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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PROPERTY

4

AND PUBLIC WORKS

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, October 26, 2009
11:15 a.m.

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PRESENT:

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COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE, CHAIR

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COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.

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COUNCILMAN WILLIAM GREENLEE

14

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.

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COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY

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COUNCILWOMAN JOAN L. KRAJEWSKI

17

COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER

18

COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO

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BILL 090390 - An ordinance amending Chapter
16-400 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
"Vacant and Surplus Properties"...

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BILL 090521 - An ordinance requiring the
Philadelphia Authority for Industrial
Development to provide certain specified
notice of its public meetings...

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COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Good

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morning. This is the Committee on Public

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Property and Public Works. We have

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established a quorum. We have Councilman

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Rizzo, Councilman Kenney, Councilman

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Greenlee.

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Will Mr. Carter please read the

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title of the first bill.

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THE CLERK: Bill No. 090390, an

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ordinance amending Chapter 16-400 of The

12

Philadelphia Code, entitled "Vacant and

13

Surplus Properties," by amending Section

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16-404, entitled "The Vacant Property

15

Review Committee."

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COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Councilman

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Goode.

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COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,

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Mr. Chairman. Very briefly. I will be

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offering an amendment to this bill.

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Actually, I've circulated an amendment to

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this bill. The Reinvestment Fund has

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asked to withdraw itself from

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consideration, which is in their written

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testimony. I don't know if someone will

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 appear here to actually explain why, but

3 I would like to just remove the

4 Reinvestment Fund and just keep Local

5 Initiatives Support Corporation, who will

6 testify on their own behalf today.

7 Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,

9 Councilman.

10 Our first witness is

11 Ms. McColloch.

12 (Witness approached witness

13 table.)

14 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Good

15 morning.

16 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Good morning,

17 Councilman Clarke and members of the

18 Committee on Public Property and Public

19 Works. I am Deborah McColloch, Director

20 of Housing, and I am here today to

21 present testimony regarding Bill No.

22 090390, which was introduced by

23 Councilman Goode on May 7th.

24 This bill amends Chapter 16-400

25 of The Philadelphia Code by adding

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390
2 members to the Vacant Property Review
3 Committee. This Committee already
4 includes heads or their designees of the
5 Department of Public Property, the
6 Department of Revenue, the City Planning
7 Commission, the Department of Licenses
8 and Inspections, the Commerce Department,
9 the President of City Council, the Chair
10 of City Council's Committee on Public
11 Property and Public Works, as well as
12 other City entities, including the Office
13 of Housing and Community Development and
14 the Redevelopment Authority.

15 Specifically, this bill would
16 add the executive heads or their
17 designees of now only LISC, Local
18 Initiatives Support Corporation, to the
19 Committee. The City has convened a
20 Vacant Property Working Group which
21 already includes representatives of the
22 Reinvestment Fund, which is no longer
23 included in this bill, and LISC, so they
24 are already our partners on these issues
25 of addressing vacant property. LISC has

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 worked for the City on issues of vacant
3 lot and it possesses a level of expertise
4 and understanding of vacant land issues
5 which may be helpful in resolving vacant
6 property issues in Philadelphia.

7 I appreciate the opportunity to
8 testify in support of this bill, and I'm
9 happy to answer any questions you may
10 have.

11 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you.

12 Any questions of this witness
13 by members of the Committee?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: There being
16 none, thank you very much.

17 I'm sorry. Let the record
18 reflect that Councilman Curtis Jones is
19 in attendance.

20 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Oh, sorry.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Generally on
22 the issue of the Vacant Property Review
23 Committee, could you for my purposes
24 share with us how in this Administration
25 its role in obtaining properties has

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 changed from the last Administration and
3 whether or not by adding these two -- I
4 believe it is now one -- extra person how
5 that's going to change the process in
6 anticipating that it may be for the
7 better? Can you give me a better sense
8 mechanically how that's going to help?

