

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS

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December 15, 2008

Start: 11:25 am

Recess: 11:40 am

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E: JESSICA S. LAPPIN
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Charles Barron
Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.
John C. Liu
Miguel Martinez
Annabel Palma
Maria del Carmen Arroyo
Rosie Mendez
James S. Oddo

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Kate Daly
Executive Director
Landmarks Preservation Commission

CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Good morning.

Welcome to the Land Use Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting, and Maritime Uses. I'm the Chair, Jessica Lappin, I am joined today by Council Member Miguel Martinez from Manhattan, Councilwoman Annabel Palma from the Bronx, Council Member Charles Barron from Brooklyn, and Council Member Leroy Comrie from Queens. We have a few items on the agenda this morning. Let's start with the Tompkinsville Pool Bath House interior and the Tompkinsville pool, which are separate actions, although obviously related, both of which are in Council Member McMahon's district. I understand that the Council Member, soon-to-be Congressman, is supportive of both of these actions. For those of you on the Committee who don't know, Diane Jackier has left the Landmarks Commission. She has, she is now at Parks, right, Jane?

FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Jane, yeah, she got a very--yes, she's at the Parks Department in a very exciting new role. So we have Kate Daly here today to testify on the items before us. So,

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2 Ms. Daly, please come. [Pause] She's working in
3 the Capital Division, Chief of Staff to the
4 Capital Commissioner at Parks. So, Ms. Daly,
5 please introduce yourself for the record and
6 begin.

7 KATE DALY: Good morning, Council
8 Members, my name is Kate Daly, Executive Director
9 of the Landmarks Preservation--

10 [Off mic]

11 [Pause]

12 KATE DALY: Okay. Good morning,
13 Council Members, my name is Kate Daly, Executive
14 Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
15 I'm here today to testify on the Commission's
16 designation of the Tompkinsville, also known as
17 Joseph H. Lyons, Pool and Bath House, first floor
18 interior, on Staten Island. On January 30th,
19 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a
20 public hearing on the proposed designations,
21 including the bath house, swimming pool, diving
22 pool, wading pool, mechanical equipment
23 enclosures, perimeter walls and fencing, and
24 street-wall brick retaining walls. This interior
25 designation includes the domed entry foyer and

1 telephone alcove and fixtures and interior
2 components of the space, including, but not
3 limited to, wall, floor, and ceiling surfaces,
4 doors, ticket and parcel booth mats--fronts,
5 mental signage, and vents. Eleven witnesses spoke
6 in favor of designation, including Parks
7 Commissioner Adrian Benepe and representatives of
8 Councilman Michael McMahon, the Municipal Art
9 Society of New York, the Historic Districts
10 Council, the Society for the Architecture of the
11 City, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the
12 Preservation League of Staten Island. There were
13 no speakers in opposition to designation. The
14 commission has also received five letters in
15 support of the designation. Several of the
16 speakers and letters also expressed support for
17 the larger designation effort of all WPA-era
18 pools. On September 16th, 2008, the Commission
19 voted to designate the Tompkinsville Pool Bath
20 House as an individual landmark. The first floor
21 interior of the bath house forms the grand
22 entrance to the former Tompkinsville Pool, one of
23 a group of 11 immense outdoor swimming pools
24 opened in the summer of 1936 by Mayor Fiorello
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2 LaGuardia and Parks Commissioner Robert Moses.
3 Constructed with funding provided by the Works
4 Progress Administration, the long low design of
5 the L-shaped building emphasized by flush and
6 recessed brickwork, horizontal window bands, and
7 contrasting bluestone coping, is characteristic of
8 the era. The interior is distinguished by a
9 number of unique Art Moderne-style features,
10 including starburst-patterned terrazzo flooring,
11 projecting pilasters, and a clerestory with arched
12 window openings. Simple geometric forms are
13 evident in the cast stone frieze and Flemish bond
14 brick coursing. The plan of the lobby evokes an
15 ancient rotunda with enclosed porticos, grand
16 entrances, and clerestory windows, giving the
17 space a monumental feel that also invites patrons
18 into the structure. Along with other WPA-era play
19 centers, the bath house was a major accomplishment
20 of engineering and architecture. The Commission
21 urges you to affirm the designation. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Thank you.

