

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

- - -

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, April 23, 2009
4:30 p.m.

- - -

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNA C. VERNA
COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN BILL GREEN
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

BILLS 090212, 090213, 090214, 090215, 090218,
090119, 090220 and 090221
RESOLUTION 090226

- - -

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
3 evening, everybody. I am so delighted
4 that many of you have come this evening
5 to our continued budget hearings. I want
6 to thank Councilmembers Tasco and Miller
7 for inviting us here this evening, and I
8 certainly want to extend my thanks to the
9 Bishop.

10 Thank you, Bishop, for having
11 the meeting in this absolutely beautiful,
12 beautiful church. I am almost tempted to
13 come here for services one Sunday,
14 because when I look at the amount of
15 people that they must have in the choir,
16 it has to be absolutely magnificent.

17 However, at this time, I would
18 like to introduce our Majority Leader,
19 Councilwoman Tasco.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you,
21 Madam President.

22 Good evening, everyone.
23 Afternoon, evening. We're almost there.
24 I certainly appreciate your taking time
25 out to come this evening to let us hear

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2 what you have to say about the budget
3 that is before the City Council.

4 Contrary to what some would
5 like to believe, that we're not doing
6 anything about the budget, the budget
7 process works like this: The Mayor
8 presents his budget to City Council, and
9 then we listen to all of the departments.
10 They come before the Council to talk
11 about what money they have and also how
12 they plan to spend that money, and then
13 we spend time asking questions about the
14 programs. We raise a lot of issues that
15 you as our constituents have raised with
16 us about services. And so it's a long,
17 in-depth kind of discussion that goes on
18 for a few weeks. And our budget is
19 planned out through May, because the 5th
20 and the 6th I believe we do have the
21 School District that comes before the
22 Council.

23 So we're there every day
24 listening to the various departments, and
25 you will see some of the Administration

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2 members come in this evening to hear your
3 comments. And so I wanted you to know
4 this is part of our way to include you in
5 this process and allow you to be in your
6 neighborhood and not necessarily have to
7 come down to City Hall.

8 We did not have the opportunity
9 to participate in the forums that were
10 held prior to the Mayor's budget, but
11 Councilwoman Miller and I thought it was
12 most important that we have this hearing
13 in this community so that we can hear
14 from you and what recommendations you may
15 have, some of the concerns you may have.
16 And so as we deliberate what we have to
17 do to fill this gap that is facing us
18 during this fiscal crisis, that we have
19 input from you, who we represent.

20 So thank you again for coming.
21 And for those of you who are interested,
22 this program will be replayed tomorrow on
23 Channel 64 at 9:00 p.m., Saturday morning
24 at 8:30 a.m., Sunday morning at 8:30 a.m.
25 and Sunday evening at 9:00 p.m. So

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2 you'll have an opportunity, if you have
3 neighbors who could not come and you want
4 them to see and hear, you can let them
5 know, and certainly if you testify, you
6 can see yourself testify.

7 Thank you so much.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
9 you, Councilwoman.

10 At this time, I would like to
11 recognize Councilwoman Miller.

12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
13 you. Thank you.

14 I just want to thank everyone
15 for taking the time to come out today.
16 This is the time for you to come out and
17 be heard, come out and have input.

18 I had some folks in my office
19 earlier today talking about what was
20 important to them with this particular
21 budget, and I asked them, I said, Well,
22 I'm glad to hear from you, but can you
23 come out tonight and just give us a
24 little bit of your testimony. This is
25 your opportunity.

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2 As Councilwoman Tasco said, we
3 wanted to make sure that we brought City
4 Council out to you. That way, you
5 wouldn't have to come all the way in
6 town. Some of the Councilmembers on
7 their way here today said, How do you
8 guys come to work every day, it's too far
9 to travel. So sometimes we know that,
10 and we think it's important that we can
11 make things just a little bit closer and
12 a little bit more convenient for our
13 constituents.

14 This budget process, as
15 Councilwoman Tasco explained, is
16 something that we've done every year,
17 same process. The Mayor presents the
18 budget. We review the budget, have our
19 input. But this budget, I believe -- I
20 know since I've been there for 14 years,
21 the dollar amount of this budget is
22 unlike any other budget. I mean, this
23 city is in fiscal crisis. So we have
24 very, very, very hard choices to make
25 this year, and that's why it's so

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2 important that we hear from you.

3 So without further adieu, I'm
4 going to end my comments and just again
5 thank everybody for coming out. And if
6 anyone wants to testify and hasn't signed
7 up, I know that Derek is over there and
8 some other folks are around, so you can
9 give them your information or you can
10 just sign up to testify. Three minutes,
11 though.

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
14 you.

15 And before we hear from you, I
16 would like to acknowledge some of the
17 people that are in the audience. Clay
18 Armbrister, the Mayor's Chief of Staff.
19 Please stand.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Rob
22 Dubow, our Finance Director.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: And
25 our Recreation Commissioner, Commissioner

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2 Slawson.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
5 you. And now we will open up our
6 meeting.

7 This is a continued public
8 hearing of the Committee of the Whole
9 regarding the budget. Our first
10 witnesses will be?

11 MR. MCPHERSON: Cicely
12 Peterson-Mangum, John Ungar, Majeedah
13 Rashid, Jason Salus.

14 (Witnesses approached witness
15 table.)

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
17 afternoon. Please identify yourself for
18 the record and proceed with your
19 testimony.

20 MS. PETERSON-MANGUM: Good
21 afternoon, Council President Verna,
22 Councilmembers. My name is Cicely
23 Peterson-Mangum and I am the Executive
24 Director of Logan Community Development
25 Corporation. Before I begin my

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2 testimony, I want to give special thanks
3 to Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller and
4 Councilwoman Marian Tasco for bringing
5 these hearings to the community and for
6 offering us a platform to express our
7 views and recommendations regarding the
8 City's Fiscal Year 2010 budget.

9 I am here to urge the City to
10 commit funding to the work of community
11 development corporations and economic
12 development initiatives. Economic
13 development is an important strategy in
14 eradicating poverty and generating the
15 resources necessary for human development
16 and a stable community. The work of CDCs
17 strengthen neighborhood economies and, in
18 turn, the City of Philadelphia's tax
19 base.

20 Among the many comprehensive
21 economic development activities, you will
22 find that CDCs strengthen neighborhood
23 commercial corridors; help start-up
24 businesses with site selection, marketing
25 and business plans; provide technical

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2 assistance and services to existing
3 businesses; market their neighborhood's
4 assets; and help local residents obtain
5 jobs. All of the foregoing initiatives
6 have resulted in significant positive
7 economic impact on communities, helping
8 expand local access to goods, services
9 and jobs.

10 For the past 25 years, the
11 Logan neighborhood of Philadelphia has
12 suffered high levels of poverty, crime,
13 disinvestment, abandonment and
14 foreclosures. This slow decay stems from
15 the demolition of previously sinking
16 homes in the neighborhood, which left a
17 40-acre abandoned lot along a once
18 vibrant residential section. As a
19 result, hundreds of families and
20 businesses fled the neighborhood.

21 We urge Council to restore
22 funding for programs like the Housing
23 Trust Fund and funding for affordable
24 homes. City funding will benefit our
25 neighborhoods and residents and help

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2 facilitate future affordable housing
3 efforts and efforts to stabilize the
4 neighborhood and assist disenfranchised
5 families with secure, stable living
6 conditions.

7 The Housing Trust Fund helps
8 everyone. It expands housing
9 opportunities, prevents foreclosures,
10 evictions and homelessness, supports home
11 repair, creates jobs, strengthens the
12 City's tax base, leverages other funds
13 and rebuilds communities to benefit all
14 Philadelphians.

15 We also urge Council to fund
16 property acquisition and the reuse of
17 vacant properties. The ability to
18 acquire vacant and abandoned properties
19 is critical to developing new homes and
20 businesses and improving the quality of
21 life in our neighborhoods.

22 In addition to improving the
23 City's system to acquire and dispose of
24 property, it is critical that adequate
25 funding be made available to support such

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2 developments. The City should recycle
3 previous funds committed to acquire
4 properties and identify new resources to
5 support future acquisition needs.

6 We thank the City for its
7 current investment in the work of CDCs
8 and affordable housing, and we ask for a
9 continued commitment and investment.
10 Funding for such programs should be an
11 integral part of the City's overall
12 strategy to reduce the high rate of
13 vacancies and foreclosures in our
14 neighborhoods and to ensure housing and
15 stability for citizens of all incomes.

16 To conclude, I'd like to thank
17 you for your time, attention and
18 interest. Community housing and economic
19 development initiatives are important
20 vehicles for continued growth and
21 stability in our neighborhoods, and I
22 welcome any opportunities to continue
23 this conversation.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

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2 you very much.

3 Please identify yourself for
4 the record.

5 MR. SALUS: Yes. My name is
6 Jason Salus and I'm with Mount Airy USA.

7 Good afternoon and thank you
8 for the opportunity to address Council.
9 I'm the Director of Real Estate
10 Development for Mount Airy USA, the
11 community development corporation for
12 Mount Airy. As you may or may not know,
13 we have four primary service areas: real
14 estate development, commercial corridor
15 revitalization, which works to attract
16 and retain retail businesses to our
17 commercial corridor, housing counseling,
18 which assists first-time buyers and helps
19 homeowners avoid foreclosure, and our
20 neighborhood programs that help to
21 strengthen our sense of community.

22 My message today is a simple
23 one. Supporting the City's community
24 development corporations is not simply
25 another appropriation; it's an investment

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2 that pays dividends for Philadelphia's
3 neighborhoods and strengthens our
4 communities.

5 I'd like to take just a minute
6 to share some examples of how Mount Airy
7 USA has leveraged our support from the
8 City to attract investment to Mount Airy.

9 We've worked to bring more than
10 \$35 million of public and private
11 investment to the Germantown Avenue
12 commercial corridor.

13 We've succeeded in attracting
14 new restaurants and retailers to our
15 corridor, and transformed over 55,000
16 square feet of abandoned and blighted
17 properties into vibrant new retail and
18 office commercial spaces.

19 We've constructed 11 affordable
20 new townhomes for first-time,
21 income-qualified home buyers.

22 By the end of this year, more
23 than two years of community planning will
24 culminate leveraging \$4 million in city,
25 state and federal funds to enhance the

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2 Germantown Avenue streetscape.

3 Mount Airy USA's housing
4 counselors have assisted hundreds of
5 individuals in buying their first homes,
6 while helping struggling homeowners work
7 through their finances to stay in their
8 homes.

9 We spearheaded the
10 implementation of the Mount Airy Business
11 Improvement District and now serve as its
12 managing agent and the manager of the
13 BID's cleaning corps.

14 And in 2008, we led a
15 neighborhood greening effort that
16 resulted in planting 65 trees.

17 The results of this important
18 work are clear: Every dollar investment
19 in Mount Airy USA generates over \$30 of
20 non-local investment.

21 We could not have accomplished
22 so much without the support of the City
23 through our work with the Commerce
24 Department, the Office of Housing and
25 Community Development and, of course, our

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2 elected leaders.

3 This economic environment is
4 precisely the time to support the work of
5 our CDCs to rebuild communities that are
6 hit hardest by the downturn, communities
7 that are the first to watch properties go
8 vacant and businesses close. Of acute
9 interest are opportunities to expand our
10 housing counseling capacity and our real
11 estate development capacity, working in
12 tandem to reduce the potential for blight
13 in Mount Airy and advance the
14 revitalization already underway.

15 As this budget process
16 progresses, I'd urge the City to continue
17 supporting Philadelphia's CDCs, which do
18 the important granular work of rebuilding
19 our neighborhoods block by block,
20 promoting opportunities for
21 homeownership, small businesses and
22 entrepreneurs that comprise our city's
23 bright future.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

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2 you. It sounds like you've been very
3 hard at work, both of you, and I would
4 strongly urge you to keep in close
5 contact with your Councilwoman,
6 Councilwoman Miller, who I'm sure you
7 have worked very closely with. But I
8 congratulate you on all that you've done.

9 MR. SALUS: Thank you.

10 MR. UNGAR: Good afternoon.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Good
12 afternoon.

13 MR. UNGAR: My name is John
14 Ungar. I'm the Executive Director of
15 Mount Airy Revitalization Corporation.
16 First of all, thank you, Council
17 President Verna, and, of course, thank
18 you, Councilwomen Tasco and Miller and
19 the rest of Council. We appreciate this
20 opportunity to talk about the City's
21 budget.

22 I only just have a couple of
23 points to make about the City budget.
24 Likewise, another CDC representing the
25 East Mount Airy community. But the first

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2 point I want to make is, it's very
3 important you do not cut resources to
4 middle-class neighborhoods such as Mount
5 Airy. Specifically, the City should
6 continue to invest in the business
7 districts and assist small businesses in
8 middle-class neighborhoods.

9 The improvements that our
10 organization has made on Wadsworth Avenue
11 are already having a direct positive
12 impact on the community. As a result of
13 our government investment into
14 streetscape improvements on Wadsworth
15 Avenue, several business owners are now
16 investing their own money into their own
17 storefronts. In addition, it's having a
18 positive impact on the surrounding
19 neighborhood. Many residents tell us
20 they're pleased with how the neighborhood
21 looks. They feel a new sense of pride in
22 their community. And others from outside
23 are already noticing the community. So
24 we're attracting new shoppers, new
25 residents. This is exactly what we need

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2 to strengthen the middle-class tax base.

3 And as I've said before other
4 testimonies, the impact of the business
5 district affects the surrounding
6 neighborhoods. The Wharton School at the
7 University of Pennsylvania conducted a
8 study a few years ago showing that the
9 health of the business district directly
10 impacts the housing values of the
11 surrounding neighborhood. So if a
12 business district is weak and struggling
13 with crime and vacancies, the property
14 values of the surrounding residential
15 neighborhood are going to decrease. On
16 the other hand, if you have a vibrant,
17 safe, thriving business district, it
18 actually increases the housing value. So
19 I encourage you to continue investments
20 in middle-class business districts, as
21 well as the other business districts.

22 The second point I want to make
23 is to encourage investment in
24 sustainability and energy efficiency,
25 both for businesses and for residents.

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2 Aside from being good policy, many of our
3 small businesses operate in older
4 buildings with older equipment that's not
5 energy efficient. As you all know, in a
6 couple of years the utility cap rates are
7 going to expire and the rates are going
8 to increase for everybody, and I think
9 it's going to hit a lot of our businesses
10 hard. Those that are not doing well
11 already, we may lose them. They may shut
12 down. Likewise, it's an issue for our
13 homeowners, especially those on a fixed
14 income. We need to find some way to
15 direct resources to enable them to
16 weatherize their homes, adopt
17 energy-efficient improvements so that
18 they can stay in their homes and it will
19 be affordable for them.

20 Finally, the last point I want
21 to touch on is the mortgage foreclosure
22 crisis. As you well know, this part of
23 the City, West Oak Lane and Mount Airy,
24 has one of the highest concentrations of
25 high interest -- mortgages and high rate

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2 of foreclosures. It's important the City
3 address this with resources both on the
4 front end and on the back end. On the
5 front end, we have some very good housing
6 counseling agencies up in the Northwest.
7 We need to provide resources for them.
8 We need to direct people to those
9 agencies.

10 (Bell rung.)

11 MR. UNGAR: Therefore -- also
12 on the back end. We're not going to be
13 able to prevent all of the foreclosures,
14 so there needs to be funds available for
15 non-profit CDCs such as ours to acquire
16 these properties and rehabilitate them
17 and put them back on the market. We
18 cannot let vacancy spread through our
19 community and hurt the work that we've
20 already done and so much success in the
21 Northwest.

22 Thank you for your time.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
24 you. Thank you.

25 The Chair recognizes Councilman

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2 Clarke.

3 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
4 Madam President.

5 I'd just like to say obviously
6 thank you very much for your testimony
7 and showing your interest in the things
8 that we're doing in the City of
9 Philadelphia. In particular, I'd just
10 like to say to Ms. Peterson-Mangum, I
11 want to appreciate the fact that you've
12 recognized the importance of being able
13 to use NTI acquisition funds to
14 revitalize our communities, putting to
15 good use either underutilized or
16 properties that have been off the tax
17 rolls for quite some time.

18 Unfortunately, our NTI acquisition
19 funding was suspended almost a year ago.
20 Actually, I think it's actually a year to
21 the date, and we are somewhat frustrated
22 by not being in the position to continue
23 to utilize that.

24 So hopefully we'll be able to
25 get whatever is being done, the audit or

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2 whatever the process is, to get it back
3 online so we can go out and aggressively
4 develop these communities and put these
5 underutilized properties back on the tax
6 rolls and make these neighborhoods the
7 type of neighborhoods that we would all
8 appreciate having.

9 So thank you again for
10 recognizing that.

11 MS. PETERSON-MANGUM: Thank
12 you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
14 you again.

15 Any further questions or
16 comments?

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: No. I'd
18 just like to thank these representatives
19 for coming out to speak, and I want you
20 to know it took us a long time to get
21 CDCs in the 9th Councilmanic District,
22 but we have -- other than OARC. OARC has
23 been around a long time. But they both
24 work very hard, and Cicely certainly in
25 the Logan area of the City of

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2 Philadelphia, which has been devoid of
3 having leadership over there with a
4 community organization. So we appreciate
5 her leadership and John's leadership in
6 working with the North Northwest.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
8 you.

9 Thank you again.

10 Before we hear from our next
11 speaker, I'm sure you all recognize the
12 people that are up at the table.
13 Nevertheless, I would like to introduce
14 them. To my extreme left is Councilman
15 Rizzo. Next to him is Councilman Clarke,
16 Councilwoman Miller, as you know. To my
17 extreme right is Councilman Goode,
18 Councilman Green, Councilman Greenlee,
19 Councilwoman Tasco and Charlie McPherson,
20 who is in our office.

21 Thank you. Kindly identify
22 yourself for the record.

23 MS. RASHID: Good afternoon.
24 My name is Majeedah Rashid. I am the
25 Chief Operating Officer of the Nicetown

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2 CDC. I want to thank Council President
3 Verna and my great Councilwoman, Donna
4 Reed Miller, as well as Councilwoman
5 Tasco and all of the honorable Council
6 representatives here.

