COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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Mt. Airy Church of God in Christ
6401 Ogontz Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, April 27, 2010
4:40 p.m.

- - -

PRESENT:
COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNA C. VERNA
COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

BILLS 100115, 100116, 100117, 100118, 100131 and RESOLUTION 100141

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon, everyone.

Can you hear us back there?

(No.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is that better?

(Yes.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

This is a continued public hearing of the Committee of the Whole, and I would like to recognize the Councilpeople who are in the Committee here. To my extreme left is Councilman Greenlee. Next to Councilman Greenlee is Councilman Goode. To my immediate left is Councilwoman Miller, and to my immediate right is Councilwoman Tasco.

I think on behalf of the members of Council I really want to thank all of you for being in attendance, and we certainly look forward to hearing your comments and your concerns about the upcoming budget.

4/27/10 - WHOLE - BILL 100115, etc.

At this time, I would like to recognize Councilwoman Tasco for brief remarks.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you, Madam President.

Good afternoon, everyone.

(Good afternoon.)

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you so much for coming out to this hearing that we wanted to bring to the community so that you would have an opportunity to voice your position and concerns over the proposed budget that we are addressing in City Council and have been for the last couple of months. It gives you an opportunity to let us know how you feel, and we'll take that into consideration as we deliberate how we close this $150 million gap.

I certainly want to thank Bishop Morris and the Mt. Airy Church of God in Christ for opening up the doors of this beautiful church to have this hearing. We were here last year.

They're very accommodating, and we wanted to have a place that would accommodate you and you would feel comfortable. And we certainly ask you if you would give it due respect as we proceed with your deliberations.

Thank you again for coming.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Miller.

COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you, Madam President.

I too want to thank you for taking time today to come out. We're looking forward from hearing from you, what are the things that you care about, what are the things that you like or dislike or some of your suggestions. Some people may have suggestions about budget-related issues.

We have to raise revenue. We have to get revenue from somewhere. So that's why we're here. We're glad you came out. We expect we'll be here at least until about 6:30, something to

7:00. If you haven't signed up to testify, if you want to testify, I believe the sheet is out at the front desk.

I too would like to thank Bishop Morris. This church is just a perfect place, a perfect location, off-street parking, and we're just happy to be back here again this year.

So thank you all for coming.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Our first witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: The first witness is Cicely Peterson Mangum, Esquire, Logan CDC.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

And to witnesses, I would like to set some ground rules. We do have a number of witnesses that would like to testify. We want to give them all an opportunity to actually give their testimony. So with that in mind, we're

going to give every witness three minutes.

(Witness approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon. Thank you for coming. Please identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. ROBINSON: Hi. My name is actually Carla Robinson. I'm Program Associate. I'm here on behalf of Cicely Peterson Mangum, Executive Director, at Logan CDC.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Could you speak a little more slowly and speak into the mike.

MS. ROBINSON: My name is Carla Robinson. I am the Program Associate at Logan CDC. I am here on behalf of Cicely Peterson Mangum, Executive Director of Logan CDC.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Please proceed.

MS. ROBINSON: I'm here to

testify on behalf of Cicely Peterson Mangum, Logan CDC's Executive Director. Before I begin my testimony, I want to thank Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller and Councilwoman Marian Tasco for bringing these hearings to the community and for offering us a platform to express our views and recommendations regarding the City's 2011 budget.

Logan CDC is a community development corporation serving the Logan neighborhood of Philadelphia. Its mission is to enhance the quality of life for residents and businesses through a broad range of revitalization efforts, including transformative, community and economic development; commercial corridor and affordable housing development; and community-focused education and organizing. Within a short period of time, with support from the City of Philadelphia, Logan CDC has successfully implemented the following programs and services: Free computer and Internet

access to Logan residents through the Community Technology Center; community outreach and organizing through the Logan Neighborhood Advisory Committee; foreclosure prevention through participation in the City's Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Pilot Program, which focuses on door-to-door outreach to inform homeowners about their rights, counseling and mandatory outreach to inform homeowners or mediation with lenders or services to prevent foreclosure; free application assistance to low- and moderate-income residents seeking federal and State benefits and tax credits through the Benefit Bank; small business assistance and streetscape enhancements through the North Broad Street Improvement Project, a comprehensive commercial corridor revitalization program; and planning for a mixed-use real estate development project in the Logan Triangle area.

In addition to supporting these

quality-of-life initiatives, the City has made significant investments in revitalizing the neighborhood commercial corridors and supporting small businesses to better address the need for local access to goods, services and jobs. I am here to urge the City to continue supporting the work of community development corporations and economic development initiatives. Economic development is an important strategy in eradicating poverty, generating the resources necessary for human development and a stable community. The work of CDCs strengthen neighborhood economies and, in turn, the City of Philadelphia's tax base.

The City has approved ordinances to expand and strengthen the City's CDC tax credit program, which provides flexible support for CDCs engaged in neighborhood economic development. We urge the City to approve the proposed new regulations to implement

these needed changes to the CDC tax credit program and to expedite approval of participants' renewal applications.

The Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund is a flexible funding source that enables CDCs to address a range of affordable housing needs, such as building new homes, rehabilitating old ones, helping homeowners make repairs and protecting homeowners from foreclosure. We applaud the Mayor for indicating his support for an increase in dedicated revenue for the Housing Trust Fund. However, we urge the City to restore the $3 million per year commitment from the General Fund to the Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund and work to advance State-authorizing legislation to expand dedicated funding for affordable housing through the Trust Fund.

We commend the City and the Redevelopment Authority for beginning a process to inform its system to acquire and dispose of vacant and abandoned

properties. We also commend the RDA for being chosen one of the top five cities in delivering the federal economic stimulus program through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. However, several immediate issues need to be addressed while a longer-term reform is advanced.

With the NTI audit finalized last October, we urge the City to quickly utilize remaining acquisition funds to accelerate the acquisition/disposition of property to support planned development projects that will not be able to leverage outside resources without site control. We urge the City to commence payments immediately into court to clear title for properties being acquired/disposed of and to implement the recycling agreement to generate additional funds to support future acquisitions. Request the adequate funding to be made available to assist with remediation of the Logan Triangle for future development and job creation.

To conclude, I'd like to thank you for your time, attention and interest. Community housing and economic development initiatives are important vehicles for continued growth and stability in our neighborhoods. We welcome any opportunity to continue this conversation.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very much.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Excuse me, Tony, before you call the next witness.

Again, I want to remind you that we have a time limit, so when you do hear the bell, try to conclude your remarks as much as you can, please. Thank you.

MR. RADWANSKI: The next panel is Christie Balka, PCCY, and Joanne Bursich, Non-Profit Finance Fund.

(Witness approached witness table.)

MS. BURSICH: Hi. My name is Joanne Bursich with Non-Profit Finance Fund. It looks like Christie isn't here yet. So would you like me to hand you these packets and a copy of the testimony?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: That would be fine.

Please proceed.

MS. BURSICH: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Joanne Bursich and I work with Non-Profit Finance Fund, the manager of the Child Care Facilities Fund since 2003. The Facilities Fund is a partnership between the City of Philadelphia and foundation partners, which allows NFF to help non-profit child care centers make necessary site renovations to improve the safety and quality of their buildings. Thanks to the City's support over the past seven years, the Facilities Fund has served a

critical purpose in the Philadelphia community. Eighty-seven child care centers have improved their facilities through a capital grant and technical assistance from NFF staff and hundreds more have benefitted from our capacity-building workshops and financial expertise.

As you know, child care providers in our city were acutely impacted by the State budget impasse last year. As providers were not paid regularly for the 100-day impasse, some closed and many had to borrow money to meet operating costs. Most are still recovering from those losses. In addition to this strain, the City is currently -- the State is currently strengthening playground standards, forcing many programs to make significant upgrades to one of the most expensive areas in their sites. When done right, a playground will last a very long time, but it's expensive to do right. The

Facilities Fund is an important tool in helping our providers meet these high standards and stay in business.

There are more than 200 non-profit child care centers in the City that have not access to grant or services through the Fund. Taking this need into account, we requested a budget amount of $1.1 million from the Office of Housing and Community Development for Fiscal Year 2011. Funding at this level would have allowed us to make at least ten capital grants in the coming year. OHCD has proposed a budget of $650,000 for the Fund, an amount that would allow us to support just five to seven grants. While we understand the tight budget constraints that the City is facing, we hope that OHCD can find room to increase the allocation so that we can serve more programs.

Our grants have improved the quality of programming for over 17,000 kids throughout the City. On average,

each grant that we make impacts 90 kids. Additionally, it's important to remember the parents that are able to keep their jobs because they have access to safe, high-quality child care. Our grants often support the sustainability of existing programs, but can also be used to fund expansion when appropriate.

The City's steadfast commitment to the Facilities Fund has directly impacted the quality of child care available. Not only are we witnessing significant changes site by site, but also from a systems perspective. In our daily work, NFF strongly encourages all organizations to pursue licensure if they're not already licensed by the State. We work with many publicly funded after-school programs struggling to get their buildings up to code. Some providers have operated underground for so long that the licensing process can be slow and challenging, often requiring a series of both programmatic and facility

changes. Given the absence of child care specific expertise at the municipal level, the Facilities Fund and its citywide industry partners have served as a vital tool in helping the City fulfill its long-term goal of licensing all facilities that house child care and after-school programs. The majority of the Facilities Fund's grantees, however, are already licensed centers, and we actively help them move along the PA Keystone STARS quality improvement program.

In addition to funding from the City, NFF has secured funds from the William Penn Foundation, United Way and Wachovia Regional CDC for the program. Private funding for the initiative provides at least a dollar-for-dollar match to the City. We also require that our grantees raise funding for their projects. To date, an additional $9.7 million in private funds have been leveraged against the City's allocation

of CDBG funds. The continuing need for the Facilities Fund is apparent, as there are more than 210 non-profit child care centers yet to be reached in the City.

We're proud of this national model that has clearly demonstrated results, and we look forward to our enduring collaboration with OHCD and the City.

Thank you for your time, and I have time to answer questions if anyone has any.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. I don't believe we're going to be asking any questions. Are we? I don't think so. We're here to listen.

Thank you.

MS. BURSICH: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

The Committee is now being joined by Councilman Curtis Jones to my extreme left. Next to him is

Councilwoman Maria Sanchez.

Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: Is Ms. Christie Balka here?

(No response.)

MR. RADWANSKI: The next witness then is Mr. Daniel Grace, Teamsters Local 830, and Wrenton Wright and Steve Bennett of Pepsi Bottling Group.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon. Welcome.

MR. GRACE: Good afternoon to you, too. My name is Danny Grace. I am the Secretary/Treasurer of Teamsters Local 830 here in Philadelphia.

The tax will hurt -- the tax is impractical and will succeed in cutting jobs, not cutting obesity rates. The tax will hurt hard-working middle-class families and the working poor of the City. The Mayor shows an alarming lack

of understanding of our economic consequences of this tax in challenging our position that the tax will cost my membership jobs. What's so hard to understand? The cost of sugar drinks will double in cost. People will stop buying the products. City stores will stop stocking it. The soda companies will move less products. The Teamster drivers and industry support personnel will lose their jobs.

Beverage industry statistics show that when soda prices rise ten percent, sales drop eight to nine percent. Reductions in soda sales mean job losses from bottling plant workers to Teamster Union delivery drivers. Our best estimate at this point in time is potentially as many as 2,000 lost regional jobs if this tax is passed.

These jobs will not be limited to Teamster members alone. They will be supermarket employees, convenience store workers and small business owners who

sell soda in their stores or restaurants, which will be adversely affected if this onerous tax is passed into law.

There are thousands of family-sustaining middle-class Philadelphia jobs in beverage production, supply, distribution, sales and retailing which depend on a healthy beverage industry. The loss of these jobs will only further erode the City's tax base.