23 We've been joined by Councilwoman Rosie Mendez of
24 Manhattan. Any questions from my colleagues on
25 this item? [Pause] Great. The hearing on these

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2 items is closed. I'd like to open the hearing on
3 the item in Council Member Mealy's district.

4 We've also been joined by Councilwoman Maria Del
5 Carmen Arroyo from the Bronx. The Betsy Head Play
6 Center, which Council Member Mealy is also
7 supportive of.

8 [Pause]

9 KATE DALY: Good morning, my name is
10 Kate Daly, Executive Director of the Landmarks
11 Preservation Commission, and I'm testifying on the
12 Commission's designation of the Betsy Head Play
13 Center in Brooklyn. On--

14 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: [Interposing] I
15 guess the play center and pool, I've been
16 corrected by staff, is that correct?

17 KATE DALY: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Okay. Thank
19 you.

20 KATE DALY: Absolutely. On January
21 30th, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission
22 held a public hearing on the proposed designation,
23 which includes the bath house, swimming pool,
24 diving pool, bleachers and filter house, and
25 perimeter cast iron fencing. Nine witnesses spoke

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2 in favor of designation, including Parks
3 Commissioner Adrian Benepe and representatives of
4 the Municipal Art Society of New York, the
5 Historic Districts Council, the New York Landmarks
6 Conservancy, and the Society for the Architecture
7 of the City. There were no speakers in opposition
8 to designation. The Commission has also received
9 letters from the Fine Arts Federation of New York
10 and the Modern Architecture Working Group in
11 support of designation. Several of the speakers
12 and letters also expressed support for the larger
13 designation effort of all WPA-era pools. On
14 September 16th, 2008, the Commission voted to
15 designate the Betsy Head Play Center an individual
16 landmark. Opened in the summer of 1936 by Mayor
17 LaGuardia and Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, the
18 Betsy Head Play Center is one of a group of 11
19 immense outdoor swimming pools constructed with
20 funding provided by the WPA. Betsy Head Park,
21 established in 1914 in the Brownsville section of
22 Brooklyn, was the city's first recreation facility
23 designed to include a public outdoor swimming pool
24 and bath house. Following a fire, the original
25 1914 bath house was replaced in 1939 with the

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2 current structure designed by John Matthews
3 Hutton. The bath house is distinguished by the
4 extensive use of recessed glass block walls for
5 the locker room portions of the bath house, making
6 the structure surprisingly translucent. The
7 equally striking rooftop observation gallery has
8 parabolic arches supporting a broad, flat roof.
9 The main entrance, distinguished by its relatively
10 lavish polished black marble wall facings, curved
11 corner sections of glass block, and slate paving,
12 prove an original and creative use of modest
13 materials and forms. The complex, along with
14 other WPA-era pools, was a major accomplishment of
15 engineering and architecture and has long been
16 recognized as among the most remarkable public
17 recreational facilities in the United States. The
18 Commission urges you to affirm the designation.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: And this is, as
21 my colleagues recall, we've--in this Committee
22 already designated some of the other pools and
23 bath houses that were built around the same time,
24 and the same effort across the city and this is, I
25 guess, the most modernist of all of the bath

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2 houses that we've looked at. Any questions from
3 my colleagues? Great. The hearing on this item
4 is closed. Let's open the hearing. [Pause] On
5 the item in Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito's
6 district, the Fire Engine Company Number 53, which
7 is also supported by Melissa Mark-Viverito.

