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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD

4

DEVELOPMENT AND THE HOMELESS

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, November 15, 2005
12:00 p.m.

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PRESENT:

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COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL, CHAIRWOMAN

12

COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE

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COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO

14

COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.

COUNCILMAN JUAN RAMOS

COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

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RESOLUTION 050871 - 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: This

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is a day with many, many meetings, all

4

occurring at the same time, but we thank

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you for your patience and we thank you

6

for being here. As soon as I get a

7

couple bodies to come from one office

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here, then we will begin. Again, we

9

apologize for holding you, and we're very

10

happy to see you and very happy that

11

you're here.

12

(Pause.)

13

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Again,

14

let me thank you all for being here.

15

We're going to ask the Clerk to read the

16

title of the resolution today that the

17

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood

18

Development and the Homeless will hear.

19

To my right, I have

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Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown. To

21

her right, Councilman Frank DiCicco, and

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standing behind me, Councilman Darrell

23

Clarke. Obviously, I'm Jannie Blackwell,

24

and we're very happy to be here with

25

regard to this Committee on Housing,

1 11/15/05 - HOUSING - RES. 050871
2 Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
3 that we'll here Resolution 050871.

4 Again, we'll ask the Clerk to
5 read the title of the resolution.

6 THE CLERK: Resolution 050871,
7 a resolution calling on the Committee on
8 Housing, Neighborhood Development and the
9 Homeless to hold public hearings on the
10 Administration's proposed reorganization
11 of housing agencies.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you very much.

14 As many of you know, there's
15 been much talk as of late regarding
16 housing reorganization. In preparation
17 of this hearing, we invited the Mayor,
18 the Office of Housing and Neighborhood
19 Preservation, the heads of the City's
20 housing agencies, Local 1971, the
21 blueprinter and homelessness advocates of
22 the Housing Trust Fund, as well as the
23 Philadelphia Association of CDCs and
24 others.

25 We thank you for taking the

1 11/15/05 - HOUSING - RES. 050871
2 time out to join us in this preliminary
3 hearing with regard to the proposed
4 housing reorganization plan.

5 Since the creation of the
6 Mayor's Neighborhood Transformation
7 Initiative, all of us know it as NTI,
8 many communities across our City have
9 rediscovered hope, as this program opened
10 new avenues for participation in
11 neighborhood planning and community
12 building. For the first time in many
13 instances, communities and civic
14 organizations were able to work with the
15 City planning departments to prioritize
16 local needs, work with their District
17 Councilpersons and those At-Large to
18 identify tools to address these needs,
19 and to work with private and non-profit
20 developers alike, as well as consultants
21 in order to implement sustainable
22 solutions.

23 In the Third District alone, we
24 have worked hard and have held many
25 forums where we have tried to get

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2 non-profit developers as well as
3 profit-making folks involved in
4 neighborhood building, and over \$2
5 billion has been invested in affordable
6 housing, commercial development, parks
7 and recreation centers, as well as new
8 infrastructure. That does not include
9 the extra billion dollars that the
10 University of Pennsylvania has invested.

11 Through this more
12 constituent-friendly approach to
13 neighborhood development, vacant,
14 trash-filled lots were converted into
15 beautiful gardens for seniors and young
16 people alike. Recreation parks and
17 centers were renovated to create a
18 centerpiece of development that attracted
19 home builders and contractors who wanted
20 to acquire and fix up surrounding
21 blighted neighborhoods and properties.
22 Abandoned factories have been converted
23 into livable spaces, and with the help of
24 new immigrant populations, abandoned
25 neighborhood commercial corridors have

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2 become valuable gems ready for investment
3 so that local needs can be met and new
4 jobs created. Many neighborhoods, which
5 so many people have taken for granted,
6 are now seen as assets and not
7 liabilities.

8 Through the Neighborhood
9 Transformation Initiative, our City has
10 become a national model for locally
11 controlled revitalization, a far cry from
12 the top-down approach of urban renewal
13 plans in the '60s and '70s.

14 In hearing rumors about the
15 Administration's plan to reorganize the
16 various roles and functions of the City's
17 housing agencies, we want to go on record
18 to state that we support a plan that will
19 make operations run smoother so that we
20 can continue this momentum, and obviously
21 we do not support a plan to change
22 operations that is not clearly beneficial
23 to all concerned.

24 So many people, from the
25 front-line staff who respond to

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2 constituent calls, to the operations
3 staff who research deeds and order
4 appraisals, to the legitimate teams who
5 make sure all transactions are fair to
6 all parties, have pride in what they do
7 for our citizens. They see the value of
8 their work through improvements within
9 our community and our City.

10 Through this process, we hope
11 to ease fears and show appreciation for
12 the work that all the workers do so on a
13 daily basis to make programs like NTI a
14 success.

15 Finally, we know that there's a
16 cross breed of community-based
17 organizations and for-profit developers
18 who are involved in neighborhood
19 development that manage varying needs
20 from the homeless to the luxurious. We
21 want to assure them that the housing
22 organization will make our system better,
23 and that is what we're looking for from
24 the Administration, and not slow it down
25 to previous investments that are

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2 threatened.

3 We have partnerships with
4 organizations like Philadelphia Housing
5 Authority and many others, and we want
6 all to know and our citizens to know that
7 when we talk of reorganization or
8 consolidation, that there is an
9 improvement, not a huge fear of job loss
10 or loss of pensions and benefits,
11 especially before holidays, and that we
12 are working together as a team so that
13 our City and our operations will not slow
14 down to a grinding halt.

15 We do not want to lose faith in
16 investors that we will not be able to
17 deliver additional development at this
18 time, but that all parties will be
19 involved so that the end goals will take
20 us further into better development for
21 the 21st century.

22 While we have made our
23 feelings, our sentiments known, we
24 understand that the Administration is
25 still preparing its plan and will be

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2 unable to present it in its entirety
3 before our next hearing, which will be
4 November 29th at 11:30. In the meantime,
5 we felt it important that our community
6 development partners have an opportunity
7 to express their concerns or state the
8 rumors so that they can be included in
9 any final plan that the Administration is
10 presenting.

11 To this end, we will take
12 testimony from any of those who are
13 present who would like to tell us what
14 they've heard and express their fears,
15 concerns or desires for any housing
16 reorganization.

17 At conclusion today, we will
18 stand adjourned until November 29th at
19 11:30, at which time we invite all of you
20 back and we will continue our hearing so
21 that we may all learn what the plans are
22 by the Administration for the housing
23 reorganization plan.

24 As we ask Mr. Hanna, who is
25 Secretary of Housing and Neighborhood

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2 Preservation, we'll ask him to come
3 forward. We again say that we cannot
4 give you any documents, because we have
5 none as well.

6 We called this hearing because
7 of our love for you and for our City and
8 for our concerns when we hear that the
9 Redevelopment Authority, Philadelphia
10 Housing Development Corporation, Office
11 of Housing and Community Development are
12 being reorganized. And it's been a rumor
13 that's come up over and over for the past
14 few years, and we thought it was just
15 time to see what's going on, to learn a
16 little bit about it, to find out what's
17 existing.

18 And I learned yesterday, as
19 I've said, in my meeting with the Mayor
20 that the plans were not finite. They
21 were not completed. Obviously we
22 contacted you. Most of you learned about
23 this between Thursday night when we sent
24 out notices and Friday, and it was not
25 until yesterday that we learned that a

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2 plan is not complete.

3 Again, we want to thank you and
4 we want to call on Mr. Hanna to ask
5 him -- does anyone here have any
6 statement to make?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you. Then we'll call on Mr. Hanna to
10 make any opening statement that you may
11 have.

12 MR. HANNA: Councilwoman, thank
13 you, first of all, for the opportunity to
14 sit before you, but I will say in all
15 honesty, for the most part, you've stolen
16 my thunder. The plan is not in fact
17 complete. It is currently being reviewed
18 by the Administration, and once the plan
19 is complete, we'll be more than happy to
20 come back before this body to talk at
21 length and in detail about it.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
23 we're deeply involved in, for example,
24 the ten-year plan to end homelessness.
25 I've been committed to that for the 30

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2 years I've been in politics, but we would
3 like to be included in various aspects.
4 We feel we have a lot to offer, a lot of
5 opinions. We work with everyone. But we
6 have received no formal documents to date
7 in that regard, and we want to make sure
8 that as we deal with this as an issue,
9 that the Committee is included and is
10 informed, so that when our community
11 organizations, non-profit organizations,
12 CDCs and others come to us, that we
13 certainly know what we're talking about
14 and that this Committee can speak
15 intelligently about what plans are.

