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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

PUBLIC HEARING

4

BEFORE THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON

5

PARKS, RECREATION, AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, April 15, 1998
11:08 a.m.

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BILL NO. 970794 - An ordinance naming the
playground currently designated as the
Whitehall Commons Playground, located
at 1900 Wakeling Street and bounded by 4700
Jackson Street, 4700 Ditman Street, and 1900
Margaret Street as the Billy Gambrell
Playground.

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PRESENT: COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER, Chair
COUNCILWOMAN JOAN L. KRAJEWSKI
COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY
COUNCILWOMAN HAPPY FERNANDEZ
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO
COUNCILMAN RICHARD T. MARIANO
COUNCILMAN W. THACHER LONGSTRETH
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO

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1 COMM. ON PARKS, RECREATION, CULTURAL AFFAIRS - 970794

2 P R O C E E D I N G S

3 COUNCILWOMAN CLARK: Good morning. The
4 public hearing of the City Council Special
5 Committee on Parks, Recreation, and Cultural
6 Affairs is now in session.

7 In attendance for the purpose of a
8 quorum are Councilwoman Marian Tasco, Council
9 Frank Rizzo, Councilwoman Happy Fernandez, and
10 Councilman Rick Mariano.

11 Will the clerk please read title of the
12 bill.

13 THE CLERK: An ordinance naming the
14 playground currently designated as the Whitehall
15 Commons Playground, located at 1900 Wakeling
16 Street and bounded by 4700 Jackson Street, 4700
17 Ditman Street, and 1900 Margaret Street as the
18 Billy Gambrell Playground.

19 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you.

20 Also in attendance is Council Joan
21 Krajewski and Councilman Jim Kenney. We have a
22 full house.

23 Is there anyone here to testify for or
24 against this bill? If so, please come up to the
25 table, one at a time or two at a time, identify

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2 yourself for the record, state your name and
3 organization or any other identifying information
4 you choose to give us, and speak into the
5 microphone.

6 (Y.C. Allen comes forward.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Please state your
8 name for the record.

9 MR. ALLEN: Good morning. My name is
10 Y.C. Allen. I live at 4637 Lesher Street. I am
11 the block captain of Lesher Street and a community
12 member of Frankford.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. Do you
14 want to talk about it?

15 MR. ALLEN: Okay, yes. First of all, I
16 would like to make the correction of the name.
17 It's William Gambrell.

18 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: It's not Billy
19 Gambrell?

20 MR. ALLEN: Well, his -- on his birth
21 certificate is William Gambrell -- well, Willie --
22 William -- Billy Gambrell, in fact, would be in
23 order.

24 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

25 MR. ALLEN: Because that is how the

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2 neighborhood and the young children know him as.

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

4 MR. ALLEN: He's a very dedicated man
5 of the community. He's been in Frankford, working
6 in Frankford, in the community, for 35 years. He
7 has been working with children the Frankford
8 Chargers for 32 years.

9 He is a well-respected man of the
10 community. He goes all out for the namesake of
11 the children. Where children wouldn't be able to
12 have certain challenges to be able to go and enjoy
13 sports or recreation, William Gambrell, he's for
14 every child, whether they can afford it or not or
15 are able to participate in all the sports and
16 activities of the center.

17 I highly recommend that the building of
18 Whitehall bear the name of William Billy Gambrell.

19 .

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you.

21 MR. ALLEN: Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Stay right there.

23 Is there any Committee Member that has
24 a question for this witness?

25 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I do. I just want

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2 to clarify what are we naming this center. Are we
3 renaming it "Billy Gambrell" or are we going to
4 name it "Willy Gambrell"?

5 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Councilwoman,
6 we're going to name it "Billy Gambrell."

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Okay.

8 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: We were trying to
9 rename it "Mr. Billy," but we don't think, you
10 know, that would be right. But everyone knows him
11 as "Mr. Billy." I didn't know his name was Billy
12 Gambrell till I knew him ten years. It was "Mr.
13 Billy."

14 MR. ALLEN: Oh, okay, right. That's
15 how I know him, too.

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So we won't be
17 adding "William."

18 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: No, it will be
19 "Billy Gambrell."

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: All right. Is
21 there anything else you wish to add, Mr. Allen?

22 MR. ALLEN: No, that will be all.

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you for
24 your testimony.

25 MR. ALLEN: And thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Is there anyone
3 wishing to testify for or against this bill?

4 (Johnnie Mae Parker comes forward.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Please state your
6 name and any other identifying information you'd
7 like to give us, and speak directly into the mike.

8 MS. PARKER: My name is Johnnie Mae
9 Parker, and I'm also from the community of
10 Frankford and I'm a block captain, also.

11 And it's not too much that I could add
12 to what the fellow had said because I've been
13 knowing Billy Gambrell for over 27 years. My son,
14 who's 35 years old, also was one of the Frankford
15 Chargers many years ago.

16 And when I came to know him, I saw how
17 instrumental he was in getting all the young kids
18 to play football. I mean, that was his heart.
19 And any one of the kids who couldn't afford it, he
20 made sure that they played. He looked all over
21 for grants.

22 I remember when the little boys, they
23 didn't even have uniforms. They were just little
24 raggedy -- they didn't have enough money to buy
25 uniforms but he went around and tried to make sure

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2 outfitted and made sure that they played ball. He
3 is just that kind of guy.