Teamsters Local Union 830 represents 2,200 Philadelphia members in the soft drink and brewery industry. These hard-working tax-paying City residents do not deserve to have their jobs placed in jeopardy because of a misguided attempt to plug the City's budget gap solely by taxing the product they produce and deliver.

The soda tax is also discriminatory. Taxing one product and one industry to the exclusion of numerous items containing similar sugar-based ingredients is simply unfair. The tax

would not be imposed on snack items such as ice cream, candy, popsicles, doughnuts or other high sugar foods. Instead, this tax would unjustly target and burden the beverage industry alone.

Mayor Nutter proposes to use $20 million of the 77 million raised annually through this tax for public health education and services. Let's be honest here. The initiative is not about health. It is about deficit reduction and raising taxes on Philadelphians, who are already burdened with among the highest taxation rates in the country. If Mayor Nutter is serious about improving citizens' overall health, then only a broad education program aimed at targeting eating behaviors and promoting fitness and a healthy diet can effectively combat the country's obesity epidemic.

Any food or drink consumed without moderation will cause weight gain. A sugar-based tax in any form is

simply unacceptable. I respectfully ask the members of City Council to vote against the sugar drink tax. It will be an additional financial burden on the families already struggling to make ends meet. It does not work for Philadelphia or for the Philadelphia workers.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you, Mr. Grace.

Sir, would you identify yourself.

MR. WRIGHT: Good afternoon, Council. My name is Wrenton Wright and I am employee of the Pepsi Beverages Company and we bottle Pepsi-Cola here in the Philadelphia area. I'm also here as a concerned citizen in the Ninth Councilmanic District as a resident of East Oak Lane, and I want to further espouse our opposition to the sugar tax bill that Danny Grace just walked us through, but I want to talk from the perspective of the manufacturer. We feel

that it will affect a lot of people throughout the City if this bill is passed.

From the perspective of the manufacturer, though, our main concern is, as Danny Grace mentioned just a few minutes ago, is the devastating impact that it will have on our base of employees. We have hundreds of Philadelphia residents that are currently employed with the Pepsi-Cola Bottling facility out on Roosevelt Boulevard, and if this tax is passed, their livelihood could be in jeopardy. We could lose jobs due to the lack of our beverages being further sold in the City due to the increase of the cost of the product.

Not only will it affect us as the manufacturer, it will affect, as I mentioned, our employees on the street, in the warehouse, our fleet mechanics, all of our employees from A to Z, whatever facility they may be employed with us in. But it would also hurt the

Philadelphia retailer. They are the ones that are, again, going to be devastatingly impacted, because, again, they will not only have to pay the tax, they will lose customers we feel to the county stores, those that are close enough or those that have the wherewithal to make it out into the counties to buy these beverages at a much lesser cost. Not only will they more than likely buy their beverages when they're outside of the City, they probably will do all of their shopping outside of the City. So not only will they lose the beverage sales in their stores, they will lose quite a bit of other sales throughout the store. So, again, I'm not representing the retailers, but they will be gravely impacted as well.

So if this -- again, just to reiterate what both Danny Grace and I said, if this tax is passed, it will have a devastating effect on our employees, the consumption of our beverages and we

think citizens throughout the City of Philadelphia.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: John Millevoi, Raphael Thomas and Frank Mamoine.

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Let's go to the next witness.

MR. RADWANSKI: Edward Thompson, Myra Johnson, Charles Harrison.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon.

(Good afternoon.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Please identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MR. THOMPSON: My name is Edward Thompson.

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This is where I stand: I'm from -- well, I live in East Oak Lane. I'm just a regular person like everyone else here. My background is in engineering. I was laid off in January, and I could say I'm not looking forward to spending any extra money on anything that I plan on buying in the future. So I would, in my best ability, avoid purchasing anything that's affected with the sugar tax.

One, to me, the way the City is structured with all the outside counties, you could basically go across the street and be in another county and purchase something that's not affected by the sugar tax. I live off of Cheltenham Avenue. I'll just go across the street to CVS if I really want a soda that bad. If not, I'll just stop drinking them altogether.

But I also agree with the guys from Panel 3, especially the first gentleman, Grace, I believe, spoke. I

really believe his statement is how the economy and the people will be affected by this.

To me, I don't think you can make much money raising things by an extra 50 cent or a dollar. It's just going to hurt people from not buying it. So I believe a lot of mop-and-pop stores are going to be affected, because they still have to make money for markup. So with the increased tax and their markup, I don't think anybody going to buy it. And, like I said, the way the City is structured itself, from Upper Darby to Cheltenham Township and Jenkintown, a lot of people drive in and out of Philadelphia to work. They'll just buy their stuff elsewhere if they really want something that bad.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you, Mr. Thompson.

Good afternoon.

MRS. THOMPSON: Good afternoon. My name is Shayna Thompson. I'm the wife

of Edward Thompson. I'm just speaking on behalf of myself and my family. I completely agree with Edward here with the sugar tax. I'm not a complacent or a lazy person at all, so as my husband said, we'll just basically go across the street to Cheltenham Township, Upper Darby, Lansdale, wherever we may need to go, to pay a lesser price for sugared items.

Ourselves don't really buy or drink sugared items that much, so it really won't be affecting us, but for other families that do actually consume sugared items, it's just -- it's probably one of the most ludicrous taxes I've heard in my life.

I'm actually from New York. I've only been in Philadelphia for two, three years, so I've been through different types of politics with my Mayor at the time Bloomberg, and I probably have to say this is probably the most ludicrous tax I've ever heard in my life.

So that's my stand.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Hi. I'm Sean Smith. I'm not speaking for any organization, but the citizens of Philadelphia.

I think the City is just looking for another angle to make up for their mistakes for the last 20 years with taxes and not giving back to the community. So now you're going to tax, take away from the community, instead of educating our citizens on the nutrition. We have schools that don't even have gym classes. Now you want to tax our poor communities, drain them of more money, less money going back into their communities that is already not giving back to them.

And besides that, the jobs are going to be driven out of our city, less money coming into our city, to go across the suburbs. Then we're going to lose

jobs, we're going to lose revenue and the City is -- the companies that are here that donate to the City, guess what, they're going to take their manufacturing plants to another city or another town, and there we go, we're in even more of a deficit.

You want to tax a beverage two cents an ounce. The tax is going to cost more than the beverage is worth. So from a citizen's standpoint, it makes no sense to me. There's other ways and better ways. If you need help with a budget, give me a call, because there's a lot of issues that you guys are not looking at and blind to what the budget is now. You're spending money on ridiculous stuff.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: What is your answer to the dilemma that we're facing?

MR. SMITH: Why don't you ask the citizens of this city?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm

asking you.

MR. SMITH: You're asking me?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Yes.

MR. SMITH: Spend money the right way. We got a school district that is one of the worst in this country. We can't even teach our kids to read, but we'll just dump money into programs and let me spend 600,000 on curriculum, but then I'll switch it in six months to a year and then, oh, wait, I don't have any money, so let me tax the poor for beverages.

I mean, it's common sense. Spending money more wisely, you won't have budget problems. I mean, it's just like you take a normal person. Okay, I know how much money is coming in. So if I don't have it, I don't spend it.

So you've been overspending for years and now you're trying to come back and tax all of us. For what? For your mistakes. So why are we --

(Applause.)

MR. SMITH: So if the City is so concerned about their citizens and about us staying in this community -- I'm a long-time resident of this city and I've -- whatever. But I've watched people be drained for years in this city. I've watched people that can't even feed their families, including my own family, and now you want to tax the same people that I grew up with families in past generation to make up for mistakes.

The money has never got to the people. It has never got to the communities that need it. So now we're going to drain the communities that didn't have it in the first place for more. For what? Why don't you cut the Mayor's salary and give back to the community.

(Applause.)

MR. SMITH: If he's so concerned about our communities, take his six-figure contract. He just cut BRT's by $25,000. Cut his by $25,000. He's

got people in the City that aren't from the City coming up with these ridiculous-ass taxes that don't understand how this city is, how it operates and how our people live. So you're bringing in people, let me say, Oh, I'm going to pay you six figures to come up with some ridiculous tax. For what? To help who? It's not helping us. We're going to lose jobs, lose business and revenue, and guess what? Our city is going to be neglected again.

Besides being in a deficit, we have the second highest dropout rate in the country. You guys aren't addressing any major issues. We're worrying about a sugar tax. We can't even educate our own X generation to take over when you guys are all gone and retired. My kids, their kids, the kids coming up, we have -- there's no direction. Everybody is pointing fingers. You guys have no clue what is really happening within our communities.

(Applause.)

MR. SMITH: You're detached from a generation. There's no disrespect, but I speak to kids on a daily basis. There's a generation gap where we don't even know how to speak to our next generation.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

The Chair at this point recognizes Councilman Jones.

COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

Thank you for your comments, but let me correct you on some things. Let's take the sugar tax out of it. Let's assume for the sake of discussion we agree. But you did not answer her question about the fact that there are certain communities where the diabetes rate is twice the national average, where organ failure because of it is --

MR. SMITH: Because --

COUNCILMAN JONES: I listened to you. Sir, I listened to you. And I

said let's take the sugar tax out of it. But I need you to address what we're going to do about the fact that there are maps that you can show where there are areas called food deserts where you have a better chance of walking out the door and if you had three choices to run into first, a fresh vegetable, a book or a gun, you're going to run into the gun, and in those food deserts, there's a nutritional problem where we get fast foods, high salt, high sugar and results in another map that goes right over the same area where organ failures are at twice the rate.

And so I'm saying to you, I'm not out of touch. I go through there every day, and, in fact, I'm an organ donor and donated to my brother, who grew up on those things, and donated -- I only have one kidney to give.

So we're going to deal with the problem one way or another, whether it's a sugar tax, which we said we're going to

take off the table, but do not ignore, do not ignore, sir, the fact that we have a problem.

MR. SMITH: And the problem isn't sugar. It's education. You can't stop people from buying that until you change their mindset.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN JONES: But it's also choices.

MR. SMITH: Mindset.

COUNCILMAN JONES: But it's also choices.

MR. SMITH: And it's not sugar that is --

COUNCILMAN JONES: But you have to have healthy choices.

MR. SMITH: Sugar isn't the only effect.

COUNCILMAN JONES: But you have to have healthy choices.

MR. SMITH: There's people that don't even eat --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

Excuse me, sir.

COUNCILMAN JONES: You have to have healthy choices in neighborhoods, too. And I'm saying to you that we have a mutual problem that, okay, you raise the point about the revenue. Let's take that off the table. The health concern still exists.

MR. SMITH: So spend the money and put gardens that teach these people how to grow.

COUNCILMAN JONES: But that's what she asked you to speak to. And you spoke to no tax, and we got that. Believe me, we hear you, but the "out of touch" part is not out of touch, because we deal with the problems every day.

MR. SMITH: I don't see you in these neighborhoods. I'm in these neighborhoods every day. I don't see you walking around talking to citizens.

COUNCILMAN JONES: Wait a minute. This is not my district, but you come to the Fourth, you'll see me plenty.

I didn't see you at 60th and Market.

MR. SMITH: I didn't see you at 5th and America or 5th and Indiana.

COUNCILMAN JONES: That's her district.

MR. SMITH: That's not my district either. I'm up in West Philly, South Philly, Northwest, Southwest. It's not a district. It's a city.

MR. THOMPSON: Is the sugar tax to raise money?

COUNCILMAN JONES: Do not say that people at this table are out of touch with their respective districts. That's not true.

MR. THOMPSON: I have a question. Is the sugar tax to raise money or not? What's the purpose of the sugar tax? Is it to raise money?

COUNCILMAN JONES: The sugar tax, according to its writers, are for health and to raise money.

MR. THOMPSON: It's not for health.

COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm just saying what was said.

MR. THOMPSON: It can't be for health. It don't make any sense to be for health. You still got the option to go to stores. You still have a choice, regardless of how much it is. It's just like when cigarettes went up, people that smoke and really wanted to smoke, they still smoke.