16 Councilman DiCicco.

17 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Thank you,
18 Madam Chair.

19 Good afternoon, Mr. Hanna.

20 MR. HANNA: Good afternoon.

21 COUNCILMAN DICICCO:
22 Notwithstanding all of the language and
23 the issues that still need to be dealt
24 with to finalize or at least have a
25 document which we can better understand

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2 about what this reorganization is all
3 about, whatever you have already on the
4 table in terms of the reorganization
5 plan, would eminent domain still be a
6 tool in which your mission would need to
7 be accomplished? Would you still need to
8 use eminent domain in some instances or
9 any instances? Because, I mean,
10 presently now the Redevelopment
11 Authority --

12 MR. HANNA: Right. I
13 understand.

14 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: -- uses
15 eminent domain for development purposes.

16 MR. HANNA: And the only reason
17 I'm hesitating is because eminent domain
18 has not been in the forefront of our
19 thinking as we have tried to pull
20 together a reorganization plan.

21 As you know, eminent domain is
22 a power vested in the Redevelopment
23 Authority by virtue of state legislation.
24 Obviously we're not going to do anything
25 that's going to go in opposition to

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2 existing or --

3 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Let me
4 stop you, if I may. Not to break your
5 train of thought, but the reason I raise
6 this, you may be aware, you may not be
7 aware that there's pending legislation --

8 MR. HANNA: Yes.

9 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: -- in
10 Harrisburg as we speak that would
11 basically take the powers of eminent
12 domain away from Philadelphia, from
13 everybody in the Commonwealth for that
14 matter, but Philadelphia, because that's
15 what we're interested in.

16 So in your discussion on this
17 reorganization plan, if eminent domain is
18 one of the tools that would still be
19 used, assuming you move forward, a lot of
20 these discussions may not amount to
21 anything anyway, because if you can't use
22 eminent domain, where is the power either
23 under the existing rules that we have or
24 a new piece of legislation under this
25 reorganization plan?

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2 MR. HANNA: No.

3 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Because I
4 don't know, for the most part, how we
5 will ever be able to do anything.

6 MR. HANNA: Councilman, you're
7 absolutely right. If legislation passes
8 which yanks out of the RDA or any
9 redevelopment authority of the
10 Commonwealth the power to acquire
11 property, then, yeah, that's going to
12 severely, with a capital S, severely
13 hamstring the City's, not just RDA but
14 the City's ability to develop.

15 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: And that's
16 my point. So I think the people in this
17 room, if they're not aware of that, I'm
18 sure most of them are, we have -- I've
19 been on the phone. I've been e-mailing
20 people for the last three days. We need
21 to get some support in Harrisburg,
22 irregardless of what happens with the
23 reorganization, does it happen, does it
24 not happen, because without eminent
25 domain, there is not going to be much, if

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2 any, development in this City, except in
3 the private sector, but that's only a
4 small portion of it. The larger portion
5 will be determined by the fact that we
6 still can use eminent domain. If we lose
7 that power, we're dead in the water all
8 the way around.

9 I think the Philadelphia
10 Delegation is on board, but we need to
11 get some people to start putting pressure
12 up in Harrisburg, because I think that's
13 our first fight. I really think that's
14 our first and biggest fight. This was a
15 fight, but until that's resolved, I don't
16 think we can even get into this
17 discussion, because it may be for naught.

18 MR. HANNA: That's a very good
19 point.

20 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Thank you.
21 Thank you, Madam Chair.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me
23 ask you, and then my colleagues have a
24 lot of questions. I have some. I
25 probably won't ask them all today, but

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2 I'll just put a few things on the table.

3 Rumor has it that there may be
4 a housing reorganization that not only my
5 functions might change, that people may
6 be laid off and that there is duplication
7 of services among the agencies.

8 Am I to assume that is the
9 Administration's point of view, that more
10 layoffs will occur?

11 MR. HANNA: Without commenting
12 either way on rumors, the stated goal --
13 in fact, you helped state it just in your
14 introductory comments. The stated goal
15 of the reorganization is to help the
16 Office of Housing run in a more efficient
17 or economic way.

18 The Administration has gone on
19 record -- in fact, I've heard the Chief
20 of Staff mention at least twice the
21 contention that people will not be laid
22 off as a result of reorganization.
23 Beyond that, again, I'm not quite sure
24 what else I can say.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,

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2 that's very, very important, because we
3 are --

4 MR. HANNA: I'm sorry. There
5 is -- let me finish the thought voiced by
6 the Chief of Staff.

7 People will not be laid off as
8 a result of -- people will not lose their
9 jobs as a result of reorganization, I
10 think, were her exact words. People may
11 be given different jobs. People may have
12 different responsibilities, but
13 reorganization, in and of itself, won't
14 displace people from their jobs.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: The
16 question becomes if people are
17 transferred or people are given different
18 jobs, will these people maintain their
19 same salary and the same level of
20 benefits?

21 MR. HANNA: Now you're getting
22 to a level of detail to which I'm really
23 uncomfortable talking.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
25 that's one of our concerns. To move

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2 people around and have them move down and
3 lose benefits and lose salary is
4 something different. Having the freedom,
5 labor has always -- not always. Labor
6 for about the past maybe ten years, it
7 seems to me, has used the tool of letting
8 people work in different capacities.
9 That's a tool for labor-management
10 negotiations. But the whole issue of
11 having them lose benefits and salary,
12 that's a whole other question, and that
13 is something that we are concerned about.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Point of
16 order, Madam Chair. Thank you.

17 And I'm not suggesting that the
18 sky is falling. I'm not running around
19 like Chicken Little, but there's a real,
20 real, real possibility that this
21 legislation that will take the authority
22 away from eminent domain is going to
23 happen by the end of this month. That's
24 how soon, before the legislature breaks
25 for the holidays.

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2 So going to the Chairperson's
3 question, hypothetically, if we lose the
4 authority to use eminent domain,
5 conversely we will have less development,
6 which translates into less employees. So
7 regardless of what this is -- and this is
8 important, and the Chairperson raised a
9 great question and we're all concerned
10 with that, and I don't want to put this
11 on the side. And you don't have the
12 answer for this, Mr. Hanna. I'm just
13 basically making a speech here, that this
14 is a serious, serious situation that we,
15 as a City, are being faced with.

16 There will be development that
17 will be curtailed, not happen, and that
18 will translate into loss of jobs.
19 Because if you're not developing, you
20 don't need employees all the way around.

21 So, again, we have to deal with
22 this issue and keep our eye on this issue
23 before us, but the big picture is what's
24 going on in Harrisburg, in my opinion.

25 Thank you, Madam Chair.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

3 Certainly we agree that that's a big
4 issue and that the whole question of
5 eminent domain is a major one.

6 I want to ask one specific
7 question, and then I will defer to
8 Councilman Clarke and hold my questions,
9 and, that is, is it true that the
10 Redevelopment Authority is down to one
11 appraiser for the entire Redevelopment
12 Authority of the City of Philadelphia?

13 AUDIENCE: Yes.

14 MR. HANNA: That's a question I
15 can't answer. I don't know. We'd have
16 to pose that question to the Executive
17 Director or his assistant.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.
19 I've heard it's true, and as you've heard
20 people in the audience on the other side
21 of the gate are saying it's true. And
22 that's really, really important. In the
23 past, in the past few years where there
24 supposedly has been layoffs due to
25 attrition or less employees due to

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2 attrition and that sort of thing, for us
3 to be effective, there's always this
4 complaint, and I thought over the years
5 to try to improve the process and the
6 system so that it doesn't take us as long
7 to go through the process and that maybe
8 the same departments didn't have to be
9 visited maybe three times. But the
10 question becomes if you have one
11 appraiser, and we know that every
12 property has to be appraised at least
13 twice, how fast do you expect us to get
14 it done if we have one appraiser for the
15 whole Redevelopment Authority for the
16 City of Philadelphia? It's
17 unconscionable. Unconscionable.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: The
20 Chair will defer to Councilman Clarke.

21 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
22 Madam Chair.