7 As I said, I'm the Chief
8 Operating Officer of the Nicetown CDC and
9 I'm also a member of the Philadelphia
10 Association of CDCs, and I also am the
11 Executive Director of the Nicetown CDC
12 Neighborhood Advisory Committee, whose
13 service area includes census tracts
14 within the 8th and 9th Council Districts.

15 I have two positions. I could
16 have many positions. They go on and on,
17 but I chose to focus on two today. And
18 for your consideration, my first position
19 is regarding property acquisition.

20 I just want to share a story
21 with you. The Nicetown CDC, briefly, was
22 founded in 1999 with a mission to
23 establish effective and sustainable
24 community economic development
25 initiatives in Nicetown and its

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2 surrounding neighborhoods. We have
3 fulfilled our mission with a holistic,
4 citizen-driven approach, which includes
5 re-establishing the Nicetown Neighborhood
6 Advisory Committee in 2002, which we
7 definitely could have not done without
8 the support and interest of Councilwoman
9 Donna Reed Miller.

10 In 2006, the City of
11 Philadelphia expanded the Nicetown CDC
12 service area -- Nicetown CDC NAC program
13 service area boundaries, and today our
14 service area includes 12 census tracts.
15 The Nicetown CDC NAC is a program of the
16 Nicetown CDC and has been successful with
17 ensuring citizen participation in the
18 development and planning process. It has
19 been the vehicle by which the Nicetown
20 CDC has developed a series of economic
21 development plans and projects which
22 target Nicetown's commercial corridor and
23 the blocks connecting to it. From those
24 plans, we have implemented a Clean and
25 Safe initiative that encourages

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2 businesses and residents to be
3 responsible for cleaning and maintaining
4 the environment in front of and around
5 their businesses and homes. This
6 includes facade improvements, new trash
7 receptacles and planters, banners,
8 signage along Nicetown's corridor and the
9 rehabilitation of vacant and abandoned
10 property.

11 The Nicetown CDC embarked on
12 its first affordable housing project in
13 2004, with five properties that were to
14 be conveyed to us by the Redevelopment
15 Authority. We are a grassroots
16 organization and very naive to some
17 degree, and we were excited when we
18 received the memo from the RDA which we
19 believed would give us site control and
20 allow us to utilize the Homeownership
21 Rehabilitation Program, HRP, to redevelop
22 these abandoned and blighted properties.
23 Needless to say, it was nearly three long
24 years before we actually got the project
25 underway. During that

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2 acquisition-related delay, two of the
3 properties were lost to sheriff sale and
4 developed by other private developers.

5 (Bell rung.)

6 MS. RASHID: The Nicetown CDC
7 and its NAC program have since assisted
8 the owners of those properties with
9 heater replacement, roofing and other
10 basic system repair. It was obvious that
11 the properties were included in a rash of
12 substandard development projects from
13 owners who wanted to sell or rent them as
14 quickly as possible.

15 In close proximity to our first
16 HRP project are three properties adjacent
17 to each other in the 4300 block of 16th
18 Street. These properties have been
19 abandoned for nearly 20 years and were
20 listed on the City's demolition list.
21 The block is well organized, and the
22 block captain and other neighbors came to
23 us to let it be known that they did not
24 want the properties torn down. They did
25 not want their already low property

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2 values to be again reduced because of a
3 huge space that demolition would leave
4 between their homes.

5 After consultation with
6 Councilwoman Miller and her staff, the
7 properties were taken off of the
8 demolition list, with the intent to
9 convey to the Nicetown CDC for rehab.
10 Council has since passed an ordinance to
11 initiate that process, but it is now hung
12 up somewhere between Council and the
13 forensic audit at the RDA. Meanwhile,
14 the properties have been open to the
15 elements for years and have become
16 imminently dangerous. Of course, the
17 community wants to know why these
18 buildings are sitting there, when we told
19 them that we would improve the
20 neighborhood by rehabilitating them for
21 homeownership. The residents often ask
22 us, What are you people doing? What is
23 it going to take to get something done
24 about this?

25 Councilwoman Miller, I know

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2 that you have done all that you could do
3 to eliminate this problem, but how could
4 we explain to the community that it is
5 out of our hands?

6 The Nicetown CDC is ready,
7 willing and able to hit the ground
8 running and eliminate this ugly,
9 blighted, unsafe disgrace. The funds are
10 there to improve the conditions of these
11 properties, so there's no excuse for the
12 City to continue to allow the property
13 acquisition process to be the number one
14 cause of these types of properties.

15 My second point was short.
16 It's regarding the Neighborhood Advisory
17 Committee and its contract relating to
18 operating funds. This point is related
19 to the funding of the 22 NACs in the
20 City. I want to bring to your attention
21 that NAC contracts begin officially on
22 October 1st and are rarely executed
23 before mid-January. During that gap in
24 time, there are no operating funds to
25 cover incurred expenses over that

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2 three-month period, or maybe longer in
3 some cases. No funds for staff payroll,
4 taxes, utilities, supplies and other
5 vital needs. Advance checks in the
6 meager amount of \$5,000 are made
7 available, but only after the NAC
8 contract has been fully executed.
9 Historically, this has placed a
10 tremendous fiscal strain on the Nicetown
11 CDC NAC and other NACs, and in Year 34,
12 it resulted in the loss of two of the
13 most valuable employees that we ever had.

14 For the record, NACs are often
15 reminded by OHCD that annual funds
16 allocated are based upon reimbursable
17 contract activities and merely represent
18 seed money that should be supplemented by
19 fundraising efforts of NAC
20 administrators. It is our position that
21 the City should put more value on the
22 NACs, which represent the citizens'
23 participation portion of the Consolidated
24 Plan, which is very important to the CDBG
25 funds that come through the City of

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 Philadelphia. They should also invest
3 more in capacity building and
4 professional development funding, which
5 will also help to eliminate many fiscal
6 issues of NACs. One suggestion is to
7 make available unused NAC funds which
8 could easily be utilized for bridge
9 loans, with provision of proper
10 supporting documentation.

11 In conclusion, of course, the
12 Nicetown CDC will continue to implement
13 programs that strive for effectiveness
14 and the production of measurable outcomes
15 in serving the community. However, our
16 organization as well as others will
17 continue to suffer if the execution
18 process of NAC contracts is not improved
19 or upgraded immediately. Ultimately, it
20 will continue to overshadow the great
21 works that NACs have been doing for the
22 past 34 years in the City of
23 Philadelphia.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
25 you very much.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 Are there any questions or
3 comments?

4 The Chair recognizes Councilman
5 Green.

6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you
7 very much for your testimony. I have a
8 question for you.

9 If the RDA were to transfer
10 those properties to you, how many people
11 would you employ and would they be from
12 the neighborhood or local contractors?

13 MS. RASHID: Well, they would
14 definitely utilize neighborhood
15 contractors, because the Nicetown CDC
16 prioritizes minority contracting. But I
17 would say right off the bat, we would
18 work with the YouthBuild Charter School,
19 which is primarily a minority
20 organization, and for subcontracting of
21 special needs, special values on schedule
22 values, we would utilize neighborhood
23 contractors that have the qualifications.

24 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But I'm
25 trying to get a sense of how many people

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 aren't being employed in the neighborhood
3 because of this delay in getting the
4 property to you. Is it 20 people that
5 currently could have jobs?

6 MS. RASHID: I would say easily
7 between 25 and 30 people are not being
8 employed.

9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And that's
10 happening all over this city as a
11 consequence of this forensic audit.

12 MS. RASHID: Absolutely.

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: It's a very
14 large problem in many Council districts,
15 and we're doing everything we can on City
16 Council to try to help the Administration
17 recognize that there's a difference
18 between an audit and making stuff
19 available to citizens to employ people in
20 neighborhoods.

21 Thank you.

22 MS. RASHID: Thank you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
24 you.

25 Any further questions or

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 comments?

3 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I just
4 have a comment. I invite you to testify
5 when we have OHCD budget hearings with
6 City Council. We'll notify you. Thank
7 you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
9 you.

10 Councilwoman Miller.

11 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Can I
12 ask a question?

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Majeedah,
14 I'd like to thank you for coming and
15 thank the other CDCs for coming here
16 today. We do know that the acquisition
17 dollars are very, very important, and if
18 we -- we're doing all that we can. I
19 believe the audit is either nearly done,
20 if not finished. I suggest you call the
21 Mayor's Office and ask them when the
22 audit is going to be finished, because
23 I'm not really sure.

24 But in any event, we do hope --
25 thank you for your perseverance and all

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 the good work all of you do in
3 neighborhoods. Thank you.

4 MS. RASHID: Thank you,
5 Councilwoman.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
7 you.

8 Just a moment, please. We do
9 have members that have joined us. To my
10 extreme left is Councilwoman Brown,
11 Councilman Curtis, and to my right is
12 Councilwoman Sanchez, who I understand
13 would like to be recognized for a
14 question.

15 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Yeah.
16 Can any of the CDCs speak to if in the
17 discussions with OHCD, for those of you
18 who have either NAC or CDC contracts,
19 have you been in discussions around the
20 stimulus, weatherization and your ability
21 to ramp up those activities as it relates
22 to potential stimulus money? Any of the
23 CDCs.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Is
25 someone going to respond? Please come up

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 to the table and use the microphone.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. RASHID: I'm sorry. You
5 were referencing if NACs were able to
6 access --

7 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Have you
8 been in discussions with the
9 Administration about the potential
10 stimulus money and the increase in
11 weatherization, and those of you who have
12 the capacity to ramp up those activities,
13 have you been in discussions about that?

14 MS. RASHID: Well, we've been
15 in serious discussion about it, not
16 necessarily with the Administration of
17 the City, but with other community-based
18 organizations. The Nicetown CDC is
19 currently engaged in a project that will
20 allow us to be a part of stimulus funds
21 that are coming down in relation to
22 weatherization and a lot of green
23 activities.

24 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Are you
25 applying directly to the state or to the

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 feds?

3 MS. RASHID: We are applying --
4 for this particular project, it's
5 directly to the federal government.

6 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Okay.
7 Thank you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
9 you.

10 The Chair recognizes Councilman
11 Jones.

12 Just a moment, please.

13 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: You're on
14 the hot seat.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
16 Madam President.

17 On behalf of my colleague,
18 Blondell Reynolds Brown, we apologize for
19 our lateness, but we were on a panel for
20 greening out at the Cira Centre, a part
21 of a vibrant discussion about the future
22 of greening in the City of Philadelphia.

23 I guess a couple of questions
24 come to mind. One of the concerns of
25 this body is, how does the stimulus

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 package and how does the green trickle
3 down to CDCs like Nicetown and are you
4 plugging in to PWDC by way of contracts
5 or transitioning traditional trades such
6 as plumbing, roofing to green trades?
7 Because I do understand that there will
8 and are looking for those kinds of
9 proposals to take a plumber to be a gray
10 water recycler or a roofer to be a green
11 roofer. So I wanted to know, is it
12 trickling down to CDCs like Nicetown?

13 MS. RASHID: Well, not per se
14 in regards to PWDC, but we are looking to
15 do some things. For example, we are
16 contracted by the City with land care,
17 and we're looking at ways to engage our
18 land care activities in a more green
19 manner in regards to pesticides and
20 things of that nature, storm water
21 management and that kind of thing, and
22 the people have been trying to put us in
23 contact with stimulus funds that may
24 assist us in that way. But we haven't
25 been engaged in direct stimulus funds

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 activities that would help us in that
3 regard.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: I think
5 it's -- Councilwoman Tasco says if we do
6 things in haste, we will repent in our
7 leisure.

8 Is that right? Did I butcher
9 it?

10 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: You did
11 pretty good.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
13 Thank you.

14 But I don't want us to move
15 with such haste that we leave CDCs and
16 these opportunities behind. If we're
17 talking about revamping how we deal with
18 rainwater runoff and the rain garden is
19 going to be the landscape out here at
20 intersections, then it seems to me that
21 we should be connecting with folk in the
22 CDC community to prepare young people
23 from neighborhoods to be able to be rain
24 garden installers, developers,
25 assemblers, and those connects are very

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 important so that the stimulus package
3 actually stimulates Ogontz Avenue here.

4 MS. RASHID: Right. That's
5 good.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: I think we
7 need to challenge ourselves not to move
8 so fast that we leave the opportunities
9 on the table.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Madam
11 Chair?

12 MS. RASHID: Point taken.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
14 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Miller.

15 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Majeedah,
16 it's my understanding that Nicetown and
17 other groups were encouraged to form a
18 coalition around job training as it
19 relates to the stimulus dollars --

20 MS. RASHID: Right.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: -- and
22 greening?

23 MS. RASHID: And that's
24 something that was initiated -- it's a
25 very good project with three CDCs and

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 some other community-based organizations,
3 and especially American Cities
4 Foundation, who is -- they're like the
5 gurus of a lot of this greening
6 initiative, especially the training
7 aspects. And thanks to Congressman Chaka
8 Fattah and the U.S. Labor Secretary, we
9 were urged to maintain this coalition and
10 identify ways that we can utilize those
11 stimulus funds. So we're real excited
12 about that.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
14 you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
16 you.

17 The Chair -- just a moment,
18 dear.

19 The Chair recognizes
20 Councilwoman Brown.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
22 Madam President.

23 The forum we just left was
24 actually hosted by the American Cities
25 Foundation, where the principal interest

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 is to make sure that green happens in
3 what some might call at the neighborhood
4 level as well.

5 So the opportunity I see
6 here -- and Councilman Jones and I and
7 others want to put this in writing -- a
8 letter to the Mayor making a request that
9 the announcement that is happening I
10 believe next week by Mark Alan Hughes,
11 who is the public policy director of the
12 City and it appears to me one of the
13 principals in the sustainability efforts
14 that will be rolled out by the
15 Administration, that everybody that cares
16 in any way, shape or form about greening,
17 sustainability, energy conservation be
18 invited to a major press conference that
19 is being led by him over the next ten
20 days. I simply don't know the date. But
21 your presence there will be important,
22 because what's missing is gaps of
23 information, misinformation. We can't
24 afford late information. And it's my
25 understanding that this important

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 announcement, it will launch, if you
3 will, the Administration's goals and
4 initiatives around how the Administration
5 plans to roll out and dispense of those
6 recovery dollars.

7 MS. RASHID: That's a good
8 suggestion, and we would like to avail
9 ourselves of that here in the Northwest,
10 because we're big on greening in the
11 Northwest.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
13 Madam President.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
15 you.

16 MR. McPHERSON: Our next panel
17 consists of Emanuel Freeman, Bruce Tabbs,
18 Dot Newton and Miriam McClare.

19 (No response.)

20 MR. McPHERSON: They left their
21 testimony.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: And
23 that will be given to the stenographer so
24 it will be made part of the record.
25 Thank you.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 MR. McPHERSON: Our next panel
3 consists of Veronika Johnson and
4 Gwendolyn Tucker.

5 (Witnesses approached witness
6 table.)

7 MR. McPHERSON: They can't
8 hear?

9 Veronika Johnson and Gwendolyn
10 Tucker. The names before that was
11 Emanuel Freeman, Bruce Tabbs, Dot Newton
12 and Miriam McClare.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
14 Hello. Please identify yourself for the
15 record.

16 MS. TUCKER: My name is
17 Gwendolyn Tucker.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Can you
19 speak into the mike? You have to pull it
20 a little closer.

21 MS. TUCKER: Is that better?

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Yes.
23 Thank you.

24 MS. TUCKER: Thank you. My
25 name is Gwendolyn Tucker. I'm happy to

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 have the opportunity to, President Verna
3 and the members of City Council, to make
4 this testimony, and I would like to first
5 thank Donna Reed Miller for attending our
6 last town hall meeting and helping
7 resolve several problems, but then again,
8 I'm here to speak for the Cliveden Hill
9 Association and their concerns about the
10 budget relative to proposed property tax
11 increases.

12 My name is Gwendolyn Tucker of
13 Mount Airy and I reside in the 8th
14 Councilmanic District. I'm here today to
15 express the concerns of the members of
16 the Cliveden Hills Association. For over
17 40 years, our organization and its
18 membership have been and continue to be
19 active in the protection, preservation,
20 development and growth of this Northwest
21 community. We continue to do so through
22 partnership with business, government and
23 community residents to maintain and
24 support a stable, safe environment.

25 To this end, we would like to

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 state our objections to any, especially
3 double digit, increase in our property
4 taxes for any duration for the following
5 reasons:

6 Number one, Philadelphia has
7 had a longstanding problem with the
8 inequitable assessment of properties
9 across City districts. Overassessment of
10 minority neighborhoods and
11 underassessment of properties and
12 districts such as ex-Senator Fumo's have
13 been documented for more than 20 years.
14 In 1981, a lawsuit was filed and settled,
15 and on November the 11th, 1994,
16 Councilman, now-Mayor Nutter and Council
17 adopted a resolution to create a Property
18 Tax Review Committee to investigate and
19 resolve this complex issue. To date,
20 assessment reform has not been
21 accomplished and is sorely needed.

22 Number two, higher property
23 taxes will have a disproportionate impact
24 on retired senior citizens. Over 60
25 percent of homeowners in our community

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 are senior citizens on fixed incomes who
3 have lived in and maintained their
4 properties for over 30 years. Senior
5 citizens in Philadelphia have already
6 been excluded from benefiting from the
7 state gambling proceeds which now go to
8 the City wage taxes.

9 Number three, given the current
10 state of the banking and accompanying
11 housing market and the increase in the
12 number of bank foreclosures on homes,
13 higher property taxes will increase the
14 likelihood of more homeowners abandoning
15 and/or losing their property, as well as
16 possible flight of valuable, stable,
17 long-supporting retired senior citizens.

18 (Bell rung.)