COUNCILMAN JONES: But, my man, that's the same argument that drug dealers make. They say, yeah, they're going to buy it anyway. We still got to be against certain things that are bad for us.

And, listen, I'm not saying here and I don't want you to think that I'm for it. I'm listening, but don't ignore the problem as well. That's all I'm saying. The solution we may not agree on, but the problem for sure we have to.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

you.

MR. THOMPSON: Everybody need to look in the mirror. If you need to go to the gym, go to the gym and work out. Raising the tax of some sugar --

COUNCILMAN JONES: We agree.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: All right. I don't think we're going to debate the issue.

MR. THOMPSON: I have one last question. It might be a little personal, but as far as the Council, City Hall, was it a salary freeze down there or do people still get their raises or whatever?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: No, we don't.

MR. THOMPSON: I'm just curious, because my job when I was working at the time, I actually was for a salary freeze in my job just so other people would stay around. I'm wondering how the City Hall look at the situation as we raising taxes. But everybody

sitting in the City Hall, are they still getting their money or did it stand still like everybody else is doing on their jobs?

I have a question. That's all I want to know. I was on a salary freeze for two years helping my other brothers and sisters stay around at work. Are y'all doing the same?

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Just for the record, there is no salary freeze, but last year the Council gave back five percent of their salary and those increases that were automatic, they were also given back to the City.

MR. THOMPSON: That's the first year. What's in the second?

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: It was all in the same -- it was the second year.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: All right. Thank you.

I neglected, and I'm sorry, to recognize some members of the City

Administration. I understand that Streets Commissioner Tolson is here, Rob Dubow and Steve Agostini.

Our next witness?

Oh, is Dr. Schwarz also here? Clay Armbrister. I'm sorry. You're so far back, I can't see you. Deputy Commissioner Gillison and Tumar is here.

You should all be sitting up here. I can't see who is back there, and I don't know if you could hear what's being said.

Okay. Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: The next panel is Hannah Park and Miriam McKnight.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Welcome. Please identify yourself for the record.

MS. PARK: My name is Hannah Park. I am --

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Hannah, would you please speak into the

microphone. You have such a soft voice, we can't hear you.

MS. PARK: My name is Hannah Park. I am a social work graduate student at Temple University and I am also a foster care caseworker. Most of the children and families that I work with live in various neighborhoods in Philadelphia, which gives me the opportunity to drive all around the City. While driving around, it is not difficult to notice illegal dumping that occurs in the City.

It was exciting to hear that Mayor Nutter was promoting a cleaner Philadelphia. However, the proposal of the Keep Philadelphia Clean fee will not produce the results of encouraging residents to reduce the trash amount, but will only bring the result of increasing City revenue. The potential benefit that this trash tax may bring does not overweigh the hardship that the City residents would come across. City

residents have already tightened their belts due to the struggling economy and the loss of jobs. This fee would cause more financial hardship.

If the residents pay a standard trash tax, how are they being encouraged to recycle more or reduce the amount of trash they produce? This tax will worsen or have no effect on the amount of illegal dumping in the City, and it will not do much to reduce the amount of trash that is being produced per resident. Everything will probably stay the same or worsen, except the fact that residents will be struggling even more due to the additional tax.

Although there are many other alternative suggestions that were made to replace the Keep Philadelphia Clean fee proposal, I think the first step the City needs to make is to collect the already outstanding property tax that was issued to businesses and individuals. This would increase revenue without putting

the burden of new taxes on responsible taxpayers and force irresponsible taxpayers to pay what they owe. I also encourage the City to enforce the already existing illegal dumping fines on businesses and individuals.

I agree that it is time for Philadelphia to take action to reduce the amount of trash and illegal dumping. However, the Keep Philadelphia Clean fee is not the right way.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Next.

MS. McKNIGHT: Good evening.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Would you speak into the microphone, dear.

MS. McKNIGHT: Good evening --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. McKNIGHT: -- members of the Council and ladies and gentlemen. My name is Miriam McKnight, a senior and

resident of this community, also a member of Concerned Citizens for Change.

I am addressing two issues on the proposed budget that is of major concern to me and everyone else that I have spoken to.

Number one, payment for trash removal. This would inflict additional hardship to people on fixed incomes and the working poor. We are already robbing one bill to pay another and cannot afford to buy the healthy foods that we need.

It was my belief that our taxes paid for trash removal at this time, so is this just a ploy to increase our homeowners taxes without stating it as such? Then if this passes, people should be given a choice as to who will be hired to remove the trash, as it is done in some of the suburbs.

Should the City not consider other methods to fulfill their tax woes without increasing the burdens of the low- and middle-income residents? For

example, rehab these abandoned properties and sell them. You will have more taxes coming in from the people that buy, and I am sure there are several other ways to redeem taxes that are not utilized.

Wake up. Rethink this budget. Do not drive people out of Philadelphia. Who will be left to vote for you?

Number two, why tax soda pop? This is not the main cause of obesity in our community. Why are we attacking the consumers? There are so many additives in all food products, like steroids, so that a newborn chicken could be weight ready in days, what cows are fed to produce more milk, and I could go on. Some research states that artificial sweeteners contain cancer-forming agents which could be more detrimental to one's health than the use of a reduced amount of regular sugar. What is our enemy? Think about it. Cigarette taxes have been increased so many times, it has not stopped the people who wishes to continue

smoking to stop. Education is freedom. Educate the public. Include health education as an integral part of the curriculum.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you and thank you for your time.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Next?

MS. HENSLEY-COHEN: Good evening.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. HENSLEY-COHEN: My name is Melissa Hensley-Cohen and I'm a social worker in Germantown. I'm also a graduate student at Temple University.

Since moving to Philadelphia eight years ago, I've come to love our city for its history, vibrancy, quirkiness, attitude and excitement. The one thing I don't like about Philadelphia

is all the illegal dumping. Illegal dumping, not only is it unattractive, it has serious costs - environmental, social, budget and just to our health and well-being. The runoff from the dump sites, they contain contaminants such as motor oil and lead. The dump sites deter visitors and business investment, which is a direct hit to the City's pocketbooks. Dump sites attract further dumping and criminal activity, such as graffiti and arson, which decrease community pride and further exacerbate the problem.

Beyond the direct cost of cleanup, there are indirect costs, such as negative effects of property values, lost residential and commercial development. Illegal dumping also poses major threats to the health of residents who live nearby. Residents can be exposed to sharp objects, medical waste, caustic substances and even fire. If there is a fire, neighbors risk inhaling

pollutants. In fact, 3.9 percent of all fire injuries in Philadelphia were related to fire injuries from abandoned homes, vacant lots and illegal dump sites, and this is well above the national average of 0.4 percent. The dump sites are ugly and they're just plain dangerous.

The Keep Philadelphia Clean fee initiative is appealing, but unfortunately this initiative is just another tax designed to close the budget gap rather than clean up the problem. This $300 unexpected fee creates an undue burden on Philadelphians who are hurting already during these challenging times. A hundred-dollar discount for low-income households is nice, but that still leaves $200.

In conclusion, I think the City should enforce existing fines and unpaid taxes to close this budget gap rather than burdening us with additional taxes.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: May we call Christie Balka and Alicia Dorsey.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good afternoon. Please identify yourself for the record.

MS. BALKA: Good afternoon. My name is Christie Balka. I'm the Director of Child Care and Budget Policy for Public Citizens for Children and Youth, and I'm also a life-long resident of Philadelphia's Eighth Councilmanic District. I want to first thank you for the opportunity to testify at this neighborhood hearing, and I'll begin by addressing the Child Care Facilities Fund.

As the City's oldest child

advocacy organization, PCCY has seen the needs of Philadelphia's families change over time. Nearly 30 years ago when we were founded, 35 to 45 percent of children under the age of six came from families where both parents, or in single-parent households, the only parent, worked outside the home. Today that figure is 65 percent, and child care plays a crucial role in helping parents return to the workforce, retain jobs and support their families.

Thirty years ago many of us thought of child care as custodial, someplace to put your children while parents worked, but today we know better. We know a lot more about brain development, that good child care stimulates children's learning, social and emotional growth and serves as a protective influence against poverty, violence and other toxic stresses in early childhood. And we know that children who participate in good early

childhood education don't require as much special education and remediation once they start school, and their high school graduation, college attendance and employment rates are much higher than those of their peers.

Is Philadelphia reaping the benefits of early childhood education? To some extent we are. We have almost a hundred thousand children from birth to five in this city, and about 40 percent are enrolled in publicly funded child care while their parents work. But 30 percent of these programs aren't licensed, and fewer than 11 percent meet State standards for good quality. In Northwest Philadelphia, I'm sorry to say that that percentage is much lower. There are only a dozen programs in Council Districts Eight and Nine that meet State standards for good quality.

One reason is that quality costs money. It's measured by a child care's physical environment, fiscal

management and the educational levels of its teachers, and lack of money for deferred maintenance and capital improvements is one of the biggest obstacles child care providers face in maintaining a license and improving the quality of services.

Because child care businesses operate on a thin financial margin and usually only with the help of outside support, a broken heating system or a leaky roof can spell disaster. This is especially true in 2010 when many child care providers depleted their reserves waiting for a State budget last summer and fall. And it's especially true now when access to credit has become next to impossible for neighborhood businesses because of the excesses of Wall Street.

A playground without a safe fence, ground cover or play equipment can prevent a child care program from advancing through Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS Program, our quality improvement

program, or participating in other initiatives that bring educational benefits to children and economic benefits to adults.

The Child Care Facilities Fund, a public-private partnership supported by the City, has been a reliable partner and support in improving child care, and I would ask you -- we are encouraged that OHCD has proposed $650,000 for the Facilities Fund next year. This is a particularly difficult time for child care providers in light of the budget in past last summer, and I would ask you to make every effort to support the Fund at $1 million, as it has been in the past.

I'd like to thank you for your leadership up until this point on the Child Care Facilities Fund and thank you for holding this neighborhood hearing.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you, Ms. Balka.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Jones.

COUNCILMAN JONES: I'd like to thank you publicly for what you do for child care. In parts of my district, other than food deserts, there are a lot of working people, and many of them have to make a choice whether they go to work or not take a job based on adequate, safe child care. And we were just reviewing all of the facilities that you support in our respective districts, and I think it's a worthwhile cause, and we saw that there is a decrease this year and we're going to try to fight to keep that in there and put it back to its old level.

MS. BALKA: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN JONES: So I just wanted to thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Good afternoon. Kindly identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony. I'm sorry. I know you came in late, but we had said

earlier in the evening that everybody was going to be given three minutes to testify, because we want to give everybody an opportunity to be recognized. Thank you.

MS. DORSEY: Thank you. Good afternoon and thank you all for having this hearing. It's a very important issue. My name is Alicia Dorsey. I'm a parent at Germantown High School and also a member of Concerned Citizens for Change. I'm here because of my concerns for the education budget. I'm not talking numbers, because I don't want to talk numbers today. I'm just talking accountability and how that budget is handled. I think the City needs to get more proactive in tracking the money and how it's spent with the School District, because right now we're facing an education debt, and the recidivism rate in Philadelphia is based off of the lack of education.

And also, the sale of School

District property, the sale Councilman Darrell Clarke was involved in with the school at 15th and Susquehanna -- I believe that's Duckery School -- without the community input, to me that's just shameful for this city to do such deals without having input from the community.

So my concern is on education and how the City sends its money to different schools and the accountability of them.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Our next witness?

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Excuse me. Could I ask a question?

Have you talked with Councilman Clarke?

MS. DORSEY: We've invited him to meetings, and he doesn't show up to the meetings. But we did have a meeting. State Representative Jewell Williams was there and he expressed what went on, but Darrell Clarke never showed up.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you very much.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MS. DORSEY: Thank you.

MR. RADWANSKI: Our next witness is Lamont Thomas and Veronica Johnson.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Hello. Please identify yourself for the record.