23 Good afternoon.

24 MR. HANNA: Good afternoon.

25 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Mr. Hanna,

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2 with respect to the reorganization
3 plan -- and obviously your primary
4 portion of it is to discuss
5 reorganization of employees'
6 responsibilities, duties within the three
7 housing agencies -- what were the other
8 parameters that were set as it related to
9 reorganization beyond the reorganization
10 of the employees in the departments? Are
11 you all looking at policy issues --

12 MR. HANNA: Yes.

13 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: -- beyond
14 employee issues?

15 MR. HANNA: Not just policy
16 issue, but process issues as well. And
17 it's the process issue that we've made
18 more progress upon than the personnel
19 issue.

20 From a process issue, I'll give
21 you a couple or for instances.
22 Technology at the Office of Housing has
23 gone wanted, well, forever. Among other
24 things, we were unable to accurately
25 identify properties owned by the RDA,

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2 PHDC, public property anywhere in the
3 City. Even if we could track what we
4 owned, it was difficult to -- well, we
5 didn't have very current information like
6 on taxes, whether there was a lien
7 against it, who owners were, where owners
8 were. That obviously presents a problem
9 if you're transacting real estate
10 business, meaning acquiring and disposing
11 of real estate if you don't know what you
12 have.

13 So towards that end, the City
14 through NTI has invested hundreds of
15 thousands -- actually, millions of
16 dollars in what's called a Vacant
17 Property Management Information System,
18 VPMIS. That process, that initiative,
19 VPMIS, rather, is being driven both by
20 the Office of Housing in close
21 consultation with the Redevelopment
22 Authority, because therein is where most
23 of the real estate transactions happen,
24 the RDA and MOIS.

25 The Cabinet was actually

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2 briefed on the process, that particular
3 initiative, maybe a week and a half or so
4 ago, and we are well along to getting
5 that underway and kicked off.

6 Among other things now, or
7 within another couple of weeks or so, we
8 will be in a position to map and identify
9 every single parcel of property in the
10 entire City of Philadelphia. We will be
11 able to, with the literal click of a
12 button, of a computer button, tell you
13 who the owner is, what the status is of
14 the property, whether there is a lien
15 against it, when the last transaction
16 that took place -- when was and for how
17 much the last transaction was for that
18 particular piece of property, like I
19 said, its tax status. All of that, in my
20 mind, is light years ahead of where we
21 were before and a very important, though
22 seldom talked about, aspect of
23 reorganization.

24 As the Councilman said relative
25 to the legislation in Harrisburg, without

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2 the ability to do certain real estate
3 transactions, we're going to be hampered.
4 In the same light, if we don't know what
5 we own, if we can't keep up with what we
6 sell, again, our efforts to transact real
7 estate business in the City of
8 Philadelphia in fact has been hampered to
9 some extent but is going to be
10 significantly improved once VPMIS is
11 implemented.

12 Another example --

13 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Let me stop
14 you there. I want to ask you a question
15 on that particular issue.

16 So you're telling me within two
17 weeks --

18 MR. HANNA: No, not within two
19 weeks. I said within a couple of weeks.
20 Not necessarily two.

21 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Okay.
22 Normally when people say a couple of
23 weeks, they kind of think --

24 MR. HANNA: How about within
25 several weeks.

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2 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Okay.

3 Using your system, you will be able to
4 determine a particular property in the
5 City of Philadelphia, the ownership, any
6 liens. Can you determine utilities
7 usage?

8 MR. HANNA: What do you mean by
9 utility usage?

10 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Water,
11 sewer, electrical.

12 MR. HANNA: That, I don't know.
13 That level of detail, I don't know.

14 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Can you
15 determine if the property is occupied or
16 vacant?

17 MR. HANNA: Well, that changes
18 from day to day or minute to minute in
19 certain neighborhoods. So, no, I'd say
20 we couldn't necessarily tell you if it
21 was occupied.

22 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Why
23 wouldn't you be able to determine if
24 there were utility connections?

25 MR. HANNA: I'm not saying we

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2 can't. I'm just saying I don't know. I
3 don't know the system to that level of
4 detail.

5 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Is there
6 anybody here that may know that that
7 worked on the system?

8 MR. HANNA: If in fact -- well,
9 let me put it like this: If you deem
10 that an important aspect of the system
11 and we right now don't contemplate having
12 that as an aspect of the system, it's
13 certainly something we can add onto it.
14 I just don't know the answer to the
15 question.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I asked
17 you, is there anyone that may be able to
18 answer that question?

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: While
20 he's waiting for Ms. Califano to come
21 forward, you mentioned mapping. We would
22 like to know who is going to be
23 collecting this mapping data.

24 MR. HANNA: What do you mean by
25 who is going to be collecting it?

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You
3 said you're doing mapping. Who is going
4 to be doing it? Are those union jobs?
5 Didn't you just tell the Councilman
6 you'll be able to access who controls
7 what properties, where they are, lien
8 sale, whatever? So who is going to be
9 collecting that data or what agency?

10 MR. HANNA: The RDA will be
11 responsible for collecting and updating
12 that information on an ongoing basis,
13 obviously with the help of MOIS. As to
14 whether it's a union or a non-union job,
15 that I don't know.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Rumor
17 has it, and then I'll defer again to
18 Councilman Clarke, that it is your plan
19 within this housing reorganization to
20 allow RDA to continue to acquire
21 properties but that you want to transfer
22 the disposition of said properties to
23 OHCD. Is that true?

24 MR. HANNA: Again, Madam
25 Chairwoman, with all due respect, I don't

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2 want to comment -- in fact, I won't
3 comment on rumors, and I can't comment on
4 that level of specificity of a plan that
5 we've already said is being reviewed
6 right now by the Administration. I've
7 heard hundreds of rumors of various sort,
8 and, again, to comment on any one I think
9 would be unwise at this time.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But
11 remember, all we can do is ask you about
12 rumors because you give us no data.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
15 Councilman Clarke.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
17 Madam Chair.

18 Ms. Califano.

19 MS. CALIFANO: The Vacant
20 Property Information System is a tool for
21 the Redevelopment Authority to use in
22 tracking the process of their acquisition
23 activities and the disposition
24 activities. So it's not a staffing
25 change. It's an efficiency change in

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2 terms of the Vacant Property Information
3 System.

4 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: No, no. Do
5 you understand the question I asked?

6 MR. HANNA: I think she was
7 getting more to Councilwoman Blackwell's
8 question.

9 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I didn't
10 ask you that. I asked the question about
11 on the systems that you spoke of, what
12 information are you able to access?

13 MS. CALIFANO: You're able to
14 access all information managed by the
15 other City agencies. So, yes. The
16 information will link to the Water
17 Department, to License and Inspections to
18 be able to see what utilities are
19 operational and if there's any debt or
20 liens by the City on the property.

21 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So you can
22 essentially determine if the property is
23 being utilized --

24 MS. CALIFANO: You can look at
25 the indicators, correct.

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2 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: --

3 formally.

4 MS. CALIFANO: But it would
5 still require someone to go out and look
6 at the property to assure whether it was
7 vacant or occupied. All of the
8 indicators --

9 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: If the
10 property has no utilities, no water, no
11 sewer, no electric, no gas, hasn't paid
12 taxes, wouldn't you assume that that
13 property --

14 MR. HANNA: That's certainly an
15 indicator that it's unoccupied, but you
16 and I have both seen where people string
17 extension cords from one property over to
18 another.

19 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Yes, but
20 that's not a legal use. I'm talking
21 about formally/legally occupying a
22 property.

23 MR. HANNA: Given that kind of
24 information, yes, one ought to be able to
25 deduce whether it's occupied or not.

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2 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So when the
3 Revenue Commissioner comes in here, as
4 she does every year during budget
5 hearings, and tells me that the City of
6 Philadelphia has no ability to implement
7 a bill that was passed and supported by,
8 I guess, 17 members of Council, a bill
9 that was essentially the non-utilization
10 bill that imposed a tax on these vacant
11 properties that stay in neighborhoods,
12 people walk away and we were imposing
13 additional tax to act as an incentive for
14 the person to either occupy or sell the
15 property to get it back on the tax roll,
16 then she's incorrect?

17 MR. HANNA: I don't know if I'd
18 say incorrect because I don't know what
19 she represented to you, but --

20 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: She said
21 that she can't implement the bill because
22 the City has no ability to determine as
23 to whether or not a property is being
24 utilized.

25 MR. HANNA: In that respect,

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2 yes, VPMIS will go a long way towards
3 helping us to determine whether or not a
4 property is or is not being utilized.