19 MS. TUCKER: While the ten-year
20 property tax abatement plan encourages
21 the development of new buildings, it is
22 categorically discriminatory against
23 existing homeowners, who will be assessed
24 additional property taxes to meet budget
25 shortfalls.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 We believe that an additional
3 inequitable increase in the property
4 taxes will lead to the destabilization of
5 our community and the City as a whole.
6 We, therefore, encourage the Mayor and
7 the City Council to undertake serious
8 legislative initiatives to eliminate the
9 inequities and inefficiencies in the real
10 estate property tax system as it
11 currently exists, actively pursue the
12 collection of many delinquent property
13 tax accounts, suspend or add a special
14 condition to tax abatement and tax-exempt
15 establishments, and explore alternative
16 approaches to meet the budget shortfalls
17 which do not disproportionately impact
18 upon senior citizens and minorities.

19 Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
22 you.

23 Are you testifying?

24 MS. JOHNSON: Yes.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 Please introduce yourself for the record.

3 MS. JOHNSON: My name is

4 Veronika Johnson.

5 Okay. With the lady sitting

6 next to me, I feel a little slighted.

7 I'm not just here for myself, but I think

8 just about every Councilmember up here

9 knows why I'm here. So I have three

10 minutes, so let me keep it short.

11 First of all, I'd like to thank

12 Councilman Green, your staff member Tracy

13 Hardy. I'd like to thank Darrell Clarke,

14 Donna Reed Miller. Most of all, from the

15 depth of my heart, I want to thank

16 Councilman Curtis Jones, Tumar Alexander

17 and Councilwoman Marian Tasco, your

18 Sharon Vaughn.

19 My problem is with an agency.

20 Am I allowed to identify an agency?

21 PHDC.

22 In 2001, I lost my grandmother.

23 I'll be very brief. In 2002, once

24 survived my grandfather. Found him dead

25 in the backyard. September of that year,

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 lost my grandmother. That June the
3 following year, lost my brother. After
4 that, four other people, the only people
5 I have to depend on, but nobody was
6 there. My house became in disrepair.
7 Excuse me.

8 (Witness crying.)

9 MS. JOHNSON: And my background
10 really is outreach group specialist from
11 PWDC. It is what I've done for everybody
12 else for so many years. Actually, when
13 Councilman Jones was at PCDC, I needed a
14 place to take clients. He found a place
15 for me to take 80 clients per day.

16 So if I don't speak about
17 myself, I won't get emotional.

18 So that being said, the way I
19 fight for other people, I never fought
20 for myself. I never asked for anything
21 for myself.

22 Also, going through that, my
23 daughter was pregnant, going through a
24 separation. Fiance had eight
25 (unintelligible).

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 My best friend, she died, had
3 to bury her. So my neighbor told me --
4 they moved in next door. They said, Have
5 you looked at the back of your house?

6 I never had a reason to go out
7 the back of my house, because I'm at
8 (unintelligible) and Ogontz. They had
9 just moved in. When I looked, my mouth
10 dropped. My previous neighbor on the
11 other side had lost the house to
12 sheriff's sale. I don't know if you
13 remember. In '96 when they had those
14 shootings, October 30th on the corner,
15 his son got killed. Made it to the
16 house, died in the house. A month later,
17 his daughter's -- one baby father killed
18 the other baby father inside of the
19 house. All this is documented. He
20 literally lost it, left the house. The
21 house is a total mess. I have a
22 certified letter from him.

23 Another neighbor came to me.
24 She works for PHDC. She said, You're
25 able. I never knew she was actually

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 going to be the inspector.

3 So to make a very long story
4 short, I've had six inspections. No one
5 has ever had six inspections. These
6 inspectors gave me their numbers.

7 (Bell rung.)

8 MS. JOHNSON: Their cell
9 numbers, everything.

10 So what I've been going through
11 now since 2005, if I had known being a
12 caregiver for two people, the only two
13 people I have left now, I would have done
14 something to repair it myself. They
15 approved me. They gave it to L&I.
16 Everything was a go. Every piece of
17 document that I have in here, as I said,
18 I think mostly everyone saw, one being
19 from -- originally as of last week, I
20 never applied. By the grace of God, I
21 found it that I did apply. That went
22 away. Then it was a thing I was on over
23 income. Due to Sharon Vaughn, Derek
24 Green, other people, especially Curtis
25 Jones -- I thank him -- I was able to

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 prove that I wasn't over income. Then
3 with Tumar Alexander, we all went into a
4 meeting September, and everything was
5 supposed to be okay. It wasn't about
6 over income now. It was about my
7 residency. That went away. Then after
8 the residency, they wanted to know if L&I
9 will say -- this is after I have been to
10 court four times for L&I. They wanted to
11 know if L&I would be okay with them
12 building it back up at the cost of what
13 it was.

14 Very long story short,
15 everything was a go after September. I
16 received a letter in November 21st saying
17 everything would be okay as long as I
18 removed the deck. Someone from 332 came
19 up. They were going to move the deck on
20 a Saturday. We said, No, let's wait
21 until Monday.

22 I called them on Monday. They
23 said, No, we didn't get it out yet. And
24 we know if you take the deck down, the
25 house is going to fall down. That was

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 November the 21st.

3 So with them approving me
4 November 21st saying that everything was
5 good, I said, I'll tell you what, I'll
6 use the same person you're going to use,
7 come out of my pocket and pay for the
8 deck. Okay. Everybody was all right
9 with that. Calling every day. January
10 21st I received a letter saying, No, you
11 no longer can have that. You have to pay
12 for both houses. This is the point I'm
13 making. My house, as well as the house
14 next door.

15 So my Councilman wrote the
16 letter explaining everything that I would
17 like to give all of you a copy so you can
18 see where we are. That was in January.
19 Then I received a letter in February
20 telling me, Okay, we haven't heard
21 anything from you -- and I've been
22 calling every day -- which I know isn't
23 true. If you don't respond, then we're
24 going to just consider it gone.

25 I responded in a certified

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 letter. They said they never got it.
3 That was in March. Then in April, I
4 received a letter since I hadn't
5 responded, they wouldn't take no further
6 action. In my letter I just asked them
7 to give me the scope of what they wanted.
8 I went and got a contractor. I had five
9 contractors. Then they said it had to be
10 a contractor off their list. I got their
11 list. They told me there was no such
12 list. I had to fax them the list. I got
13 the list. Then the contractor from their
14 list gave me his estimate.

15 Now, at this point, I don't
16 know where to go.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm
18 going to tell you where to go. There's a
19 gentleman sitting there who is the Chief
20 of Staff to the Mayor. I am sure that he
21 has someone with him who can take the
22 necessary notes so that I'm sure he'd be
23 very happy to look into it.

24 MS. JOHNSON: Okay.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 you.

3 MS. JOHNSON: Can I add one
4 other thing? I have been in contact with
5 Mr. Altman, Ms. McCollough.
6 Unfortunately, she had to go on vacation
7 for Portugal. So I'm not here to point
8 fingers. I just want to get answers. If
9 you're telling me this is the gentleman
10 to do it, I thank you very much.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: I
12 have full confidence that he's going to
13 be able to help you.

14 MS. JOHNSON: Lastly, because
15 I'm due back in court for the seventh
16 time April the 30th and I have to do
17 something.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Okay.
19 Thank you.

20 MS. JOHNSON: Once again, thank
21 you, Councilman Jones, Clarke, Tasco,
22 Green and, most of all, Tumar Alexander.
23 And I almost got to you, Councilman
24 Goode.

25 Thank you very much.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
3 you.

4 Thank you all.

5 Incidentally, you were talking
6 about property taxes, and I see that we
7 may have a number of seniors in the
8 audience. I do hope that people who are
9 under PACENET are taking advantage of a
10 bill that Council passed several years
11 ago whereby if you're a senior citizen,
12 own your home and you are under PACENET,
13 your property taxes will never go up
14 until such time as you sell that property
15 or, God forbid, you die and somebody else
16 should take over. But I think a lot of
17 seniors are not aware of that and
18 certainly should be. So I think that we
19 have to spread that word around, because
20 we're being told that there are thousands
21 of seniors who do come under that PACENET
22 guideline who are not applying and they
23 should be.

24 MS. TUCKER: I thank you for
25 that information, because I am not

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 familiar with it, and I did run across it
3 when I was in City Council. However, it
4 would be helpful if I can call your
5 office, Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller,
6 and get that information, and I will
7 certainly disseminate it. I do have
8 several resources within the community to
9 disseminate that and to offer the support
10 to the senior citizens.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: That
12 would be wonderful.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Actually,
14 can you just give me your e-mail address
15 and we'll get the information to you?

16 MS. TUCKER: Yes. I'll see
17 that you get it.

18 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Give it
19 to William, Gwen.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Our
21 next panel?

22 MR. McPHERSON: The next panel
23 consists of Kevin Peter, Sloane Folks,
24 Jennifer Powell-Folks.

25 (Witnesses approached witness

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 table.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
4 Hello. Kindly identify yourself for the
5 record.

6 MR. PETER: Hi. My name is
7 Kevin Peter. I'm the Executive
8 Vice-President of the Board of Directors
9 of West Mount Airy Neighbors.

10 Thank you, President Verna,
11 Councilwoman Miller, Councilwoman Tasco,
12 for organizing this today and for the
13 rest of the Councilmembers for being here
14 listening to us.

15 We're grateful for the
16 opportunity to give testimony on City
17 Council's current fiscal crisis -- on the
18 City's, rather, fiscal crisis and the
19 challenging choices our elected officials
20 will make in the next few months to
21 assure that Philadelphia will have the
22 revenues it needs to retain essential
23 services.

24 In preparation for this
25 testimony, West Mount Airy Neighbors'

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 Board of Directors discussed options for
3 service cuts and tax increases at its
4 monthly Board meeting on April 14th, and
5 our Quality of Life Committee dedicated
6 its meeting on April 16th to a public
7 conversation about these matters within
8 our neighborhood.

9 With regard to raising revenue,
10 WMAN's Board and the community members we
11 heard from believe strongly that property
12 tax increases cannot form the largest
13 share of the revenue source. We urge
14 Council and the Mayor to consider
15 eliminating or reducing the tax abatement
16 on new development and increasing the
17 wage tax temporarily.

18 WMAN Board members also
19 expressed concern that a two-year
20 temporary increase in the property tax
21 would indeed become permanent as the wage
22 tax, which was originally adopted on a
23 temporary basis, became permanent many
24 years ago. How this proposed temporary
25 cut would fit with the actual value

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 project was also a concern. We've
3 already heard from residents within West
4 Mount Airy who are planning to move out
5 of the City if the property tax increase
6 passes. Finally, we are deeply worried
7 about the effect of the property tax
8 increase on low-income and fixed-income
9 residents of our community.

10 With regard to service cuts, we
11 echo the values expressed in the recent
12 Great Expectations citizen budget
13 workshops that we do not want to see cuts
14 to the Police and Fire Departments. We
15 also value the work the Department of
16 Licenses and Inspections does and
17 recognize that their ranks were deeply
18 cut during the previous Mayor's tenure.
19 We want their funding to continue at
20 current levels. As West Mount Airy
21 enjoys a long border with Fairmount Park,
22 we want funding to that essential amenity
23 to continue at its current level, if not
24 at the more generous level contemplated
25 before this crisis developed, and we

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 would like single-stream recycling to
3 continue.

4 West Mount Airy is a community
5 which enjoys a remarkable level of civic
6 engagement in the issues of the day, and
7 we are proud of the way in which our
8 residents come forward to assist City
9 government in caring for our city.

10 Through West Mount Airy Neighbors,
11 volunteers care for Ned Wolf Park, Emlen
12 Circle and other green parts of the
13 community. West Mount Airy Neighbors is
14 a partner organization with Fairmount
15 Park, and our Streetscape Committee
16 engages in many activities to beautify
17 our community, including twice-annual
18 tree plantings. We work closely with the
19 14th District Police and with our local
20 Town Watches to support their efforts,
21 and we use our 1,100-address e-mail list
22 to promote safety by distributing Safety
23 Alerts about crime incidents, as well as
24 crime prevention information and
25 resources. We also co-sponsor with our

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 sister organization, East Mount Airy
3 Neighbors, the Mount Airy Safety Network
4 website, which offers crime prevention
5 tips and other vital information.

6 Perhaps most important, West Mount Airy
7 Neighbors continues to work on the most
8 essential issue that led to our founding
9 50 years ago: to maintain the racial
10 economic diversity that makes our
11 neighborhood and city vibrant, vital and
12 welcoming to all.

13 (Bell rung.)

14 MR. PETER: In closing, we
15 return to the current crisis and look
16 ahead to the future. We believe that it
17 is essential that the City government
18 right size itself for a smaller
19 population. We understand that current
20 staff openings are either not being
21 filled or are being filled on a
22 provisional basis, and we applaud those
23 steps. However, we urge City Council and
24 the Mayor to engage in a long-term,
25 serious effort to make the difficult

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 choices necessary to bring our government
3 in line with our city's size and our
4 capacity to raise revenues and fund
5 necessary services. We're grateful for
6 this opportunity to share our views.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
8 you very much.

9 I would ask everyone to try to
10 stay within the time limit, because we
11 have a number of people that signed up to
12 testify and we would like to give
13 everybody that opportunity. We did
14 promise the Bishop that we would actually
15 be out of here by 7 o'clock, and I see
16 the time is drawing very near. So if you
17 would try to be as concise as possible,
18 we would appreciate it. Thank you.

19 Please identify yourself for
20 the record.

21 MR. FOLKS: Good afternoon,
22 Council.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
24 afternoon.

25 MR. FOLKS: My name is Sloane

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 Folks. I am the Director of Economic
3 Development and Planning for Central
4 Germantown Council. I thank you for the
5 opportunity to testify, and today I'm
6 going to be testifying on behalf of
7 funding for non-profits and our community
8 development corporations.

9 Again, my name is Sloane Folks
10 and I'm the Director of Economic
11 Development and Planning for the Central
12 Germantown Council. Today I am here to
13 testify in favor of public funding for
14 non-profits and CDCs.

15 Central Germantown Council is a
16 non-profit community development
17 organization which works in the 19144 zip
18 code, census tract 241 and has benefited
19 greatly from the infusion of Community
20 Development Block Grant funding.
21 Throughout my career working with
22 non-profit organizations and municipal
23 authorities in the City of Philadelphia,
24 I have witnessed infusions of direct and
25 indirect public funding assist in local

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 job creation, housing counseling, career
3 counseling assistance and construction
4 for very low, low and moderate-income
5 families. More specifically, public
6 funding has been responsible for the
7 following programs in which I have been
8 involved:

9 The creation of SBA
10 intermediary entities assisting small
11 business borrowers in the development of
12 their business plans and loan packaging,
13 which has subsequently been submitted to
14 the SBA for increased qualification and
15 the possibility of SBA guaranteed loans;
16 National Trust for Historic
17 Preservation-designated Main Street
18 programs both in Germantown and
19 Frankford, which were two of only a
20 handful of pilot programs in urban
21 business districts around the country.
22 Both Germantown and Frankford Main Street
23 programs focus on revitalization of the
24 business corridors through a proven
25 five-point approach to economic

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 revitalization. These points include
3 organizational development, marketing and
4 promotional activities, design and
5 streetscape implementation, quality of
6 life, and economic restructuring for the
7 business corridor.

8 The Germantown Special Services
9 District is a privately directed
10 municipal authority charged with the
11 responsibility to provide the Germantown
12 business corridor with complimentary
13 sidewalk sweeping services and safety
14 ambassadors who act as the eyes and the
15 ears of the police on Germantown Avenue,
16 as well as providing welcoming presence
17 to visitors and shoppers.

18 CDBG funding has allowed each
19 of these initiatives to begin or maintain
20 delivery of services to the community and
21 has contributed to the following increase
22 in these growth indicators:

23 A net new increase in
24 businesses in the Germantown corridor,
25 the creation of new permanent jobs in the

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 community. Private sector investment
3 presently in Germantown Avenue and
4 Central Germantown is in the order of
5 more than \$4 million.

6 As has been demonstrated, the
7 use of public funding has been a critical
8 stimulus in the economic development and
9 commercial revitalization of the
10 Germantown community, as well as
11 instrumental in the creation of a more
12 livable and enduring community.

13 I fully urge the continued
14 support of public funding for economic
15 development initiatives for very low, low
16 and moderate-income communities.

17 Thank you for your time.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
19 you.

20 Good evening. Please identify
21 yourself for the record.

22 MS. POWELL-FOLKS: My name is
23 Jennifer Powell-Folks. I am the Program
24 Director for Giving of Self Partnership.
25 Giving honor to God and the great Pastor

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 of this church and Mother Morris and the
3 Honorable Councilwomen Tasco and Reed
4 Miller by which the programs that we
5 operate are in the 8th and 9th Council
6 District.

7 I am engaged as the Program
8 Director, which is human service, and for
9 some of us who know, it's GOSP. We're
10 located at 6101 Limekiln Pike in the 8th
11 Council District and we operate
12 out-of-school-time programs at Second
13 Macedonia Baptist Church, which is in the
14 9th Council District. So I'm doubly
15 blessed with two wonderful ladies who
16 support us, and I thank you.

17 We are a community-based
18 organization that functions as a
19 community center, with children and youth
20 services, senior services, medical
21 offices and a daycare center. I have had
22 the privilege of working with and for the
23 late Reverend Dr. Thomas Ritter, Founder
24 of Giving of Self Partnership, Co-Founder
25 of OIC and the Pastor of Second Macedonia

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 Baptist Church for 50 years. And he's
3 greatly missed.

4 I am testifying on behalf of
5 public funding to human service agencies
6 in the prospective Council districts and,
7 most especially, citywide. Since 2004, I
8 have developed and managed children and
9 youth services to residents and schools
10 that operate because of public funding.
11 Just last fiscal year, we worked with
12 over 500 people, more than 300 children
13 and over 100 families in desperate need
14 of counseling, mentoring and sustainable
15 living situations. I am here to serve
16 and to implore Council to limit or
17 eliminate any cuts to funding to many of
18 the departments that service children and
19 families.

20 Presently, Giving of Self
21 Partnership's children and youth services
22 are funded through DHS, and we have been
23 previously funded by the Department of
24 Behavioral Health, and our services
25 include qualified in-home case

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 management, in-home violence prevention
3 and de-escalation groups, family support
4 and linkage services, promotion of peace,
5 and youth-led community service, which
6 includes summer camps, after-school
7 programs and after-school clubs.