9 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Well, the
10 Vacant Property Review Committee, of
11 course, is a committee of City Council,
12 and so this is expanding that membership.
13 So Committee members vote on the
14 disposition of properties, and so now
15 there will be one additional entity
16 represented at the table, and LISC, as I
17 said in my testimony, has been working
18 with us addressing issues of vacant land,
19 so I think that the expertise that LISC
20 brings could be helpful in the discussion
21 of how land should be disposed and to
22 what entities and to what end.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: I am
24 familiar with the Vacant Property Review
25 Committee. In fact, in a prior capacity

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390
2 as President of PCDC, I sat on the Vacant
3 Property Review Committee and understand
4 its important function. The question I
5 have is that as a public land
6 distribution/dissemination agency, we
7 seem to be experiencing some delays by
8 way of disposition of property, and I
9 wanted to know -- and I came from my
10 office to burden this committee with that
11 question so that I could get a better
12 answer.

13 It's my understanding that we
14 have some delays and backlogs. Is this
15 going to change that in any way, and, if
16 not, how are we going to kind of move
17 that process along?

18 MS. MCCOLLOCH: We're
19 currently -- there is a backlog of cases
20 that's currently being addressed. The
21 cases are being reviewed. We've been
22 going through what was an extensive
23 backlog. I believe about 250 properties
24 have been moved recently, and that we're
25 going back and reviewing each of those

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 cases so that that pipeline that has been
3 delayed can get moved.

4 I'm not sure that adding an
5 additional member to the committee will
6 have much of an impact on that backlog,
7 because that's really several years old,
8 that we have to process each of those
9 deeds, and each of those cases has to be
10 reviewed. So we're turning that through
11 the system now.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm aware
13 keenly that the Chairman is interested in
14 this subject and, in fact, has introduced
15 legislation to deal with the overarching
16 issue of publicly owned land, but I
17 wanted to on the record cite that we
18 really need to, in light of all of our
19 budget constraints, in light of all the
20 economic imperatives that we have, need
21 to fix this process so that not only
22 residential individuals who have adjacent
23 properties to their property can gain
24 control, but also issues, fundamental
25 issues, of what is the value of the

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 inventory that we have, what is its
3 potential to deal with some of the
4 deficit problems by disposing of it.

5 Those are issues that, just to
6 give you a heads-up and the Vacant
7 Property Review Committee and OHCD in
8 general and Public Property, that we are
9 going to be increasingly concerned about
10 in light of all of the tough decisions we
11 have to make budgetarily, and we're
12 already beginning the budget process
13 again. So fixing this is a critical
14 component on the revenue side.

15 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
17 Councilman.

18 I must admit, I wasn't going to
19 bring it up today, but there is some
20 concern about some of the inconsistencies
21 in the interdepartmental back and forth
22 about how properties should be disposed
23 and whether or not should they be market
24 value or nominal. I understand that
25 Public Property, not only being a member

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390
2 of the committee who actually has to sign
3 the deed, at the end of the day I think
4 we all need to be on the same page,
5 particularly given the fact that
6 Councilman Jones has said we do need to
7 be in a position to accelerate the
8 disposition and our financial situation.
9 I think we're actually going to be doing
10 something very shortly relating to that
11 issue.

12 Councilman Kenney.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chairman.

15 This doesn't have as much to do
16 with backlog as it does with information
17 that I had received recently, and I don't
18 know how accurate the information is, but
19 has there been some discussion either in
20 RDA or somewhere else relative to side
21 yards that have been deeded over to
22 neighbors in the past? I know the
23 Chairman mentioned something about
24 relative to the market value argument or
25 discussion going forward. Is there

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 anything that you've heard of relative to
3 properties that have already been deeded
4 in the Side Yard Program?

5 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Not that I'm
6 aware of of properties for which people
7 have already received deeds. There is a
8 working committee. The Redevelopment
9 Authority is taking the lead on it, also
10 working with the Chief of Staff, to
11 review overall our vacant land
12 disposition policies, as Councilman
13 Clarke said, to try to bring consistency
14 to what happens at Public Property,
15 Redevelopment Authority, Philadelphia
16 Housing Development Corporation and so
17 forth.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But not
19 properties that have been deeded?

20 MS. MCCOLLOCH: But not
21 properties -- to my knowledge, not
22 properties for which people have already
23 received deeds.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So in the
25 discussion -- and I have not been

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 directly part of it, just kind of getting
3 information here and there, and that's
4 the difficulty, and I will echo what I've
5 said before and what other people have
6 said, is that when there's lack of
7 information or communication, rumors and
8 other things grow and things become
9 actually worse. So any ability to share
10 what the issue is and what the discussion
11 is with everyone in Council would be
12 helpful, because when you hear this
13 stuff, you go, Oh, my God, what are they
14 going to do now.