5 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Can you
6 forward to the Chair a brief summary of
7 what this system will be able to provide,
8 and when I have the Revenue Commissioner
9 in here the next time, I can show her the
10 information so she will understand that
11 there is the ability for the City.

12 MR. HANNA: Okay.

13 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: All right.
14 Thank you.

15 With respect to the other
16 parameters of what you are trying to
17 achieve as the reorganization takes
18 place, you are going to continue? I
19 actually wanted to kind of follow up
20 on -- one of the questions I want to ask
21 has some relationship to what
22 Councilwoman Blackwell asked.

23 MR. HANNA: There was just one
24 other example dealing with process that I
25 wanted to mention. The fact that over

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2 the past 18 months to two years, we've
3 implemented something that we call a Deal
4 Team Process wherein members of my staff,
5 along with L&I, Streets, Fire, a number
6 of the City's other operating agencies,
7 literally get into a room with the
8 developer in an effort to hash out
9 whatever problems they might have, rather
10 than having the developer skip or have
11 the developer hire someone to skip from
12 department to department to department to
13 department to try to have problems
14 solved.

15 This has gone a long way,
16 especially when it comes to large-scale
17 developments. This has gone a long way
18 towards, as you mentioned, Councilwoman,
19 shrinking the process, making it shorter
20 and easier to navigate.

21 In my mind, that is also an
22 aspect of reorganization in the sense
23 that it, as I said before, makes the
24 process more efficient and more
25 economical to the City.

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2 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: All right.

3 In your reorganization discussion, have
4 there been or will there be at any time a
5 discussion about an aforementioned land
6 bank that could possibly change the way
7 that government, particularly City
8 Council, its current relationship to
9 acquisition and disposition of property?
10 Is that a part of the discussion?

11 MR. HANNA: That is a part of
12 the discussion, but, again --

13 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: You can't
14 talk in specific terms about it?

15 MR. HANNA: Not beyond that.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I'm trying
17 to ask you a question so you can give me
18 a vague answer.

19 In terms of the discussion --

20 MR. HANNA: Again, my goal is
21 not to be coy or --

22 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: No, and I
23 don't want you to take it that way, but I
24 know based on your earlier statements,
25 that you're limited in terms of what

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2 you're going to be able to say.

3 I'm trying to determine
4 particularly as a Councilperson, as a
5 legislator, given what I've been doing
6 over the last six years as a legislator,
7 and my colleagues here a lot longer than
8 me, I know we take very importantly what
9 it is we do here in the Council session,
10 and if there's some discussion about
11 possibly changing a process that involves
12 us as Councilmembers, frankly speaking,
13 I'm a little concerned that that level of
14 discussion is not had with us early on in
15 the process and potentially later on in
16 the process as a recommendation without
17 any input from Councilmembers. I mean,
18 surely you wouldn't do that, right?

19 MR. HANNA: Councilman, you're
20 right. Surely we would not change a
21 process --

22 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I know
23 you're not going to change the process.
24 I'm talking about --

25 MR. HANNA: That was a pause.

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2 I'm still in the same sentence.

3 We would not change a process
4 that currently involves City Council
5 input or action, certainly not
6 unilaterally. I don't know if we could
7 legally anyway.

8 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I don't
9 think you can do that.

10 MR. HANNA: But to follow up
11 that second sentence of that first is, in
12 those processes wherein City Council is
13 currently involved, even if it doesn't
14 have to pass legislation but where
15 Council provides input, before such a
16 process is modified, I commit to you, I
17 promise to you we'll certainly come back,
18 if not to this Committee, then some
19 subcommittee or the Council as a whole,
20 obviously to talk to you about it before
21 something like that happens.

22 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Well,
23 personally, I'm concerned that there
24 would even be any discussion about making
25 a recommendation to change an action that

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2 is Charter mandated by the City Council
3 of Philadelphia without having some level
4 of discussion.

5 MR. HANNA: I don't know that
6 we're having any discussions about
7 changing a Charter-mandated Council
8 responsibility.

9 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So there's
10 no discussions about changing the process
11 as it relates to Councilmembers and
12 distribution and acquisition of land?

13 MR. HANNA: I'm racking my
14 brain right now to think, but to my
15 knowledge -- and if I go back and see
16 that there is some, I'll certainly come
17 back and talk to you about it, but to my
18 recollection right now, no, there is no
19 such contemplation.

20 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Okay. All
21 right.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you, Councilman.

25 Let me be specific with regard

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2 to VPRC, or the Vacant Property Review
3 Committee. This Committee was
4 established in 1976. I was here in those
5 years, too, when I worked for Lucien
6 Blackwell. I understand it's not on the
7 table for discussion with regard to
8 review, that you're talking RDA, PHDC and
9 OHCD; is that correct?

10 MR. HANNA: I'm not quite sure
11 I understand your question.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I want
13 to make sure that the Vacant Property
14 Review Committee, VPRC, is not being
15 tampered with. I'm told it is not being
16 tampered with, so I figured this is an
17 easy one for you to put on the record
18 that you're not considering it.

19 MR. HANNA: See, again, Madam
20 Councilwoman, you're asking me to speak
21 in specifics that I'm not right now
22 prepared to do.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
24 right. Well, let me let you know that
25 that's a Council-formed operation and

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2 it's one that we would not hold lightly
3 to if there is any move to deal with it.
4 It is the only committee that Council
5 itself has the ability to deal with small
6 individuals, people who want individual
7 homes, side lots next to them, and it
8 gives us some small way to deal with
9 individual homeowners and even business
10 in the City who have no big monetary way
11 to sponsor a project or be involved. It
12 allows us to say, Okay, Ms. Jones, that
13 vacant property or vacant lot next to you
14 where you're growing a garden on, sure,
15 we can convey it to you.

16 So that's an important
17 committee to us. It's one of the little
18 ways we can serve our constituents, but
19 it means a lot to us, and so we want to
20 put on the table that we would not hold
21 lightly to it being some way done away
22 with. So I want to put that on the
23 table, and that's how we feel about our
24 VPRC.

25 MR. HANNA: Okay.

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2 capacity and wherewithal to take the
3 project through fruition.

4 The Interagency Review team is
5 an advisory group established by the
6 Administration, and all recommendations
7 go to the Councilmembers, the District
8 Councilmembers, for their final decision.

9 That Committee continues to
10 meet twice a year, and through written
11 correspondence from myself to the
12 District Councilmembers, we memorialize
13 both the recommendations of the Committee
14 and then the final decision of the
15 Councilperson on the acquisition
16 decisions.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
18 we've submitted vacant lots back in --
19 they were submitted in 2001. They were
20 postponed by the IR team, and we've had
21 no further feedback or resolution. And
22 you know we're always pressing hard in
23 issues. We don't forget. We submit them
24 all the time. That's why I asked if this
25 Committee was still in existence, because

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2 from '01 until now is a little bit of
3 time that we haven't heard.

4 MS. CALIFANO: Hopefully we'll
5 be meeting shortly, Councilwoman, and I'm
6 happy to sit down with anyone to review
7 old outstanding requests and the status
8 or new requests and see how we can move
9 them through the process.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
11 Councilman Clarke.

12 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
13 Madam Chair.

14 It's my understanding that the
15 IR team looks at proposals generally and
16 then sends recommendations to the
17 Council.

18 MS. CALIFANO: Correct.

19 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So the
20 Council doesn't actually see all of the
21 proposals?

22 MS. CALIFANO: No. You see
23 everything that comes in. We send you a
24 copy of everything that comes in, and
25 then when we meet, we review and say,

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2 This is recommended for approval, this is
3 a project that the Committee had concerns
4 with.

5 But as soon as we get a copy --
6 on the application form, it states to the
7 developer that they should submit a copy
8 to their District Councilperson and that
9 it requires District Council support for
10 any action. As soon as we get copies, we
11 also forward a set to the District
12 Council office so that if the developer
13 did not do that, you're seeing it when
14 we're seeing it.

15 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So we see
16 everything?

17 MS. CALIFANO: You see
18 everything that comes in. And as part of
19 the Vacant Property Information System,
20 we're able to now document every request,
21 and we can go through all those to make
22 sure everyone has been responded to in
23 some fashion.

24 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Okay.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
3 that is why it was important to us to
4 know if the IR team -- I didn't know
5 whether if it was still in existence or
6 not, because we have projects that are
7 some four years behind in resolution.