8 Agencies like Giving of Self
9 Partnership are the last line of defense
10 when children are beginning to go astray,
11 to protect those in harm's way, provide
12 mentorship and to direct children towards
13 positive directions, and our
14 out-of-school-time programs are safe
15 havens for children in dangerous
16 situations. In short, we provide
17 qualified services to disenfranchised
18 populations or, in plain language, we
19 stand against the evil forces out to
20 destroy our children and our families.

21 The goal of programs like ours
22 that service children and keep them off
23 the streets are to increase their
24 academic success, reduce youth violent
25 behaviors, stabilize their family and

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 living situations, and give them the
3 ability to access and utilize appropriate
4 community supports.

5 (Bell rung.)

6 MS. POWELL-FOLKS: Although
7 there are a number of goals I could go
8 into, I'm going to try and keep it brief,
9 and simply, our goals feed directly into
10 the City's goals to improve
11 Philadelphia's service delivery.

12 Appropriate funding levels will increase
13 opportunities to better support youth,
14 families and communities and ensure the
15 safety, permanency and well-being.

16 Finally, as a provider of
17 necessary youth services, because in some
18 cases we are the only hope families have
19 of supporting and saving their children,
20 which was Reverend Ritter's vision, I
21 pray Council follows you ladies' generous
22 lead and continue to support agencies
23 like ours with the same level of funding,
24 because if we fail to appropriately
25 support children, especially K through

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 8th grades, we will fail them and they
3 will be lost for life.

4 Thank you.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
6 you very much.

7 Any questions or comments from
8 members of the Committee?

9 The Chair recognizes Councilman
10 Green.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
12 and thank you for all the work you do in
13 the City of Philadelphia, all three of
14 you that testified.

15 I just wanted to make a fact
16 known that I think is often missed in the
17 debate we've been having around the
18 budget, and that is related to your
19 comment, sir, from Mount Airy USA.

20 The Administration -- there is
21 currently a hiring freeze in City
22 government. However, for next year in
23 many, many departments, they are
24 increasing the number of positions paid
25 for out of the General Fund in Class 100,

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 and that creates, depending on how many
3 you think are critical or not, a \$10 to,
4 say, \$30 million availability, and I'd
5 just like to take a quick poll. How many
6 people think the City should -- raise
7 your hand if you agree with this concept.
8 How many people do you think the City
9 should extend its hiring freeze into next
10 year before we raise taxes?

11 (Audience members raising their
12 hands.)

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

14 Thank you, Madam Chair.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

16 You're welcome.

17 MR. PETER: If I could just
18 respond to that quickly. Many of us who
19 work in the private sector are extending
20 our hiring freezes well into next year.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
23 you.

24 The Chair recognizes
25 Councilwoman Miller.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I just
3 want to thank you for coming in, and
4 don't forget to leave us a copy if your
5 testimony is written. Leave us a copy.
6 Okay?

7 Thank you.

8 MR. McPHERSON: Our next panel
9 consists of Christie Balka, Leni Johnson
10 and Jerome Knowling.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Hi,
12 Christie.

13 Please identify yourself for
14 the record and proceed with your
15 testimony.

16 MS. BALKA: Good evening. My
17 name is Christie Balka and I want to
18 thank Council for the opportunity to
19 testify at this community hearing. It's
20 an honor to speak after the last speaker.
21 I am the Director of Childcare and Budget
22 Policy for Public Citizens for Children
23 and Youth. I'm also a lifelong resident
24 of Northwest Philadelphia. I was born
25 and raised here, attended schools here,

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 own a home about a mile from here, and
3 have raised two children here.

4 When I was growing up, a great
5 deal was made about the fact that in
6 Northwest Philadelphia we live and work
7 together across racial differences. Too
8 little was made of our economic
9 differences, which have only increased
10 since I was a child.

11 Today, some of the most
12 affluent people in our city make
13 Northwest Philadelphia their home, as do
14 some of those who are the most
15 economically challenged. Economic
16 hardship, although very much present, is
17 often invisible in our community, but in
18 the last census, nearly one in four
19 children in Northwest Philadelphia lived
20 in poverty.

21 Today, more than ten percent of
22 pregnant women in the Northwest receive
23 no -- received late or no prenatal care,
24 and almost one in seven children were
25 born at low birth rate, but there were

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 stark differences from one zip code area
3 to another in this part of the City.

4 Throughout the Northwest,
5 children had elevated blood levels that
6 were higher than the citywide average,
7 putting them at risk for lead poisoning.
8 There are only a dozen childcare centers
9 in Northwest Philadelphia that meet state
10 standards for high quality, and excluding
11 Girls High and Central, 86 percent of
12 students attending senior high in
13 Northwest Philadelphia scored at or below
14 basic in reading, and 79 percent scored
15 basic or below basic in math.

16 After-school and family support
17 programs are in short supply, and our
18 libraries are not open full time.

19 So here we are, some of the
20 most affluent residents of the City,
21 living adjacent to some of the most
22 hard-pressed. In some ways, the
23 Northwest is a microcosm of a city in
24 which some residents rely more heavily on
25 public services and some have a greater

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 capacity to pay for those services with
3 tax dollars.

4 In the face of the global
5 economic meltdown, cutting services for
6 children and youth would only increase
7 the disparities that we find in our
8 community. Study after study shows us
9 that less prenatal care, fewer parenting
10 programs, after-school programs,
11 recreational opportunities, summer
12 internships and hours spent in the
13 library result in higher infant
14 mortality, lower academic achievement,
15 less job readiness, higher unemployment
16 and more violence. This would be
17 disastrous for our community and for our
18 city. Cuts like the ones being proposed
19 are simply not an option.

20 While no one likes the thought
21 of raising taxes, I urge you as Council
22 to raise taxes in order to preserve
23 services for our children and youth.

24 (Bell rung.)

25 MS. BALK: I hope you'll raise

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 taxes in a way that reflects our
3 communities and our city's economic
4 diversity. First, make sure everyone,
5 individuals who are living in abated
6 properties, large businesses that are
7 doing business here but don't pay tax
8 here, and tax delinquents, pay their fair
9 share. But we understand that this won't
10 be enough. So I urge you to enact tax
11 increases, if only temporarily, that ask
12 more of those who can afford to pay and
13 less of those who cannot. Wage and
14 business taxes fit the bill and so might
15 a property tax increase that includes
16 exemptions or circuit breakers for those
17 on limited income, including seniors.

18 PCCY urges you to support any
19 tax increase that is fair and affordable
20 for most residents. We urge you to think
21 about increasing taxes as a way to shore
22 up the next generation of children and
23 youth in the City.

24 I appreciate the opportunity to
25 speak to you this evening and I

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 appreciate all your support for children
3 and youth.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
5 you.

6 Any questions or comments from
7 members of the Committee?

8 (No response.)

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
10 you again.

11 Do we have Leni Johnson or
12 Jerome Knowling here?

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
15 Mr. McPherson, please call the next
16 panel.

17 (Witness approached witness
18 table.)

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
20 evening. Please identify yourself for
21 the record.

22 MR. KNOWLING: My name is
23 Jerome Knowling. I'm coming here on
24 behalf of the coalition to save the
25 library, the Friends of the Free Library

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 at the Ogontz-Cohen branch of the
3 library.

4 What I'm coming to talk about
5 is the impact on the budget cuts in the
6 branches of the Free Library. Number
7 one, the staffing. None of the 111
8 positions lost to the layoffs and
9 transferred to the 3-1-1 call center has
10 been restored.

11 Number two, full-time municipal
12 guards laid off, one of the 11 in the
13 system. Twenty percent of the branches
14 are without full-time guards.

15 Three, hours of operations are
16 drastically reduced now on a
17 five-day-week schedule instead of
18 six-day, Monday through Friday, open
19 alternate Saturdays and closed alternate
20 Mondays. Confusing to patrons who cannot
21 keep track of the hours of operation,
22 many of the doors to find the library
23 closed. Schedules are posted inside and
24 outside of the building, but much
25 confusion remains. Many disgruntled

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 patrons who complain to front-line staff.

3 Five, minimum of four staff
4 needed to open in order to open the
5 library, including the security guard.
6 Otherwise, staff is redeployed to another
7 branch and the library is closed for the
8 day.

9 Five, material, budgets, books,
10 magazines, newspapers, music CDs and
11 videos cut by 30 percent.

12 Six, no money to purchase
13 summer reading books, lists, for students
14 in Grades 1 through 12. A donor book
15 drive is in place to try to provide a
16 supply of these titles.

17 Number seven, no budget for the
18 summer reading program for children,
19 teens or adults.

20 Number eight, all programming
21 suspended due to uncertainty of
22 schedules. No programs can be booked in
23 advance.

24 Number nine, after-school
25 program budgets cut and hours for

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 after-school leader and student

3 assistance program eliminated.

4 Number ten, Sunday hours

5 eliminated in three regional libraries,

6 west, north and south, in the Northwest

7 area of the City. Sunday hours only at

8 the Central Building.

9 Outreach activities suspended.

10 Staff cannot spend time away from the

11 branch visiting schools, daycare centers.

12 No funds for Saturday overtime for staff

13 to participate in community events,

14 health fairs, et cetera.

15 Number 12, which is the last,

16 staff overworked and low morale. Stress

17 rate high due to uncertainty about the

18 future.

19 Just one more thing I would

20 like to say, the branch of Ogontz

21 Library, David Cohen, he fought very hard

22 to get this library here. When I was a

23 child --

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: We

25 know.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 (Bell rung.)

3 MR. KNOWLING: When I was a
4 child, we were looking for this library
5 to come, and we're ready to fight to keep
6 this library here.

7 Thank you very much.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
9 you. Thank you, Mr. Knowling.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. McPHERSON: Our next panel
12 consists of Reverend Dr. Mattie Pinkney,
13 Tyvonne Mackey, Dorothy Zarr, Anthony
14 Richardson and Mattie Carter.

15 (Witnesses approached witness
16 table.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
18 evening. Please identify yourself for
19 the record and proceed with your
20 testimony.

21 REVEREND RICHARDSON: My name
22 is Reverend Anthony Richardson from the
23 Agape Baptist Church.

24 I'm here not in any official
25 capacity for the church, but as a

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 concerned citizen, and I'd like to thank
3 this Council for allowing me to testify.

4 I'm here to talk about the
5 increase in taxes. I don't know how
6 we're going to do it. I mean, with our
7 current recession, most people have lost
8 their jobs, and homes are being
9 foreclosed on, and unemployment checks
10 are stretched as far as they could go to
11 cover their basic living expenses.
12 Families are in need of healthcare and
13 childcare. It just doesn't seem like
14 this is the appropriate time for a tax
15 increase.

16 (Applause.)

17 REVEREND RICHARDSON: I do
18 understand -- I won't be long.

19 I do understand that these tax
20 dollars do fund our education and things
21 like that. I work for a daycare. I work
22 for the Agape Community Outreach
23 Services, and I know how important
24 education is. As our day-to-day
25 operations, our standards are that our

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 children have moral values and that they
3 learn how to study and prepare themselves
4 and that they may not be so easily
5 compromised as they move on into middle
6 school and to high school. And we house
7 an after-school program and a daycare.

8 So I do know the value of
9 education and I do understand that our
10 tax dollars fund these things, but I say
11 to the Council today, if there is any
12 way, any kind of way possible that we can
13 do this thing without raising the taxes,
14 I challenge you to find a way. I
15 challenge each and every one of you to
16 find a way.

17 Times are hard. Times are
18 tough. We know that our children need
19 education. Education is one of the most
20 important things that's going on now.
21 Without education, life is at a zero
22 level.

23 So I'm just asking if this
24 Council can put their heads together and
25 find a way that we can get around this

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 tax increase and keep some of these
3 programs going, the educational programs
4 going, I ask that you would do so.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
7 you.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
10 you very much.

11 Deacon Carter: Praise the
12 Lord.

13 My name is Deacon Mattie Carter
14 from Agape Baptist Church and I'm here to
15 speak for the senior citizens.

16 (Applause.)

17 Deacon Carter: I am a senior
18 citizen and I'm on a fixed income, and
19 property tax increasing and increase of
20 medical increases and insurance
21 increases, and when you're 80 years old,
22 how can you do it? Because it's tough.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: God
25 bless you. God bless you.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 DEACON CARTER: People that has
3 raised their children up from babies here
4 has had to move out of Mount Airy because
5 they couldn't afford their house anymore.
6 I mean senior citizens like me. And
7 there are senior citizens that come to
8 the church right now and they complain
9 about this going up, that going up and
10 they can't afford it. What can you do?
11 Some of them even going in shelters.

12 So, I mean, is there any way
13 that things can change up a little bit
14 for our senior citizens, including me?

15 Amen.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
18 You're adorable.

19 DEACON CARTER: On fixed income
20 you live day by day, you know.
21 Hallelujah. You just have to live on day
22 by day. But can't y'all do us a little
23 bit better and not just let us have to go
24 out of the homes we've been in for years
25 because we can't afford the tax increase,

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 the property increase and, for God sakes,
3 the insurance?

4 Amen. All I'm going to say is,
5 Help.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
7 you.

8 The Chair recognizes --
9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Ma'am, are
11 you aware that you can't call yourself a
12 senior citizen when you're 39?

13 DEACON CARTER: Bless the Lord.
14 I was born 1928, August the 24th, 1928.
15 God bless you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
17 Chair recognizes Councilman Green.

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
19 Madam Chair.

20 The President mentioned
21 PACENET. I just wanted to let people in
22 the audience know, if you're a single
23 person over 65, you can apply for that if
24 you make up to \$23,500 a year, and if
25 you're a married couple living together,

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 you can apply for PACENET, which, as the
3 President said, will freeze your taxes
4 while you stay in that house, if you make
5 up to \$31,500 a year.

6 Thank you.

7 DEACON CARTER: Thank you very
8 much.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
10 you both very much.

11 Any other questions or comments
12 from members of the Committee?

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
15 you again.

16 Our next panel?

17 MR. MCPHERSON: Consists of
18 Edward Roberson --

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Just
20 a moment, please.

21 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I just
22 wanted to add to what Councilman Green
23 said. You can sit down. I just wanted
24 to say that, Madam President, with
25 respect to the PACENET, normally it's a

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 form received in your real estate tax
3 bill, but this particular year because we
4 changed the bill to take it from 14,000
5 to 23,000, that number was not in the old
6 tax bill, but the Administration has
7 indicated that you can still get that
8 program for your house and yourself up
9 until October of this year. Am I
10 correct? So if you fall under that
11 guideline, contact the Revenue Department
12 or call one of your Councilpeople, and
13 we'll make sure that you get the form to
14 take advantage of that program.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
16 you.

17 MR. McPherson: The next panel
18 consists of Edward Roberson, Junette
19 Marcano, William Evans and Gloria Gilman.

20 (Witnesses approached witness
21 table.)

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
23 evening. Kindly identify yourself for
24 the record.

25 MR. Roberson: Certainly.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 First of all, I want to say good
3 afternoon to all, especially to my
4 Councilwoman, Marian Tasco. Thank you
5 for organizing this, along with
6 Councilwoman Reed and hello to Blondell,
7 former Simmons Dance Company. So we have
8 a nice relationship, a long friendship
9 with a lot of people here.

10 My name is Edward Roberson.

11 I'm the current President of the Melrose
12 Park Garden Civic Association, and I'm
13 here -- there's been a lot of testimony
14 about taxes and wages and the budget. I
15 understand that. I understand the City
16 is operating and/or projected to operate
17 at a budget deficit for the next five
18 years. However, my testimony will focus
19 on a public safety and health issue.

20 For many years, I have
21 relentlessly tried to have the back
22 driveways repaired. This is a pet peeve
23 of mine.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: And I
25 think of Councilwoman Tasco's.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 MR. ROBERSON: Yes. I had
3 succeeded in getting a Band-Aid repair
4 for one section of one driveway. That
5 work was done several years ago, and now
6 the concrete has cracked and repairs are
7 needed again. There are two other cracks
8 in this same section. This has created a
9 very dangerous situation. Damage to cars
10 and, even more importantly, medical
11 issues could arise, because our children
12 play in these areas.

13 Perhaps I'm naive. I've
14 contacted contractors and received
15 estimates. However, my attempts to
16 retrieve money from homeowners have
17 failed. I may have to try another
18 technique. Maybe I'll try the Pied Piper
19 technique: Dangle something in front of
20 them. I don't know what to dangle,
21 though.

22 Therefore, because of the
23 existing dangerous and hazardous
24 conditions of these driveways, I'm here
25 to solicit help from the City and City

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 Council. If the City of Philadelphia has
3 to budget money to repair driveways and
4 then assess each homeowner, so be it.
5 And this was already done with a
6 retaining wall in our area. The means
7 will justify the end.

8 If these repairs are not made,
9 the Melrose Park Garden community will
10 face another problem, damage to our
11 homes, foundations shifting, property
12 becoming unsettled. This will occur over
13 a period of time when there is a rain
14 runoff. If this continues unresolved,
15 our community will face the same
16 devastation that happened in the Logan
17 area, and we don't want that to happen.

18 The Melrose Park Garden
19 community is a very strong community.
20 Our property value has gone up each year
21 I've lived there with my wife and my twin
22 daughters, and it's a good community.
23 But we need your help. I'm here on
24 behalf of Melrose Park Garden, but I'm
25 quite sure other communities are going

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 through the same problem.

3 (Bell rung.)

4 MR. ROBERSON: Something has to
5 be done.

6 And I just want to thank you
7 for your time and anticipated cooperation
8 in this matter.

9 Thank you.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
11 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Tasco.

12 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you
13 so much, Mr. Roberson, for coming out.
14 If we hadn't had this crisis in the
15 budget, we're working with the Streets
16 Department on the proposal that I've put
17 in with them, and they're very positive
18 about getting it done. It's just that we
19 got sidetracked. So we're still on --
20 the issue is still before us and we're
21 still going to try to work it out.