MR. THOMAS: My name is Lamont Thomas. I'm currently running for State Senator in the Fourth District.

As you know, to get on the ballot, you have to go and get a lot of signatures. I had a town hall meeting in the Eighth District and I also had one in the Ninth District. I met a lot of senior citizens going door to door, and by going there and meeting with the people of both of these districts that I

hope to represent next year, I found like a lot of senior citizens are very, very much scared, because when the Mayor suggested that they pay a trash tax -- which to me was very ludicrous, because why would you pay twice for City services? Then they went to Harrisburg and he begged for a two percent sales tax, which they gave him eventually, and on top of that, he said it would solve the problems of the City of Philadelphia. It didn't.

One of the things I came up with meeting with different people throughout the Ninth and the Eighth District is, I need you guys to really think about taking back the abatement program that you got, the ten-year abatement. So much millions of dollars are wasted by giving millionaires and well-off-to-do people a free ride in real estate taxes for ten years.

(Applause.)

MR. THOMAS: I also beg of you

guys to also consider giving all the senior citizens in the City of Philadelphia, make them exempt from paying property tax. They have no investment.

(Applause.)

MR. THOMAS: They have no investment at all, the money that they have to pay.

You guys, when the Mayor came up with this other crazy --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Please don't call us "guys."

MR. THOMAS: I'm sorry. City Council. I'm sorry. City Council came up with this idea of saying, Hey, we won't do the sugar tax. What we will do is, we will raise everybody's property tax by 12 percent. That's not going to solve a problem for people that's on fixed incomes.

People are hurting out here, and you guys are the -- you, City Councilpersons, people --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm going to charge you for every time you say "guys."

MR. THOMAS: I'm sorry. It's just me, because I get emotional about these situations, because it's affecting people.

You have to stop the Mayor from coming up with the harebrained ideas that he got. I mean, it just doesn't make any sense.

(Applause.)

MR. THOMAS: If the Mayor would like to have a sugar tax, if he'd like to have his trash fee, if he has come up with anything else, tell him to lead by example. Tell him, cut his salary by $50,000, or better yet, make it $33,000, is what a lot of people are out here making nowadays, because companies are not paying what they used to pay, but everything is going up.

But thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

You're welcome.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: The next panel is Duane Hines, Brian Yoon and Lori Davis.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. HINES: Good evening. Actually, my name is Duwan Hines and I'm just here representing myself.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: What's your last name?

MS. HINES: Hines.

Coincidentally, I'm going to speak about what the gentleman just spoke about. I understand that if the sugar tax doesn't pass or the trash fee doesn't pass, that you're going to increase property taxes. You're going to look at it. I understand that nationwide we're

all having problems, so, therefore, that trickles down to the City. As members of this community, we all have to do our part to create a solution to that problem, and I believe in that. But I don't think it's fair to single out a particular group to do that, which would be homeowners that either are working that are above poverty level or not senior citizens. We get caught in the middle and there's no one to represent us. There's no one to say that that's not fair. There's no one to say that there really isn't any more money, because if you work at Jefferson, you didn't get a raise last year. If you work here, you didn't get a raise last year.

I'm here representing myself and all the people that this will affect. If you increase property taxes by 12 percent, you have to do that in a way that makes sense. It doesn't make sense to base that on the system that two years

ago you said is broken. You at least have to fix that and then come to the table and say, Okay, now that we've fixed this problem, we're going to legitimately try to move forward.

I'm a single person. I live in a house by myself. I heat it. I cool it. I do everything I need to do, and every year everything goes up. I read in the paper that property taxes haven't increased for 21 years. I don't know about that, but every year I get a bill at the end of the year saying, Okay, you got to pay an extra $150, an extra $200, otherwise your mortgage is going to go up. And while I understand these may be in different pots of money, all my money is in one pool. So it doesn't matter to me where it goes. It only can go so far.

The City somehow increased the registration fee to have a security system almost 50 percent just out of nowhere. I'm a single woman. That's not a choice for me to not have a security

system. But I feel like the City is taking away our choices.

I watch the TV and I see all these ads about move to Philadelphia, from Philadelphia with love. I'm from Missouri. I've lived here five years. I was raised that you grow up, you buy a house, you give back to the community. I try to do what my parents told me was, quote/unquote, right. I don't want to do it anymore. I want to be transient. I just want to rent forever and just put that off on someone else, and then that's less money going back into the City.

I think people have to think of it as a broader way. I understand that we all have to do our part, but let's do our part across the board. It's not fair to single out one population. I do understand that senior citizens can't afford it. I understand the low-income people can't afford it. But I don't think the middle class can afford it either, and I think that that's

legitimate. I think that I would be willing to cut out some things. Again, I'm from Missouri. In Missouri we don't have a library on every other corner. The people don't even go through here. Half the people here don't even have library cards.

I'm just saying I'm willing to do my part, but don't ask me to do the part of me plus seven other people.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MS. HINES: You're welcome.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. YOON: My name is Brian Yoon. I'm a wholesale distributor in Philadelphia. I distribute cigarettes --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. Yoon, pull the microphone closer, please.

MR. YOON: I distribute cigarettes, soda and other grocery items. I service about two to three hundred

stores. The general consensus that I hear from my customers, which are the store owners, is they're scared they're going to lose their business, because most of them make their business off of selling $1, $1.50 per soda. And then a two-liter soda is about 70 ounces, and so that's $1.40 in taxes on an item that you sell to the consumer at $1.19. So that's more than 20 cents than what the soda is actually costing.

I live in Lansdale and right now as it is, I buy my lunch in the City, but I'm just going to start packing, you know, because I don't want to pay 40 cents extra for a soda that I can just bring from home, you know, for a dollar.

And a lot of my customers are scared that most people are going to think like me and just go across Cheltenham Avenue, go across City Line just to buy a soda and buy the rest of their groceries over there too, you know, and it's -- they're pretty scared.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Understood. Thank you.

Please identify yourself for the record.

MS. DAVIS: Hello. My name is Lori Davis and I'm Program Director at Porter's Day Care and Educational Facility. I am here on behalf of the Non-Profit Finance Fund.

Reducing funds allocated to the Non-Profit Finance Fund will be detrimental to early child care. Giving our youth a quality education in a safe and loving environment helps our children not to become a negative statistic in society.

Non-Profit Finance Fund also helps day care centers to continue to provide a high standard of early childhood education that is always given in the suburbs, but very rarely given in the City.

Porter's Day Care is licensed and accredited and we have our Keystone 4

STARS. Without the funding that has came from Non-Profit Finance Fund, we would not be able to achieve these acclamations. They have helped us to pretty much have a new school yard that has interactive learning centers in our playground. They have upgraded our electrical system, which I have to just say thanks to God for not allowing us in 30 years to have a fire. They have also provided us with a new roof.

Eliminating an organization that is for the betterment of our youth can only increase the poor chances our children would make. If we cut spending funding on our children's mind, then we cut what our future has to hold, and that is our children growing up to become men and women of the City Council just like you. So I ask that you do not cut funding to the Non-Profit Finance Committee.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

you very much.

Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: Melissa Hensley-Cohen, Reverend Chester Williams and Lenora Parker.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

MS. PARKER: Good evening. My name is Leora Parker and I'd like to ask about the Logan Triangle area. I've lived there since 1983 and I've applied for a PHDC loan for $12,000, and as of yet, I haven't gotten a response, and my home needs stucco on the wall. And how does that fit in your budget?

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Why don't you wait and see me. We'll be finished shortly. I need to talk to you about that.

MS. PARKER: Thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: That's more personal than public.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good

evening. Welcome.

REVEREND WILLIAMS: Good evening, everyone. Thank you again for coming to our community. I'm Reverend Chester Williams. I'm a block captain over 30 years for the 6200 block of Chew Avenue. I'm the President and founder of the Chew and Belfield Neighborhood Organization, and I'm also the committee person for 59th Ward, Tenth Division.

What I'm about to say, some may agree, some may disagree, but the most important thing, everyone that knows me know that Reverend Williams does all that he do in traveling good word and get good messages out to the people, and all things that we say and all things get understanding, and my people perish because of lack of knowledge.

I say to you today, some time ago the Mayor had his community meeting, and I and some other people have mentioned to him, which I emphasized when I stood up, if you need money, take it to

the people. Tell them exactly what it's for and look and see how much you would get donated to you. He did that with the swimming pools, and you know the results from that.

I say again, instead of blindly leading the people, tell them exactly what this money would go for and what is it needed for. Publicize it and see how many donations you would get to close this gap.

One thing I'd like to say also in adding on that is that Happy Holiday is a gem that serves many children off of Wayne Avenue. I ask you to please don't cut any funding from them. I've been there and saw how they take young girls and young guys of all age groups and teach them how to stay off the street and do positive things.

I say to you again, come around and travel in your communities. Someone made a statement earlier about you're paying so many people, the Mayor, for

auditing or giving you ideas. I myself and other seniors citizens, young and old, because we're all young in God's sight, I'd be willing to volunteer our services and write proposals. Why pay all that money out there when you -- charity begins at home.

(Applause.)

REVEREND WILLIAMS: We have plenty of knowledgeable people that have grants, foundations here in Philadelphia that would be willing to sit at a table like you and don't move until you come up with how we can raise money to cover these gaps.

I say to you again, it's not just the sugar, but if you teach our people how to eat and talk a way of getting the grocery stores to move in, as we hate to use the word, ghetto so they can have our people have nourishing food to eat, but unless you step down on our level again where you used to be -- I'm not saying you're not -- come help the

people get these things that they need back in the community and teach them how to eat and how to take care of their own.

God bless you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. RADWANSKI: The next witnesses are Juan Hayes, Rhonda Moore and Edward Robinson.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening. Please identify yourself for the record.

MS. MOORE: Hi. My name is Rhonda Moore. I live in the Olney section, and I'm here -- I'm concerned about the increase in the property taxes as well. Basically, if you don't have the money, need neither do I. I'm a single woman. I'm currently financing two college degrees. I'm looking at a hundred thousand dollars in debt for

education. I simply don't have the money.

I don't understand how we can have a ten-year tax abatement for the rich and expect me to finance it. That just doesn't sit well with me. I don't understand how we can build not one but two stadiums at a time when we don't even have books for our children. That doesn't sit well with me.

(Applause.)

MS. MOORE: I'm a very generous person. I donate regularly, but I don't have any more money for you.

That's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. HAYES: Hello. How you doing? My name is Juan Hayes. I'm a child mentor, sports coach, employee union carpenter and a homeowner in the Ninth District.

Basically what I'm here for is

like, I'm just trying to -- I was coaching with the North Philly Aztecs for maybe nine years, and now I started my own program, which is the R.J. Trailblazers, and I'm having a hard time getting like recreational gym time for these kids that I'm trying to keep off the street, and basically I'm just trying to give back and I'm trying to get sources to help me keep these kids off the street. That's all I got to say basically.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: What area of the City are you in?

MR. HAYES: I'm in the Olney section right now.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: See me after the meeting.

MR. HAYES: Okay.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

MR. HAYES: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. ROBERSON: Good evening.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good

evening.

MR. ROBERSON: Madam President, my Councilperson, whom I have a lot of respect for, Marian Tasco, Majority Whip. I also recognize other members here who have come to our meetings at the Melrose Park Garden Civic Association. I've been involved with this organization for the last 15 years. My topic today is the topic I talked about last year when I was here, and it's the damaged back driveways in our community.

I think it's imperative, important that budget -- monies be directed in the budget for this particular issue. Last year I gave testimony to this very important topic. So here we go again.

Since last year the problem has gotten worse. The cracks in the cement and the concrete has become very dangerous, dangerous for our children who play back there, dangerous to our homes because of the water from the rain that

has caused some of the foundations to shift. If this problem is not addressed, our properties will be de-valued. We do not want another Logan tragedy in our community.