8 With the shift in NTI to more
9 neighborhood commercial development
10 versus residential development, what
11 resources will be allocated toward these
12 efforts?

13 MR. HANNA: I don't know if
14 it's a fair characterization,
15 Councilwoman, to say that more
16 resources -- well, maybe implication --
17 more resources will be allocated to
18 commercial rather than residential. We
19 are the Office of Housing and
20 Neighborhood Preservation. By far, most
21 of our resources will continue to be
22 allocated to residential, not just
23 development but to residences, housing in
24 the City of Philadelphia.

25 But as for what resources will

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2 be allocated towards commercial
3 development, I can talk to you about a
4 couple of them. It might make sense to
5 have the Commerce Director or maybe, more
6 specifically, Eva Gladstein of NTI to
7 come and talk more specifics.

8 But the Elm Street and Main
9 Street initiatives are two state
10 initiatives designed to help foster
11 development for commercial in -- well, in
12 cities all across the state, but in
13 Philadelphia, we're trying to use those
14 dollars to leverage residential dollars
15 that are spent nearby, if not adjacent
16 to, those chosen, Elm Street and Main
17 Street initiative areas.

18 The Governor also has a couple
19 of other initiatives.

20 Cathy, help me out.

21 The Business in Our Sights
22 initiative is a huge state initiative
23 designed to help foster commercial growth
24 again in each of the state cities, but
25 those are all state initiatives. The

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2 money comes through the City of
3 Philadelphia. Some might come through
4 us; most goes through Commerce.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
6 received a letter dated September 26th
7 from Cathy Califano, Deputy Secretary,
8 your Deputy Secretary, saying that the IR
9 team would be reviewing certain projects
10 from my district, one particular project
11 because of the limited funds, that she
12 would be reviewing one project only.

13 But what you're saying is that
14 we all get all the lists and we review it
15 and we get a chance to review everybody's
16 list in addition to our own, but that's
17 not in fact what this letter states, what
18 your letter of September 26th states.

19 MS. CALIFANO: For
20 clarification purposes, I think there
21 were some discussions with the offices,
22 and that was the -- there were a number
23 of projects that had come forward, and
24 discussions were what was the priority.
25 But we're happy to reconvene IR if you'd

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2 like to review your fullest of projects.
3 There is limitations in the NTI funding,
4 and that is the reason for that. But all
5 of the requests that came to your office
6 are documented in our files as well.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It is
8 always a problem for us. I have lists
9 here of projects that we've heard no
10 follow-up on. I won't mention my
11 specific projects at the moment, although
12 I can. I've listed them all for purposes
13 of this hearing. But we would like to
14 see settlement sheets for our projects,
15 and we'd like to know, in addition to
16 that, we want to know how much money is
17 recouped through the sale of projects in
18 our district and how that money is used.

19 I mean, our understanding was
20 back in the previous budget that if they
21 sold land in our district, and we have
22 even referred private developers or
23 private entities who want to buy some
24 land that we want to sell in our
25 district, we referred those to you or

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2 Public Property, and we would like to
3 know how you're dealing with those and
4 what your plans are to deal with those.

5 MS. CALIFANO: We provide on a
6 biannual basis a budget sheet to your
7 office, and on that sheet it shows and
8 accounts for all settlements that the RDA
9 has had for sales of property in your
10 district. So any NTI dollars that were
11 used out of your District Council budget
12 item, when those properties are sold to
13 the private developer, the proceeds from
14 that sale go back to your budget for
15 future allocation.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But we
17 would like to know specifically what
18 those dollars are so that we can match it
19 as well as ourselves, because we work on
20 every aspect of this. We work with
21 people who may want to buy property, as
22 well as people who want to dispose of it.

23 Many developers don't mind
24 acquiring properties by paying fair
25 market value. However, even the most

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2 sophisticated developer is unable to pay
3 200 percent security bond that is
4 currently required.

5 What thought are you giving to
6 working around this requirement to make
7 the acquisition and selling of properties
8 more user-friendly? Have you thought of
9 a revolving loan fund? I mean, we've
10 talked about this for a while, or what
11 can happen to get around this 200 percent
12 security.

13 MS. CALIFANO: As Kevin
14 mentioned, through the reorganization
15 process, we were looking both at
16 structural and process issues, and that
17 is something that the Redevelopment
18 Authority is looking at within its --
19 many of the actions of the Redevelopment
20 Authority are guided by state law or
21 legal precedent, and there is legal
22 precedent on the 200 percent.

23 So the Redevelopment Authority
24 is taking that issue under advisement to
25 see if there's ways, but that's a

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2 challenging issue because of the history
3 on it. And we are looking at private
4 sector partners to see if there can be
5 loan funds set up to support especially
6 small developers through the acquisition
7 process.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I'm
9 going to ask one more question and then
10 I'm going to open it up for all these
11 folks who have been waiting.

12 I know that you work with the
13 Planning Commission directly with regard
14 to neighborhood development to try to
15 coordinate planning. Is it not your job
16 to assist them in implementing their
17 recommendations insofar as finding
18 funding is concerned?

19 MR. HANNA: Yes. Absolutely.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It has
21 been rumored that your office has told
22 several Council offices that they have
23 exhausted all their acquisition funds.
24 How is this possible?

25 MR. HANNA: That's true as

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2 well.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I
4 mean, given the selling of that, given
5 your working with Planning Commission and
6 given acquisition resources, NTI, how is
7 it possible that people are told all
8 their funds are gone, especially if you
9 don't give them copies of sheets saying
10 what private properties have sold, what
11 excess land has sold, et cetera?

12 MR. HANNA: Councilpeople were
13 asked to submit their requests for
14 acquisitions. Those requests are in
15 varying stages of being processed. Some
16 are completed, the acquisitions are done,
17 money has been paid, land has been
18 exchanged, et cetera. Some are still in
19 the process at various points along the
20 process.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I have
22 in my district alone nine properties
23 listed -- I won't read them now. I could
24 if you would like -- that were approved
25 in spring of '05 that we haven't heard

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2 about.

3 MR. HANNA: I want to speak to
4 your first question, first of all. That
5 is, how might a district -- why might a
6 district be told that they're out of
7 acquisition dollars.

8 As you know, as Councilman
9 DiCicco knows, the NTI acquisition, at
10 least half of the NTI acquisition
11 dollars, were allocated on a
12 district-by-district basis. If in a
13 given District Council the amount of
14 finite identified limited amount of NTI
15 dollars, if in a given Councilmanic
16 District the requests for acquisition and
17 the cost of those acquisitions exceed the
18 value of dollars allocated to that
19 particular District, then the fact is,
20 there aren't enough NTI dollars to
21 acquire all of the stuff that a given
22 Councilperson might want to acquire.

23 Now, having said that, that is
24 just one of several, not a couple,
25 several sources of funding. The Housing

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2 Trust Fund is another potential source of
3 acquisition dollars. The state might
4 provide sources of acquisition dollars.
5 Our office, particularly the Office of
6 Housing and Community Development, one of
7 our responsibilities is to help not just
8 the planning department but
9 Councilpeople -- I don't want to use the
10 word "find," but come up with, otherwise
11 identify dollars to help them, not just
12 with acquisition, but with demolition.
13 Some folks are at or beyond their
14 demolition budget.

15 It's part of our job, from a
16 housing development standpoint, to help
17 identify funds from whatever source. Our
18 sources, however, are going to be finite.
19 We won't be able to provide all of the
20 dollars requested by all of the Councils
21 for all of the things that each
22 Councilperson wants done in their
23 district.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I just
25 referenced nine projects that I won't

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2 read today that were approved in spring
3 of '05. So certainly we would like to
4 know before we meet on the 29th our
5 estimated settlement dates for those
6 projects.

7 MR. HANNA: As Cathy said,
8 Councilwoman, we will be happy, both
9 Cathy and the Redevelopment Authority,
10 will be happy to sit down with you and
11 each and every Councilmanic District
12 person to talk about where each
13 individual acquisition request is in the
14 RDA acquisition process.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And we
16 assume if they were approved, they were
17 approved. Then it's just a matter of
18 between now and spring for those dates.