15 Going forward with the side
16 yards, what's the issue relative to
17 market, the market value argument?
18 What's going on with the discussion
19 there? What's the two sides or three
20 sides of the issue?

21 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Well, there's a
22 debate, I'll say, between the
23 longstanding policy, which has been side
24 yards would be disposed of at nominal
25 value for use by an adjacent owner to use

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 as a garden or parking space or
3 what-have-you, versus the notion that the
4 land has value and we should -- "we" as
5 the City -- should be recovering that
6 value and not providing side yards at
7 nominal value. So there's been a debate
8 back and forth, particularly --

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: In
10 neighborhoods that are experiencing
11 difficulty where there could be hand in
12 hand with that difficult circumstance, a
13 lot of the abandonment and properties
14 that have been demolished under NTI or by
15 the City generally, it would seem that it
16 would be cost prohibitive for some of the
17 folks who live in those struggling
18 neighborhoods to be paying market rate
19 dollars for side yards, which I in the
20 past in my experience, it's kind of been
21 a bit of a favor I thought that they were
22 doing for the City by taking ownership,
23 cleaning it up, fencing it, landscaping
24 it and making the neighborhood look
25 better, while at the same time getting

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 more square footage for their own use.

3 But if theoretically we start charging

4 people a market rate assessment in a

5 struggling neighborhood, you're not going

6 to have any of those sold and you're

7 going to have the blight.

8 So, I mean, if the lot, which

9 is highly unlikely, is located in a

10 neighborhood where the property values

11 are up there, in the 200, 300 per house,

12 it's unlikely the lot is going to exist,

13 because it's going to be developed. In

14 neighborhoods where development is

15 difficult for numbers of reasons, it

16 would seem that having the Side Yard

17 Program and a nominal fee is a

18 neighborhood stabilization effort as much

19 as it is a revenue producer. Do you

20 understand the difference?

21 MS. MCCOLLOCH: I understand

22 exactly what you're saying, Councilman,

23 and that is precisely, if you will, the

24 debate that's been going on between sort

25 of the community development side of the

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 world, which is the value here is to
3 promote neighborhood stabilization, give
4 people, particularly in distressed
5 neighborhoods, an opportunity to acquire
6 that land and take care of it, as opposed
7 to the side of the City that is looking
8 to generate revenue and sees this as a
9 way to generate revenue.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But you
11 could put a side yard and vacant property
12 out there for a market rate sale and
13 never sell it.

14 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Right.

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I mean, we
16 just can't -- we've become kind of our
17 own slumlord at that point, because we're
18 not going to have the capacity or desire
19 to turn these properties over to folks
20 who will create a garden, maintain it,
21 put a little side patio and make their
22 house and their neighborhood better.

23 MS. MCCOLLOCH: And I think
24 that's why we need a policy with some
25 nuance to it so that particularly in

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 neighborhoods where there's not a lot of
3 investment, you can have a way to dispose
4 of properties at nominal value and not
5 create a windfall in a different
6 neighborhood where if you sell it at
7 nominal value and then the person could
8 turn around...

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And the
10 only thing I would add to that is that,
11 again, if there's lack of information,
12 there's going to be rumors and
13 exaggeration, and that makes it harder to
14 get the toothpaste back in the tube once
15 it's out, and it's happened not
16 necessarily with you on a number of
17 instances, but over the last couple of
18 years, a lot of that stuff could have
19 been avoided had we had the information
20 correctly in front of us and then had the
21 ability to discuss it as opposed to
22 trying to figure out what people are
23 thinking.

24 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Okay.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thanks.

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
3 Councilman.

4 Real quick, Ms. McColloch, you
5 mentioned that there was a committee
6 reviewing land disposition/acquisition
7 policy. Is City Council, either itself
8 or through VPRC, represented on that
9 committee?

10 MS. MCCOLLOCH: No, but the
11 idea was that the committee is working --
12 it's a committee of the Administration
13 that will be bringing a set of proposals
14 back to Council to discuss with
15 Councilmembers. There's not -- we've not
16 yet created a set -- we've not yet
17 written a set of policies for discussion.
18 We're in discussion stages.

