

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME
USES

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April 4, 2011
Start: 11:36 am
Recess: 11:53 am

HELD AT: Committee Room
250 Broadway, 16th Floor

B E F O R E:

BRAD S. LANDER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Brad S. Lander
Rosie Mendez
Annabel Palma
James Sanders, Jr.
Jumaane D. Williams
Daniel J. Halloran III
G. Oliver Koppell

A P P E A R A N C E S

Jenny Fernandez
Director of Intergovernmental and
Community Relations
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director
Historic Districts Council

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CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Good morning.

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It's still morning I think, yes. I'm Brad Lander,

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and this meeting of the City Council's Land Use

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Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and

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Maritime Uses is called to order.

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We're joined this morning by

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Council Member Dan Halloran from Queens, Council

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Member Jumaane Williams from Brooklyn, by Carol

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Shine, counsel to the committee, by Council Member

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Sanders from Queens, Council Member Koppel from

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the Bronx. He's not a member but joining us for

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an item in his district. Also we're joined by

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Council Member Mendez from Manhattan and Council

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Member Palma from the Bronx.

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We have three items before us this

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morning. We will begin with one of them. Land

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Use number 335, 20115318 HKX, Alderbrook House in

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the Bronx, in Community Board 8, in Council Member

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Koppell's district. We'll ask Ms. Jenny Fernandez

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from Landmarks Preservation Commission to come and

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present it to us.

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COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Mr.

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Chairman, if I may? I'm here because of this

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item, which is in my district. The meeting got

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transferred from the 16th Floor to this floor.
The owner of this property is not particularly
supportive. Does he know that we're here?

CHAIRPERSON LANDER: I was on the
16th Floor and an announcement was made that the
Landmarks--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL:
[interposing] Okay, all right.

CHAIRPERSON LANDER: --Committee
was moving down to this floor. I don't know
whether he was there or not.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: He will
undoubtedly complain that he wasn't informed of
the meeting. This is my history with him.

CHAIRPERSON LANDER: I'm informed
by Counsel that he had indicated that he couldn't
make it today.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON LANDER: We make it
policy because some of the members of the Council
like to know when an owner is in opposition to
make that clear for the record and so we know when
we're doing that.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Right.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: So we will
3 note that for the record. It was announced
4 upstairs that we had to move down here.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: I see.
6 Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you.

8 JENNY FERNANDEZ: Thank you, Chair
9 Lander and members of the Landmarks Subcommittee.
10 My name is Jenny Fernandez, Director of
11 Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the
12 Landmarks Preservation Commission.

13 I'm here today to testify on the
14 commission's designation of the Alderbrook House
15 in the Bronx. On December 15th, 2009, the
16 Landmarks Preservation Commission held a hearing
17 on the proposed designation as a landmark of the
18 Alderbrook House. Two people spoke in favor of
19 designation, including a representative of the
20 Historic Districts Council. There were no
21 speakers in opposition to designation. The LPC
22 had several conversations with the owner, who
23 chose not to attend the public hearing.

24 On February 9th, 2010, Bronx
25 Community Board 8 voted in favor of designation.

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2 On December 14th, 2010, the Commission voted to
3 designate the building a New York City individual
4 landmark.

5 Overlooking the Hudson River and
6 the Riverdale neighborhood of the Bronx, the
7 Alderbrook House is a rare example of a mid 19th
8 century Hudson River villa in New York City.
9 Probably built by Oscar C. and Ada Woodworth
10 Ferris between 1858 and 1859, Alderbrook is one of
11 the two oldest villas in Park Riverdale, an
12 exclusive residential development, begun in 1856,
13 and the only one of Park Riverdale's early villas
14 to remain in use as a single family residence.

15 Alderbrook fell into disuse until
16 its purchase in 1921 by Viola Nadelman, the wife
17 of the renowned sculptor Elie Nadelman, to serve
18 as the couple's summer home. Born in Poland in
19 1882, Elie Nadelman moved to New York in 1914 and
20 in the early 20s began amassing a folk art
21 collection that was one of the finest in the
22 world. He committed suicide at Alderbrook in
23 1946, but his wife Viola, who played a key role in
24 promoting her husband's legacy, continued to live
25 at Alderbrook until her death in 1962.