19 MR. HANNA: I'm not quite sure
20 what's on your list. I don't know where
21 each individual acquisition is, but what
22 I don't want to do, Councilwoman, I don't
23 want to be backed into a corner by
24 saying, Yeah, it's approved, so we're
25 working on it. If there are no

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2 acquisition dollars available for it,
3 even if it has been approved, if there
4 are no acquisition dollars available for
5 it, we can't buy it.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: When
7 we meet with you and when you tell us
8 these projects are approved and we tell
9 our people, our community groups, like
10 Habitat, Freeze Park Shop, Partnership
11 CDC, Bottom of the Sea, et cetera, et
12 cetera, et cetera, we tell them they're
13 approved, these people assume and these
14 community groups assume that these
15 projects will come to fruition.

16 See, it's not fair for us to
17 get letters from you or anybody else
18 anywhere representing the Administration
19 or any other entity who says,
20 Congratulations, your project is
21 approved, and then all of the sudden,
22 that letter doesn't mean anything a year
23 or two later. It's not fair, because it
24 puts our credibility on the line with the
25 people who send us here.

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2 MR. HANNA: Councilwoman, I
3 don't disagree, but let me just give you
4 a hypothetical. I'm not saying this is
5 your situation, but let's say a Council
6 District has a \$2 million budget for
7 acquisitions. Let's say 20 projects are
8 approved, each of which costing \$100,000.
9 If my math is correct, that gets you to
10 \$2 million.

11 If over the course of the
12 process of acquiring a property, let's
13 say it takes 12 months, if the actual
14 value of that property appreciates, goes
15 up to something more than \$100,000, we
16 still have a \$2 million budget. It's not
17 unusual for properties to appreciate in
18 value by 5, 10, 15, 50 percent.

19 When that happens, and it does,
20 when that happens, we go out and buy as
21 much as we can with \$2 million. Once
22 that \$2 million is exhausted, one of a
23 couple of things are going to happen.
24 Those projects which have not been -- I'm
25 still talking about the same 20

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2 properties. Those properties which have
3 not been closed upon are going to have to
4 wait until we help you identify more
5 acquisition dollars or they're going to
6 have to wait until --

7 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: The
8 property is sold and then the money gets
9 refunded. Not to interrupt you, because
10 I'm thinking of 639 Catharine, which is a
11 big number.

12 MR. HANNA: Again, I'm not
13 saying that that's what happened in your
14 district, but that is a very real
15 probability, not possibility. And it's
16 an issue that happens, over which we have
17 no control.

18 Again, we are certainly
19 sympathetic and respectful of your
20 credibility, but when it comes to
21 commitments made as of a certain day, a
22 year and a half later all kinds of things
23 may have changed. We can't be expected,
24 given the commitment that was made two
25 years ago, if the world has changed, to

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2 be able to step up as a result of if
3 things change, over which we had no
4 control.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But
6 you are expected to say something. If
7 a --

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: If a
10 father loses a job or somebody is laid
11 off, the family knows they suffer, but
12 somebody is supposed to talk to them and
13 say, We have to tighten our belts, or the
14 situation is changed.

15 MS. CALIFANO: Councilwoman --

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And we
17 have a right to expect that.

18 MS. CALIFANO: You're
19 completely correct, and we would not make
20 any movements without sitting and
21 reviewing those discussions and those
22 issues with the District Councilmember.

23 In the cases where that has
24 been a problem, the District
25 Councilmember sometimes has decided that

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2 they were going to only proceed with a
3 sum total of the properties or put a
4 project on hold. That's not a decision
5 that we have made. It's a decision --

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: No.
7 You all ignore it. You ignore it.

8 MS. CALIFANO: We have laid out
9 the issue for the District Councilperson
10 to make the decision.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: My
12 final question is -- that's only because
13 we call every doggone day. We push all
14 the time, because this is my issue. It's
15 what I care about. If we didn't, we'd
16 hear nothing from you.

17 Would you comment on the
18 success of the sheriff's sale process in
19 complementing tax delinquent right of
20 properties, as well as the success of
21 acquisition through equity courts?

22 MS. CALIFANO: We cannot
23 comment on the sheriff's sale process.
24 That's not something in which we're
25 involved with. I'm sorry.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: So
3 your Department with regard to sheriff's
4 sale, you have no money with regard to
5 any properties in the sheriff's sale,
6 none of that comes back to you in any
7 way.

8 What about equity court then,
9 equity court action? You're saying none
10 of that comes back to you?

11 MS. CALIFANO: None of that
12 comes to us.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Under
14 NTI, it was listed as another way to
15 acquire properties.

16 MS. CALIFANO: Correct. And
17 Eva Gladstein would more -- those are
18 things that are done under the purview of
19 the Managing Director's office. Equity
20 court is something that involves the Law
21 Department, L&I and the Commerce
22 Department on large vacant buildings, and
23 the sheriff's sale, again, is not
24 something --

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But

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2 that's you. If it happens under NTI,
3 then it does affect you.

4 MR. HANNA: Well, it affects
5 us, but it's not a system that we drive,
6 unlike the ones we've been talking about
7 thus far.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's
9 a different answer. Thank you very much.

10 We'll ask you if you would stay
11 around. We would like to ask Veronica M.
12 Pankey, President of Local 1971 for
13 AFSCME, AFL-CIO, to come forward and
14 anyone she would like to bring with her,
15 and we would hopefully ask that you
16 remain.

17 Thank you for your patience.
18 Welcome. Please identify yourself to the
19 record and begin your testimony.

20 MS. PANKEY: Good afternoon,
21 Madam Chairwoman and members of the
22 Housing, Neighborhood and Homeless
23 Committee and attendees. My name is
24 Veronica M. Pankey, and this is our
25 Vice-President, Caswell Curtis. We both

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2 represent AFSCME Local 1971, District
3 Council 33, AFL-CIO. We're here today to
4 testify on the impending housing
5 reorganization plan and the impact thus
6 far it has had on the 205 members for
7 whom we represent.

8 Permit me to begin by informing
9 the members of this Committee of the work
10 performed by AFSCME Local 1971 union
11 members and the agencies for which we
12 work, the Redevelopment Authority, the
13 Philadelphia Housing Development
14 Corporation and the Office of Housing and
15 Community Development.

16 The Redevelopment Authority
17 coordinates real estate activities and
18 acquires and disposes of property for
19 development purposes. It finances and
20 oversees the development of housing and
21 rental projects undertaken by a
22 non-profit and for-profit developers. It
23 also issues debt to finance specific
24 projects and for the programmatic
25 purposes, such as low-interest home

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2 improvement loans.

3 The Redevelopment Authority
4 staff authorizes site improvement
5 contracts for street improvements,
6 including curb and sidewalks, street
7 lighting, street trees and awards
8 demolition contracts for the
9 Authority-owned buildings. The
10 Redevelopment Authority is, by state law,
11 the only body in Philadelphia that can
12 issue housing bonds and acquire land
13 through eminent domain for the public
14 good.

15 PHDC administers the
16 weatherization program and oversees the
17 rehabilitation services provided by
18 contractors to income-eligible homeowner
19 occupants. PHDC also acts as a developer
20 for projects as directed by OHCD and is
21 responsible for the Home Start Project,
22 which involves the rehabilitation of
23 homes for sale to income-eligible
24 first-time home buyers. It administers
25 the Adaptive Modification Program to

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2 eligible senior citizens to afford them
3 safe mobility throughout their home. It
4 also manages and maintains a few low- and
5 moderate-income scattered site rental
6 properties.

7 OHCD is responsible for
8 establishing housing and community
9 development policies for all the City
10 housing agencies, setting priorities and
11 coordinating planning efforts. It
12 administers the housing budget and
13 contracts with the Redevelopment
14 Authority, PHDC, the Redevelopment
15 Authority, as well as subrecipient
16 non-profit organizations to conduct
17 planning activity and perform services in
18 support of the overall housing plan.

19 As you can see, allegedly, all
20 of the work performed by Local 1971 union
21 members and the agencies for which we
22 work could be affected by this
23 reorganization. Therefore, we have a
24 crucial interest in its implementation,
25 both as employees and residents of the

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2 City of Philadelphia.

3 AFSCME Local 1971 last met with
4 Kevin Hanna and the consultants, with
5 whom a consultant contract was entered
6 upon for \$550,000, with Public Financial
7 Management regarding the reorganization
8 on February 3, 2005. The union again
9 emphasized to the City Administration
10 that Local 1971 is willing to work with
11 the City and the three housing agencies
12 to ensure smooth reorganization and help
13 improve working and living conditions for
14 all citizens of the City. We also
15 explained that the union has a legal and
16 moral responsibility to protect the
17 rights, benefits and working conditions
18 of the employees in which we represent.