19 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: And I do
20 hear that you said that the RDA was
21 taking the lead, along with the Chief of
22 Staff?

23 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Yes.

24 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I'm a
25 little concerned about establishing a set

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390
2 of policies, albeit a recommendation,
3 without the involvement of City Council,
4 who is pretty much the only entity that
5 can dispose of property within
6 government, and hearing now that VPRC --
7 the Chair of our committee is Mr. Coates.
8 I'm a little concerned that you're saying
9 that they're not involved in that
10 discussion. I found --

11 MS. MCCOLLOCH: I beg your
12 pardon. Well, I've been involved in the
13 discussions and Mr. Coates has been
14 involved in the discussions.

15 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: He is?

16 MS. MCCOLLOCH: I meant there
17 was not -- I misspoke. I misunderstood
18 your question. There's not a specific
19 representative -- there's not a specific
20 Councilmember in those discussions, but
21 certainly Mr. Coates has been in the
22 discussions, as have I.

23 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: In his
24 capacity is he representing VPRC or is he
25 representing -- because it's a little

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 confusing, because it's a VPRC staff that
3 actually works for you.

4 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Right.

5 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So my
6 question is, is he representing City
7 Council in his capacity as the Chair of
8 the committee on that panel or is he
9 representing you in his capacity as
10 Director of the VPRC staff?

11 MS. MCCOLLOCH: He's bringing
12 his expertise to the committee to this
13 little working group as --

14 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Two hats.

15 MS. MCCOLLOCH: -- the Director
16 of Real Estate for the Office of Housing
17 and Community Development. So he's not
18 there specifically as a representative of
19 City Council.

20 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So we don't
21 really have a representative on it.

22 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Right.

23 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Okay. All
24 right. I'll leave that alone.

25 Councilman Rizzo.

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thanks, Mr.
3 Chairman.

4 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Then
5 Councilman Greenlee.

6 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Has the sale
7 of a side yard or a piece of real estate
8 to a homeowner ever impeded development?
9 Do we have in our arrangements land
10 leases? I mean, do you ever hesitate in
11 selling someone outright a vacant lot
12 that you believe some day when the
13 neighborhood, like many neighborhoods
14 have, comes back? Could they be a land
15 lease versus an outright sale?

16 MS. MCCOLLOCH: There's not a
17 land lease. Hold on just a minute. I'm
18 sorry.

19 Let me just ask Mr. Coates to
20 come up, because he's really the expert
21 on this and he could answer that
22 question.

23 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: You
24 understand my question?

25 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Yeah.

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: That they
3 own it, but they don't own it.

4 (Witness approached witness
5 table.)

6 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I'd just
7 like to say, Mr. Edwards, I know you're
8 here for this particular bill that will
9 designate your agency as a member of
10 VPRC. Please bear with us. We don't get
11 a lot of bites at the apple, so I know
12 we're a little off the screen in terms of
13 our question, but we'll be with you very
14 shortly.

15 MR. COATES: Good morning.
16 Yes. There are -- John Coates, Chairman
17 of the Vacant Property Review Committee.

18 There are times that we issue
19 what's called an Urban Garden Agreement,
20 which is similar to a lease. It's a
21 renewable document each year that allows
22 a homeowner or civic group to utilize
23 vacant land. That way, I think to answer
24 your question, should the City at some
25 point down the pike wish to use that land

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 for another purpose, it hasn't been
3 deeded over. It stays in City inventory.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, we
5 just witnessed that, I believe. They
6 relocated one of the urban gardens
7 recently, in the last six or eight
8 months, to a new location because of
9 development. So I've witnessed that.
10 But I'm talking about some of the routine
11 sales. Should there be some
12 consideration of land lease versus
13 outright ownership?

14 MR. COATES: Well, I think the
15 Planning Commission reviews -- on the
16 committee is the Planning Commission, and
17 the Planning Commission usually reviews
18 the appropriateness of the disposition.
19 So if there is a plan for some future
20 use, we're usually made aware of that and
21 asked not to dispose.

22 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, the
23 reason I'm bringing it up is exactly
24 that. Many people have been turned down
25 because of that, that they asked that

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 there be an option that they could lease
3 it until the time that it was developed,
4 and they were told no.