22 MR. ROBERSON: I know you're a
23 hard worker.

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: We know --
25 most people don't want the City to pay.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 They want a process by which everybody
3 pays, and that's what we're working on.

4 MR. ROBERSON: Very good.

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: So, Clay,
6 Rina has been working with us and if she
7 could get back on this issue, I'd
8 appreciate it very much.

9 Thank you.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
11 you.

12 The Chair recognizes Councilman
13 Jones.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
15 Madam President.

16 I appreciate your testimony.
17 I, like Councilwoman Tasco, share a
18 district that is comprised of driveways
19 and alleys. And I'm going to throw
20 alleys in there as well.

21 Early on in my administration
22 here in Council, she educated me about
23 some of the issues regarded by the
24 Administration on how we approach this.
25 It is my opinion that as we start to

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 define what a shovel-ready project is and
3 we start to define what infrastructure
4 is, this public safety issue is more
5 important than we may be giving it credit
6 for.

7 If you look at an alley -- and
8 you don't have them in Mount Airy, but in
9 West Philly where I come from, we have
10 alleys where you go through and as a kid,
11 I must admit, I played in them. But more
12 important than the play area is how
13 first-responders get to the public in
14 cases of fire, in cases of police action.
15 So it is a public safety issue, and if
16 they cannot access these common areas and
17 get to vulnerable people like seniors and
18 chase perpetrators, then we are putting
19 ourselves in a public safety hazard.

20 So I share with my colleague,
21 Councilwoman Tasco, the urgency that even
22 though we are in a budget deficit -- and
23 I understand it, I see the numbers, but
24 we should be planning for the day when we
25 are not. And shovel-ready to me means a

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 driveway that some Volkswagens have
3 disappeared in that we should be filling
4 and we should be taking care of those
5 common areas.

6 Thank you, Madam President.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
8 you.

9 Our next speaker, please.

10 MS. Gilman: Good afternoon.
11 My name is Gloria Gilman. Thank you for
12 the opportunity to present testimony on
13 behalf of Philly Neighborhood Networks
14 and the Coalition for Essential Services.

15 Philly Neighborhood Networks is
16 a citywide grassroots organization
17 dedicated to educating Philadelphians
18 about the political process and how to
19 utilize it through both the electoral
20 process and by issue organizing to
21 achieve a more just society. We have
22 joined with over 30 organizations to
23 create the Essential Services Coalition,
24 representing many tens of thousands of
25 Philadelphians throughout the City, with

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 the purpose of advocating to preserve the
3 essential services provided by the City
4 in a fair and equitable tax -- by fair
5 and equitable taxation of all
6 stakeholders.

7 I have lived most of my life in
8 Philadelphia, the last 22 years in Mount
9 Airy, and as a sole practitioner
10 attorney, I'm a small business owner. I
11 love the uniqueness of Philadelphia, but
12 will be even prouder of our city when our
13 tax structure reflects the values and
14 exists to serve the needs of the majority
15 of the people who reside and work here.

16 We ask that City Council adopt
17 a budget that is not dependent upon state
18 approval, that invests in our
19 neighborhoods, creates quality jobs for
20 our residents and is adequately funded by
21 a progressive tax system in which
22 corporations, large non-profits and
23 individuals pay their fair share.

24 We believe that you can achieve
25 this by approving a Fiscal Year 2010

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 budget based upon real revenue within the
3 City's control, by rejecting the Mayor's
4 Plan B contingency budget with its
5 drastic cuts to services, which the Mayor
6 will propose if the state does not
7 approve the sales tax increase, and by
8 fully funding essential services. This
9 means not only rejecting the Mayor's
10 proposed cuts to services in Plan A, but
11 restoring the cuts already made in the
12 last year to pre-crisis levels.

13 We believe that you can
14 increase taxes in such a way that they're
15 broad-based and fair, placing a greater
16 burden on those most able to pay and
17 protecting those least able to sustain
18 increased taxes from additional burdens,
19 whether on sales or property taxes or on
20 the use of City services, such as the
21 health centers, and by reaching fair and
22 just contracts with City workers and
23 allowing the budget process to continue
24 to be fully transparent with continued
25 public input. We truly appreciate your

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 giving us this opportunity to have input
3 today.

4 An analysis of the tax burden
5 on business will reveal that contrary to
6 the Mayor's assertions and the beliefs we
7 have been fed by the media, the business
8 tax burden is not substantial in this
9 city. The Mayor tells us that the
10 business privilege tax chases business
11 away from the City and that any increase
12 will make the City less attractive to new
13 businesses, but research reveals that
14 what new businesses look for is not low
15 taxes, but the quality of life a city
16 provides, the achievement level of its
17 schools, the educational level and
18 availability of the workforce, the
19 existence of cultural activities, the
20 maintenance of parks and recreational
21 opportunities. Instead of asking
22 business to contribute its fair share to
23 the City, the Mayor wishes to place an
24 additional unbalanced substantial burden
25 on individual homeowners through

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 increased property taxes and on
3 individuals through a sales tax increase,
4 which would impose a greater burden on an
5 individual the lower the person's income.

6 We have an unusual situation in
7 Philadelphia.

8 (Bell rung.)

9 MS. GILMAN: We have many low
10 income and lower/middle income families
11 who are homeowners and who live within
12 the boundaries of the City. That is part
13 of what accounts for the unique fabric of
14 Philadelphia. We need our tax structure
15 to support people keeping and maintaining
16 these homes and strengthening our
17 neighborhoods by having policies friendly
18 to small business. We, therefore, call
19 for rolling back the gross receipts tax
20 portion of the business privilege tax to
21 its former level of 0.002875 -- that's
22 double its current rate -- while
23 exempting all businesses grossing less
24 than \$500,000 in receipts. This would
25 exempt 85 percent of all business

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 taxpayers, thereby stimulating small
3 business growth and employment by
4 imposing a temporary and not overly
5 burdensome increased tax on the larger
6 businesses most able to absorb an
7 increase. Thus, a business with gross
8 receipts of \$501,000 would pay only an
9 additional \$720 annually. Yet, the City
10 would raise \$70 million a year.

11 Pittsburgh and Harrisburg
12 already benefit from having dual classes
13 of business taxpayers. Many of the
14 businesses who would wind up paying this
15 tax are located outside the City
16 boundaries, and this is the only tax that
17 they contribute to the City despite the
18 benefits they receive from doing business
19 here. As it is so minimal, it is not
20 credible that any of these businesses
21 would opt instead to cease doing business
22 in the City.

23 We also call for a rollback of
24 the City wage tax temporarily to the 2004
25 levels, while implementing the

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 already-passed Working Families Wage Tax
3 Rebate to protect lower income families.
4 This would bring an estimated additional
5 \$322 million annually. Further, wage
6 taxes should not be reduced as planned by
7 the gambling revenues, as this is no time
8 to cut taxes to celebrate new revenues.

9 City Council should take
10 advantage of the opportunity to redirect
11 any gambling revenues, now at \$80
12 million, received to other needs. We
13 also urge you to equalize wage taxes for
14 those who work within the City, but live
15 outside it with those who live and work
16 here.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

18 Excuse me. Do you mind abbreviating --

19 MS. Gilman: I'll speed it up,
20 but these are important issues --

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: --
22 the remainder? It's very important, very
23 interesting, but we have any number of
24 people that would like an opportunity to
25 testify.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 MS. GILMAN: I'm almost done.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
4 you.

5 MS. GILMAN: We unfortunately
6 have few ways to obtain appropriate
7 contribution to the City from those who
8 benefit from the City but live outside
9 our region. This would be one way to
10 help bridge that gap and would be
11 expected to bring in an additional \$71
12 million annually.

13 There is widespread agreement
14 that our current property tax system is
15 arbitrary and discriminatory with an
16 unfair burden on low-income and minority
17 homeowners and needs to be made fairer to
18 all property owners. Raising property
19 taxes prior to making the system more
20 equitable substantially increases the
21 discriminatory impact. Once we have made
22 the system more equitable, if we wish to
23 raise taxes, we then need to protect
24 those least able to handle an increase in
25 taxes: the poor, elderly and others on

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 fixed incomes.

3 We, therefore, ask you to
4 consider providing homestead exemptions
5 and to advocate such from the state, and
6 circuit breakers, if that would be
7 required. Further, the current ten-year
8 tax abatement program, which has
9 disproportionately benefited wealthy
10 homeowners and developers, should be
11 halted, as it is a wasteful, inefficient
12 means of attracting new residents and
13 development. The Center City District
14 has determined that it was an
15 insignificant reason new residents moved
16 to the City.

17 The sales tax is regressive and
18 imposes a much greater burden on
19 low-income people than on wealthier
20 individuals. It harms small businesses,
21 who depend on local residents to purchase
22 their goods, and it cannot be changed
23 without approval from Harrisburg.

24 Please do not pass a budget for
25 this coming year that depends on

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 Harrisburg's cooperation, for we cannot
3 count on that. If the budget ultimately
4 fails because these funds do not get
5 approved, then you, City Council, give up
6 your right to establish the budget to the
7 Mayor, who can step in and take whatever
8 remedial action he deems necessary.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

10 Again, I'm going to ask you to summarize.

11 MS. GILMAN: I have one
12 sentence left.

13 You, our Councilpeople, must
14 stand up for the residents of
15 Philadelphia by passing a budget that's
16 within your control and that promotes the
17 best interest of all people by a fair and
18 equitable tax system with proportional
19 burdens on all stakeholders to protect
20 our pre-crisis service levels.

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
23 you very much.

24 (Applause.)

25 MR. EVANS: Good afternoon.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 Good evening to the Council --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I'm
4 so sorry.

5 Councilman Goode, you want to
6 be recognized?

7 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,
8 Madam President.

9 Ms. Gilman, I believe you
10 mentioned three times in your testimony
11 that City Council should not rely upon
12 Harrisburg in passing its budget, that we
13 should take all action that is already
14 within our authority. Yet, in terms of
15 your specific recommendations, you
16 recommended a two-tier system in terms of
17 gross receipts tax?

18 MS. GILMAN: The gross receipts
19 tax, I believe that you can do that
20 without Harrisburg's approval.

21 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I don't
22 believe we can.

23 MS. GILMAN: Well, we'll
24 provide whatever research we can to
25 support.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Well, did
3 you research it? I mean, did you
4 research it in terms of whether it's
5 within our authority?

6 MS. GILMAN: I do believe that
7 that there are -- that Pittsburgh has a
8 two-tier system and we could do so as
9 well.

10 COUNCILMAN GOODE: If
11 Pittsburgh has a two-tier system, it
12 doesn't mean that Philadelphia has the
13 authority to have a two-tier system.

14 MS. GILMAN: Well, they have
15 not been given permission by Harrisburg
16 either, is my understanding.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Excuse me?

18 MS. GILMAN: I believe that
19 there has not been any specific authority
20 granted to them by Harrisburg either.

21 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Do they have
22 both a gross receipts and a net income?

23 MS. GILMAN: I'm not sure.

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Okay. Thank
25 you.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

3 Again, welcome.

4 MR. EVANS: Thank you,
5 Councilmen and women. Thank you for
6 giving me this opportunity to testify.
7 My name is Willie Evans. I'm a resident
8 of Germantown. I've been a resident and
9 homeowner since 1984. I've lived in
10 Philadelphia all my life. I raised my
11 four children with my wife, Michelle.

12 Looking at the possibility of
13 raising property taxes, I feel that will
14 be a mistake on the part of the City, but
15 I believe the residents is the biggest
16 asset to the City, and I feel that we
17 should run it like a business.

18 Businesses tend to want to keep their
19 loyal customers, and I think by raising
20 taxes you will have a flight from the
21 City as opposed -- as you'll get the
22 opposite effect of bringing in income.
23 You may be losing income.

24 I believe by keeping the taxes
25 the way they are will draw more people to

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 the City, because every other community
3 are raising their taxes. So people are
4 going to come where the taxes are
5 reasonable. So I think that will give us
6 what we wanted for us, bringing in more
7 revenue.

8 As far as the tax abatement,
9 five years ago that was a good program to
10 bring in business when the market was
11 booming. That's not happening right now.
12 The most vital asset is your residential
13 existing home. It's better to keep a
14 customer than try to get a new customer.
15 Keep your residents here. It's cheaper
16 than bringing in new ones.

17 So you have to be careful about
18 how you raise taxes on your existing
19 customer, which is the residents of this
20 city. If you maintain a fair tax for the
21 residents -- because that resident is
22 going to bring in more money than anybody
23 else that come in, because we spend more
24 money in the City than anybody else.

25 (Applause.)

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 MR. EVANS: So I say in this
3 economy, giving away a tax abatement to
4 bring in new customers isn't going to
5 work. Keeping taxes low for the existing
6 customer is going to draw more people to
7 the City. People want to come to the
8 City, but if you're chasing people out,
9 who is coming in? If they come there for
10 an abatement, then what's going to happen
11 to the existing homes?

12 So I'd like you to reconsider.
13 Run it like a business and you'll do all
14 right. Businesses don't raise their
15 prices. They reduce their prices to
16 bring in customers. Think about the
17 volume of residents and not what we might
18 lose because we raise taxes.

19 Thank you very much.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
21 you.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The
24 Chair recognizes Councilman Greenlee.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yes.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 Very quickly.

3 Ms. Gilman, you mentioned was
4 it a study by the Center City District
5 that said that there was negligible
6 effect of the tax abatement?

7 MS. GILMAN: Yes. It was a
8 2006 study done by the Center City
9 District. There were 16 factors
10 identified, and they polled the people
11 who came into the City who bought under
12 the ten-year abatement, and it ranked 16,
13 the last --

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I'd have
15 to see that study. That is definitely
16 different from what I hear from most
17 people. But okay. I'd like to see that
18 study. Thank you.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Our
20 next witness?

21 MR. McPHERSON: Our next panel
22 consists of Pat Redman, Leon Simmons, and
23 I'm having difficulty with the
24 handwriting that I believe is the
25 Reverend Singleton from 1512 East Duval

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 Street.

3 (Witnesses approached witness
4 table.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
6 evening. Please identify yourself for
7 the record.

8 MS. Marcano: My name is
9 Junette Marcano and I am an ACORN member.
10 I wish to thank you, Madam Chair --

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
12 you.

13 MS. Marcano: -- Councilwomen
14 Donna Reed Miller and Tasco, for hosting
15 this event and all Council present and
16 honored guests.

17 I am speaking about the
18 proposed property tax increase.

19 I am a senior. Recently my
20 daughter, who assists me with my
21 household bills, lost her job because of
22 the economy, the current economy. If
23 these taxes are increased for people on
24 fixed incomes, which many people in this
25 neighborhood are seniors on fixed

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 incomes, we would have to make really,
3 really difficult choices that affect our
4 quality of life, what to choose to do and
5 what we cannot do because we have to pay
6 these increased proposed taxes.

7 We are in the worst recession
8 in 70 years, and many of us are hurting.
9 We know that the City is in economic
10 crisis, much as the rest of the U.S. We
11 know that money has to be increased in
12 some aspects, but we all need to know
13 that everyone is paying their fair share
14 of taxes. We do not need --

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. MARCANO: We do not need
17 the affluent to live off of the low- and
18 middle-income backs. We need everyone to
19 pair their fair share of taxes. That is
20 only but fair. We cannot take from the
21 poor to give to the affluent.

22 The tax abatements were said to
23 be responsible for much of the housing
24 development in Center City. Almost all
25 large metropolitan areas increased

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 affluent people moving back into the City
3 during the past ten years. However,
4 these abatements, with the current
5 economic crisis, need to be rescinded or
6 limited. Some sort of modification needs
7 to take place. We do not need to
8 increase taxes off of the poor and low
9 and moderate-income person and
10 constituents and gratify the affluent.

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
13 you. Thank you very much.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
16 evening. Please identify yourself for
17 the record.

18 REVEREND SINGLETON: I guess
19 what I'm going to say is old hat, because
20 I've heard it now since I've been here.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
22 Excuse me, sir. Would you mind
23 identifying yourself for the record.

24 REVEREND SINGLETON: Oh, I'm
25 sorry. My name is Reverend Singleton. I

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 live in Ms. Tasco's district on Duval
3 Street, East Duval Street.

4 You know, when I was in high
5 school, one of the first things we
6 learned was that the pilgrims came to
7 America to get away from paying taxes.
8 Well, they didn't escape, not if they
9 came to Philadelphia. We're still paying
10 taxes, and a lot of them.

11 My income, not that you care,
12 but just so you'll understand where we
13 are, a month is \$1,080. That's what I
14 have to live on for a month. Out of that
15 1,080, I got to pay \$91 real estate tax.
16 Now, forget I got to eat and I got to go
17 places, but that's what it costs me just
18 for taxes.

19 But, you know, Ms. Tasco asked
20 me a question. She said, Don't you like
21 the good I do?

22 Yes, but the thing is,
23 Ms. Tasco, and to any Councilman here,
24 is, we have no idea what you do. We
25 don't. I don't know what you've done

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 since I've been in Philadelphia, because
3 everything that's done is done as a
4 group. Council did it. So we got to
5 blame the whole Council for what we don't
6 like. But now if -- like if you vote on
7 something and you put on there, Well,
8 Ms. Tasco was against it or Mr. Green was
9 against it or somebody else, then we
10 would know who is doing a good job and
11 who isn't. But we don't know that now.
12 I'm sorry.

13 Another thing is, I asked
14 Ms. Tasco again -- because she was here
15 talking to me -- I said, You know,
16 somebody told me that being on City
17 Council is like having a Supreme Court
18 job, that you're there for life. And she
19 cut me short on that one.

20 But the thing is this: See,
21 Councilpeople don't realize that very few
22 people know what you do. Very few. But
23 they know you by name. So when they go
24 to vote, they look for a name, and that's
25 what they vote for. They don't vote for

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 the job you did, because they really
3 don't know. I know that. And I looked
4 at Ms. Tasco. She's in my district. She
5 ran unopposed. So naturally she's going
6 to win.

7 But the thing is this, that
8 what we need to know is what does the
9 Council and individuals do. In other
10 words, if a big bill comes up, how
11 come -- they publish everything they want
12 published. They publish the DROP and
13 they published you don't want to give up
14 your cars and they published all of that,
15 but with the job you do, we don't
16 honestly know what it is. We really
17 don't. And we should know. We have a
18 right to know.