8 KATE DALY: Thank you. Council
9 Members, for the record, my name is Kate Daly,
10 Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation
11 Commission. I'm here to testify on the
12 Commission's designation of Fire Engine Company
13 Number 53 in Manhattan. On October 30th, 2007,
14 the Landmarks Commission held a public hearing on
15 the proposed designation. Four witnesses spoke in
16 favor of designation, including representatives of
17 the owner of the building, Manhattan Community
18 Access Corporation, the Historic Districts
19 Council, the Municipal Art Society, the
20 Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in
21 America, and the New York Landmark Conservancy.
22 This building was previously heard at a public
23 hearing on July 15th, 1991. On September 16th,
24 2008, the Commission voted to designate Fire
25 Engine Company Number 53 as an individual

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2 landmark. Erected in 1884, Fire Engine Company
3 Number 53 was designed by the prominent firm of
4 Napoleon LeBrun and Sons, architects for the fire
5 department between 1879 and 1895. An excellent
6 example of a mid-block firehouse, Engine 53 was
7 among the initial group of buildings that set the
8 standard for firehouse construction in the city,
9 with a design incorporating elements of the Queen
10 Anne and Romanesque Revival styles. Engine 53's
11 most significant features are a cast iron
12 trabeated base, a central vehicular entrance
13 enlivened by foliate capitals incorporating
14 sunflowers and torches, and ornate brickwork. The
15 firehouse also represents the city's commitment
16 during this period to the civic character of
17 essential municipal services. The Commission
18 urges you to affirm the designation. Thank you.

19 [Pause]

20 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Is this the--
21 what's this being used as right now? Is it being
22 used as a firehouse?

23 KATE DALY: No, it was
24 decommissioned as a firehouse in 1974 and is
25 privately owned by the Manhattan--

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CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: [Interposing]

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Neighborhood network.

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KATE DALY: --Community Access

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Corporation--

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CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Oh.

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KATE DALY: --which is a public

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service--

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CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Right, I've--

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KATE DALY: --[crosstalk]

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CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: --I've been

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here, I just wanted to make sure that it was the

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same place I was thinking of in my mind. Any

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questions from my colleagues?

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Council Member

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Barron.

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[Pause]

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Good

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afternoon, Ms. Daly, I just wanted to welcome you

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and--

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KATE DALY: Thank you.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --just be

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consistent, you know, I just wanted you to be

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aware, if you're not already, that what I've been

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2 doing with the Landmarks Commission is to make
3 sure that any landmarking historic districts or
4 buildings, particularly those dates that coincide
5 with the date of slavery, 1827 was, I think, when
6 they abolished slavery from 1620, 1625 to 1827,
7 but even after that 1840, 1850, and sometimes even
8 in 1860s, it still occurred. So I just wanted you
9 to be on top of that, that anything--this is
10 close, 1884--that it be researched thoroughly to
11 see if in fact Native Americans, if their land was
12 taken to do this or if enslaved Africans were used
13 to build any of these pieces of real estate or
14 buildings that it be included in the history.

15 KATE DALY: Thank you, Council
16 Member, I am aware of your concern and I share
17 your concern, and the Commission is very mindful
18 of the need to look very closely at that history
19 when pursuing the research of buildings such as
20 this one. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Council Member
22 Comrie.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Good
24 morning, Ms. Daly.

25 KATE DALY: Good morning.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: What is the
3 building being used for now?

4 KATE DALY: It's a community access
5 television station, a private owner and they have
6 their offices in the building.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Private
8 owned community access television?

9 KATE DALY: That's right.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: And so the
11 interiors not landmarked. [Crosstalk]

12 KATE DALY: No, this is just an
13 exterior designation.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: And we
15 couldn't really tell from the pictures what the--
16 today's condition is. Is it in pristine
17 condition?

18 KATE DALY: The building--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER Comrie: Is that
20 this?

21 [Off mic]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Okay. All
23 right.