5 MR. COATES: Well, they should
6 be able to lease through Public Property.
7 They couldn't lease -- the VPRC can't
8 issue a lease, but the Department of
9 Public Property could. That might be
10 something that could be incorporated into
11 these discussions.

12 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I'd
13 appreciate that.

14 MR. COATES: Okay.

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.
16 Thank you.

17 Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: While the
19 Chairman is out, let me ask another
20 question, not to belabor this point, Ms.
21 McColloch, but in kind of piggybacking on
22 what Councilman Kenney said. Whose
23 decision was it to set up this advisory
24 committee or whatever it was, or who is
25 doing it?

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Who is?

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: On the
4 working group, yes.

5 MS. MCCOLLOCH: It's being
6 chaired by the Chief of Staff, Clay
7 Armbrister.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Do you
9 know the reason -- I mean, it would seem
10 to me just for a couple of reasons, just
11 sort of courtesy and saving time, to get
12 it done, that Council would have a direct
13 involvement, some Councilmember or some
14 entity. This is nothing against
15 Mr. Coates, but as Councilman Clarke
16 says, he has a couple hats on. You had
17 said earlier that Vacant Property Review
18 Committee is part of City Council, and so
19 obviously vacant property, its
20 disposition affects -- City Council
21 affects, and certainly the district
22 Councilpeople particularly are very
23 involved in this, and those of us
24 at-large are too, but particularly the
25 district people. It just doesn't seem to

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 make a lot of sense. And I know this
3 maybe isn't your decision, but I'm just
4 trying to think the thinking here of why
5 Council would not be a direct involvement
6 in this, because it comes back to us and
7 we didn't -- I would say the likelihood
8 of problems coming out of that increases.
9 Wouldn't you think?

10 MS. MCCOLLOCH: I think the
11 idea was that there would be some
12 preliminary work done to put some ideas
13 out and then bring it back and have
14 discussions with Council.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Well,
16 again, not to belabor it, but it would
17 seem like having Council as one of those
18 entities in that original discussion
19 since they're so involved anyway just
20 makes some sense. And, again, I'm
21 probably picking on you and it's not your
22 decision, I understand that. We go
23 through this all the time. The folks
24 that we need to get to, we can't. And
25 this has gone farther than the bill we

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 have today, but it just seems like that
3 doesn't -- because vacant property is
4 going to be always a big thing with
5 Council and the constituents, and it just
6 seems to include Council in the very
7 beginning makes a lot more sense.

8 Councilman Kenney.

9 MS. MCCOLLOCH: I understand
10 your concern.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.
12 Just one more question relative to this,
13 and this came into my head as a result of
14 conversations I just had with Councilman
15 Greenlee. You had said in your answer to
16 my question that no deeded properties
17 would be reconsidered, or once they were
18 deeded over, the deed was --

19 MS. MCCOLLOCH: As far as I
20 know, that's -- yes.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And
22 Mr. Coates mentioned issues relative to a
23 garden lease or garden agreement. Are
24 the garden agreements in the mix of
25 potential properties that could be

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 reclaimed by Public Property or the RDA?

3 MR. COATES: They could be.

4 They could be.

5 MS. MCCOLLOCH: They could be,

6 because those properties have not been

7 deeded. The ownership has not changed.

8 The ownership is still in RDA or the

9 City.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So let me

11 give a hypothetical. If a community

12 civic association managed an urban garden

13 for 15 years and this group that's

14 putting together this policy decides that

15 that property is of value, they could

16 conceivably move to take the property

17 back and sell it on the market?

18 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Conceivably the

19 City could choose not to renew the lease

20 for another year if their people have it

21 under an Urban Garden Agreement.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And that

23 would have to do with the current value

24 of the property as it relates to that

25 neighborhood when you reconsider the

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 lease?

3 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Right.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: How many of
5 those properties -- how many of those
6 Urban Garden Agreements exist or are
7 active right now?

8 MR. COATES: I can't tell you
9 offhand. There are several.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: "Several"
11 being?

12 MR. COATES: A few hundred.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: A few
14 hundred?

15 MR. COATES: Could be.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So all of
17 those few hundred would be eligible for
18 reevaluation. Now -- let me go back.

