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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
PUBLIC MEETING
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON PARKS,
RECREATION & CULTURAL AFFAIRS

- - -

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, December 3, 1997
11:30 a.m.

- - -

BILL 970589 - Naming the new library to be built in
conjunction with the South Philadelphia Community
Center located at 2600 S. Broad Street as the
Fumo Family Branch of the Free Library.

- - -

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER, Chair
COUNCILWOMAN HAPPY FERNANDEZ
COUNCILMAN W. THACHER LONGSTRETH
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO
COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL A. NUTTER

- - -

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5	Community Civic Association-----	3
6	John DiGiorgio, Representative, UNICO National	
7	and Philadelphia Association of Retarded	
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1 BILL 970589

2 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Good morning.

3 The Special Committee on Parks, Recreation &
4 Cultural Affairs is now called to order.

5 I would like to recognize a quorum
6 with the attendance of Councilwoman Fernandez,
7 Councilman Longstreth, Councilman Nutter, and
8 Councilman Frank DiCicco.

9 Would the clerk please read Bill No.
10 970589.

11 THE CLERK: An Ordinance naming the
12 new library to be built in conjunction with the
13 South Philadelphia Community Center, located at 2600
14 South Broad Street, as the Fumo Family Branch of the
15 Free Library.

16 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Is there anyone
17 here to testify on behalf of this bill?

18 And, if so, can you come up one at a
19 time, or two at a time, actually, at that table with
20 the mikes, speak directly into the mike, and state
21 your name or group you represent, or any other
22 identifying information.

23 MR. TONY GRECCO: Good morning, Madam
24 Chair and honorable committee members.

25 My name is Tony Grecco, President of

1 BILL 970589

2 the South Philadelphia Community Civic Association.
3 We represent the area from Broad Street to 9th
4 Street, and from Snyder Avenue to Pollock Street.

5 The new proposed Fels Community
6 Center, which will house the new library, would be
7 located at Broad and Porter Streets, which is within
8 the First Councilmanic District and within the
9 service area of our civic association.

10 I would like to begin by saying, let
11 the record show that the South Philadelphia
12 Community Civic Association is the organization that
13 was instrumental in proposing the idea of naming the
14 new library.

15 Our association, through the efforts
16 of Mr. John Palmieri, who is a Board member of ours,
17 and myself have obtained the support of several
18 community organizations in this endeavor of naming
19 the new library.

20 Some of those organizations are here
21 today, and you will hear from them shortly.

22 For the record, I have submitted to
23 you letters of support from the Queen Village
24 Neighbors Association, the Whitman Council, Packer
25 Park Civic Association, Broad Street West Civic

1 BILL 970589

2 Association, Passyunk Avenue Merchants Association,
3 Phil-Italia National, UNICO Village, Incorporated,
4 Eastwick PAC, and ARC, the Association for Retarded
5 Citizens.

6 We also have the support of
7 Councilman DiCicco, Councilwoman Verna, and
8 Councilman Jim Kenney, all of whom have sponsored
9 the bill before you today.

10 I am happy to say that the Free
11 Library of Philadelphia has not rejected my
12 association's idea to name the new library after a
13 very distinguished and honorable family from the
14 South Philadelphia community.

15 As the Ordinance states, the Fumo
16 family came to South Philadelphia as Italian
17 immigrants, and established a savings and loan which
18 served the needs of the community and gave many
19 immigrants the opportunity to buy homes when other
20 banks were unwilling to take a chance.

21 The Fumos have long been a very
22 generous family, by freely giving of their time and
23 money to those in need and serving on the Boards of
24 such organizations as the Deborah Hospital,
25 Association for Retarded Citizens, the Knights of

1 BILL 970589

2 Columbus, the Sons of Italy, and the Columbus Civic
3 Association.

4 In addition, the Fumo family have
5 long been dedicated to the betterment of libraries.
6 They have served on the Philadelphia Library Board
7 and have worked tirelessly for the citizens, and
8 especially the children, of our community to ensure
9 the community had access to libraries.