What options do we have? I have tried fundraising, engaging the community to give so we can correct this problem ourselves. That hasn't worked. Now I turn to City Council. If there is no money available to make the repairs, I suggest the City of Philadelphia get the job done and then bill each homeowner respectively and equitably. This option is better than doing nothing at all.

Must we wait until a tragedy occurs before action is taken? Must we wait until a child is hurt? Must we wait until homes are destroyed by water or a sinkhole develops and cause our damage? Shouldn't we be more proactive than reactive?

I am tired, I'm frustrated and now angry. I love my community. This is

why I participate in the civic activities. However, if this situation is not resolved and resolved very soon, my family and I will move. Disaster is right around the corner.

Additionally, what if an emergency vehicle cannot get through in an emergency and a life is lost, God forbid?

City Council, the ball is in your court. The puck stops here.

I thank you for your time and your attention, and more than likely I'll be back again next year.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Sir, I just want you to know that your Councilperson, Marian Tasco, has been fighting for those driveways for as long as I can remember, and I think at every budget hearing that we have ever had she talks about the driveways. But I want you to know that she has been there fighting for you.

MR. ROBERSON: And I know she

has, because for the 15 years I've been involved, she has told me the same thing, Mr. Roberson, we're doing the best we can. And as long as she's doing the best she can, I know we're going to have a good fight.

God bless you.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Let me just say this: We're trying to do a little more than the best we can. I mean, it really is a problem not only for you, Councilman Jones will testify for Wynnefield area, President for her area.

About a year or two years ago, we sat down with Rina Cutler to talk about a process that we had talked to you about to deal with the driveway situation. You're talking about a budget gap of $150 million. You don't know how much it would cost, because I can't just do yours. I have many others to do also. It's very expensive. And it really is the homeowners' responsibility, and it's unfortunate that your neighbors can't get

together to repair their responsibility.

But what we were trying to do was find a process that we've talked about to deal with it, and we were on the road to dealing with it when the whole budget process just collapsed, and it's sort of on hold, but it's not off the table. Hopefully if we get -- we've even looked at stimulus money to be able to do it. But you have to have an ongoing process. You can't just set up a program and then stop it.

So know that, and certainly the Mayor is committed, because Rina Cutler works for the Mayor, and the Mayor is a friend of yours.

MR. ROBERSON: I certainly hope so.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: And I know that. So it's delayed for a moment, but it's not off of our minds or agenda. It's, again, how much money can we -- how much money do we need to fill the gap, and it's not -- we cannot borrow money to

repair private driveways. So we have to figure -- the process takes money and we still have it on the table.

MR. ROBERSON: Well, when I think about the process, I think about the retaining wall that was done in the community. If something similar can be done --

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: That was done with NTI money, and because it was a safety issue, we did about three or four retaining walls.

MR. ROBERSON: Well, these back driveways are safety issues also, one of many issues that they create.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: But we have thousands of those. We have thousands of them, and you can imagine how much they cost.

And it's not the City's responsibility. That's what we want you to understand. Our responsibility is to help you get your neighbors to pay for it, and that is the process we're looking

at. Not that the City will do the paving.

MR. ROBERSON: I've been trying for 15 years.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I know.

MR. ROBERSON: I'm getting ready to celebrate my 61st birthday tomorrow. I don't know how much more energy I have left to keep this up.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Just hang in there.

MR. ROBERSON: The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I agree with you on that. Thank you very much.

MR. ROBERSON: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Happy birthday.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: And thank you. I appreciate your continued advocacy for your neighborhood. I appreciate your leadership over there in the Melrose Park section.

Is Ms. Tolson here?

Yes. Go back there and talk to Ms. Tolson. Okay? She's the Streets Commissioner.

MR. ROBERSON: Thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: She's back there. She'll talk with you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: Stanley Daniel representing Philly Bargain House, Norman Mashore (ph) from the School District and Mark Williams from Coke.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening, gentlemen.

MR. MASHORE: I wrote this down last night about 7:55 p.m.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And before we hear what you wrote down, would you identify yourself.

MR. MASHORE: My name is Norman Mashore. I work with the School District.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. MASHORE: And I just wrote a couple of budget ideas down.

I wrote down, all City Hall workers take a 50 percent pay cut, workers that make $40,000 a year and up. Add money to the budget. All people that took DROP program, return money to the budget.

Start a cell phone police department or squad. Hire 25 to 50 people. They cover the whole City. They work eight hours a day, three shifts. Collect fines, add to the budget.

Term limited for Councilmembers. Cut down Council staff and add that to your budget.

I'm just one voice for the community. It only took me one minute to figure that out. Now, if Nutter want to come down and talk to me, I can help him out.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. MASHORE: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. DANIEL: Thank you very much to City Council for giving me a few moments to speak. My name is Stanley Daniel. I'm a real estate investor and a realtor doing business in Philadelphia. I own multiple properties in the City and pay real estate taxes on these properties.

I've been sitting here for the past hour, hour and a half and I've heard testimony from people that have specific interests in maintaining funds for various projects and causes. I've heard suggestions like the gentleman just said, pay cuts. I heard that the Mayor should take a pay cut, things of that sort. Many of these testimonies are proper and have merit, but I think we really have to address the situation, and, that is, we

have to increase the revenues that the City now has.

I am in support of Mayor Nutter's Actual Value Initiative in reassessing real estate taxes for the City of Philadelphia. The financial woes of the City are not the fault of this Administration. It goes back -- I don't know how many years, probably 15, 20, maybe even 25 years. The Administrations have been either unable, unwilling or unknowledgeable in reassessing the real estate in the City of Philadelphia. I'm not sure even members of City Council realize how low the taxes are in the City compared to the surrounding areas.

As a realtor, I have access to TrendMLS. I went in there and I said show me what the taxes are on all the properties sold from January 1st of this year to April 10th. I did that in the City and in Delaware County, Bucks, Chester, Montgomery and Camden, Burlington and Gloucester Counties in New

Jersey. The average hundred-thousand-dollar house in the City of Philadelphia had taxes of $932 a year. The average of the houses sold in that time period outside City limits for a hundred thousand had taxes of $3,188.

I own property in the City. I have a property, a five-bedroom, two-bath house, and I can open up my big mouth because it's in a fictitious name, you can't find me. I have a five-bedroom, two-bath house in University City, rehabbed house. My rent income is $1,500 a month and my taxes are less than the $300 proposed trash tax that you guys are talking about. That's the problem in the City of Philadelphia.

You should not hesitate to make the adjustment on the taxes, and even if everything is reassessed and taxed accordingly, your taxes will still be half of what it is in the surrounding areas.

I, again, am in support of

Mayor Nutter's Actual Value Initiative. And I will deliver to each member of City Council personally before the week is over a proposal on how to do it at no out-of-pocket cost to the City of Philadelphia. I repeat, no out-of-pocket up-front cost to the City of Philadelphia.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MR. DANIEL: Any questions?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah, I have a question.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: No. We're not --

Sir, are you testifying?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'd like to know what the average income is of those counties where you said their property taxes were $3,000.

MR. DANIEL: I do not have that information, but I don't think --

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We're working

class and we're kind of poor here. So you're comparing apples with oranges.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Wait a minute. We're not going to have a debate.

(Audience members and witness talking without microphone.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Where do you live?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sorry. We're not --

MR. DANIEL: I live out of the City. I do not own any --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sorry.

MR. DANIEL: To answer the question, I do not own any real estate outside of the City.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Sir, we're not going to have a debate. We are not having a debate. We're going to hear everybody's concerns and whatever testimony they have.

Are you testifying, sir? Pull

your chair up, speak into the mike and identify yourself for the record.

MR. WILLIAMS: Mark Williams and I work for Philadelphia Coca-Cola Bottling Company, and I'm a resident of this great city. And basically I'm just here about the soda tax.

I'm a father of three, and my budget is already stretched two and three times past what I think that it should be. And this soda bottling tax will hurt me tremendously. I buy at lease three two-liter sodas for one-week period. Now, if I have to change my budget because the soda is going up or either doubling, then that mean that I will have to make some more cuts. I will buy less soda for my family, and eventually that going to hurt the company.

If everybody that got a realistic budget, half of the people that I know don't have no extra income to pay for all of this money that soda is supposed to be raised by, and basically

they will have to stop buying as much soda as they buy now.

If I cut one bottle of soda out of my budget a week just to make my financial budget go a little bit longer, I'm just thinking, what is the next person going to do? What is this gentleman going to do? What is the next family going to do? And eventually that will hurt my company, and my company will produce less sodas and they're going to have less people to distribute the soda, so that mean it going to be less jobs.

People cannot spend any more money that they don't have. And basically what I'm saying, that if we pass this soda tax, this soda tax really going to hurt families like mine's and family that is represented here, because we won't buy as much soda. Then it will hurt our budget and it will hurt our job budget.

My job, I was employed last year. I've been on my job one year and a

day, and I'm certainly blessed to be there, because this job afford me to raise my family and not to be on unemployment, because I know that the unemployment benefits is stretched way and far too much. If this soda tax goes through, I know that I will have to go back on unemployment, because my job won't be able to afford to keep me and some of my co-workers. I know within a year that they will have massive layoffs at my job and probably at our brother job, Pepsi-Cola, at Canada Dry, because people will actually buy less sodas.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Your message has been heard loud and clear.

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, and thank you for your time.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: We have two

more, Ayana Powell from Temple University and Larry Raye.

(Witness approached witness table.)

MS. POWELL: Good evening.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MS. POWELL: My name is Ayana Powell. I'm with the Temple Group. We're graduate students, but I'm also a registered dietician. I hadn't planned on talking, but my ears bled listening to some of the things that I've heard, so I wrote down a few things.

Earlier someone mentioned that the City needs to worry about the status of our education system instead of the soda tax. As a registered dietician, I am qualified to describe the role that poor nutrition plays in the development of the child and how it influences their educational career.

Without adequate nutrition, proper brain development cannot occur in

toddlers. During the school-age years, poorly nourished children are unable to concentrate.

I also heard someone yell that it starts in the home. I am from Philadelphia. My mom was one of the few mothers who didn't allow Kool-Aid, Hugs, soda, doughnuts or any of that crap, because it is crap. However, because there was a corner store on every single corner or a Chinese store on every block, I was able -- I went to public school. I went to Taggart in South Philly and Furness in South Philly. I was able to purchase sugary beverages from corner stores that sold white bread, candy, nothing but calorie-poor foods, nothing but it.

So it starts in the home, but we also need to change the environment, too. It's two things. It's education, it's socialization within the family and it's the environment.

It's a health hazard to have a

high concentration of corner stores that sell nothing but crap to communities that they supposedly care about. Education is not enough.

I've been a clinical dietician for three years at Mercy Philadelphia Hospital. I educate all day every day. I was a WIC nutritionist for a year. I educated all day every day, but if you go outside and all you see in your community is poor nutrition and sodas and candy and Hugs, that's all you're going to get. Just education is not enough. I educate. I'm an educator. That's what I do.

I'm passionate about nutrition. I'm passionate about diabetes reduction, cardiovascular disease reduction, and it's important, the last thing I heard.

I'm just appalled at how many parents are saying that the soda tax is going to hurt them and their kids. It makes no sense. Just there, just that there shows that there's a problem. It provides evidence that parents are

feeding their children soda for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

When I was a WIC nutritionist, I saw babies come in the office with -- it's called baby bottle tooth decay, from sodas being in their bottles, sipping on sodas and sugary beverages. We need to feed our children water and 100 percent fruit juice, which counts as a fruit serving, not soda.

That's all I have to say. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I see that Councilman Darrell Clarke has arrived. He's to my very extreme left. Thank you.

Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: Larry Raye.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is Larry Raye here?

(Witness approached witness

table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening.

MR. RAYE: Good evening.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Welcome. Please identify yourself for the record.

MR. RAYE: My name is Larry Raye from the Mt. Airy area.

Do I just go ahead?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Please proceed.