19 But raising taxes is not there.
20 See, we are not the problem here.
21 Politicians are the problems here. What
22 happens to the money that comes into
23 Philadelphia?

24 (Applause.)

25 REVEREND SINGLETON: Where is

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 the money that goes into Philadelphia?

3 I read the other day where --
4 this city, between the Council and the
5 Mayor, lost the City over 400-and-some
6 thousand dollars because they didn't want
7 to get the casinos started. Now, the
8 casino would have brought -- I'm not a
9 casino, I'm not a gambler, but the casino
10 would have been tax money. It would have
11 put people to work three shifts a day,
12 and they would have been paying taxes and
13 maybe somebody would make some money. I
14 wouldn't because I wouldn't go there, so
15 it doesn't make any difference.

16 But the thing is, why couldn't
17 you and the Mayor get together and get
18 the job done? Now all of a sudden --
19 see, the election is over now, so now
20 everybody is in a hurry to get it done,
21 after we've done lost all that money. It
22 just doesn't make any sense.

23 Where is your concern for the
24 citizen and for people who voted for you?
25 Where is your concern for the people who

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 put their trust in you to take care of
3 the business that -- we can't do it
4 ourselves.

5 (Bell rung.)

6 REVEREND SINGLETON: We got you
7 to do it. But when you get lax on the
8 job, the only thing that really seemed to
9 concern me in the last two months is City
10 Council -- and I'm not taking anybody --
11 is only concerned in what benefits them.
12 They don't -- pick up the paper and read
13 it. It's in there every day. But we're
14 the ones you should be concerned. But we
15 voted and put you in office, not that we
16 know what you do, but because you're
17 there already.

18 I called the Council of Seventy
19 and I said, Look, our City Council has
20 been in office for over -- as far as I
21 been in Philadelphia. How do we get them
22 down to a certain number of years?

23 She says, Well, what you have
24 to do now is, you have to get 20,000
25 signatures. Once you get the 20,000

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2 signatures, then guess what we got to do
3 with it? We got to give it to you to
4 vote on. That makes a lot of sense,
5 don't it? Are you going to vote yourself
6 out of a job? Not hardly, no. No,
7 you're not going to do that. But in
8 order to get -- like New York did, they
9 tried to do it and I think they got away
10 with it, gave them two terms and that's
11 it.

12 I don't want to do anybody out
13 of a job, but maybe we're out of a job.
14 You're wondering where we're coming from.
15 We have to live, too.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
17 you very much.

18 REVEREND SINGLETON: And we
19 can't live paying all these taxes.

20 Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
22 you.

23 (Applause.)

24 MISS PAT: First, my name is
25 Miss Pat, but I want to give God his

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2 proper praise, because I am in his house,
3 and I want to give God all of the glory
4 and the praise right now. Let's give God
5 some glory.

6 (Applause.)

7 MISS PAT: First I want to say
8 that I'm part of Double Lyte Posse,
9 community liaison. I have my club
10 brother here. He's on the PO team.

11 I want to say to the City
12 Council, first of all, I want to thank
13 you all. I know what you do. I'm in
14 City Hall. I walk down there and I come
15 down, I see the things that you do. I
16 see you guys on the weekend taking off
17 those ties. And I know y'all are tired
18 right now, but what my concern is, like I
19 know the City is in the uproar about
20 money. We all are. I can't blame
21 anybody for it, but I can do something.
22 What we can do is stop talking about it
23 and do something about it.

24 As a community liaison for the
25 motorcycle community of Philadelphia, we

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2 do a lot of fundraisers, and we're
3 hearing that a lot of pools are going to
4 be closing, things for -- the activities
5 for the kids in. We are willing to raise
6 money to have clean, safe parties and
7 have a good time, and raise the money to
8 do things for the kids in the summertime
9 to keep the kids off the street. The
10 problem that I'm having is going to our
11 city parks. We can have a park for a
12 day, which is the Plateau, the Plateau
13 Groove, where there is fence up, so we
14 have an eyeball on the kids and they are
15 safe. Some parents will be dropping
16 their kids off. And they want \$3,500 for
17 us to raise -- I mean, for us to rent the
18 Plateau Groove out, and I think it's
19 unfair, because we're not coming to the
20 City to ask the City for any money. We
21 taking money out of our own pockets,
22 dealing with the children of Philadelphia
23 that we don't even know, and we put
24 flyers up to get the kids out.

25 So I'm asking if they can kind

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2 of give us a break where we can help the
3 City keep the kids off the street. We
4 also do the safe corridors. I'd like to
5 thank Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller, who
6 is really a strong supporter of us,
7 Curtis Jones and Darrell Clarke. And any
8 time I go in their office, they know I'm
9 coming there, so they can help me to do
10 something, and they're always there. And
11 Tasco always say, Here come Pat again,
12 but she's there to help us. So I want to
13 say thank you. You know what I'm saying?
14 Because I know that it's hard.

15 I'm real. Y'all know I'm real.
16 I come in City Hall and I'm real. Like
17 y'all just have a job, and I know you're
18 doing the best you can. But we got to
19 work with you all, and our Mayor have to
20 work along with us. See, we a team. I'm
21 looking at it this way: I'm just sitting
22 here and I'm going to take -- I hope I
23 don't take more than three minutes.

24 I look at the City now. The
25 Mayor is our father and the City Council

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2 is our mother, you know, and we are the
3 children within the City, and the mothers
4 have to tell their father, like this is
5 what need to be done. You know,
6 sometimes the father don't want to listen
7 to us, but as a mother, y'all know how it
8 is. Your wife end up getting the right.
9 So I'm looking towards City Council going
10 to our Mayor, let him know this is
11 exactly what is going on.

12 I know I have a way of saying
13 things, but this is the only way I know
14 how to say it and that's the way I look
15 at it. So us as being the mothers, we're
16 taking care of the children. See, it
17 takes a village to raise a child.

18 (Applause.)

19 MISS PAT: And I'm here for the
20 kids, because the kids are the ones that
21 are suffering, you know. Like, yeah,
22 people losing their homes and a lot of
23 things, but if we work together, we can
24 get through this thing.

25 And I thank you, Councilwoman

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2 Donna Reed Miller. I know what you do.
3 I know you take off them heels, and you
4 and you take off them heels and put on
5 your sneakers and you're coming out,
6 you're cleaning up and you're doing some
7 things, but the people of the City of
8 Philadelphia got to come out and do some
9 stuff, too.

10 (Bell rung.)

11 MISS PAT: I have my minute.

12 But I just wanted to like feel
13 comfortable where I can say what I want
14 to say. We always get -- yeah, we vote
15 y'all in, but how about even as we vote
16 y'all in, we need to help y'all while
17 you're in. People always can slander the
18 City, but it ain't the City. It's us.
19 We got to help one another. If we can't
20 help one another, we going to be doomed.

21 My patch here says, "Miss Pat,
22 Community Liaison." My other patch says,
23 "A Committee that Prays Together Stays
24 Together." And I feel as though a city
25 that prays together, we can stay

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2 together. We ain't got to go nowhere to
3 ask for no money. We got enough money
4 right up in here if we can take care of
5 ourselves, but we got to work together.

6 So I'm asking City Council to
7 kind of help Double Lyte Posse, also the
8 other motorcycle community that's out
9 there to help us. When I come, I'm
10 coming asking for some money, but how
11 about the money that -- I'm already going
12 to have it. I just need like the puck to
13 be given to us.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
15 you.

16 Miss Pat: The pools be given
17 to us.

18 I'm sorry. I'm just going to
19 say, good afternoon to you, Madam
20 President. I love that. I love to say
21 that to you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
23 you.

24 Miss Pat: But I want to say
25 thank you. I got to leave. I got to go

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2 to another meeting.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: I
4 think one of the Councilmembers or maybe
5 two would like to be recognized.

6 Councilman Jones.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
8 for your testimony, and it was a colorful
9 metaphor, to say the least, and the one
10 thing that I took out of it, I took a lot
11 out of -- you need to know more about
12 what we do on a daily basis, and we grant
13 you that, but also something you said,
14 that you gave the analogy that pop is the
15 Mayor and mom is Council, and it's a sad
16 day in the house when mom and pop are
17 arguing. And definitely mom and pop
18 shouldn't be arguing in public, and we're
19 going to try to do a lot better job of
20 taking our disagreements about how things
21 should happen inside, put our heads
22 together and come out with a united front
23 for all of the taxpayers, and not our
24 children, but taxpayers out there. We're
25 going -- I'm going to take note of that.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
3 you.

4 The Chair recognizes
5 Councilwoman Tasco.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: But,
7 Councilman Jones, it won't be
8 transparent. We have to fight in public.
9 That's what we're told, we have to be
10 transparent. So if we're not
11 transparent, the fighting has to take
12 place in public.

13 But we have the opportunity to
14 discuss issues and agree to disagree and
15 disagree. It doesn't mean that we're
16 fighting. We have to respect each
17 other's opinion. We have differences of
18 opinion. We're not going to always agree
19 100 percent.

20 And, Miss Pat, I thank you for
21 coming in here, because I see you
22 everywhere, and you do help us.

23 And I ask Mr. Singleton, we
24 need your help in our community, because
25 I've had any number of community meetings

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2 and public hearings and you've not been
3 there. So I'd like to say that you are
4 welcome to come and be helpful to us to
5 what we're doing in our community. We're
6 doing work on Wadsworth. We're doing
7 work on Stenton. We're trying to fight
8 the foreclosures. So maybe you don't
9 know what we do because it doesn't get
10 reported in the media what we do. It's
11 only what we don't do that gets reported.

12 So thank you very much.

13 MISS PAT: I know I gotta roll,
14 but I have one more thing. In the 8th
15 District under Councilwoman Donna Reed
16 Miller, we're doing clean-ups every week.
17 And this is going to you. I think
18 calling the office, I've been getting the
19 secretary. Since I got y'all out here on
20 the spot, I'm going to put you there.

21 We've been asking for trash
22 bags. What's been happening is, the City
23 will not pick up our black trash bags,
24 because I understand the guy said it's
25 like personal trash. But when -- I got a

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2 bunch of kids every Saturday, we
3 somewhere cleaning up somebody else's
4 neighborhood and they will not take our
5 black bags. So I went to the City to ask
6 could I get some brown bags. The guys
7 there pick it up. I went over there.
8 You know what they told me? I couldn't
9 get no more bags. We got to go to Home
10 Depot to buy our bags. I don't think
11 that's fair, when we got people who want
12 to volunteer to clean up the City and not
13 asking for no money. So I've been buying
14 trash bags out of my own pocket, and my
15 club been giving me money to buy trash
16 bags so these kids can keep going.

17 We always talk about those
18 kids, right? But the kids are going to
19 destroy the City if they don't have
20 nothing to do. So we out here as a club
21 like trying to make these kids like do
22 something good, do something good. And
23 we got a bunch of kids every Saturday.
24 We going to a neighborhood, Yo, y'all
25 want to clean?

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2 Yeah, we'll clean.
3 Give them a little sandwich, a
4 bag of potato chips and a soda and they
5 happy. And plus we teaching them some
6 things. And then I come back to you guys
7 in the City, Oh, you gotta call Carlton.
8 You gotta call Carlton. And his name
9 Buddy. I'm going to put him out there.
10 He told me call you, e-mail him, all
11 that. But here we want to do something
12 to help and nobody want to help us. And
13 I'm asking you, so come this Saturday,
14 can I get some trash bags so we can go do
15 something somewhere to keep our city
16 clean? Because I am (unintelligible),
17 but now I'm a Philadelphia Eagles fan,
18 right? And I want to let them know,
19 Philadelphia is not called Dirty. It's
20 called Philadelphia. You know what I'm
21 saying? So I would like to do that
22 myself, and I got everybody behind me as
23 far as the bike community to kind of help
24 us keep our city clean. We need the City
25 to help us.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

3 you.

4 MISS PAT: Thank you. I love

5 y'all. Y'all have a blessed day.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

7 you. Thank you.

8 (Reverend Singleton speaking

9 without microphone.)

10 REVEREND SINGLETON: They're

11 using Duval Street as a speedway, and

12 some kid this summer is going to get

13 killed on that street.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: There's a

15 young lady out there at the table named

16 Pat Trinkle. Would you give her that

17 information, please, so we can address

18 that. Thank you.

19 REVEREND SINGLETON: I sure

20 will. Thank you.

21 MISS PAT: And that's going to

22 be done. That's how we do it here.

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank

24 you, Pat.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 you.

3 MR. MCPHERSON: The next panel
4 consists of Leni Johnson, Eunice Beeks,
5 James Wyatt.

6 MISS PAT: Bye, y'all.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
8 you.

9 (Witnesses approached witness
10 table.)

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

14 MS. BEEKS: My name is Eunice
15 Beeks. First, I'd like to say good
16 afternoon to our distinguished leaders of
17 the City of Philadelphia.

18 I come before the Council today
19 not only as a block captain of the 8400
20 block of Fayette Street, but as a
21 taxpayer and a law-abiding citizen of
22 Philadelphia to express some possible
23 solutions to help the City fight this
24 budget crisis.

25 These are not complaints, but

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2 suggestions to the Council to contemplate
3 in coming up with ways to get our deficit
4 back on track.

5 I live in the 50th Ward
6 represented by our own distinguished
7 Councilwoman Marian Tasco, as well as our
8 hard-working State Representative
9 Cherelle Parker, respectively. I attend
10 many community meetings, and I was told
11 one of the suggestions is something
12 that's going to be addressed, but if some
13 of you are like me, over 50, you need to
14 be reminded of some things.

15 The first solution is the
16 Police fleet management. In my research,
17 and if it's correct, when Commissioner
18 Ramsey came to Philadelphia, he installed
19 several new Deputy Commissioners and
20 Captains. I understand that from the
21 rank of Captain and up there are three
22 vehicles available to one individual.
23 That is a car, an SUV and a truck.

24 Now, I'm not talking against
25 the Philadelphia Police Department,

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2 because they are Philadelphia's finest to
3 me and I respect the job that they do,
4 but we talking about trying to save some
5 money here or get some money from
6 somewhere.

7 Even if you're on call 24
8 hours, a person should only have one car.
9 You can only drive one at a time. That
10 would allow for more patrol cars for the
11 police on the streets. This would save
12 the City at least \$3.5 million a year.
13 There are -- these are estimate numbers,
14 but I tried to come as close as I could
15 to the actual numbers.

16 I know that I only have three
17 minutes, so I'll just give you the
18 estimates.

19 Police vehicle saving
20 estimates, gas alone, \$650,000 to
21 \$700,000 per year. This number can go
22 well into the millions based on the
23 fluctuation of gas prices, tires and
24 parts. This number does not include
25 collision repairs. To eliminate some of

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2 these vehicles, we save the City quite a
3 large sum of money.

4 The second issue is abandoned
5 housing. I am also a property owner in
6 the 8th Council District headed by the
7 Honorable Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller.
8 The abandoned houses in the neighborhood
9 has been dilapidated for years, and I
10 understand that there are legal
11 ramifications involved, but someone has
12 to do the job so that the City can start
13 getting revenue from these properties.
14 When a property causes danger to the
15 block in the community, as well as the
16 depletion of value on everyone else's
17 property, it becomes costly for everyone.

18 (Bell rung.)

19 MS. BEEKS: My suggestion:
20 Mayor Nutter is cracking down on tax
21 delinquents who owe \$50,000 and more. I
22 suggest that the City property owners
23 with back taxes of \$5,000 or more, the
24 property has to be -- and the property
25 abandoned for at least three years, that

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2 property should be purchasable at a
3 reasonable low cost to anyone interested
4 in improving a neighborhood or block.

5 (Applause.)

6 MS. BEEKS: The new owner must
7 have at least the outside of the property
8 repaired within one year or default on
9 the property. This at least would start
10 the process of making blocks safer and
11 look better, and then people start to
12 feel better about their surroundings.

13 A volunteer task force should
14 be formed to serve the City areas with
15 housing abandonment issues. This is a
16 snowball effect that if paid attention to
17 could save the City millions of dollars
18 in City revenue and create pride in the
19 neighborhoods again and make the process
20 inexpensive unless red-taped so that all
21 the neighborhoods in Philadelphia can
22 start coming up again. We should not
23 have to wait on PHA or any other agency
24 to build up our neighborhoods.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
3 you very much.

4 MS. BEEKS: And I know I have
5 three seconds. This is a letter that I
6 faxed April of 2006 to Councilwoman
7 Tasco's office. I am very, very pleased
8 with the response that I have gotten from
9 your office, your Administrative
10 Assistant, Sharon Vaughn. These houses
11 right here are not even in her district
12 and she tried to help me. Three houses:
13 One \$17,094.13 in back taxes; second
14 house, \$8,865.33 in back taxes; third
15 house, \$5,861.68 in back taxes.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: And
17 that was in 2006?

18 MS. BEEKS: This is in April.
19 I faxed this April 7th, 2006.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:
21 Disgrace.

22 MS. BEEKS: Now, somebody is
23 not going to say nothing until one of
24 these little kids get raped in one of
25 these abandoned houses or a child gets

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 killed.

3 Let's work together. We can
4 make this happen. That lady said it. We
5 have money in this city. Let's do this
6 thing. Let's stop talking. I've been to
7 five meetings in three months, and I keep
8 hearing the same thing over and over
9 again. Let's get some action going.
10 Let's get some volunteers. Let's get
11 some task forces going. Y'all can't do
12 it all.

13 And as far as what Marian Tasco
14 does, she works 24/7. I see. And I
15 appreciate my State Representative and my
16 City Council, because without them, I
17 would not have some of the information
18 that I have. But we have to be willing
19 to research and survey and come with the
20 facts, and if we come with the facts,
21 it's your responsibility as City Council
22 to address them and address them
23 properly.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank

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2 you very much.

3 MS. JOHNSON: Good evening to
4 City Council members that are here. I'm
5 encouraged that you've come out to the
6 community instead of holding hearings
7 downtown all the time. I think this is
8 something that I would encourage you to
9 do on a regular basis throughout the
10 City.