10 I am particularly proud to say that
11 the Fumo family was especially instrumental in
12 keeping the Ritner Children's Branch of the Free
13 Library open when the city was preparing to close
14 it. Instead of a closing, today we are faced with a
15 new library at that location.

16 Finally, more recently the Fumo
17 family was instrumental, along with our wonderful
18 Councilpersons of South Philadelphia, in helping a
19 dream come true, as we in South Philadelphia are
20 about to obtain a new state-of-the-art community
21 center, and with it a new state-of-the-art,
22 full-service library.

23 An \$8 million project, \$7 million of
24 which is funded through private foundations and fund
25 raising by the Crime Prevention Association and the

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2 citizens of South Philadelphia.

3 This is a project that most likely
4 would not have been able to be built today with just
5 public dollars.

6 Therefore, the South Philadelphia
7 Community Civic Association, all the supporting
8 organizations, and the residents of South
9 Philadelphia respectfully request that the Council
10 of the City of Philadelphia permit us to name our
11 new library as we see fit.

12 We, therefore, support Bill No.
13 970589 and choose to name it the Fumo Family Branch
14 of the Free Library.

15 Thank you for your time.

16 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Thank you,
17 Mr. Grecco.

18 Does anyone have any questions?

19 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Yes. Thank you,
20 Madam Chair.

21 Mr. Grecco, back in the late '80s,
22 the library was faced with being closed during that
23 winter because the heating system was broken and
24 could not be repaired.

25 Are you familiar with that

1 BILL 970589

2 situation?

3 MR. GRECCO: Somewhat, yes, I am.

4 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Just for the
5 record, I was working for the Senator at that time.

6 And we received a call at his office,
7 and we were informed that the library would, in
8 fact, not be open that winter because of the heating
9 situation.

10 And I was sent down there one evening
11 to discuss the dilemma with representatives of the
12 library and the community.

13 And I reported back to the Senator
14 what was going to be happening, meaning that the
15 library would not open that year.

16 There was a source of money that was
17 available in those days, Legislative Initiative
18 Funds, or something more commonly known as WAMS,
19 that our illustrious Governor decided is bad money.

20 But, anyway, we were able to procure
21 \$50,000 through Senator Fumo that enabled that
22 library to get a new heating system, and they never
23 lost a day of operation.

24 And that library, could you explain a
25 little bit about that library, what it does. That's

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2 the Children's Library; right?

3 MR. GRECCO: That's the Children's
4 Branch that's been there for quite a few years.

5 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And it is rather
6 unique.

7 And it is really a facility that is
8 part of the whole fabric of that community; would
9 that be correct?

10 MR. GRECCO: That's correct.

11 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And had we lost
12 that library, I think it would have just been one
13 more blow to South Philadelphia, and the city in
14 general.

15 And it would have given people
16 another reason, maybe, to think twice about whether
17 they still want to live in the city, and things like
18 that. And those are the kinds things I think we
19 need to continue.

20 But I wanted to get it on the record,
21 had it not been for the Senator -- and maybe that's
22 not all the reason why the library should be named
23 in his family's honor -- but I think it is just one
24 of the many hundreds of things he has brought to
25 South Philadelphia and his family has done over the

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2 years.

3 I just wasn't sure if you were the
4 president or involved in the civic group back then.

5 MR. GRECCO: Yes, I was.

6 And also I would like to mention that
7 his wife Jane was on the Library Board, I believe,
8 at that time, also, and worked very hard to keep it
9 open.

10 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Yes, I think you
11 are correct.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Thank you,
14 Councilman DiCicco.

15 I have one question. The new library
16 is going to be built at 2600 South Broad?

17 MR. GRECCO: No; it is the 2400
18 block, between Porter and Ritner Streets.

19 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Okay. That's
20 what I wanted to know.

