compliance, because we're not able to reference anything, but in terms of

them notifying us that there's going to be a layoff, in terms of soliciting us for alternative to layoffs, they have done that and they have met back with us to gather them, and at this point, we're waiting for a response to what we get.

Now, based on what was said today, I wouldn't expect a response, because supposedly there's not going to be any layoff, but if we get a response, then we got a major concern, because things will then appear to be moving forward.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: My final question is, given Chair Lady's leadership, we're now in a different place. So going forward but with the benefit of hindsight -- they say hindsight is 20/20 -- what would you expect to happen differently going forward?

MS. PANKEY: Going forward at this point based on what happened this morning, I would expect to be getting

some phone calls from somebody on this Administration so we can sit down and talk about what the issues are so that when we come in September, we're not talking about, We're waiting to hear anything or something to schedule. I'd like to see some progress being made.

We've been talking about this matter for eight years. This isn't something that has just come out of the woodworks. This reorganization issue has been going on for a very long period of time, well before Kevin Hanna, well before Kevin Hanna, and we have always from day one -- Jeff Brown initiated all of this.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Jeff Brown would be?

MS. PANKEY: He was the previous President. He was the President at the time when this whole reorganization issue began to be talked about.

We have always, this local has

always, demonstrated their willingness to work with this Administration to make this transition as smooth as possible. If you look at all the other reorganizations that have ever taken place, the union was involved. We wasn't sitting here for eight times. We probably was never here, because the union was involved. But for whatever reason, this Administration, as you hear today, it wasn't about money. It wasn't about money. But this Administration chose not to deal with the union, and the only consensus that we can come up with was because to bust the union. But as Ms. Blackwell has said to us, with the grace of God and with our efforts, we prevail, because we know we were fighting a good fight and we were fighting for the right reason, and we're going to continue to press on. We're going to continue to press on. And as we expressed to Mr. Hanna back in March, one thing you need to know about a union that you

didn't know when you first came in the City, this is a union town, and if you didn't receive the education about a union when you came, we're going to give it to you, and we will continue to give it to you.

(Applause.)

MS. PANKEY: We are one. We're going to continue to fight for our efforts. We didn't just come about. We've always been about. We intend to stay around. And we're also willing to work with the Administration on anything that comes about.

We understand deficits. We clearly understand. We have gone through layoffs. We just had a layoff in 2004. We had a layoff in 1993. We have gone through many layoffs. We understand deficits. But what we don't understand is total disrespect, total disregard from any process, and it's not acceptable. It is not acceptable, and we will not accept it and we will not tolerate it. And we

will do what we need to do to continue to fight as one on matters that affect us and our working conditions.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you for your testimony.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me thank all the other unions who are also here to support you and us.

Let me say that I reached out for the Mayor, and the Mayor said that he would consider this issue. He would deal with it, but I needed to give him an hour from now. So if we consider now it's like 2:40 -- I don't know who wants to come back. We can come back here in an hour, and then the Mayor, I'm sure he'll reach out.

He asked if his housing people were here, so that you know he asked if you were here, Mr. Hanna. I told him that you were, but that we needed some

assurances in writing for RDA and PHDC, as you so stated, Madam President.

So, therefore, what I'll do is, we can formally recess until then. You can wait here. You may not want to. You've been here all day, or whomever wants to come back can, and we'll come back here in one hour from now. So it's 2:40. We'll come back here at 3:40.

MS. PANKEY: That's certainly acceptable to us.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And we'll hope to see you then.

MS. PANKEY: Thank you very much.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

(Short recess.)

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon again.

We spoke again to the Mayor with regard to a letter and a commitment. The Mayor has said given the fact that there are -- the Mayor did not want to

give a letter. He said that the letter he's provided talks about it, makes reference to it, the CDBG commitment we have where it goes back to the other departments. He thought we had it, but he thought that in the spirit of union negotiations and you all talking and all of the interaction you have to do, that he didn't think at this point that it would be beneficial to issue another letter.