24 KATE DALY: The building is in good
25 condition and the owners have been filing for

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permits to restore and renovate the building.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Well that's this, okay, I'm--

[off mic]

COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Okay.

[Off mic]

COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: All right. It's just this doesn't look like that, so [off mic] okay. Thank you. Welcome aboard.

KATE DALY: Thank you very much.

[Pause]

CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Great. We're going to close the hearing on this item and move to the two items that are in Councilwoman Mendez's district. The first being the Public National Building. [Pause] Councilwoman, do you want to make any comments about this item?

COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Yes, thank you very much, Chair Lappin. I gave testimony earlier this year on these two buildings at the Landmarks Preservation Commission in support of these two items and the--let me say the exact name, the Wheatsworth Bakery Building, known to me as Keeper Storage, where I actually have a storage

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2 unit 'cause my apartment is too small. It's a
3 place I'm very familiar with and also the Public
4 National Bank that's located just a few blocks
5 from where I live. Both are very distinguished
6 buildings from the outside, I support their
7 designation under historical significance. And as
8 I understand we're going to hear some testimony in
9 opposition, I just want to put on the record I was
10 never notified, never reached out to by anyone
11 associated with these two buildings asking to meet
12 with me who had some issues with the designations
13 of these buildings.

14 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Thank you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Ms. Daly, we'll
17 do the Public National Building first.

18 KATE DALY: Sure, and on behalf of
19 Chair Tierney, I know he would want me to thank
20 Council Member Mendez for all of her support of
21 work that we're doing in the East Village, thank
22 you. For the record, my name is Kate Daly,
23 Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation
24 Commission. I'm here today to testify on the
25 Commission's designation of the Public National

1 Bank of New York Building, late Public National
2 Bank and Trust Company of New York Building, in
3 Manhattan. On October 30th, 2007, the Landmarks
4 Preservation Commission held a public hearing on
5 the proposed designation. Five people spoke in
6 favor of designation, including Council Member
7 Rosie Mendez and representatives of the Greenwich
8 Village Society for Historic Preservation, the
9 Historic Districts Council, Metropolitan Chapter
10 of the Victorian Society in America, and the New
11 York Landmarks Conservancy. The building's owner
12 opposed designation. In addition, the Commission
13 received a number of communications in support of
14 designation, including letters from Council Member
15 Tony Avella, the Friends of Terra Cotta, The Neue
16 Gallerie Museum for German and Austrian Art, and
17 the City Lore: The New York Center for Urban Folk
18 Culture. On September 16th, 2008, the Commission
19 voted to designate the Public National Bank of New
20 York as an individual landmark. The Public
21 National Bank of New York Building in the East
22 Village is a highly unusual American structure
23 displaying the direct influence of the early 20th
24 century modernism of the eminent Viennese
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1 architect designer Josef Hoffmann. Built in 1923,
2 the bank was designed by Eugene Schoen, an
3 architect remembered today for furniture design.
4 At his death, the New York Times remarked that
5 Schoen was regarded as one of the leading
6 exponents of modern architecture and design. This
7 was one of the many branch banks that Schoen
8 designed between 1921 and 1930 for the Public
9 National Bank of New York, which had its
10 headquarters on the Lower East Side. Originally
11 two stories, the structure had a monumental ground
12 story banking floor and upstairs offices clad in
13 light gray granitex and terra cotta above a
14 polished gray granite base. Designed with an
15 angled corner bay with entrance, flat capital-less
16 fluted pilasters, and a broad, highly stylized
17 modern cornice, the entrance is surmounted by
18 notable polychrome Viennese-inspired terra cotta
19 ornament in the form of a decorative band, above
20 which is a cartouche. The building's terra cotta
21 was manufactured by the New York Architectural
22 Terra Cotta Company. Sold in 1954, the building
23 was converted into a nursing home, with the
24 addition of an intermediate floor, and converted
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2 into apartments in the 1980s. The Commission
3 urges you to affirm the designation. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Any questions
5 from my colleagues? I don't see anybody else
6 signed up to testify on this item, is there
7 anybody here who was planning to testify on this
8 item? [Pause] Okay. The hearing on this--

9 [Off mic]

10 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: --item is
11 closed and I would open the hearing on the
12 Wheatsworth Bakery Building. [Pause] And, again,
13 there's nobody else signed up to testify on this
14 item either, if there's somebody sitting in the
15 room who would like to, please fill out a slip
16 with the Sergeant At Arms.