11 My name is Lani Johnson. I'm a
12 resident here in this immediate area and
13 I'm also a member of the Friends of the
14 Free Library. Our local branch just a
15 few blocks from here in walking distance
16 is the David Cohen-Ogontz branch.

17 I've been a resident in this
18 community since the '60s, with the
19 exception of several years in Montgomery
20 County, and I've seen many changes during
21 that time, some good and some not so
22 good. But for the past several years, it
23 has become more difficult for me to
24 justify why I should continue to live in
25 Philadelphia.

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2 It's been the best of times and
3 the worst of times, and we're all going
4 through difficult and perilous
5 economically around the country, the city
6 and our state. However, my concern is
7 regards to the children. Their future
8 and knowledge needed to succeed in
9 today's world hinders on what we do as
10 responsible adults and what you, our
11 elected government officials, do in
12 legislation and law.

13 Young people do not need
14 anything else to discourage them from
15 learning, seeking knowledge and being the
16 best that they can be. Sadly and
17 realistically, we have already lost too
18 many, and we can't afford to continue to
19 have this happening. Our institutions of
20 learning need to be kept humming at peak
21 performance to be a safety net and
22 positive stimulus for education and
23 knowledge, and the libraries are part of
24 that safety net.

25 Having said that, there are a

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2 number of people, many in this room, that
3 I'm familiar with that volunteer and
4 donate our personal time to the library
5 branches, civic organizations,
6 after-school tutoring and coaching
7 throughout the City to help make a
8 difference, and these are the unsung
9 heroes that we don't hear a lot about
10 usually. And they're not doing it for
11 fanfare, accolades or photo ops, but in
12 most cases, many of them are doing things
13 freely for the fact that we can't seem to
14 get the funding that we need from the
15 City.

16 For those Councilmembers that
17 are not aware, there are still some
18 library closure issues and they have not
19 been resolved as a result of the ruling
20 that was given down for the 54 libraries
21 to remain open. Some of them have been
22 maintenance issues. Libraries have been
23 shut down because they didn't have
24 boilers, and they were closed for weeks
25 in communities. There are others that

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 didn't have the parts for the boilers.
3 And there are hours of operation and
4 staffing problems.

5 A library has to have four
6 people now to be open, three staff and a
7 guard. Our particular library has to
8 have a guard that is from an agency. The
9 original guard was laid off. So as a
10 result, if there are not enough people to
11 open that library that day, that library
12 is closed in the community, and as a
13 result, the staff is deployed to another
14 branch, and it's been causing a lot of
15 issues, a lot of morale issues, and I
16 just don't really find a lot of logic to
17 the methodology that's being used to keep
18 the libraries open but not at full staff.

19 There have been issues with the
20 resources and the lack of books. We're
21 coming up this summertime and there's
22 going to be issues as far as providing
23 for the summer reading programs.

24 (Bell rung.)

25 MS. JOHNSON: And I'm finding

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2 that funding essential issues to function
3 properly and effectively is needed for
4 the schools, the libraries, our rec
5 centers, our police and fire. These are
6 all the fundamentals.

7 People have been talking about
8 sacrificing or shared sacrifice, but I
9 don't feel that's for everybody. It
10 seems to be limited to who considers to
11 be one that's going to be in that shared
12 sacrifice. But I feel it's time to
13 readdress or revisit the ten-year tax
14 abatement program. It's proved
15 beneficial in its creation and it's
16 appeared to have served the City and the
17 business and investors very well, but I'm
18 in favor of asking you to reform the
19 terms and the number of years for
20 abatement versus strapping a 19 percent
21 property tax rate on the backs of the
22 average homeowners. I don't know whether
23 that proposed 19 percent is actually
24 going to end up being temporary or
25 permanent, but in addition, there appears

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2 no regard for the impact it may have on
3 the senior citizens that are on fixed
4 incomes.

5 So I'm asking City Council to
6 be bold enough to get a bill passed for
7 amendment to the period for tax abatement
8 and also the needed revenue to come -- be
9 diligent and relentless in collecting the
10 millions from the list of businesses and
11 individuals that still owe the City money
12 for many years. And that was a list that
13 was constantly on Hallwatch, if you're
14 familiar with that.

15 I think the City government is
16 failing its citizens who pay taxes to
17 have revenue for services that we're
18 entitled, and I'm asking you to collect
19 overdue taxes, eliminate some of the DROP
20 program loopholes that allow double
21 dipping, and eradicate inefficiency and
22 provide accountability for all your
23 revenue.

24 And, finally, I implore that
25 you include appropriate funding in the

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2 budget for the libraries, which would be
3 for 38 million for the fiscal year budget
4 of 2010 to restore libraries to full
5 service in our communities, the rec
6 centers and pools and our health centers.

7 If we must all bear this
8 burden, I would like to ask City Council
9 members, with sincerity, make adjustments
10 yourselves so that your constituents can
11 see that you have the best interest of
12 the City and your residents at heart. It
13 would show the citizens that you're doing
14 whatever it takes as well to bring us
15 through this crisis and keep the
16 components intact that are needed for the
17 children and the taxpayers who faithfully
18 remain in the City in the good times and
19 the bad.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: The
23 Chair recognizes Councilman Jones.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Again, as a
25 body, we're learning a lot, and I want to

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2 thank publicly Councilman Clarke for
3 working with the President to bring us
4 out to the community and really hear a
5 lot of the concerns that you have. And
6 one of the things -- I wish the gentleman
7 was here and questioned some of the
8 things we do as a body, but sometimes you
9 look at a body and judge it by what they
10 do, and then sometimes you should judge
11 them also by what they don't let other
12 people do to you. And in the case of the
13 libraries, this Council overwhelmingly
14 supported the libraries, overwhelmingly.
15 In our own way and in our own districts
16 we fought very hard for the libraries.

17 One of the questions I have
18 about that now is, it's my understanding
19 that you have a situation where a lot of
20 the staff that come into the libraries
21 every day have to report in and then
22 don't know where they're going to be
23 deployed based on other shortages. So
24 they're kind of moved around in a way
25 that keeps the library open to the degree

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2 that they can, but also causes a problem
3 by way of long-term planning. So if you
4 are a librarian trying to work on a
5 program for a summer camp or summer
6 reading, you don't have that stability of
7 knowing where you're going to be to be
8 able to do any long-term planning other
9 than day to day. Is that true?

10 MS. JOHNSON: That's basically
11 how it's working, and as a result of
12 that, a lot of times residents will come
13 to a library not knowing whether it's
14 going to be open or not. Sometimes
15 they're closed every other Monday and
16 then they're closed every other Saturday,
17 and people have to kind of try to keep
18 all of these things in mind, and as a
19 result of it, you have a lot of children
20 that come to these libraries after school
21 hours that need to use the computers, go
22 online.

23 So it's really very difficult
24 to plan anything, and this is because of
25 the budget, the way it's been cut, the

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 way staff has been reduced. So it would
3 be quite helpful, especially with
4 libraries being one of the more positive
5 things in the community besides our
6 churches and our synagogues, it's
7 something to keep the children safe.
8 It's a learning environment. And we need
9 to be encouraged to put whatever we can
10 into our young people. Not just them,
11 the adults come there as well, because
12 they need the computers for jobs and
13 checking -- even employment now you have
14 to go online to do those types of things.
15 So libraries are important. These are
16 the young people that are going to
17 probably be sitting in your seats one
18 day, and we just need to make sure that
19 we're encouraging them in positive things
20 and not a lot of the things that they can
21 be in trouble in out in the street.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
23 you.

24 Are there any other questions
25 or comments?

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm sorry.

3 Could she repeat her name? I'm sorry.

4 MS. JOHNSON: My name is Lani
5 Johnson.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
7 you both very much.

8 Our next witnesses?

9 MR. McPHERSON: Are Marlene
10 Hardy, Rosalyn Watson, Carol Stupes.

11 (Witnesses approached witness
12 table.)

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: I
14 know you've all been very patient, but we
15 did make a commitment to the Bishop that
16 we would complete our hearing by 7
17 o'clock. So if you would please try to
18 do your best in consolidating whatever
19 words you want to share with us, we'd
20 appreciate it.

21 Good evening. Please identify
22 yourself for the record.

23 MS. HARDY: My name is Marlene
24 Hardy and I'm here representing the
25 Northwest Community Coalition for Youth

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2 Partners in Saving Lives, and I will be
3 as quickly as I can.

4 To the City Councilwoman Marian
5 Tasco and City Councilwoman Donna Reed
6 Miller, the 8th and 9th District
7 Council -- and this is a testimony from
8 the Northwest Community Coalition for
9 Youth and also Luther Baldwin.

10 The purpose of the testimony is
11 to highlight the impact of reducing the
12 number of patrol vehicles assigned to the
13 14th and 35th Police District and to
14 request a reinstatement of the Curfew
15 Center located in the 14th and the 35th
16 Police District.

17 At a time when our young people
18 are being placed in harm's way because of
19 the disappearance of funds for our
20 after-school programs and youth programs
21 in general, it seems cruel to have the
22 burden of worrying about their safety and
23 security further compromised by the
24 reduction in police vehicles available to
25 patrol our community.

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2 The perception of police
3 cruising neighborhoods provides some
4 deterrent to crime, just as the absence
5 of cruisers suggests a welcoming attitude
6 to those who would endanger the residents
7 of our community. Police resources
8 should never be considered as part of
9 budget cuts.

10 In the past year, 324 citizens
11 and five police officers have been
12 murdered in Philadelphia. It takes a
13 special person to even consider working
14 in law enforcement, and the pay is
15 certainly not the major incentive. We
16 can't afford a reduction in resources
17 that support our police officers. In
18 time of economic hardship, more police
19 resources should be a priority.

20 I would also remind our elected
21 officials that our major juvenile
22 crime-fighting tool is the proper
23 operation and funding of Curfew Centers.
24 Please restore funding to the Curfew
25 Center which used to operate within the

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 boundaries of the 14th and the 35th
3 Police District.

4 And just one more comment on
5 that. Many of you may not be familiar
6 with the Northwest Community Coalition
7 for Youth, but it's a well-ran
8 organization consisting of many of our
9 community people, volunteers, teachers as
10 well, and if you get an opportunity, we
11 welcome and we would like maybe someone
12 from besides -- I'm sure our Honorable
13 Marian Tasco, she knows of the program as
14 well. So if you get an opportunity, stop
15 by sometime in our meetings. We would
16 really appreciate it, and you will see we
17 are one of the community organizations
18 that doesn't exist anywhere in
19 Philadelphia.

20 Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
22 you very much.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASCOS: Thanks,
24 Marlene.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

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2 Please identify yourself for the record.

3 MS. WATSON: My name is Rosalyn
4 Watson and I am here today representing
5 HERO, which a non-profit organization
6 located at 17th and Tioga Street in the
7 Nicetown section of North Philadelphia.
8 HERO stands for Helping Energize and
9 Rebuild Ourselves. Doris Phillips is our
10 Executive Director, but she could not
11 attend this evening because of a medical
12 energy today.

13 HERO would first like to thank
14 Donna Read Miller for inviting us here to
15 share our problem with you, and in
16 advance, we thank you for listening to
17 us.

18 HERO has been running a summer
19 camp and after-school program for the
20 past 15 years, where neighborhood
21 children between the ages of 5 to 12 come
22 to HERO for homework assistance,
23 activities such as computer literacy,
24 nutrition and physical fitness
25 activities, educational and social trips.

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2 But most of all, coming to HERO, the
3 children are in a safe, caring and
4 nurturing environment.

5 Our dilemma is, funds for this
6 program runs out on June 30th of this
7 year for not meeting a paperwork
8 deadline. HERO accepts its part in not
9 meeting the deadline, but we want PHMC --
10 I don't know if I'm supposed mention the
11 organization, but we want PHMC and DHS to
12 look at our record for the past five
13 years in working with them, where we
14 never, ever missed a deadline in
15 providing paperwork.

16 Though we do receive other
17 funding from other foundations and
18 sources, the funding from DHS is a very
19 large contributor. This would be a
20 devastating loss to HERO and to the
21 children of the community.

22 We are here today to ask for
23 help in resolving this crisis with DHS
24 that can and will have a dramatic effect
25 on our children in the community.

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 Thank you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
4 you very much.

5 Are there questions or comments
6 from members of the Committee?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
9 you again.

10 MR. McPherson: Our next set of
11 witnesses are Reverend Chester Williams,
12 Francis Kilson, Habbibah Ali.

13 (Witnesses approached witness
14 table.)

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
16 evening. Please identify yourself for
17 the record.

18 MR. KILSON: Francis Kilson,
19 KIG Homes. Good evening.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Good
21 evening.

22 MR. KILSON: I think we
23 understand that there is a correlation
24 between education and poverty and between
25 poverty and crime. The reason I'm here

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 this evening is that there are a number
3 of vacant properties in Philadelphia
4 which are City-owned, and I believe that
5 if these properties which are City-owned,
6 if they were brought back to the City's
7 tax roll as a viable source of income and
8 at the same time developed, which would
9 provide jobs and housing, that would
10 serve to mitigate, one, the increase in
11 taxes and, two, the City budget cuts. I
12 think that the City with the current
13 poverty rate of 24.9 percent and
14 unemployment rate in the black community
15 of 50 percent, that would certainly help
16 to offset this deficit.

17 My question to the Council --
18 and I'm a constituent of Marian -- I'm
19 sorry. Marian Tasco has done a lot for
20 KIG Homes, but I'm a constituent of
21 Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller. My
22 question to the Council is, what can be
23 done to bring these properties back to
24 the City's tax rolls as a viable source
25 of income and what can be done to

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 expedite the sale of these properties,
3 whether it be to CDCs or private
4 developers?

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
6 you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Do you
8 have about four days?

9 We understand your concern, and
10 it is a concern of ours, and Councilman
11 Clarke will respond.

12 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you.
13 Thank you, Councilwoman.

14 First, thank you. How you
15 doing today?

16 MR. KILSON: Good.

17 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I hear you,
18 and I know you because I recall the
19 interaction we had about some of the
20 things that you were doing, I believe, in
21 South Philadelphia, some of the
22 development. I had an opportunity to
23 meet you on a couple of occasions, and
24 you were trying to do something in
25 Brewerytown in earlier years and most

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2 recently up in the North Philadelphia
3 community. And I have to say, because we
4 do have some concerns about some of the
5 policies associated with particularly
6 disposition of vacant properties, not
7 just for development purposes -- and I
8 know Councilwoman Sanchez and I talk
9 about this all the time -- of vacant
10 lots, side yards, and there's been, to
11 me, a somewhat inflexible position,
12 policy position, as it relates to making
13 sure that these properties can go to an
14 individual who would be responsible at
15 maybe nominal fee, where a person who
16 took care of a vacant lot next to their
17 property for ten years on their own, with
18 no money, now that person is asked to pay
19 market value for a lot, when they would
20 say, I'm ready to buy this, not taking
21 into account all the sweat equity that
22 they put in the lot.

23 In your case, the vacant lots
24 that I know that I interacted with you
25 on, you were prepared to bring properties

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 online that had been vacant for I don't
3 know how many years in that particular
4 location, and you wanted to get a little
5 creative and creating a market value for
6 what we call working housing, workforce
7 housing, I think the term that was used,
8 for people that don't qualify for the
9 traditional 80 percent and below median
10 income properties, but don't make enough
11 money to buy some of the higher-end
12 properties in other parts of the City.
13 And you and some of the people you were
14 working with wanted to have some
15 flexibility in the purchase price of the
16 property, but because of the inflexible
17 policy that wouldn't allow either as
18 market value if you're a for-profit and
19 if it's a non-profit, you get it for
20 nominal, but you can only sell it or rent
21 it to this category of people. So you
22 have a wide margin in between that can't
23 accommodate.

24 My concern, like yours, is that
25 if you take such a position and the

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2 properties continue to stay vacant and
3 not on the tax rolls, who wins? Nobody
4 wins. The City is not collecting taxes.
5 People don't have the ability to live in
6 a house. You don't have the ability to
7 conduct business in the City of
8 Philadelphia. And I think that some of
9 these policies need to have some level of
10 flexibility. You just can't simply have
11 it at the extreme ends of the proposal.

12 So I agree with you. We hear
13 you. I know I've talked to a number of
14 my colleagues about this policy that is
15 either market value or it's nominal, but
16 if it's nominal, you can only be a CDC or
17 a non-profit and you can only rent and
18 sell to these people.

19 So I hear you. I feel you.
20 And hopefully as we move down the line
21 and once we get our NTI back up and
22 running, we'll have some ability to have
23 some flexibility so we can do some things
24 to make some sense in this city.

25 MR. KILSON: I appreciate your

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 response, Councilman Clarke. My interest
3 is not personal and it's not selfish.

4 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I
5 understand that, and I shouldn't have
6 brought that to the table. I just know
7 you and --

8 MR. KILSON: The reason I
9 brought this up is because as we've done
10 development throughout the City, part of
11 our company, our ministry, is that we
12 hire people in the community.

13 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Right.

14 MR. KILSON: We've noticed that
15 there's a large number of black men on
16 the corners, but we've also noticed
17 there's an increase in pride and
18 self-worth and self-esteem once they have
19 a job.

20 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Right.

21 MR. KILSON: The reason I'm
22 bringing this up is because once more
23 properties become available, because
24 there are developers out here that don't
25 need public funding, that aren't asking

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2 the City for anything, but as soon as
3 properties come on board and we can
4 access more real estate and access more
5 opportunity, I think we can help to
6 increase employment.

7 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I agree,
8 and I guess I didn't bring that up
9 because I know what you do, so I didn't
10 make that a part of my conversation,
11 because it was an assumption that if
12 you're going to build, you're going to
13 build it making sure that all inclusion
14 strategies are met, and I probably should
15 have prefaced my statement by saying
16 that.

17 But I hear you. I agree. At
18 the end of the day, it's about providing
19 job opportunities and providing revenues
20 for the City and providing productive
21 citizens of the City of Philadelphia. So
22 I'm going to continue to hopefully help
23 and work with you all and people like
24 yourself to continue to do some of the
25 things that we need to do in our

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 districts.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank

5 you.