MR. RAYE: My primary concern for being here today is the proposal for the trash tax and as a landlord who has been providing affordable housing in the City of Philadelphia maybe the last 20 years, and I think a trash tax would put an additional burden on those landlords that provide housing for low-income people beyond that which they can stand.

Things continuously change and escalate, but poor folks still don't have any more money to pay for these things.

And if it was pushed over to them, it would take some time and I think in a city which is probably pretty much a tenant-oriented city anyway, it just puts an additional burden, which I think will result in the lack of some good affordable housing for people of eager means.

I just heard someone speak about the disparity in the tax system here in Philadelphia as opposed to the surrounding counties, but I also heard a rebuttal as to what can those people afford to pay. So I guess it's a two-edged sword, but it's very -- it seemed like it would be a real hardship for me to try to pass on or for anyone to try to pass on to people who can hardly afford to pay what they pay now an additional $300 per year.

So my concern is that in the long run, this is going to hurt the most needy people. So I would certainly like to advocate to oppose the institution of

such a tax.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony.

Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: We have one person that could not make it tonight that asked that her statement be read into the record. That's Ms. Maya Travis. And we have one additional witness, Mr. George Tyler.

(Witness approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening. Please identify yourself for the record.

MR. TYLER: Good evening. My name is George Tyler and I represent Pepsi Beverage Company, and I hope I'm representing most everyone in here who spoke, and I'm thankful for them for being here. I'm quite sure you've heard enough, or maybe not. But this tax on soda is just -- you're looking at a lot

of people losing their jobs, and if you don't understand that, I have about 40 to 50 guys who report to me every day and go out on the street and deliver soda. And every day I look at them and they got this feeling, something is wrong if this goes through. These are hard-working men.

I'm quite sure that you members didn't get where you got being dumb. You're, in my mind, smart people, and with all due respect, snap out of it. This is not the thing to do. If you want to know how I feel about that, do I want my child to come in and smoke a cigarette or drink a soda? Tax cigarettes. See how that works. I think more people are dying from cigarettes than soda. Now, if that's a State issue, call Mayor Rendell -- or Governor Rendell, ask him to come down. I'm quite sure there's quite a few people would express their feelings on what to tax.

Soda is not the greatest thing

in the world, but I'm quite sure it beats smoking cigarettes.

And I thank you again for your time.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MR. TYLER: And I thank everyone for being here.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

MR. RADWANSKI: The next witness is Mr. Coker Thomas.

(Witness approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Mr. Thomas.

MR. THOMAS: Good evening. Good afternoon, Councilmembers, people that are here.

I haven't heard anyone kind of like put a personal face on a lot of these taxes, other than the age issue and things like that. I represent the so-called ma-and-pa store. I've been in

business for 15 years here in the City, and I've seen a lot of things go on in that time. I've seen my personal property taxes increase over 100 percent. I've seen my utilities go up anywhere from 15 to 30 percent. I've seen my insurance increase over 300 percent. In the last seven years, due to the economy, my business has dropped 20, 30 percent. At the same time, I see companies like Comcast get a 25-year tax abatement. I see people who buy properties, new properties in the City, get a ten-year tax abatement.

Sodas represent 30 percent of my business. That's on average 65 percent gross profit off of that. I finally, after seven years, have seen my business increase by a mere three percent. Okay? This soda tax is going to represent about 30 percent. You do the math. I'm right back where I started again. Okay?

I don't know what the answer

is, and I know you guys are looking for answers. I've heard people say stuff like flat taxes. That would mean that if you are a non-profit or a rich person or poor person, two percent, three percent. Whatever it is, that's what you pay. I think that is better than individual shots at different companies and people like myself or just plain old poor people. I just can't see it.

Education, in my opinion, is the key to better health. Diet is a choice, okay, that we make. Some of us, we make poor choices, and you can see it in obesity and so forth and so on. I don't think it's a good idea. I think we need -- I think it has to be rethought, that particular portion.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our next witness?

MR. RADWANSKI: Tracee Hunt.

(Witness approached witness table.)

MS. HUNT: Good evening.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening. Welcome.

MS. HUNT: Thank you. My name is Tracee Hunt. I am from the Philadelphia Coca-Cola Bottling Company, and I do appreciate having the opportunity to speak. I too have been very attentive throughout this session, and there are a couple of things that I want to say because I know them to be firsthand.

Being part of the leadership team at Philadelphia Coke, I do know for a fact the impact that it will have on our industry from a numbers perspective. We don't need to sit here and go through numbers. I'm speaking because I'm very passionate about the topic personally as well as professionally.

Number one, it's an absolute fact that the higher cost will cause

volume declines. It's an absolute. And when an employer -- when an industry has a primary or a core product, there is no way you're going to be able to say that its secondary brands will make up for those volume declines. So what's going to happen is, we'll have volume declines, which will ultimately result in less production, less distribution, which ultimately will absolutely result in less jobs. And when you think about the fact that we have life-sustaining jobs -- I sit on the Workforce Investment Board. I do a lot with the youth in Philadelphia, because I'm passionate. I grew up in a city, not Philadelphia, but growing up a city child who took three buses to school, I had a very similar situation and I had corner stores on every corner as well. So I had the choice to drink soda, eat chips, did all of the above, Now and Laters, the whole nine yards, and I'm sure you can understand exactly what I'm talking about. But when you stop and

you think about the fact that Philadelphia Coke as well as the other beverage manufacturers offer life-sustaining jobs that don't need to be augmented by City funding, City services and so forth and so on, they are your homeowners in these various districts.

Philadelphia Coke in particular has been a major leader in economic development. It went from 600 jobs to 1,200 jobs over a span of a number of years, and we continue, in a bad economy, to continue to hire people. We did not do any layoffs.

When you think about the fact that from a community perspective, all the initiatives that we support - walks, runs - we're giving thousands of dollars to all these different events, that these are the things that would absolutely be impacted. So it's also those other secondary revenue streams you have to think about coming from our industry that

would have to be ended.

When you think about the fact that -- you also have to give major consideration that -- one person said earlier it's about additives and preservatives. You look, there's sugar in almost everything we consume. I don't care what it is. And when you think about how you really should impact that, it is about education. It is about calories out as well as calories in. A well-balanced diet contains some of everything. I have to personally say as a mother of two, I let my kids drink soda. Do I let them drink it every day? No. As a parent I have to manage that. But are either one of them remotely obese? Absolutely not. And at the end of the day, there's many people in the beverage industry who are contributing to this City's well-being and its economic development going forward, and without that, you're going to hurt a major industry.

So I think that it's important that we not just get caught up in the hype about it's sugar and juice. I heard some comments about juice. I know children whose teeth have decayed from just apple juice bottles sitting in their mouth all night long.

So I think it's -- I'm very passionate about it, and I think our industry has to be passionate, because at the end of the day, these are life-sustaining jobs that are at risk and we can't take it lightly.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I think we have completed our witness list. Is there anyone in the audience that would like to testify?

Please approach the witness table. We are pressured for time.

(Witnesses approached witness

table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening. Kindly identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. ALEXANDER: Good evening, everyone. My name is Carolyn Alexander. I've been working with home and school, starting home and school volunteering in several schools, Head Starts around here. Presently I'm the Secretary of Home and School at Wagner Middle School.

I heard a lot here. It's not about the soda, the non -- the sweeteners, you know, or the non-sweeteners and so forth. It's about us, people caring about people and supporting one another's ideas.

I believe that from -- and there's a lot of people that know me that if it weren't for I, my husband and my children, the love I have for my children and people, that a lot of children wind up being honor roll, going to special

academies and stuff because I took money out my pocket, not sugar but love, and gave to these children. Because to see a child that cry and say they hadn't eaten that morning in the school yard, I start searching through my child's bookbag in kindergarten to feed that child. You know, that's things like that that perturbs me, you know, what's happening, who is taking care of that child, you know, why is that child not cared for. And I maybe probably brought it to the attention of the principal, Rowen, me at Head Start, what-have-you.

Basically right now my son's 14. Jordan Alexander was in an accident, and I heard this young man, Mr. Brown (sic), speak of kidney donations and so forth, organ donations. I as well offered to give my organs or my children, what-have-you, organs to a donator in the event that they would expire. Jordan is now -- he has a spinal cord dysfunction, gait and so forth playing football. I

wasn't there at the time in Holmesburg when this occurred when they played last week. He was there with his father. But the thing that I begged him was to rethink your direction, and your direction is what God puts in your heart and your spirit. And one thing I learned was my mother -- I always respected my mother's love and my mother's opinion. You know, they would say, listen to your mother, and even in the Bible it says love thy mother and father.

And so I'm saying that my son is probably not going to ever play football again. He has a collar up on his neck, because the boy rammed out of anger into him, because they were winning the game, into his neck. So, you know, right now they going to -- he's not probably going to be in the school another week or so because of his injuries. He can't carry a bookbag. He's like 6'1", 14.

So I see here and I just want

to cry, you know, for everyone. You know, everybody is thinking about soda, water. It's about life. You know what I'm saying? Nobody is going to give my son a new spine. Okay? And so forth. So, you know, like I'm really not happy with the situation and so forth that -- people -- adults say, you know, this is from the Hornets, okay. The Hornets, right, Adams Avenue, so forth, took my child -- it was the storm they had two months ago, and the window blew out in his face and my husband. But, see, I have fibromyalgia from accidents and falls off the sidewalk cement and stuff like that, you know, cheap cement and so forth like that, when I know I wasn't standing on the side. And it's not because I weigh 300 pounds. It's just that, you know, people just don't build like they used to and stuff.

And basically what I'm saying is that we need to build support together. I came here to join with a

bond with everyone here when I received a letter from Ms. Marian Tasco and so forth. I try not to be all this time, you know, the only person there, but I beg people to help because of my 12-year battle with fibromyalgia and neuropathy. So now I have to sit and watch my other child and maybe the one that's 11 years old because of poor decisions, not just coming from sugar or whatever, you know. It's just war. People don't care. You know, it's not a joke or nothing like that. I don't want nobody applaud to me or nothing like that or say that I'm special, because I do get that and have gotten it all my life from people. I'm special because I do believe in God and I believe that we all are children of God, good or bad, and the only way it's going to make a difference is the ones that have the wisdom to know to help.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: God bless you, and thank you for coming in to testify.

Our next witness?

MS. WILLIAMS: My name is Brenda Williams. I live in Mt. Airy. I'm a retired worker for the Department of Public Welfare.

I've seen too much poverty. I've seen too many families that can't afford the things that most of us take for granted. I've seen a lot of people that are unemployed. We can't pay for -- when I say "we," I include myself, because I'm retired and I'm making less money. We can't afford all these taxes. Every time you turn around, there's more taxes, taxes on everything, and for you to put more tax on soda, something that kids enjoy, sure it may be detrimental, but so is alcohol, so is tobacco, and I don't see anybody doing anything to stop those things. They kill people and they cause disease.

Sugar is a problem, but it's been around, and if parents are educated, they know what to give their kids and

what not to give them. But to cause parents to be -- fathers to be out of work that can't pay child support, they have to turn to welfare, it's not fair. We can't pay our electric bills, gas bills, water bills. Everything keeps going up on top of that. And I would be willing to bet that even if we get the sugar tax and the disposable trash tax, there's going to be another tax come behind that, and there's going to be no stopping. Well, we can't tax this anymore, but let's tax over here and let's tax over here.

I can't afford to even live in my house. My mortgage is $900-and-some a month, and I have to pay electric and gas and heat and all that. Where am I going to get the money when I'm making half of what I used to make? I mean, where is it going to stop?

Whenever you get a new set of people in office, the first thing they do is start taxing. I'm tired of it. I

don't know where I'm going to live.

(Applause.)

MS. WILLIAMS: I'm tired of paying more taxes. And then I can't even come out of my house because of the drug dealers. They don't pay taxes.

(Applause.)