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2 Alderbrook is a picturesque
3 residence exhibiting both Italian and Gothic
4 revival characteristics. Remarkably well
5 preserved, this Hudson River villa retains its
6 many distinguishing features. The commission
7 urges you to affirm this designation.

8 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you very
9 much, Ms. Fernandez. Council Member Koppell?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: I would
11 just first like to thank the Landmark Commission
12 for their extensive discussion not only of the
13 house but also the history of Riverdale. It's one
14 of the best I've ever read and has facts in it
15 that I have never known before, as a lifelong
16 resident of Riverdale. I commend to the committee
17 to read the history here, because it's very
18 interesting.

19 I have visited the house myself.
20 I think it richly deserves designation, both
21 because of its architectural value and its
22 historic value as a part of New York City now,
23 although it wasn't then when it was built. It was
24 part of Westchester actually.

25 So I'm strongly in support. I do

1
2 want to say on the record that we've given the
3 owner every courtesy. He asked for a postponement
4 of the consideration by the Landmark Commission
5 and I asked the Landmark Commission and he was
6 granted a postponement.

7 When the matter came here, he again
8 asked for a postponement of the meeting of this
9 subcommittee and such a postponement was granted.
10 I'm sorry he can't be here today, but I think
11 we've given him every consideration. I urge the
12 subcommittee to support designation.

13 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you,
14 Council Member Koppell. I think this is a good
15 example of why we both try to make sure we listen
16 to owners and give them the courtesy but why, in
17 my opinion, owner opposition by itself is not
18 sufficient to block us from acting. This is
19 clearly a quite extraordinary house. It's rightly
20 owned, as it has been for its history, by someone
21 of enough means to keep it up. But there is a
22 public interest in making sure that it's
23 maintained and no allowing it to be altered even
24 if it was the owner's wish to do so.

25 So I appreciate your making sure

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2 that he had the opportunity to make his voice
3 heard, and also you're being here in support.

4 Also, I'll just note since you're joining us, that
5 we often get these wonderful and rich histories of
6 neighborhoods and houses.

7 One thing that I'm enthusiastic
8 about and can't wait to see soon enough is that
9 the commission is working on updating and
10 improving its website in a way that will make this
11 information available to people in a much easier
12 fashion than it is now. You can go on the website
13 and get the PDFs of the documents, but the odds
14 that anyone would ever do so seem very slim.

15 It's possible to sort of click on a
16 buildings and sections and get to the information.
17 I think it'll really help people understand and
18 appreciate the history of the city even better.

19 Any other members have questions
20 about Alderbrook House?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: So the
22 owner never attended any of the public meetings?

23 JENNY FERNANDEZ: Not at the
24 Landmarks, he did not attend the public hearing.
25 On behalf of the chair and the LPC I just want to

1
2 thank Council Member Koppell for all of his
3 support in all the items in his district which has
4 been very important to the commission and the city
5 and to the chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Council Member
7 Halloran?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HALLORAN: Mr.
9 Chair, I just want to say that it's my
10 understanding that this house even has a
11 tangential connection to Teddy Roosevelt. So of
12 course, I'll be voting in the affirmative.

13 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: That's good.
14 I thought you were going to talk about the concern
15 about ghosts.

16 Okay, great. Thank you. We do
17 have one other person signed up to testify on this
18 matter. Mr. Fernandez, thank you. Please stick
19 around. I'll ask Simeon Bankoff from the Historic
20 Districts Council to come up.

21 SIMEON BANKOFF: Good morning,
22 Council Members. Simeon Bankoff, Executive
23 Director of the Historic Districts Council. I had
24 said earlier this year that one of my resolutions
25 was to come before you more often, and here I am.

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2 I'm going to testify on both this
3 and the other and just say that we were in support
4 at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. We
5 continue to be in support here. We ask the
6 Council to please affirm this designation. The
7 Alderbrook House, specifically is one that is a
8 wonderful marriage of both architectural and
9 historical importance, a very rare house in many
10 ways and really quite beautiful.