6 Reverend, you've been very

7 patient. Thank you.

8 REVEREND WILLIAMS: I give

9 honor to each and every one of you and

10 the President and all the Councilpeople.

11 I missed my Councilwoman, Donna Reed.

12 Where is she?

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:

14 She'll be back momentarily.

15 REVEREND WILLIAMS: I thank God

16 for being here and for you all taking the

17 opportunity to come to our neighborhood.

18 I can't thank y'all enough. I feel like

19 a kid in a candy shop when I heard that

20 y'all was coming to our neighborhood. So

21 I'm not here to --

22 (Applause.)

23 REVEREND WILLIAMS: -- to

24 attack you in any negative way. I'm here

25 to say this: I'm the President and

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 Founder of the Chew and Belfield

3 Neighborhood Organization. I've been a

4 block captain for over 30-something years

5 and a committee person for the 59th Ward,

6 10th Division under Councilwoman Donna

7 Reed Miller. I'm also the President of

8 the National Alliance of Postal Federal

9 Employees Union, the oldest black union

10 in the United States. And I'd like to

11 say to you that the Chew and Belfield

12 organization, which range between

13 Johnson, Chew to Walnut Lane and Chew, to

14 Clearview to Musgrave, by the grace of

15 God I founded that many years ago when

16 David Richardson was available with us,

17 and in doing so, our motto was to help

18 those to get communication that never

19 receive communication of how to grow.

20 And right today we do that. We paint our

21 curbs. We clean empty lots. We seal up

22 empty houses. We call real estate people

23 that own the empty lots or homes and say

24 to them, We need you to come clean up

25 your property, because we can't do but so

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2 much. And I guess because I get on the
3 floor and they see who I am, they come
4 out within a week and work with us in
5 doing that. So I thank God for that.

6 But we're going through a
7 dilemma, and I know you know who I'm
8 about to mention. I'm asking you all to
9 help us. It's SEPTA. Why is SEPTA
10 getting money from the City and can't
11 help the community? I can't understand
12 that part. For the simple reason, if you
13 know anything about Washington Lane and
14 Chew, we have a train station there, we
15 have the XH and the 18 bus. We have
16 plenty of senior citizens, plenty of
17 handicapped like myself. I'm a disabled
18 veteran from Vietnam, and not too long
19 ago you might have seen me on TV. Thank
20 God I'm here. A young gentleman tried to
21 hijack my car and shot me, and I was in a
22 coma for like a month. But God is good.
23 He brought me here through it all to be
24 here to let you know that we as a
25 community with other organizations in our

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 immediate area, we do everything to keep
3 our neighbors informed of what's going on
4 and what they should do to abide by the
5 law and rules and regulations. But SEPTA
6 seems like they get by, for the simple
7 reason we're asking them that a critical
8 thing that we face, there's a rail that
9 they put directly through the train
10 tracks, and if you see Washington Lane
11 and Chew, if you park on one side and you
12 you're handicapped or just a normal
13 person and come back at night from City
14 Hall working, you can't go back over to
15 that car. You have to go down that hill,
16 and many of our people have been robbed,
17 unfortunately, because of that.

18 So I'm asking you to get off
19 the line to help us with that critical
20 issue and get benches on our area for our
21 senior citizens at these bus stops, where
22 our seniors are lean and handicapped,
23 leaning through the rain, the snow and
24 cannot get no benches to sit there to
25 help us out, and we paying taxes.

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2 God bless you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
4 you. Thank you very much, Reverend.

5 Good evening.

6 MS. ALI: Good evening, Council
7 President Verna, Councilmen and women.
8 It's always a pleasure to be in your
9 presence and to my fellow citizens of
10 Philadelphia, who have taken time from
11 their busy schedules to come out this
12 evening. I am Habbibah Ali. I am the
13 Executive Director and Founder of Rays of
14 Hope, Incorporated. We are a 501(c)(3)
15 non-profit that was established in 1993.
16 I am a citizen of Philadelphia, born at
17 PGH. For those younger people, that was
18 the Philadelphia General Hospital. That
19 has been long knocked down and gone.

20 I'm here tonight to speak to
21 you regarding housing, which is my area
22 of expertise. I got involved in housing,
23 as some of you know, from being homeless
24 in the late '80s with my four children
25 due to domestic violence. Councilwoman

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2 Tasco, former Councilwoman Augusta Clark,
3 Councilman David Cohen, God bless his
4 soul, Councilwoman Blackwell, Councilman
5 Ortiz, these people have always, always
6 been there for the homeless and the low
7 income. I have lived in Councilwoman
8 Miller's and Councilwoman Tasco's
9 districts all of my life that I have been
10 in Philadelphia. I left for a little bit
11 and I came back.

12 The City of Brotherly Love and
13 Sisterly Affection is a place that I love
14 to call home. And we're talking about
15 children not having things to do and
16 people losing their employment and people
17 losing their mortgages. It is serious
18 business when you are homeless. It's one
19 thing not to have a home, a roof over
20 your head to call a home, but when a
21 person loses a mortgage, that's a whole
22 family, including the children, including
23 sometime the grandparents, the aunties
24 and the seniors, people who have worked
25 and contributed all their lives.

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2 I want to speak to you
3 specifically about housing acquisition,
4 the acquisition money that comes to the
5 City from the Department of Housing and
6 Urban Development through the RDA, the
7 Redevelopment Authority, and OHCD. We
8 are very fortunate that we are a very
9 small non-profit, but we were awarded
10 \$1.2 million, with the help of
11 Councilwoman Miller's office and some
12 long, hard work, and also we got that
13 money as a result of myself and about 100
14 homeless men marching down Broad Street
15 up to City Hall to Mayor Street's offices
16 saying, What are you going to do with
17 these homeless men? Because if you go to
18 Broad and Ridge on any given day, it is a
19 disgrace.

20 Our men are not disposable, and
21 they need other options than a halfway
22 house and a homeless shelter or prison
23 cell. How long can you be halfway?

24 (Applause.)

25 MS. ALI: And every time that

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 clock goes off, I think I need to go
3 baste the turkey. So can you please turn
4 off that clock? And I will be brief. I
5 just think I need to go baste the turkey
6 every time it goes off. Thank you.

7 There are monies in housing
8 acquisitions that have been allocated
9 from the previous Administration that are
10 frozen, and we need to thaw out the
11 money. Irregardless of what's going on
12 with this new Administration, they've
13 been around long enough to get it right,
14 to get with the program.

15 Now, I understand we are trying
16 to find money. So is the government, so
17 is the world. But as we are here today,
18 City Council, if you could please come
19 together on approaching our Mayor and
20 having those funds released for
21 acquisition, like our program that's in
22 the pipeline that has the money. \$1.2
23 million for a little teeny weenie CDC
24 that's run and operated by a formerly
25 homeless mother is not anything to sneeze

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2 at, but I trust you. I've gone through
3 hell and back to get there. Now, I
4 cannot break ground. We have homeless
5 families waiting in the shelters to go
6 into these houses and I can't break
7 ground because we have a new
8 Administration that's freezing dollars.
9 Thaw it out.

10 I also feel as though if it
11 would be to your benefit, all of the
12 Councilpeople, to have OHCD, the Office
13 of Housing and Community Development, and
14 the RDA, the Redevelopment Authority,
15 give you all reports on all the existing
16 programs that they are overseeing, have
17 the money for from the previous
18 Administration. You got new money coming
19 down for the new budget. You have things
20 that are open and undone from the last
21 Administration, and the people are the
22 ones who suffer. These are taxpayers'
23 monies, and I think that it is incumbent
24 upon our representatives, who you are, to
25 know and make OHCD and the RDA more

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2 accountable. I know they sit in front of
3 you and give a nice report every year. I
4 sat in many of them. I have learned so
5 much from being homeless, from sharing
6 Dignities Housing, which is an \$11
7 million program that Councilwoman Tasco
8 has been in support of, as well as
9 Councilwoman Miller.

10 I know what homelessness is.
11 I'm not above going back into a shelter
12 because life may be that way. It's no
13 cake walk. But why since 2004 I'm
14 allocated over a million dollars, because
15 of red tape, we can't break ground?

16 Now, Councilwoman Miller has
17 looked into this, and I'm told that the
18 new fiscal year things are going to start
19 happening, but I think that OHCD and the
20 RDA, these people are paid very well,
21 with nice benefits, need to be held
22 accountable. We need the acquisition
23 dollars to be released so that programs
24 can move forward so that people, our
25 citizens, can see productive things

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 happening in our community, in your
3 districts.

4 So I want to thank you for this
5 time. I will continue with the housing
6 activists to do the things that we do to
7 help make sure the homelessness, low
8 income, moderate, working people,
9 taxpayers are on the front burner,
10 because in the City, I do know it is the
11 squeaky wheel that gets the oil, and you
12 know I don't have no problem making
13 noise.

14 I want to thank you all. It is
15 a pleasure to sit before you. I am
16 always honored to come before these
17 beautiful women and these handsome men.
18 Yes, yes, Councilman Rizzo, and these
19 handsome men. And it just makes me know
20 that there are wonderful things that I
21 can do when I grow up.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
24 you all very much. We appreciate your
25 attendance.

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2 (Applause.)

3 MR. McPHERSON: The next
4 witness is Miriam Levy.

5 (No response.)

6 MR. McPHERSON: The last panel
7 that I have is Reverend Dr. Mattie
8 Pinkney, Tyvonne Mackey, Dorothy Zarr.

9 (Witnesses approached witness
10 table.)

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERA: Thank
12 you so much for being so patient.
13 However, I'm going to ask you to try to
14 be as brief as possible, because it is
15 after 7:00 and we did give a commitment
16 to the Bishop that we would be finished
17 by 7 o'clock. So thank you so much.

18 Please identify yourself for
19 the record.

20 Oh, the keys are here. They're
21 ready to lock the door on us.

22 Okay. Kindly identify yourself
23 for the record and proceed.

24 MR. MACKEY: Good afternoon,
25 ladies and gentleman in the Council. My

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 name is Tyvonne Mackey. I have been a
3 part of Agape since I was four years old.
4 I am presently attending the Agape
5 after-school program at McCloskey, but I
6 attend Leeds Middle School. I have other
7 siblings that attend Agape also. My
8 other brother, Tyrone, used to, but now
9 he is in high school. He attends Agape
10 Church on Sunday, and we work together by
11 running the church's video camera. My
12 sister, Derita, who is 10, she's been
13 with Agape since she was six weeks old.
14 At two years old Derita has been singing
15 at our after-school program concert. Now
16 she's singing on the church choir. My
17 aunt and uncle presently attend Agape and
18 they will soon be going to Leeds in
19 September. That will be new to them.

20 We need a program at Leeds,
21 because that way, they will see familiar
22 faces being in a new environment. Since
23 my grandpa passed away, Agape being at
24 Leeds will continue to help them through
25 difficulties. The after-school program

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2 provides the tools I need, such as
3 computers, and the staff is available to
4 help me to academically achieve my
5 educational goals. I get to finish my
6 projects and homework before I go home.
7 I am an A and B student. I have made the
8 honor roll every single year.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. MACKEY: Agape is a safe
11 place to be. I have somewhere to go
12 after school instead of being on the
13 streets.

14 Agape has activities such as
15 holiday programs, learning how to speak
16 in front of a crowd of people without
17 being afraid. Agape has a summer program
18 also, and the same principles are being
19 taught throughout all of their programs.
20 My mom chose Agape for my spiritual
21 growth, and growing up in Agape has
22 inspired me to be the best I could be.
23 Agape has taught me how to love other
24 people even if I don't know them. They
25 are my inspiration. Agape is like a

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2 second family to me, because they taught
3 me how to be good and kind to other
4 people, and they treat me like a family
5 member.

6 The men of Agape is not
7 available on Sundays only, but they are
8 always there for me. They put my needs
9 before theirs. If I was sad, Agape
10 always cheered me up.

11 Agape also taught me about
12 conflict resolution. Instead of fighting
13 all the time, I've learned how to solve
14 problems in a peaceful way. If I ever
15 thought that I could do something, Agape
16 encouraged me to try. The most important
17 Agape has taught me in all the wonderful
18 things is what Jesus did and how he saved
19 us by dying on the cross for all of us.
20 If I ever had to go to a place and learn
21 about God and have fun, I would go to
22 Agape. I think they are one of the most
23 fun, peaceful, trustworthy and kindest
24 people I have ever known.

25 Thank you, Pastor Pinkney, for

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.
2 opening up Agape, because without Agape,
3 I will not have turned out to be the
4 person I am today.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
8 you.

9 MS. ZARR: Good evening,
10 Council. My name is Dorothy Zarr and I
11 live in the Mount Airy section of the
12 City and I also am a participant of
13 Agape.

14 I'm a mother with two special
15 needs children, and the children have
16 participated in Agape's after-school and
17 summer camp program for over six or more
18 years now. Without your funding, I
19 wouldn't be able to afford this type of
20 service. For the safety and the
21 protection and the nurturing that these
22 services provide, it's been beneficial
23 and educational for me and my family.
24 This is why I'm pleading with all
25 officials here that you allow the funding

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2 to continue, because this is just
3 something that we need. And me as a
4 parent and having special needs at home
5 all day, this is the only outlet that
6 they have.

7 I just -- I'm a pleader. I'm
8 begging that the funds be available,
9 because Pastor Pinkney has opened Agape
10 Center for the first time I have ever
11 heard for any special needs, and this is
12 my plea for this evening, that you keep
13 these services and fundings available to
14 us.

15 Thank you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
17 you.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
20 you.

21 Good evening.

22 PASTOR PINKNEY: Good evening,
23 ladies and gentlemen of the Council and
24 certainly to my Councilperson,
25 Councilwoman Tasco. It is a pleasure to

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 be here with you. My name is Mattie
3 Pinkney and I am the Pastor of Agape
4 Baptist Church and the Executive Director
5 of Agape Community Outreach Services.

6 I have a twofold plea today.
7 Simply that you've heard these two that
8 have come to you stating that we need to
9 keep our fundings in place for our
10 children. On the other side of that
11 coin, I have people in my church and in
12 my community that partake in the programs
13 that can't afford the new taxes that are
14 going to be levied upon them. And I know
15 that -- I'm not here to ask you to do one
16 or the other, because I know you're in a
17 Catch 2 situation. You got to do
18 something.

19 What I am asking you, that when
20 you do make your decision, that you take
21 into account some of the ramifications
22 that community people will feel if they
23 don't -- if they're not able to comply
24 with a lot of the new taxes that they
25 have to; for instance, a business

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2 privilege tax that will be imposed on all
3 of the people that lease from Agape.
4 We're asked to pay that tax not only for
5 this year but for next year, and if we
6 don't come up with the funding to pay
7 both this year and the following year for
8 monies we haven't even earned yet, then
9 we are levied with taxes and penalties
10 that, if we're not careful, can almost
11 amount to become even more than the
12 actual tax.

13 It's the same with taxes on
14 homes, the new taxes that are coming up
15 on the mortgage -- not the mortgage, but
16 the real estate taxes. If older people
17 don't get those taxes paid in time, they
18 have to literally look at the penalties
19 and the interest, and sometimes those
20 rates are just downright ridiculous.

21 We need your help in this,
22 because if you look at some of the things
23 that we have to pay in terms of our
24 penalties and interest and even paying
25 taxes on the business privilege end

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 that's for next year, maybe you can find
3 a way to kind of help us bridge those
4 gaps so that we can be in compliance.
5 Most of us want to comply. But whatever
6 you decide to do, but you need to help us
7 to be able to do that.

8 I thank you. I appreciate your
9 time. And, again, I also agree with the
10 Reverend, that we are grateful for you
11 coming into our community. God bless
12 you, each and every one.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Thank
14 you. Thank you all very much.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna:
17 Councilwoman Tasco.

18 COUNCILWOMAN Tasco: Thank you,
19 Madam President. I'll be brief.

20 I first want to thank Bishop
21 Morris and Elda Morris, Winifred Morris
22 for allowing us to come into this
23 wonderful sanctuary to have the hearings
24 today.

25 I want to thank my colleagues

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 for all being here to hear what the
3 people in the Northwest have to say about
4 the deliberations that are before us.

5 I want to thank all of you who
6 have come out from the 8th and the 9th
7 Councilmanic District, and even
8 Mr. Roberson from Melrose Park with the
9 driveways. I knew that was going to come
10 up, if nothing else came up.

11 But it's been a good evening,
12 and we appreciate your words, your
13 kindness. And I want to say to
14 Mrs. Pinkney, Reverend Pinkney, we thank
15 her for her leadership with Agape and her
16 business activities on Wadsworth Avenue.
17 She's very supportive of the community
18 and works very well with the children.
19 So I thank all of you for what you do in
20 the community, and we just are very
21 pleased to be here and I'm very glad we
22 had a very good turnout.

23 So thank you, Madam President.
24 Thank you, my colleagues. Thank you,
25 Elda, Winifred, for your patience, your

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 love and this wonderful church, which
3 does a lot of wonderful work in this
4 community. Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA:

8 Councilwoman Miller.

9 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I too
10 want to thank everyone for coming out and
11 thank you, thank you, thank you for the
12 use of the church. I mean, this
13 congregation has been so great and so
14 wonderful. And you and your husband are
15 always there for us, no matter what we
16 ask you to do. So thank you.

17 Thank you, everyone. Thank
18 you.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Thank
20 you.

21 This Committee will stand in
22 recess until Monday, April the 27th at 10
23 o'clock.

24 Thank you all very much.

25 (Committee of the Whole

1 4/23/09 - WHOLE - BILL 090212, etc.

2 recessed at 7:25 p.m.)

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1
2 CERTIFICATE

3 I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
4 proceedings, evidence and objections are
5 contained fully and accurately in the
6 stenographic notes taken by me upon the
7 foregoing matter on April 23, 2009, and that
8 this is a true and correct transcript of same.

9
10
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12
13
14 _____
15 MICHELE L. MURPHY
16 RPR-Notary Public
17
18

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20 transcript does not apply to any reproduction
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