MS. WILLIAMS: They sell all the drugs they want and they don't pay an extra penny for anything, and I got to pay extra money. Now they're talking about who is paying $3,000 in another county. I'm paying all the real estate taxes I can pay now, and I can't even go in town to park. I went in town to park. Twenty-five cents only got me six minutes of parking. And I come out and I got a $36 ticket. I put $2 in the meter. I put $2 in the meter.

(Applause.)

MS. WILLIAMS: So you know where I'd rather go? If I have to, I'd rather spend the money to go to New Jersey to shop, because I don't have to

pay for parking in New Jersey, whereas you go and just to get a sandwich, come out, you got a $300 ticket because you mistakenly parked at a handicap meter.

I'm sick of taxes and I'm sick of politics, because they're not doing anything for me. And I worked 40 years and now they're -- every year I got to pay $1,300 more in taxes to IRS. I raised my children, my grandchildren, and now all of the sudden, I can hardly make it because I chose to leave my job. I couldn't work anymore because I'm disabled. I have arthritis. But you want more money from me every time I bat my eye. I'm tired. I'm really tired of it.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

MS. WILLIAMS: And I'm also tired of the fact -- I worked for 24 years as a police officer and I was in City Council when they invoked this

program with the retirement, the --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: DROP?

MS. WILLIAMS: DROP program. They didn't know how they were going to finance it. So they went ahead and put it through, and now they're trying to figure out how they're going to pay for it, and they're going to pay for it on the backs of the people who work every day and make five to seven dollars an hour.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Kindly identify yourself for the record.

MR. FRANCISCO: Good afternoon. My name is Leonard Francisco. I'm here in representation of the Dominican Association of Business Owners from Pennsylvania.

I heard earlier Mr. Brown say that there is a disease problem in our communities.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I think that's Councilman Jones.

MR. FRANCISCO: Mr. Brown.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: No. It's Councilman Jones.

MR. FRANCISCO: I'm sorry. I apologize for that.

But I heard him say, you know, that there is a disease problem, which I do agree we cannot neglect. We cannot turn our eyes from it. However, sugar and sugar tax is not the solution, because when they find out that trans fat was making people sick, they didn't tax trans fat. They didn't put a tax into trans fat in order to get revenue for these companies making sick our people.

So basically what we're saying is, All right, you, soda bottling companies, you're making our people sick, so you got to pay us some more taxes, because we need money to find programs so you can keep getting our people sick. And what I'm trying to say with this is

that we do not need more taxes. If this is making our children -- making us sick, just putting a tax into it is not going to help any better, because I heard before we're going to be creating programs for healthier children and health education. However, just last year, just this year, we're cutting our school programs funded. We're cutting our kids programs in the school.

So what I'm trying to say here is, you already heard from everybody else that this tax is going to be affecting the jobs, the communities, the small business owners. It's going to be affecting every single one of us, because as I can see, you Council, you're drinking soda. You're drinking those kind -- I don't know if you pay for it or they were just here.

MS. REDMOND: I bought it for them. They didn't pay for it. I bought it for them.

MR. FRANCISCO: What I'm trying

to say here is, it's going to be affecting you, because you also are a consumer of this kind of product. And, again, we need the City of Philadelphia to start working for the people and not being taxed -- not putting more taxes on our backs, because right now we're paying too much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you. We appreciate your testimony. Thank you again.

Good evening.

MR. WRIGHT: Hello.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Hello. Please identify yourself.

MR. WRIGHT: Good evening, panel, and I want to -- my name is Gerald Wright. I live in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. I work for the North Philadelphia Human Services Development Corporation, which is under the umbrella of Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition, and I guess I want to comment

on all of those things.

Personally I want to thank Councilwoman Miller. Last year when the Mayor cut out a couple recreation people that closed and into a pool called Pickett Pool, which had an active and vibrant competitive swim program. Three teams that swim there are PDR, Sailfish and Polar Bears, and it's probably the only program like that that I know of in the City, and parents are paying to make sure the coaches are there, but without the Rec staff, they can't function. So when the Mayor said we cut the swim program, we couldn't get in, because we're indoor and we're competitive and people didn't understand what we're talking about. So I want to thank Councilwoman Miller for helping us to keep that pool open. And, in fact, on Friday, we're having a swim explosion, 6:00 to 8:00. So if you want to come and see what tax dollars are helping young people do to stay fit, not obese, to be

healthy, to learn about nutrition and have an active life-style.

Those are the kind of things that I think we need more of. We keep talking about what causes things to happen, but we're not talking about -- we don't have gym in school anymore. A lot of schools don't have gyms. I just talked to a charter school in North Philadelphia, Darrell Clarke, Walt Palmer School at 1415. They're struggling to find a place to have a gym so that their kids can have activity. So they take them out front of 1415 and let them have gym out there, and that's only on, of course, good days.

So as we talk about our children, I would like to say, who are part of our families, we need to be kind. We need to stop calling them obese, and we need to think about how we're going to have a structured program to make it a part of their life, not an add-on, not an extra, not because you can afford to pay

more dollars for it. So the school becomes a place for that. And one of the things that we said North Philadelphia Human Services Development Corporation, we're seeing more people coming in needing food, nutritional food.

The Food Trust did a study -- well, let me not get into that, but we're seeing more people who need food, clothing, housing, affordable housing, and they definitely need employment. And so with all of the discussion, we're always locked up into these discussions that don't answer these bread and butter issues. Where do we get more jobs for people that pay a living wage so they can afford to take care of their families, they can afford to buy the nutritional food, they can afford to participate in the economy, and they can respect themselves and recognize they are participants in this economy, not just people collecting a check someplace.

And I guess the last thing, the

School District of Philadelphia proposes to spend $3.2 billion, and within that they are proposing an amount of money that they don't even know if it's real. So I just want to say to both you and as the people with ultimate appropriation authority over the budget, let's not let our School District do that again. We just did it last year. We constantly put our educational process into such a dilemma that parents are now struggling with just how do I get my kid to school, how do I get my kid into one of the better schools, and no one is really holding anyone's feet to the fire about why is it taking so long to turn schools around when all of the models exist. And just in Philadelphia, at one point there was something called restructured schools. Now we're talking about renaissance schools, but there was something called restructured schools. That is the only thing that has ever been proven to move the academic achievement

level of kids in a particular school rapidly from underachieving to achieving on the level that we want to see. That model has just been thrown out, and we keep reinventing the wheel, and every time we reinvent the wheel, it costs more money.

So with all of that, after listening to the testimony today, I wanted to, one, say we need to start looking to service our people in the City. We need to bring people together, like today, and just talk and figure out -- I think a gentleman said, I have some ideas. Well, we all have ideas, and I think if we could get together and focus our discussions on some real solutions that may not cost a lot of money. Now, you may not need a whole bunch of experts either. So, you know, at some point in just -- the one thing I want to say is, in 1973, we had less credentialed teachers and, to some extent, more attention to education. We

now have a lot of credentials and we have a lot of models, a lot of studies, and we can't seem to get it right. Nearly every one of the neighborhood high schools is considered to be lacking the ability to move kids to adequate yearly progress. There is a crisis. There is a crisis, and we expect these kids to be able to function in this economy. We've got to address that crisis, because they're coming out of school with a high school diploma reading below the 10th grade level.

My daughter is in 8th grade and reading at 9.5. That's her tested reading level. And we have people, graduates, who are barely reading at the same level as she is. And she attends a Philadelphia public school. So there's a disparity. We know how to educate, but then somehow it doesn't translate into everyone.

So I know I've gone over my time, and I thank you for allowing me.

I'm very passionate about that, for those of you who know me. I'm very passionate, but let's talk about instead of one item like soda, let's talk about how do we put gym back into the mix so that the kids think about doing activity every day, and let's talk about improving stuff and bringing the community in to work together. Like when we had to fight for our Pickett pool, we were told by the City, You can't even attempt to raise money to keep that pool open, because you got to put it all into one pot. You don't know how discouraging that was, but we were able to ultimately get the support of Councilwoman Miller, the Recreation Commissioner Slawson and one of the Deputies, Marissa Washington I believe is her name, and a Program Deputy were very, very helpful in ultimately getting that pool back open, and now there are probably about 75 kids on a regular basis coming in, along with a bunch of others. They come in every day.

The pool is open Monday to Friday, and it's a great thing to see. I think if you try and do that in each of your districts, it will be a great way to promote our physical activity.

Sorry if I went too far.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Your testimony was very interesting. Very interesting, and thank you for your involvement in your community.

Would you please identify yourself for the record.

MR. JAMES: Yes, ma'am. My name is Arthur James. I'm an employed male who works for the National Comprehension Center for Fathers, and to be very, very frank, my spin is a little bit different than everything that I've heard today.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sorry. I can't hear you.

MR. JAMES: My spin on what I've heard today is a little different, and I'm hoping that I don't get lynched

or mobbed when I get ready to get up and walk out of here, because I'm going to say what I'm going to say, too.

Now, what I'm going to say is, you have a very, very difficult job. The economy is not what it used to be. It is changing, and hopefully it will get better. The revenue streams aren't the same anymore. The demand for services are getting higher. The more people you get in the City, the demand for services increases. Somebody has got to pay for some of this, and how do we pay for it. There ain't but too many things you can do. And I'm looking around to see what can you do to do it. The only thing is that word none of us likes is taxes. It's unfortunate, but it's a reality of what we're dealing with and it's a reality of our economic time set. Now, hopefully it's going to change, but at the moment, finding a viable way to augment the lack of revenue streams seems to be taxation.

I looked at that $300 piece and I said that comes down to about $25 a month. It ain't the end of the world. Now, I know that it's a terrible thing to do. What I'm more concerned about is how long will you keep it on. It would seem to me that a compromise might be to say we're going to do this tax thing for two years and it's done. And in two years, the economy may change. There may be additional revenue streams. There may be a more vibrant economy. And what you have is, for this particular period now, you're taking care of -- it's a Band-Aid. You're putting a Band-Aid on this particular approach, but it solves the problem for the moment and takes it off the backs of people sometime in the future and you've already decided that by the way you enacted legislation.

One of the things that affects us as a non-profit organization; that is, the National Comprehension Center for Fathers, is that when things -- when the

revenue streams are down, it affects our funding, and the things that are provided by non-profit organizations really affects the quality of life for all of us, when people can't receive the services that are provided by people other than the City government. It's drama, from reentry down to helping the elderly.

So for me, I don't think it's a terrible thing to pay the $300 at $25 a month. I think what you must do is limit how long you keep it in effect.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much.

Good evening.

MR. PATTERSON: My name is Demetrius Patterson and this is my --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And what is your daughter's name?

MISS PATTERSON: My name is Talia.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Very pretty. Thank you for coming.

MR. PATTERSON: She forced me to come up here. I wasn't going to come up here at first, but she had a lot to say and she wanted to speak through me. So she said, Daddy, if you lose your job, we're not going to be able to do the things we used to do. So I want to know who is going to tell my baby I can't send her to school and do the things we usually do? Daddy is not going to be able to pay tuition. I'm not going to be able to pay my car note, mortgage, take her to Sesame Place, do nice things I usually do with her.

If the tax go through, I will lose my job. There's no doubt in my mind. I was employed by Coca-Cola, thank God, two years ago in May. In May it will be two years. And since I've been employed by Coke, things have been, you know, working out. It's not perfect, but things are getting better. And I know what it is to be unemployed for six months at a time and struggle and have a

car repossessed and have to borrow money to get the car back just so I can make it to work. I know what that's like. I know what it's like to make less than 20,000 a year.

Before I started working at Coke, I held eight jobs in a year. I've been fired. I've been laid off. It's crazy. It's really crazy, and I can't imagine going through that again. I don't know what else to do if I was to get laid off from Coke. I don't know.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Let's hope you're able to keep your job.