19 How many of the several hundred
20 that we have have not been renewed?

21 MR. COATES: I would have to
22 pull those and give you an answer.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is
24 non-renewal a regular thing?

25 MR. COATES: No. It's usually

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 automatic, and in many cases, if the
3 group incorporates and becomes a
4 corporation, they can acquire title.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Let me just
6 give you some -- and, again, this is for
7 whoever is listening and whoever is going
8 to read the transcript.

9 If the results of this working
10 group put us in a position here where
11 we're going to have to take a ton of
12 grief from folks in the community because
13 their properties are being taken back
14 after they've tended them for a
15 significant amount of time, it's not
16 going to be pretty, and as Councilman
17 Clarke said and Councilman Greenlee has
18 said and Councilman Rizzo has said, if
19 we're on the ground floor with the
20 development of the policies, one of us or
21 someone designated from Council staff,
22 then you're not going to have the
23 problem. I don't want to have to put up
24 with hundreds of phone calls and e-mails
25 to my office if the policy outcome

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 decided that we're going to take these
3 properties back and market them. If I
4 have some advanced notice of it, I can
5 deal with it. If we have some input, we
6 can mitigate it and we can shape it, but
7 if you guys go ahead and do it and then I
8 start getting bombarded for no reason --
9 since we're telling you this now --

10 MS. MCCOLLOCH: I hear you,
11 Councilman.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: It's not
13 going to be a pleasant situation. And I
14 don't want to be unpleasant.

15 MS. MCCOLLOCH: I understand
16 your concern.

17 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Can I follow
18 up?

19 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Sure,
20 Councilman.

21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: A perfect
22 example of being blind-sided was when
23 they had to relocate in Southwest
24 Philadelphia all of the urban gardening
25 to accommodate the expansion of the

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 airport, or whatever the rationale. We
3 were bombarded by that, and I think we
4 honestly read about that in the newspaper
5 when that all occurred on all of those --
6 do you remember that, when all the
7 gardeners' gardens had to be removed to
8 accommodate some activity at the airport?

9 MS. MCCOLLOCH: I'm not
10 familiar with it, but I think it went
11 through Public Property, yeah.

12 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Perfect
13 example.

14 MS. MCCOLLOCH: Okay. I hear
15 the concern.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
17 Councilman.

18 I concur with the earlier
19 statements by the Councilmembers.

20 Let the record reflect that
21 Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller and
22 Councilwoman Joan Krajewski are present
23 at the committee meeting.

24 Any other questions from
25 members of the Committee of these

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 witnesses?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: There being
5 none, thank you very much.

6 The next witness will be Mark
7 Edwards from LISC.

8 (Witness approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Good
11 morning, Mr. Edwards. Please state your
12 name for the record.

13 MR. EDWARDS: My name is Mark
14 Edwards. I'm the Executive Director of
15 Philadelphia LISC.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Please
17 proceed.

18 MR. EDWARDS: Good morning,
19 Chairman Clarke, Vice-Chairman Kenney and
20 members of the Committee on Vacant
21 Property and Public Works. Good morning.
22 As indicated, I am Mark Edwards,
23 Executive Director of the Philadelphia
24 Office of the Local Initiatives Support
25 Corporation, otherwise referred to as

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390
2 LISC.

3 On behalf of the staff and
4 Board members of Philadelphia LISC, I am
5 honored to be with you this morning to
6 testify in support of Bill No. 090390,
7 which would add Philadelphia LISC to the
8 Vacant Property Review Committee.

9 We are grateful to Councilman
10 Goode for introducing this bill and we
11 deeply appreciate his confidence in us.
12 Should this bill pass, we look forward to
13 the opportunity to play a vital part in
14 the important work of the VPRC.

15 I would like to provide some
16 brief background information about our
17 organization and describe some recent
18 work we are doing in the area of vacant
19 properties. I will then be pleased to
20 respond to any questions you may have.

21 Philadelphia LISC is the local
22 office of the national Local Initiatives
23 Support Corporation. National LISC was
24 established in 1980 and today is the
25 largest community development

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 intermediary in the United States.

3 National LISC channels loans,
4 grants and technical assistance to more
5 than 2,200 community development
6 corporations, or CDCs, nationwide. By
7 supporting and strengthening these
8 non-profit, resident-led local
9 organizations, LISC helps renew the
10 communities where lower-income people
11 live, work and raise their families.