21 Thank you, Mr. Grecco, for your
22 testimony.

23 And can we now have the next person.

24 MR. JOHN DiGIORGIO: Thank you. Good
25 morning, Madam Chairperson and other committee

1 BILL 970589

2 members.

3 My name is John DiGiorgio. I am here
4 to testify on behalf of two nonprofit entities,
5 UNICO National and the Philadelphia Association of
6 Retarded Citizens.

7 Both of these entities have been
8 assisted by Senator Fumo in carrying out their
9 charitable functions.

10 Beginning first with the Philadelphia
11 Association of Retarded Citizens, I am the Chairman
12 of the Board of Directors of the association.

13 I have previously forwarded to Ms.
14 Miller a letter co-signed by myself and Dr. Bonnie
15 Zedick, Executive Director of the Association, in
16 support of the resolution before the committee
17 today.

18 In carrying out the functions of the
19 association, which is located in the Chairperson's
20 district, 2350 West Westmoreland Avenue, our General
21 Counsel, Jim Greenlee, often uses his good offices
22 in Harrisburg, in the State Senate, to secure
23 funding for our programs.

24 Council advises that, throughout the
25 years, Senator Fumo's assistance in facilitating

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2 funding for the Association of Retarded Citizens has
3 been crucial and beneficial.

4 In particular, I recall one occasion
5 several years ago when Senator Fumo personally
6 secured a substantial annual subsidy for PARC. For
7 this, the directors and the staff of PARC were
8 extremely grateful.

9 Dr. Zedick and myself have no
10 hesitancy in representing to this committee the
11 great support the Senator has rendered over the
12 years to PARC and its activities in the city on
13 behalf of retarded citizens.

14 Secondly, a word from UNICO
15 National.

16 UNICO National is an Italian-American
17 service and charitable organization devoted to
18 rendering assistance to the needy and in preserving
19 the traditions of Italian-American culture.

20 One of the chief celebrations of our
21 Italian-American culture is the annual Columbus Day
22 Parade in Philadelphia.

23 UNICO has long participated in the
24 committee which plans and carries out this
25 function.

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2 We are, thus, mindful of the
3 tremendous assistance that Senator Fumo has rendered
4 over the years in finding ways to help with the
5 funding of this cultural celebration.

6 On behalf of President John Albonase
7 and the other members of the Philadelphia Chapter of
8 UNICO National, we are proud to point out to the
9 committee the fine work that the Senator has done in
10 supporting this important cultural institution.

11 To sum up, then, both PARC and UNICO
12 are able to represent to Council that Senator Fumo
13 has an outstanding track record of assistance to
14 charitable nonprofit organizations.

15 The Fumo family in general has a long
16 history of assisting the unfortunate and in aiding
17 in public service activities, like libraries.

18 Indeed, Miss Jane Sochetti, as
19 pointed out by Mr. Grecco, was a valued member of
20 the Library Board.

21 Accordingly, we have no hesitancy in
22 recommending that an appropriate recognition of the
23 efforts of this group would be naming the new
24 library after the Fumo family.

25 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Okay. Thank you,

1 BILL 970589

2 Mr. DiGiorgio.

3 Do any members of the committee have
4 any questions?

5 Okay. Thank you.

6 Anyone else here to testify on the
7 bill?

8 Please come forward to the table.

9 Please state your name, who you represent, or any
10 identifying information you would like to present.

11 MR. ROBERT BLACKBURN: Good morning,
12 Chairperson Miller and distinguished committee
13 members. I will be very brief.

14 My name is Robert Blackburn. I am
15 the President of the Whitman Council, a neighborhood
16 advisory committee that receives funding from the
17 Office of Housing and Community Development to
18 provide assistance on housing issues to the
19 residents in the southeast corner of Philadelphia.