19 The union has repeatedly asked,
20 repeatedly asked for transparency of and
21 be privy to the planning process
22 regarding any reorganization on a
23 continuing basis, not after such
24 reorganization plan has been finalized.
25 We were told that the City would sit down

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2 and talk with us about the reorganization
3 at the point where they had some idea
4 where they were needing to go, how they
5 planned to get there and, most important
6 to this union, who was going.

7 After reading subsequent
8 newspaper articles and hearing numerous
9 rumors regarding the City
10 Administration's proposed housing
11 reorganization, Local 1971 comes before
12 this Committee requesting assistance in
13 obtaining transparency of and
14 participation in the planning process of
15 the impending housing reorganization and
16 the impact it has had on our stalled
17 contract negotiations.

18 Despite the City
19 Administration's claim that it wants to
20 work cooperatively with Local 1971 and to
21 ensure fair treatment of employees, the
22 Administration has stalled negotiation
23 sessions. They have proposed
24 reorganization language and numerous
25 concessions, none of which were apart of

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2 the settlement with District Council 33
3 on December 1, 2004. Local 1971
4 reiterates our desire to meet with the
5 City Administration and to obtain answers
6 to our questions but to resume contract
7 negotiations and obtain a fair contract.

8 Perhaps the biggest concern
9 Local 1971 has regarding the proposed
10 housing reorganization is the major
11 impact it has had on contract
12 negotiations. PHDC and OHCD last met on
13 September 19th and 21st respectively, at
14 which time the signing bonus of \$750 and
15 2 percent cost of living increase
16 effective July 1, 2005 was removed, was
17 removed unless the union accepted the
18 Administration's last proposals, which
19 included reorganization language and
20 numerous concessions.

21 To further demonstrate the
22 unfair treatment by the Administration,
23 non-unionized employees at OHCD and PHDC
24 received the economic package of \$750 and
25 the 2 percent increase.

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2 Additionally, contract language
3 proposed and rejected at the bargaining
4 table was imposed in the memorandum
5 document for the represented supervisory
6 unit at PHDC, along with the economic
7 package, this despite the newspaper
8 articles quoting the Mayor that every
9 City employee received the economic
10 package.

11 Local 1971 is being held
12 hostage due to a reorganization plan for
13 which we have no knowledge.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. PANKEY: And negotiation
16 sessions have been stalled at these two
17 agencies.

18 The Redevelopment Authority who
19 once aligned with the City has pulled
20 away and resumed sessions, this due to
21 their dissatisfaction with the
22 reorganization plan and the
23 Administration's negotiation tactics.

24 AFSCME Local 1971 is extremely
25 concerned about the employees we

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2 represent. Officials have not said where
3 current housing agency employees, whether
4 they will be laid off, who will be hired
5 by new agencies, where the employees will
6 be assigned, what their wages, benefits,
7 hours or working conditions will be or
8 who will represent them. They will not
9 negotiate a fair contract in spite of.

10 Based upon the union's
11 experience in dealing the City's
12 Administration, we are extremely
13 apprehensive about the future employment
14 and working conditions of our union
15 members.

16 Madam Chairwoman and the
17 members of this Committee of the Whole,
18 on behalf of the members of AFSCME Local
19 1971, we respectfully ask that City
20 Council not authorize a service agreement
21 until a fair contract is obtained,
22 written details of the housing
23 reorganization plan and summary report
24 from the Public Financial Management are
25 provided and that the City Administration

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2 meets with representatives of Local 1971
3 and works with the union to ensure that
4 current union-represented employees are
5 not adversely affected.

6 We of Local 1971 --
7 (Applause.)

8 MS. PANKEY: -- District
9 Council 33 thanks you, Madam Chairwoman
10 and the Committee of the City Council,
11 for your support. Thank you.

12 (Standing ovation.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Before
14 I comment, let me announce to all of you
15 that the Vice-Chair of this Committee,
16 Juan Ramos, is present, and as you see,
17 Councilman W. Wilson Goode is present.
18 We thank them for being here.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: As
21 Chair, let me say that we believe it is
22 unconscionable that a contract is being
23 negotiated without all sides having
24 information, as we don't, with regard to
25 any details about housing reorganization.

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2 We are certainly saying to those involved
3 in this process, Kevin Hanna and whomever
4 else is involved with regard to a service
5 contract and with regard to the
6 statements about a fair contract, that we
7 will expect that by the time we meet on
8 November 29th at 11:30, that you can
9 report to us that you are meeting and
10 working on some contract and that
11 everyone feels that they have
12 information, as we will, by that time
13 about just what we're talking about and
14 what the future can look like.

15 So we will expect that not only
16 an answer in response to all the issues
17 that all the members of this Committee
18 have raised and any colleagues in the
19 room have raised, we will certainly
20 expect that you can come forward,
21 Mr. Hanna, and say that you are at least
22 negotiating with the union so that they
23 don't feel, just to have any concerns
24 heard, that they have to come before a
25 public forum to have that done. We

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2 expect for you to tell us that union
3 negotiations have begun by the time we
4 meet again.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

7 Councilman DiCicco.

8 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Thank you,
9 Madam Chair.

10 Good afternoon, ma'am. Bottom
11 paragraph, last couple lines, Page 2,
12 "The Redevelopment Authority who once
13 aligned themselves with the City has
14 pulled away and resumed sessions," I'm
15 not clear on that. Sessions meaning?

16 MS. PANKEY: At one point the
17 Redevelopment Authority had aligned
18 themselves with the Office of Housing and
19 Community Development and PHDC in that
20 the proposals submitted was identical
21 throughout all three agencies. They
22 wanted to have a uniform contract. Right
23 now, perhaps you may not know, but each
24 contract at our agencies are different.

25 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: I didn't

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2 know that. That's helpful.

3 MS. PANKEY: Each one of the
4 contracts at the agencies are different.
5 The Redevelopment Authority, PHDC and
6 OHCD had submitted their proposals and
7 they were all the same. They were all
8 negotiated the same. The same team was
9 in each session.

10 The Redevelopment Authority met
11 with the union. Their Chairperson met
12 with the union and stated to us their
13 dissatisfaction with where reorganization
14 was going and that they did not like the
15 negotiation tactics that were being
16 pushed onto the union, in that PHDC and
17 OHCD had basically given us their bottom
18 line, either accept this or you get
19 nothing. And that was the second time
20 that they presented that to us.

21 On June 27th, they told us,
22 This is the bottom line, accept this,
23 which included a ton of concessions and
24 reorganization, either accept this
25 proposal or you get no signing bonus or

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2 no 2 percent.

3 We rejected that. We came back
4 to the table in the latter part of July.
5 The position has stayed the same with
6 those agencies, and we met again. The
7 last time we met was on the 19th and the
8 21st of September, and we were told again
9 by the chief negotiators that this is
10 where they are, there's no changes and
11 that the 750 and 2 percent was off the
12 table unless we accepted their proposals.
13 And we have not, and will not, accept
14 their proposals until we get some clarity
15 and until they're willing to fairly
16 negotiate with us, which they have not.

17 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Has the
18 Redevelopment Authority issued any
19 counterproposals or are they basically
20 supporting what the union wants?

21 MS. PANKEY: The Redevelopment
22 Authority came back to the table after
23 their meeting with us and told us what
24 their position was, in that they were
25 pulling away from the City. They did not

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2 stand for what the reorganization was
3 presenting to them, with no specifics of
4 what the reorganization was.

5 They did revise their
6 proposals, and we have been in sessions
7 and there has been some movement --

8 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: "They"
9 meaning?

10 MS. PANKEY: "They," the
11 Redevelopment Authority.

12 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Have had
13 some movement on their --

14 MS. PANKEY: Yes. There has
15 been some movement, and they had
16 continued their sessions. They had
17 actually stopped negotiation sessions in
18 June as well, June of 2005. We had no
19 sessions from June until October.

20 COUNCILMAN DICICCO: Thank you.
21 Thank you, Madam Chair.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
23 you very much.

24 Are there other questions from
25 members of this Committee?

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Do we
4 have others here who would like to
5 testify this morning? We're happy to
6 hear you.