MR. PATTERSON: Let's hope that tax don't go through. That's what I'm hoping for. I can't look my little girl in the face every day. She's going to school and she's going to have to leave her school because I can't pay the tuition. She's going to have to leave her friends and the teachers that she love. I can't -- I don't want to look at her in the face and tell her that.

She wanted to say something.

MISS PATTERSON: And I also have a little sister. Her name is Veronica.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And is she as pretty as you are?

MISS PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. PATTERSON: And I pay tuition for both of them. So if I was to lose my job, I will have to explain to them why or try to explain to them, and I really don't know why.

I understand obesity. I understand, you know, that is an issue, but to put that all on soda or the sugar tax isn't fair. McDonald's should be in here right now, Burger King --

(Applause.)

MR. PATTERSON: -- KFC. All of them should be in here right now. All of them should be in here. All of them play a role in that obesity thing.

Now, I'm a big guy. I'm a big guy, and I didn't drink soda for years.

I didn't drink soda. And I'm not going to say I got big from soda. I know I eat my KFC and my McDonald's and everything like that, but they're not here.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. We appreciate your coming in to testify.

MR. PATTERSON: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much for coming in.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good evening. Please identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. RASHID: Good evening. My name is Majeedah Rashid. I'm the Executive Vice-President of the Nicetown Community Development Corporation, and I'm also the Executive Director of the Nicetown CDC/NAC, and I'm pleased to be here this evening, Honorable Councilmembers, especially my Councilwoman, Donna Reed Miller.

4/27/10 - WHOLE - BILL 100115, etc.

From hearing everything today, there's a lot that has to be evaluated, and I realize just looking at you guys that you have a tough job, but I do want to say that some of the things that the Nicetown CDC has faced over the years, it makes me realize how you have to make critical decisions. And in terms of the needs of Nicetown and the surrounding communities for the Nicetown NAC, our service area extends from Census Tract 203, which is at Germantown and Rising Sun, that's where the tip of our service area begins, and it ends up here to Census Tract 268, which means that we share Councilpeople in terms of the NAC service area. And as a matter of fact, today we've outgrown the office that has been facilitated to us by the Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corp up here. We were formerly at 6812 Ogontz Avenue and now we are at 2001 Tulpehocken Street.

Councilwoman Tasco, I'm quite sure you're familiar with that, the West

Oak Lane Office Center. That is now the satellite office for the Nicetown CDC/NAC as well.

So we have two offices, with many needs. As a matter of fact, right now I'm supposed to be at a prayer walk for addressing a murder that happened in a bar on Wingohocking Street a couple weeks ago. You may be familiar with that. A security guard was killed there as well as another individual. We had a major community meeting at the church on 16th and Wingohocking, and one of the outcomes of that was to keep the community mobilized. This is one of the things that NACs do, we mobilize people. And it's a job that we take very seriously. And our first point of contact is block captains.

Councilman Jones, you have an excellent program with your block captains. It's something that we're looking to emulate in the Northwest, and we're looking to have a block captain

summit that we put our own spin on, and we need our Councilpeople's assistance with that.

I don't know if there's any budgetary funds that would help NACs to do something like that, but in terms of everything that's being discussed, education is the key. We have to educate people. We have to start with the block captains, make block captains younger, with junior block captains, and then we can address issues like obesity and drinking sugar unnecessarily and things like that and having farmers' markets and community gardens and things like that. That's the things that we promote.

But we need cameras. Councilwoman Miller, we need cameras in critical places and things like that. We have a lot of needs. I can sit here for long periods of time and talk about the needs, but one of the things I do want to say is, when people work together and they make critical decisions to do the

best, things good happen, and some good things have happened to the Nicetown CDC over the years. Right now we're engaged in a number of projects, commercial corridor revitalization. We have a major economic development project called Nicetown Court that is very well supported by the City of Philadelphia, championed by Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller, as well as Councilman Wilson Goode, Jr., who founded a program called the Housing Tax Fund, the CDC tax credit program, that allowed us to be the receipt of HTF funds and a partnership with Comcast and things like that.

So things do work out when people get together and do things in the community, and I just want to thank everyone here, the entire Council, especially where it affects our district. I'm very grateful as an administrator and a community activist and doing all the things that we've done over the years. I'm not just sucking up to anyone. I'm

saying to everyone here, you know, it's a hard job. I don't envy you at all. It's very tough, especially when I hear my friend over here, Tracee Hunt from Coca-Cola, I know what she does in the community. She's funded our organization with our festival and different things like that.

Jobs are very important. You know, jobs are very important.

So I want to say God bless you in the works that you do, and I hope that you're able to do the good works that you do with the hard job that you have.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

Good evening. Please identify yourself for the record.

MS. CARPENTER: Good evening. My name is Esther Carpenter. I'm a concerned citizen, concerned mom, concerned aunt, and I'm concerned about community sports in the neighborhoods,

and the concern that we have is the funding that's available for these community sports to continue. So with that said, I had a question regarding the City of Philadelphia, if we were doing any funding for the major sports leagues, like the Eagles or the Phillies. Is there any funding or subsidies that will be given to these organizations that maybe we could turn that around and probably give some funding to the community sports?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm sorry. Are you asking --

MS. CARPENTER: I'm asking if the City of Philadelphia, if we're providing any funding to the --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: No.

MS. CARPENTER: We are not?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: No.

MS. CARPENTER: Okay. Is there a possibility of any funding to help with some of the community sports leagues for our youth?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We have the Activities Fund.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: We have the Activities Fund that you can apply to your District Councilperson for and apply for funding for your program. A lot of programs, sports programs, are funded through that mechanism. It is part of the City's budget and it's appropriated through the City Council, through the District Councilmembers.

Are you in my district? Who is your Councilperson?

MS. CARPENTER: I'm here in West Oak Lane.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Where?

MS. CARPENTER: I'm in 19141.

COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: What's the address?

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: What street?

MS. CARPENTER: Spencer Street.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The Chair recognizes Councilman Clarke.

But I think if you call either Councilwoman Tasco's office tomorrow or Councilwoman Miller, they can check what district you're in.

COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Where are you, in the 1900?

MS. CARPENTER: 1900, yes.

COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: That's the Eighth Council District.

MS. CARPENTER: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Councilman Clarke.

COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you, Madam President.

Good afternoon. Since you referenced the Eagles and the Phillies, during the course of the debate for the City to authorize the building of the two new stadiums, part of that arrangement -- and, actually, I think this program was facilitated by Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown -- there was a commitment for the teams to pay approximately $30 million to a children's fund, and my

assumption is that that could go towards supporting such programs as you reference. So what I would suggest -- and there's a 30-year. So I guess we're probably five, six years into the deal, so there should be money left. I would suggest that you call Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown's office, because she was the person that was most intimately involved in that program.

MS. CARPENTER: Okay. Thank you.

COUNCILMAN CLARKE: You're welcome. In addition to the money that you can get from Councilwoman Tasco.

MS. CARPENTER: Thank you very much.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I'm sorry. Councilwoman Miller.

I'm good about giving away other people's money.

MS. CARPENTER: All right.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN CLARKE: You're welcome.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Hi.

MS. REDMOND: Hi. My name is Pat. I'm the "Heart of Philly" community liaison.

First of all, I'd like to give God some praise. Let's give God some praise up in here. This is what we forgot. Let's give God some praise.

(Applause.)

MS. REDMOND: Because, first of all, we in his house. We need to give him some praise. I didn't hear nobody say nothing about God yet.

First of all, I wanted to say -- is my mike working?

(Yes.)

MS. REDMOND: Can y'all hear me?

(Yes.)

MS. REDMOND: Because I know I might have people get mad at me, but I

really don't care, because I sit in City Council just about every Thursday and watch how hard y'all job is. I take my wig off to y'all on the real deal.

It's kind of hard for us to be in the City of Philadelphia and going through what we going through and people really thinking it's y'all that's the one that causes the problem. We had this problem ten years ago and we just trying to fix it up. And I always tell people this, we got to help one another. We have to help City Council. I mean, I know they probably get mad at me, which I really don't care, because I see a problem and a need. I'm out here in the street. Even though I'm under Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller's Eighth District, I'm in everybody district, going to see what I can do to help somebody else. And it's not always on the City. It's on the people. You know, we got to start taking care of one another, be each other's eyes and ears.

If I'm wrong, tell me I'm wrong.

I want to thank you, Tracee, at Coca-Cola. I mean, the tax and all that, yeah, I understand that people are going to be upset with it, but we can have Kool-Aid with no sugar and sugar with no Kool-Aid, but we still got to learn to help one another. This is our city. We got to take it upon ourself to bring our city together. If we don't bring our city together, we're going to be messed up. You talking about taxes after taxes? It's going to be more taxes after taxes.

I understand what the lady was saying about her kids. We taking our kids out of public schools, where the money could be going, into private schools where the money is going somewhere else. We got to start taking care of our own city.

We putting the blame on our Mayor and our City Council. Our police is not checking upon the drug dealers. You got drug dealers in your

neighborhoods. You know who they are. Snitch on them. We waste more money on our city in the Police Department knowing who shot Tom. Everybody saw Kevin shot Tom, but nobody won't say nothing. They spend $10,000 trying to find out who shot Tom. So that's money going to waste right there.

I mean, tell me if I'm making any sense. You saw him get shot, but you ain't going to tell it, but the City going to spend $10,000 with detectives investigating who shot him. That's money going to waste. That's tax money you can use for the soda.

You understand what I'm saying? This is what gets me really revved up.

And then the man was talking about they had sodas there. I bought them sodas in here. They didn't ask for no sodas. I seen they looked like they was thirty, so I went and got some sodas. Then I went and got water.

We got to stop knocking each

other. Stop pointing fingers at one another. We got three pointing back at us. Let's start taking care of our city, stop depending on other people to do it for us.

Do I come clean your house, Tracee? Your house dirty? Do I come clean your house? You clean your own house. We got to clean our own house before we go downtown and try to clean up City Hall. That's all I'm saying.

I hope y'all ain't mad at me, but I get really upset when people be downing y'all, because they really don't know how hard it is for y'all. I know for Councilwoman, sometimes she go home with a headache. She wake up with one. You know what I mean?

I heard the man ask about y'all job. Ain't got nothing to do with y'all money.

Y'all understand what I'm saying, Darrell?

And I don't want y'all to be

mad at me neither. I'm just being real. I'm in the City. I'm out there. Stop pointing fingers at the City Council and look at the three that's pointing back at you and get out here and work and do something. We got the kids in the mobs. Let's take care of our kids, man. Our kids are in trouble. Forget the soda tax. Let's do something with our kids. They're our future. What's going to happen to our future?

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Ms. Pat?

MS. REDMOND: I love y'all. I'm going to be quiet, because they told me to shut up now in a nice way, so I'm going to leave it alone.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you very much. Thank you. We appreciate what you do.

COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Before we end, I just personally want to thank everyone for coming out. Thank you for

your testimony. It's been a real education for me, but it becomes clearer and clearer that maybe we need to be doing more education and help people understand City government and budgets and et cetera. And we wanted you to come out tonight because we wanted to hear what you're thinking, and we also wanted to have some ideas or get some real good thoughts from you. So we're just happy you came out.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Tasco.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Yes. I'd just like to add my thanks to you for coming out. It was a nice crowd. Some of you testified, some of you listened. But, again, I agree with Councilwoman Miller, we need to have more town meetings so that you can understand the governmental process, because it's not as

easy as you might think it is.

We appreciate your patience. We appreciate your listening, and have a nice weekend, and Happy Mother's Day, Happy Father's Day.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank you.

This hearing will be recessed until Tuesday, May 4th, 2010 at 1:30 in Council Chambers, Room 400, City Hall.

Thank you all very much.

(Committee of the Whole recessed at 7:05 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the proceedings, evidence and objections are contained fully and accurately in the stenographic notes taken by me upon the foregoing matter on April 27, 2010, and that this is a true and correct transcript of same.

_____

MICHELE L. MURPHY

RPR-Notary Public

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