20 Like most neighborhood advisory
21 committees, we do much more than that. We organize
22 and conduct neighborhood clean-ups, advocate
23 neighborhood views on zoning issues, marshal
24 resources, and distribute food baskets at
25 Thanksgiving and toys for kids at Christmas to those

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2 in our neighborhood who are having a tough time.

3 Basically we do anything we can, with
4 our limited resources, for our neighborhood. So
5 much of what we have been able to accomplish is a
6 direct result of assistance that we receive from
7 Senator Vincent Fumo.

8 Over the years our neighborhood has
9 often been the beneficiary of legislative grants
10 obtained by the Senator that have enabled us to,
11 among other things, provide home repair money for
12 our residents, smoke detectors, paint, food for our
13 Thanksgiving baskets.

14 Through the Senator's help we have
15 been able to maintain a regular schedule of street
16 and alley cleanings, as well.

17 The Senator and his staff have always
18 treated our requests courteously and professionally,
19 and have never tired of providing superior
20 constituent service to any of the residents that we
21 refer to then.

22 The Senator for years has fought for
23 jobs at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard and in the
24 Port of Philadelphia, two of the largest sources of
25 employment for Whitman residents.

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2 The Whitman Council is proud to be
3 associated with Senator Fumo, and we wholeheartedly
4 support the naming of the new library in honor of
5 the Senator and his family.

6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

8 Are there any questions for
9 Mr. Blackburn from members of the committee?

10 Thank you, Mr. Blackburn.

11 MR. JOHN FUREY: My name is John
12 Furey, President of the Broad Street West Civic
13 Association.

14 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: That's Furey
15 with a Y; right?

16 MR. FUREY: Furey, yes, F-U-R-E-Y.

17 I am one of the "Meddi-Gons" (slang
18 for "Americans"). Married to an Italian girl,
19 though.

20 I would just like to lend our support
21 to this bill, with such a prestigious family as the
22 Fumo family.

23 All of us active in the community
24 come across the Senator in many ways. He is always
25 there for the community.

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2 We use that facility, as well. Our
3 service area is from Broad Street west to 20th
4 Street, and from Snyder Avenue south to Packer
5 Avenue.

6 We are a newly formed civic
7 association, and we are learning fast, developing,
8 and trying to mirror Mr. Grecco and his
9 organization, which is doing a fine job. We hope to
10 be half as successful as they are.

11 And we know, to be successful, we
12 will need the influence of prominent political
13 figures, least of which would be Mr. Fumo. And we
14 support the bill whole heartedly.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Okay. Thank you,
17 Mr. Furey.

18 Does any committee member have any
19 questions?

20 Thank you.

21 Anyone else here to testify?

22 Thank you. Good morning.

23 MR. SMITH: Good morning.

24 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Please state your
25 name.

1 BILL 970589

2 MR. BERNARD SMITH: I am Bernard
3 Smith, Executive Director of Queen Village
4 Neighbors' Association.

5 The Senator has been a friend to
6 Queen Village for an awful long time. He has
7 supported a number of projects in our area, which
8 include the Southwark Housing Development, South
9 Street Bridge, and others.

10 The legislative initiative of grants
11 that have been alluded to before me went a long way
12 in development of pocket parks, summer camps,
13 regular clean-ups, and other quality-of-life
14 projects in our area.

15 The association wholeheartedly
16 supports the ordinance naming the new library to be
17 built in conjunction with the South Philadelphia
18 Community Center, located at 2400 South Broad
19 Street, the Fumo Family Branch of the Free Library.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Thank you,
22 Mr. Smith.

23 Do any committee members have any
24 questions for Mr. Smith?

25 Okay. Thank you.

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2 Anyone else here to testify on this
3 bill?

4 Please state your name.

5 MR. TONY DIODATI: I am Tony Diodati,
6 the current Director of the South Philadelphia
7 Community Center, and an employee of Crime
8 Prevention Association, who will be involved with
9 the building of the library and new community
10 center.

11 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Can you speak
12 closer. Pull the mike a little closer. Thank you.