7 Mr. Ali.

8 Mr. Curtis, are you all right?

9 MR. CURTIS: Yes. Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you for your testimony. We certainly
12 agree that every worker has a right to
13 arbitration, and certainly we're on your
14 side in demanding that that happen before
15 we meet again.

16 MS. PANKEY: Thank you very
17 much.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you.

20 MS. PANKEY: Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Please
23 identify yourself for the record,
24 Mr. Ali, and begin your testimony.

25 MR. ALI: Good morning,

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2 Councilwoman.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
4 morning.

5 MR. ALI: And other members of
6 the City Council. My name is Jihad Ali
7 and I'm here as a representative of a
8 couple development groups that we work
9 with, non-profit and profit companies,
10 the most recent being New Life Community
11 Ventures, who, Councilman DiCicco, you're
12 familiar with, and LARC, which is the
13 Housing Association of Delaware Valley,
14 Lancaster Avenue Revitalization
15 Committee.

16 One of the things that I'd like
17 to say is, I'd like to reiterate a point
18 about government and true democracy.
19 There's a statement that says that, "True
20 democracy only works if there is active
21 participation of the citizenry, which
22 completely depends on the government
23 transparency and accountability." Thomas
24 Jefferson said, "Information is the
25 currency of democracy."

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2 So we're in the same dilemma as
3 you and other members of Council, because
4 we don't have the plan in order to talk
5 about it, but I can say that we're down
6 here for a selfish interest. When I say
7 "selfish," I'm speaking about as from a
8 developer's point of view. We're just
9 down here to ensure that there is going
10 to be fairness in the development
11 process.

12 Whatever you, Madam Chair,
13 decide and the rest of the Committee
14 decides upon the plan of whatever
15 happens, we just need to make sure that
16 there's fairness, and fairness
17 particularly for African-American
18 developers. Because it's a sad state to
19 say in this City of Philadelphia, there
20 really aren't that many African-American
21 developers. There's really a small
22 limit. You probably can count them on
23 one hand, when we talk about in terms of
24 capacity of doing 50 units or more.

25 There's all kinds of people,

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2 particularly like the situation where you
3 talked about, Council President, where
4 people want to develop a lot, one or two
5 houses on their block, but in terms of
6 projects that are above 50 units or more,
7 there's no active plan. There's a little
8 limited number of African-Americans doing
9 those type of projects.

10 So whatever the plan happens,
11 we just need to make sure that there is
12 going to be accountability. Because
13 there's a lot of organized entities that
14 are pushing for this reorganization, and
15 one of the things that we need you to
16 look at as Councilpeople is that there's
17 fairness and that we have -- an
18 opportunity should go to those who are
19 prepared. And nowadays we have been
20 making progress as disadvantaged people
21 since the '60s, but we still have to be
22 vigilant as we were in the '60s to ensure
23 fairness. I mean, we need to talk about
24 it calmly and honestly about fairness.

25 So whatever your plan is,

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2 whenever happens, just make sure that
3 there's procedures in place to ensure
4 fairness for disadvantaged contractors
5 and particularly those developers who are
6 going to be doing anywhere between 50 or
7 more units.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

9 Mr. Ali, let me thank you for coming, and
10 certainly we are for fairness for
11 everyone. We introduced this legislation
12 not because someone said we should, but
13 because we wanted every point of view
14 represented, from the smallest, from the
15 individual person, to those at the top of
16 the ladder.

17 But let me say this to those
18 who head agencies such as one you belong
19 to, and, that is, that people have to
20 realize sometimes who their friends are.
21 W.B. DuBois wrote about "Friends I know
22 and the wretched of the earth," that
23 sometimes when people can't see the
24 enemy, they turn within.

25 So I only say to you and some

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2 people you represent that you should
3 realize who your friends are and realize
4 we're fighting for you, not you
5 specifically, but there are others who
6 run your organizations who want to fight
7 the very people trying to help them.

8 Nobody makes us do anything.
9 We're elected by about 155,000 people,
10 and we're here and we wrote this
11 legislation because we care about housing
12 reorganization and how it affects the
13 workers of this City and the people who
14 live and visit this City.

15 So we're on the right side.
16 We're on the same side. So I only say
17 that we have to be mature enough and
18 honest enough, not you, to understand
19 that and to recognize that and to respect
20 that.

21 MR. ALI: Well, Council
22 President, just in fairness to myself,
23 you might have me -- I'm not a member of
24 the Chamber of Commerce. I'm a member of
25 the Round Table, and as of my last

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2 meeting, there's nobody in that Round
3 Table that has taken the position that
4 has even thought that you were the enemy.
5 I just want to be clear. Because I'm
6 aware -- and I was at the same meeting
7 you were at when they were having a
8 prayer vigil that they said was a
9 protest.

10 Now, I'm not a member of that,
11 and I just want to be clear on that. I'm
12 not a member of the African-American
13 Chamber of Commerce, and I know who our
14 friends are.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you very much.

17 Let me also note that we
18 understand PEC, People's Emergency
19 Center, is here and you're here to
20 testify. Thank you very much.

21 Welcome, and thank you.

22 Thank you, Mr. Ali. Thank you
23 for your statements.

24 Please identify yourself for
25 the record and begin. Thank you.

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2 MS. LUCAS: Good afternoon. My
3 name is Jenny Lucas, and I represent the
4 People's Emergency Center Community
5 Development Corporation. For any of you
6 who do not know, we're a non-profit CDC
7 in West Philadelphia.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Pull
9 your mike up a little. We're having a
10 hard time hearing you. Would you start
11 again?

12 MS. LUCAS: Sure. My name is
13 Jenny Lucas, and I represent the People's
14 Emergency Center Community Development
15 Corporation. And for those of who you
16 don't know, we're a non-profit CDC
17 operating in West Philadelphia.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
19 They're the oldest in the state. They've
20 come from the Third District. The oldest
21 in the state.

22 MS. LUCAS: Yes.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you.

25 MS. LUCAS: Well, first of all,

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2 I just wanted to say thank you to you for
3 letting me testify today and to also say
4 that we greatly appreciate the support
5 that your office, OHCD, RDA, the Commerce
6 Department and other City agencies have
7 provided to us throughout the years. And
8 we just have a couple of months on what
9 we would like to see in any
10 reorganization of the City agencies.
11 It's difficult to say much more right
12 now, but hopefully we'll have more to say
13 later.

14 First of all, we think that
15 it's very important to streamline the
16 acquisition and disposition process of
17 properties committed to CDC projects.
18 All of the developers here realize that
19 acquisition is key to development. And
20 although the City should be committed for
21 its role in authorizing acquisitions of
22 thousands of properties through the
23 Neighborhood Transformation Initiative,
24 the City would be well-served by
25 streamlining this process so that those

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2 vacant properties already designated for
3 CDC projects move more quickly through
4 the process.

5 And we would also encourage the
6 City to examine the programmatic -- well,
7 in light of all the CDBG and Home cuts
8 that we're facing at the federal level,
9 it would just be important for the state
10 to examine programmatic delivery so that
11 more CDBG and Home dollars are brought
12 into actual projects that are out there
13 on the streets.

14 So, again, I just wanted to say
15 that through NTI and other initiatives,
16 we have gotten a lot of properties and
17 been able to transform over 82 vacant
18 lots and properties into 114 units of
19 housing for social service agencies and a
20 community playground. We have lots of
21 projects that have come up in the
22 pipeline, and we just look forward to
23 having those complete and moving forward.

24 So thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

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2 you very much.

3 Are there any questions?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you very much.

7 Is there anyone else here who
8 would like to testify?

9 The Chair notes that we did try
10 to let individuals know and organizations
11 know that the hearing would be continued
12 until November 29th at 11:30.

13 We thank those of you who are
14 here, and, again, we ask Mr. Hanna and
15 all others from the Administration to
16 know that of all the issues we mentioned,
17 we expect that you'll be able to respond
18 when we come back on the 29th and also
19 that you can also tell us that you're at
20 least meeting with the union to try to
21 work out these negotiations.

22 Having said that, are there any
23 other questions?

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

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2 you very much.

3 This Committee will stand in
4 recess until November 29th at 11:30 a.m.

5 Thank you all for being here.

6 Thank you, Committee.

7 (Committee on Housing,
8 Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
9 adjourned at 1:35 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY that the

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contained fully and accurately in the

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foregoing matter on November 15, 2005, and

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that this is a true and correct transcript of

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MICHELE L. MURPHY

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RPR-Notary Public

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