11 The Coney Island is one of the few
12 things that we're actually managing to save in the
13 Coney Island, so we strongly support it. We ask
14 the Council to look upon Coney Island with a fair
15 eye. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you very
17 much. We have no one else signed up to testify.
18 So we will close the public hearing on the
19 Alderbrook House and move on to the Child's
20 Restaurant Building. Council Member Koppell,
21 thank you for joining us.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Thank you,
23 if you don't mind.

24 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: No, of course,
25 thank you. So this is Land Use number 363,

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2 20115422 HKK, the wonderful Child's Restaurant
3 Building on the Boardwalk in Coney Island in
4 Council Member Recchia's district in Brooklyn
5 Community Board 13. Ms. Fernandez, please rejoin
6 us.

7 JENNY FERNANDEZ: Once again, thank
8 you, Chair Lander. My name is Jenny Fernandez,
9 Director of Intergovernmental and Community
10 Relations for the Landmarks Preservation
11 Commission. I'm here today to testify on the
12 Commission's designation of the Child's Restaurant
13 Building in Brooklyn.

14 On March 23rd, 2010, the Landmarks
15 Preservation Commission held a public hearing on
16 the proposed designation as a landmark of the
17 Child's Restaurant Building in Brooklyn.

18 There were ten speakers in favor of
19 designation, including representatives of Council
20 Member Domenic Recchia, Save Coney Island, Coney
21 Island History Project, the Municipal Art Society,
22 the Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts
23 Council and the architect for the building. There
24 were no speakers opposed to designation. Building
25 owner Coney Island USA, which operates a museum in

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2 the building testified in support of designation.
3 The Commission has received more than 60 letters
4 and emails in support of designation.

5 On January 11th, 2011, the
6 Commission voted to designate the building a New
7 York City individual landmark.

8 The Child's Restaurant Building on
9 Surf Avenue in Coney Island was the first
10 restaurant built for this well known chain in
11 Coney Island. The Child's Restaurant chain, begun
12 in 1889, developed a small place that catered to
13 working people where one could find decent meals
14 for a reasonable price in a clean environment.

15 The building was constructed in
16 1917 in West Brighton near the terminus of
17 Prospect Park and Coney Island Railway Line and
18 close to many of the most famous amusements of the
19 area. As the area prospered, a second and larger
20 Child's was built at 21st Street, facing the new
21 Boardwalk. This first restaurant continued to
22 operate at this location until 1943 when the
23 property was leased to the Bluebird Casino and
24 Restaurant.

25 During the following years, the

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2 building continued to house restaurants, clubs and
3 other activities related to Coney Island's
4 amusements. It was a site of David Rosen's
5 Wonderland Circus Sideshow. And since 2007, has
6 been the location of Coney Island USA and the
7 Coney Island Museum, which documents the history
8 of this famous New York City neighborhood.

9 Originally designed by John C.
10 Westervelt, who worked for the Child's chain for
11 many years, the building displays elements of the
12 Spanish Revival style, seen in its overhanging red
13 tile roof, round arched openings and white façade.

14 The building is a rare survivor of
15 Coney Island's history when amusements and the sea
16 air attracted thousands of pleasure seekers
17 escaping from the hot city, a tradition that
18 continues today.

19 The Commission urges you to affirm
20 this designation.

21 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thanks very
22 much, Ms. Fernandez. Again, there has obviously
23 been a lot of contentious issues around
24 preservation in Coney Island. It's wonderful to
25 get this building, which again not only has great

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2 history to it but has been put back into use in a
3 wonderful way of bringing together both the
4 present and the past at Coney Island. We'd love
5 to be doing more, but we're thrilled to be doing
6 this. Any questions from members of the
7 committee? We should have done this onsite I
8 think really is the only thing I would say, but in
9 the summer.