13 MS. MARY MARASA: Good morning. My
14 name is Mary Marasa, and I am here to support the
15 bill to have the name the Fumo Family Library. We
16 represent a thousand members.

17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Thank you.

19 Do any committee members have
20 questions for these two?

21 MR. DIODATI: Let me just say, we
22 are, Crime Prevention Association, in support of the
23 community groups. And they are in favor of the
24 library being named after the Fumo family. So we
25 support the bill.

1 BILL 970589

2 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Okay. Thank
3 you.

4 Any questions?

5 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Tony, are you
6 familiar that originally when the suggestion came
7 about to name the library, it was originally
8 suggested that they name it the Vince Fumo Library?
9 Are you familiar with that?

10 MR. DIODATI: Yes.

11 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And then that
12 was not acceptable to the Senator. He didn't think
13 he deserved that honor solely?

14 MR. DIODATI: That is correct.

15 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And this all
16 came from the community.

17 I guess the bottom line I am trying
18 to get to is, this all began with the community. It
19 was not initiated by the Senator or any of the
20 Fumo-crats.

21 MR. DIODATI: No. No.

22 Having grown up and lived in South
23 Philadelphia, gone to school there, I think one
24 pleasant development is that we have all these
25 community groups, representing the total community

1 BILL 970589

2 of South Philadelphia, actually in support of an
3 endeavor, which I think in itself is why Crime
4 Prevention is very delighted to be supportive of
5 this.

6 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Okay. Any other
8 questions from committee members?

9 We want to thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 MR. DIODATI: Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: Anyone else to
13 testify?

14 I would just like to thank those that
15 came to testify. We appreciate your interest.

16 I really feel that you have a real
17 commitment to the development of your South
18 Philadelphia neighborhood.

19 And I think it is great. I was
20 really impressed with how many groups have come
21 together to agree on this, and particularly when we
22 go to meetings all the time, groups can't agree, and
23 they are fighting back and forth. So this is really
24 great.

25 There being no further questions, nor

1 BILL 970589
2 anyone else here to testify, this ends the Public
3 Hearing portion of our meeting.

4 (Public Hearing adjourned.)

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3 COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
4 PUBLIC MEETING
5 of the
6 COMMITTEE ON PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL AFFAIRS
7 - - -
8 Wednesday, December 3 1997
9 - - -
10 Public Meeting conducted by the Committee
11 on Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs, held in
12 Room 400, City Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on
13 the above date, to consider action on the following:
14 BILL 970589
15 - - -
16 PRESENT:
17 COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER, Chair
18 COUNCILWOMAN HAPPY FERNANDEZ
19 COUNCILMAN W. THACHER LONGSTRETH
20 COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO
21 COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO
22 COUNCILMAN MICHAEL A. NUTTER
23 - - -
24
25

1 PUBLIC MEETING

2 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: The Public
3 Hearing is adjourned, and now we open our committee
4 meeting, Public Meeting.

5 The Committee on Parks, Recreation &
6 Cultural Affairs will now vote on Bill No. 970589,
7 if there are no other questions.

8 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I make a motion
9 that Bill No. 970589 be reported out of the
10 committee with a favorable recommendation, and that
11 the Rules of Council be suspended as to permit first
12 reading at the next regular session of City
13 Council.

14 (Duly seconded.)

15 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: All in favor.
16 Opposed.

17 Let it be noted that this bill was
18 passed with a unanimous recommendation.

19 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN MILLER: This ends the
21 Public Meeting portion of this Special Committee on
22 Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs.

23 Thank you.

24 (Public Meeting adjourned at 11:50
25 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing
proceedings of the Council of the City of
Philadelphia of Wednesday, December 3, 1997, were
reported fully and accurately by me, and that this
is a correct transcript of same.

RE: COMMITTEE ON PARKS, RECREATION
& CULTURAL AFFAIRS

DEBRA A. WHITEHEAD, RPR