17 KATE DALY: For the record, my name
18 is Kate Daly, Executive Director of the Landmarks
19 Preservation Commission. I'm here today to
20 testify on the Commission's designation of the
21 Wheatsworth Bakery Building in Manhattan. On
22 October 30th, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation
23 Commission held a public hearing on the proposed
24 designation. Four witnesses spoke in favor of the
25 designation, including Council Member Rosie

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2 Mendez, and representatives of the Historic
3 Districts Council, the New York Landmarks
4 Conservancy, and the Greenwich Village Society for
5 Historic Preservation. There were no speakers in
6 opposition to the proposed designation. In
7 addition, the Commission received numerous letters
8 and e-mails in support of designation, including a
9 letter from Council Member Tony Avella. On
10 September 16th, 2008, the Commission voted to
11 designate the Wheatsworth Bakery Building an
12 individual landmark. Constructed in 1927 and 1928
13 to the designs of J. Edwin Hopkins, a specialist
14 in the design of industrial bakeries, the building
15 is a rare example of an Art Deco Viennese
16 Secessionist style factory building in New York
17 City. The building's linear ornamentation of
18 terra cotta friezes with a restrained, geometric
19 designs is characteristic of this style of
20 architecture. Its brick façade and large multi-
21 pane steel windows are typical features of factory
22 buildings of the era, but the terra cotta
23 distinguishes this building from typical factory
24 buildings of the 1920s. The building was built by
25 Wheatsworth, Incorporated, the successful

1
2 manufacturer of whole wheat biscuits and flour and
3 inventor of the Milk-Bone dog biscuit. The
4 National Biscuit Company acquired Wheatsworth in
5 1931, and Nabisco continued to use the building
6 for baking until the mid-1950s. The Wheatsworth
7 Bakery Building is a rare surviving industrial
8 building in the far East Village, where most of
9 the 19th and early 20th century industrial
10 facilities have been replaced by public housing
11 complexes, a public pool, and parking garages.
12 The Commission urges you to affirm the
13 designation. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Any questions
15 from my colleagues? [Pause] Okay. The item--
16 hearing on this item is closed and, with that, I
17 would ask for the Council to call for a vote on
18 the agenda today and certainly recommend a
19 favorable report vote.

20 [Off mic]

21 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Christian
22 Hilton is the Council.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Chair Lappin.

24 CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN: Aye.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member

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Barron.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member

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Comrie.

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COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member

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Martinez.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member

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Palma.

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COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member

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Arroyo.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Yes.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member

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Mendez.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Aye.

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COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of seven

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in the affirmative, none in the negative, no

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abstentions, all items are approved and referred

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to the full Land Use Committee.

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CHAIRPERSON LAPPIN:

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Congratulations, Rosie. This meeting is

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adjourned.

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[START TAPE 5]

[Off mic]

COMMITTEE CLERK: Okay. Council
Member Oddo.

COUNCIL MEMBER ODDO: Yes.

COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of eight
in the affirmative, none in the negative, no
abstentions, all items are referred to the full
Land Use Committee.

[Start tape 7]

[Off mic]

COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member
John Liu.

COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: I vote yes.

COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of nine
in the affirmative, none in the negative, no
abstentions, all items are approved and referred
to the full Land Use Committee.

[Off mic]

COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: Meeting is
adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tammy Wittman, 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 Tammy Wittman

Date December 26, 2008