10 We'll refer to Mr. Bankoff's
11 testimony in support of this as well during our
12 public hearing on Alderbrook. So we don't need to
13 invite him to come up again. We have no one else
14 signed up to testify, so we'll close the public
15 hearing on Child's Restaurant Building. Thank you
16 very much.

17 We'll move on to our third and
18 final item, Land Use number 364, the Haskins and
19 Sells Building, 20115462 HKM in Speaker Quinn's
20 District in Manhattan Community Board 5.

21 JENNY FERNANDEZ: Thank you, Chair
22 Lander. My name is Jenny Fernandez, Director of
23 Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the
24 Landmarks Preservation Commission. I'm here today
25 to testify on the Commission's designation of the

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Haskins and Sells Building in Manhattan.

On June 22nd, 2010, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a landmark of the Haskins and Sells Building in Manhattan. One speaker, a representative of the Historic Districts Council was in favor of this designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

On January 11th, 2011, the Commission voted to designate the building a New York City individual landmark.

The Haskins and Sells Building, designed by architect Frederick Zobel, was originally constructed in 1912 as a speculative venture of the Brunswick Realty Company. From 1920 to 1920, the building served as the principle location for the accounting firm of Haskins and Sells which was recognized as the first major auditing firm founded by American accountants.

Haskins and Sells was started in 1895 by Charles Waldo Haskins, nephew of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Elijah Watt Sells. Although the company owned the building for only five years, an

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2 indelible reminder of their presence has been left
3 in the form of a first story frieze bearing the
4 inscription Haskins and Sells, the year of the
5 firms founding and acquisition of the building and
6 the name of the architect.

7 The 12-story renaissance revival
8 style building is an imaginative and graceful
9 combination of architectural elements and details.
10 Architect Frederick Zobel was particularly active
11 in the first decade of the 20th century and was
12 considered an expert in the field of building
13 engineering, particularly with respect to
14 skyscraper construction techniques.

15 The Commission urges you to affirm
16 this designation.

17 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thanks very
18 much, Ms. Fernandez. Just in our usual fashion,
19 have you heard privately or did you hear at the
20 public hearing from the owner of the building?

21 JENNY FERNANDEZ: The owner did not
22 appear at the public hearing or testify. The
23 chair, as a courtesy, held the record open for an
24 additional 30 days to allow the owner some time to
25 submit any statement of their position. But we

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2 did not receive anything. We've done all the
3 outreach necessary, but they've just not
4 responded.

5 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: We the same
6 here. We reached out to the owner of the building
7 but did not receive any official correspondence
8 from the owner. Hard to argue the merits on this
9 one even if you might not be entirely enthusiastic
10 as the owner about it. And there similarly is a
11 very interesting history of this building, which
12 started as an accounting firm and then was part of
13 the garment center and it looks like they made
14 radiators in it. So a very interesting history.
15 Any questions from members of the committee?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank
17 you. What's a frieze?

18 JENNY FERNANDEZ: It's like a sign
19 band but it's in the masonry with lettering on it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank
21 you.

22 JENNY FERNANDEZ: Right above the
23 first floor.

24 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Seeing no
25 other questions and no one signed up to testify,

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2 we will close the public hearing. Thank you, Ms.
3 Fernandez on this item. That concludes the public
4 hearings for today. We'll move forward to vote on
5 these three items. Land Use numbers 335, 363 and
6 364. The Chair recommends a vote of aye and asks
7 our counsel to call the roll.

8 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Christian
9 Hylton, Counsel to the committee. Chair Lander?

10 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Aye.

11 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council Member
12 Sanders?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: Aye.

14 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council Member
15 Palma?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Aye.

17 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council Member
18 Mendez?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Aye.

20 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council Member
21 Williams?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Aye.

23 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council Member
24 Halloran?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER HALLORAN: Aye.

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CHRISTIAN HYLTON: By a vote of six in the affirmative, none in the negative and no abstentions, LUs 335, 363 and 364 are approved and referred to the full Land Use Committee.

CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you very much. This meeting of the subcommittee is adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Donna Hintze certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature _____ *Donna Hintze* _____

Date April 22, 2011 _____