He said he's willing to work with me, and he said that I should know by now that he's not trying to hurt you, but that at this point, he didn't think that he should issue an additional letter or provide additional documents at this point.

So I'm happy to have further discussion about it, but that's the long and short of it. I think we've accomplished a lot. We do have our reorg on hold obviously based on where we are with the CDBG, and we've already talked

about where additional money is. I told the Mayor that this morning. We knew where 8 million was. Of course, I was always willing to gut the Housing Trust Fund, but having said that, we let that go.

So at any rate, we're here and we're happy to hear what your President has to say and your Vice-President.

MS. PANKEY: Councilwoman Blackwell, we again thank you for all your efforts. Our issue is not certainly with the efforts that you have displayed, but with that of the Mayor and head of the Redevelopment Authority and PHDC.

His response to us regarding the actions that have taken place thus far is not acceptable to us as it pertains to our layoffs. We have always demonstrated to both this Committee and the Administration that they were mixing apples and oranges, that the layoff issue and the housing reorganization issue were two separate issues.

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We certainly appreciate the victory that we achieved, that you have achieved for us this morning regarding housing reorganization, but it clearly does not deal with the deficit. We have actions that have been taking place thus far regarding dealing with the deficit with the layoffs that PHDC and both the Redevelopment Authority are supposed to implement sometime in the near future, certainly according to PHDC. What he stated is one thing, but we have nothing in writing.

So the fact that he doesn't want to provide us anything in writing and it doesn't look like he's asking PHDC nor the Redevelopment Authority for anything in writing, as a matter of record for us, what we would like to ask for is a copy of testimony from this morning by e-mail so that we can have it for our record as to what it is he said and that we have --

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

Absolutely.

MS. PANKEY: -- an official record of his commitment to us as it pertains to layoff in this housing reorganization. Because our opinion is, the letter he gave us is certainly not sufficient. It only addresses one issue of the battle in which we have been fighting.

So, again, this has no disrespect or disregard for all the efforts that you and your Committee have demonstrated, but it certainly doesn't address -- what he has given us in writing does not address what he said this morning. It only addresses a portion of what he said.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Absolutely. None taken. And we did hear a lot of testimony, a lot from the Chief of Staff, from Kevin Hanna, from Deb McColloch. We will make that available to you, obviously. John Christmas will do that. We'll also make sure you have a

copy of all the documents that were passed out today.

And, again, as I said, I'm always here. I'm always here, and should anything or you hear that anything has changed, all you have to do is just let me know, and we'll be here. I'm always here.

So having said that, we look forward to continuing to work with you, and it's not over until it's over, as they say.

MS. PANKEY: Absolutely.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And we are going to continue to work together, to hold hands and to pray that God will continue to bless us in our efforts to make sure that all families, all individuals are provided for and protected.

MS. PANKEY: Thank you very much.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Let me say, God bless you. This

time we'll recess subject to the call of the Chair, since the summer is coming. So that still keeps the issue on the table. It just means we'll have to advertise.

We look forward to -- if you make sure -- I think John, he knows how to call you, so he can always figure out how to get you the documents you needed. And certainly we say to the City housing representatives who are here that you have said that you can report back as I contact the Mayor. We do respect the fact that for PHDC it was verbal, it wasn't written notification, and I'm sure that plays into the Mayor's decision about responding. When it's not written, albeit you have a union mandate, it's better when it's not written than if it is written, as you know.

But we will continue to monitor all that we can with regard to that situation and look forward to hearing from you in that regard.

MS. PANKEY: And we certainly will keep you informed. Thank you so much.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. God bless. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless adjourned at 3:45 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the proceedings, evidence and objections are contained fully and accurately in the stenographic notes taken by me upon the foregoing matter on June 8, 2006, and that this is a true and correct transcript of same.

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MICHELE L. MURPHY

RPR-Notary Public

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