12 Philadelphia LISC was among the
13 earlier offices established within the
14 national organization and we were
15 established in 1981, and we have worked
16 with CDCs in virtually every neighborhood
17 over the last 28 years. Our aim and
18 commitment is to help reverse the effects
19 of decades of disinvestment in distressed
20 communities citywide.

21 Philadelphia LISC's services to
22 CDCs include loan financing, grants,
23 technical assistance and support on
24 policy issues. Since our inception,
25 Philadelphia LISC has raised locally \$9.6

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390
2 million in funding. By combining those
3 local resources with national funds, LISC
4 has been able to make over \$249 million
5 in community development loans, grants
6 and equity to CDCs throughout the City.

7 The result has been over 6,500
8 new housing units for lower-income
9 families and 1.37 million square feet of
10 commercial space and community
11 facilities. Additionally, Philadelphia
12 LISC's investments have leveraged over a
13 half a billion dollars, \$670 million in
14 total development costs.

15 Because of our extensive work
16 with CDCs, we believe that LISC offers
17 the VPRC an important perspective of a
18 neighborhood supporter in the areas of
19 housing and community economic
20 development.

21 By formally joining the VPRC,
22 we would hope to be able to expand on the
23 work that we are currently doing with the
24 Redevelopment Authority and the City of
25 Philadelphia overall in support of a

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390
2 comprehensive strategy for vacant land
3 management that promotes sustainable
4 neighborhood revitalization.

5 As part of that effort, we have
6 commissioned a report from a nationally
7 recognized authority on vacant land
8 management known as the National Vacant
9 Property Committee. The report will
10 assess the current state of affairs in
11 Philadelphia and offer best-practice
12 recommendations from other cities
13 nationwide. That report will be
14 available before the close of this year,
15 and we welcome the opportunity to make a
16 formal presentation of the report to this
17 committee, to the full City Council or
18 both.

19 In closing, again, let me thank
20 you for the opportunity to testify.
21 Should this bill pass, we are committed
22 to being fully engaged, active partners
23 in the VPRC's efforts to carry out its
24 mission.

25 Thank you.

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you.

3 Thank you, Mr. Edwards. Again, I want to
4 thank LISC for the significant commitment
5 to Philadelphia's neighborhoods over the
6 years. I'm hearing earlier on the
7 sidebar you telling me you guys have been
8 investing quite significantly in the
9 district I represent, and my assumption
10 is that it's comparable in other areas of
11 the City, so I just want to thank you.

12 Are there any questions of this
13 witness by members of the Committee?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: There being
16 none, thank you so much for your
17 testimony, sir.

18 MR. EDWARDS: Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Any other
20 witnesses for this bill?

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Let the
23 record reflect that Bill No. 090521 has
24 been withdrawn from this committee
25 hearing. We rescheduled that for a later

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390

2 date.

3 This concludes the public
4 hearing on the Committee of Public
5 Property and Public Works. We will now
6 go into the public meeting.

7 Councilman Kenney, can you
8 please make a motion on the amendment.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you,
10 Mr. Chairman. I move that Bill No.
11 090390 be amended accordingly with the
12 amendment circulated by Councilman Goode.

13 (Duly seconded.)

14 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: It's been
15 moved and seconded.

16 Those approved?

17 (Aye.)

18 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Those
19 opposed?

20 (No response.)

21 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: The ayes
22 have it.

23 Councilman Kenney.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chairman. I move that Bill No.

1 10/26/09 - PUBLIC PROPERTY - BILL 090390
2 090390, as amended, be reported out of
3 this committee favorably and a request
4 made for rules suspension to allow for
5 first reading at our next Council
6 session.

7 (Duly seconded.)

8 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: It's been
9 moved and seconded Bill No. 090390 will
10 be voted out of committee with a
11 favorable recommendation and rules
12 suspension to allow to be read at the
13 next session of Council.

14 Thank you all very much.

15 (Committee on Public Property
16 and Public Works concluded at 11:45 a.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY that the

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proceedings, evidence and objections are

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contained fully and accurately in the

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stenographic notes taken by me upon the

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foregoing matter on October 26, 2009, and that

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this is a true and correct transcript of same.

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MICHELE L. MURPHY

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RPR-Notary Public

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