4 And he also works a lot with the senior
5 citizens. We have -- a new senior-citizen
6 building has been built there in Frankford. And
7 he's always up there talking to the seniors about
8 anything, if they need anything or anything he
9 could do for them, he's there. He's just that
10 kind of guy.

11 And I think that it would be a great
12 thing to have that building dedicated in his
13 honor.

14 That's all I have to say.

15 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

16 MS. PARKER: Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. Stay
18 seated.

19 Does any member have questions of this
20 witness?

21 (No questions.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: None? Thank you.

23 Is there anyone else that wants to
24 testify for or against the bill?

25 For the record, we'd like to make note

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2 that Councilman Thacher Longstreth is also in
3 attendance.

4 (Fortunato Perri Jr. comes forward.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Please state your
6 name and any other identifying information for the
7 record, and speak into the mike.

8 MR. PERRI: Good morning. My name is
9 Fortunato Perri, Jr.

10 And I just want to, before I say
11 anything, that I'm honored to be here this morning
12 in Council chambers. This is my first opportunity
13 I've ever had to be here, and I'm honored.

14 I'd like to speak on behalf of William
15 Gambrell. He is known in our neighborhood as "Mr.
16 Bill." When I say "our neighborhood," I was born
17 and raised in the Frankford community. My mother
18 and father still live there.

19 Bill Gambrell is someone who I've known
20 for about 25 years. He went to school, both
21 junior high school and high school with my father,
22 as a matter of fact.

23 Bill Gambrell has spent his entire
24 adult life trying to better the Frankford
25 community generally by working with the youth of

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2 the community. He has worked tirelessly in the
3 Frankford Chargers organization in this building
4 that we're talking about this morning, along with
5 the play ground that sits in the shadows of
6 Whitehall Projects.

7 And it's through his efforts that this
8 organization has been able to maintain itself
9 through the last 25 or 30 years, when he started
10 it in the late sixties.

11 His goals are seeing that young
12 children have a place to play, a place to go, a
13 place to keep them off the streets, and he is
14 completely dedicated to that end.

15 He has made it possible for many young
16 boys, for the most part, from the community
17 through the Chargers organization, to receive
18 athletic scholarships, a college education.

19 And some of those individuals have
20 played professional sports. I can just name Ralph
21 Louis, Blair Thomas, two of the guys come to find.

22 So I'm here this morning proudly
23 stating to the Members of Council that I think I
24 can speak on behalf of the entire Frankford
25 community that Mr. Gambrell is well-deserving of

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2 this building being dedicated in his name.

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you. Do
4 any committee members have any questions for this
5 witness?

6 (No questions.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you, Mr.
8 Perri.

9 MR. PERRI: Thank you. May I be
10 excused?

11 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Yes.

12 MR. PERRI: Thank you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Is there anyone
14 else here to testify for or against this bill?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. No one
17 else that wants to testify?

18 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: It's my bill. May
19 I?

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, Councilman
21 Mariano.

22 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I just want to say
23 something for the record. I introduced this bill,
24 along with Councilman Kenney. And I know Mr.
25 Gambrell.

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2 And just a little bit of little quick
3 history about the Whitehall section of Frankford.
4 The Whitehall section of Frankford is the oldest
5 African-American section in the City of
6 Philadelphia. Campbell A.M.E. Church, which is
7 two blocks from the Whitehall Commons that we're
8 talking about was a stop on the underground
9 railroad.

10 So in a neighborhood that's been going
11 through some changes, and the projects have been
12 there as long as I can remember. I don't ever
13 remember a time the projects weren't there; as
14 long as I can remember, the projects were there.

15 Billy has been a positive reinforcement
16 on all these -- not just young men, and it hasn't
17 always been football. He has a -- there's -- he
18 has leadership classes that -- he's just amazing.

19 I mean, I love to go to Frankford
20 Chargers to listen to the boys and girls because
21 they're so well-behaved because Billy -- there's
22 dance classes in there, and Billy makes sure
23 everybody's behaved. And he's definitely a person
24 who has had effect on more people's life than
25 anyone could ever hope to.

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2 So I'm proud to cosponsor this bill,
3 and I think it's definitely a good sign for young
4 people in any community to know a person like
5 Billy Gambrell.

6 Thank you, Madame Chairwoman.

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you,
8 Councilman Mariano for your comments.

9 This concludes the public hearing on
10 Bill No. 970794.

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12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: We will now move
13 into the public meeting.

14 The Chair will recognize Councilman
15 Mariano for a motion.

16 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I'd like to make a
17 motion that Bill No. 970794 be voted out of
18 committee with a favorable recommendation.

19 (Duly seconded.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. It has
21 been properly moved and seconded that Bill No.
22 970794 be voted out of this committee with a
23 favorable recommendation.

24 All in favor, signify by saying aye.

25 Those opposed?

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2 The motion is carried. Bill No. 970794
3 is approved.

4 This concludes the public meeting. We
5 want to thank you and thank everyone for coming,
6 especially the Committee Members. Thank you.

7 (Adjourned at 11:20 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing
proceedings of the Council of the City of
Philadelphia of Wednesday, April 15, 1998, were
reported and accurately by me, and that this is a
correct transcript of same.

RE: SPECIAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON
PARKS, RECREATION, AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
BILL NO. 970794

_____,
JOSEPHINE CARDILLO, RPR