

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS,
PUBLIC SITING & MARITIME USES

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August 11, 2015
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway, Committee Rm-16 Fl.

B E F O R E: Peter A. Koo
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Annabel Palma
Maria Del Carmen Arroyo
Rosie Mendez
Stephen T. Levin
Inez D. Barron
Ben Kallos

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

Kenrick Ou
Senior Director of Real Estate Services for NYC
SCA

Fred Malley
Director of External Affairs at SCA

Eric Ritzer
Curtis High School Athletic Director

Peter Gambardella
Curtis High School Head Football Coach

Tom Hepworth
Curtis High School Parent Coordinator

Aurelia Curtis
Curtis High School Principal

Michael Harwood
Resident of Saint George

Rama Chorpash
Director of Industrial Design at Parsons

Richard Humphrey
Resident of Saint George

Theo Dorian
President of Saint George Civic Association

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Good morning. I'm
3 Peter Koo, Council Member for Queens, and the Chair
4 for the Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Use.
5 Joining us today, we have Council Member Kallos,
6 Council Member Levin, and Chair of the -- Council
7 Member Mendez, and then we have Chair of the
8 Committee David Greenfield joining us too. First
9 item we're going to discuss today will be Pre-
10 Considered Land Use Application Number 20155289 SCQ,
11 which is a 450-seat primary school. [off mic] And
12 joining us today is SCA Kenrick Ou who's going to
13 testify.

14 KENRICK OU: Good morning, Chairperson
15 Koo and Subcommittee Members. My name is Ken Ou, and
16 I'm Senior Director for Real Estate Services for the
17 New York City School Construction Authority. The New
18 York City School Construction Authority has
19 undertaken the site selection process for our new
20 public primary school facility on a site consisting
21 of lot 32 on block 1242 in the Jackson Heights
22 section of Queens. The site is located on the north
23 side of 34th Avenue between 69th and 70th Streets
24 within Queens Community District Number Three and
25 Community School District Number 30. The proposed

2 sites contains the total of approximately 20,000
3 square feet of lot area and is currently occupied by
4 a commercial office building and parking lot formerly
5 used by White Castle. Under the proposed plan, the
6 SCA would require the site demolish the existing on
7 site structures and construct a new public primary
8 school facility containing approximately 450 seats.
9 The SCA has negotiated and executed a contract of
10 sale for the purchase of the site from its current
11 owner and the purchase closing is contingent upon
12 final approval of the site by the Mayor and the City
13 Council. The notice of filing for the site plan was
14 published in the New York Post and the city record on
15 April 22nd, 2015. Queens Community Board Number
16 Three and Community Education Council Number 30 were
17 also notified of the site plan on that date and were
18 asked to hold public hearings on the proposed site
19 plan. Community Board Number Three held a public
20 hearing on the site plan on May 21st, 2015 and
21 subsequently submitted written comments in
22 recommending in favor of the proposed school site.
23 Community Education Council Number 30 also held its
24 public hearing on May 21st, 2015, but did not submit
25 written comments on the proposed site. The City

2 Planning Commission was notified of the site plan on
3 April 22nd, 2015 and it recommended in favor of the
4 proposed site. The SCA has considered all comments
5 received on the proposed site plan and affirms the
6 site plan pursuant to section 1731 of the Public
7 Authority's Law. In accordance with Section 1732 of
8 the Public Authority's Law, the SCA has submitted
9 this proposed site plan to the Mayor and City Council
10 on August 4th, 2015. I also want to note that this
11 proposed site was brought to the attention of the SCA
12 by Council Member Dromm, and we want to acknowledge
13 and thank him for his efforts to address the long-
14 standing over crowding in this section of Queens. We
15 look forward to your subcommittee's favorable
16 consideration of this proposal and are prepared to
17 answer any questions from the Subcommittee. Thank
18 you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, Mr. Ou. Any
20 questions from our members? Mr. Chair?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you,
22 Mr. Chairman. How much does this project cost?

23 KENRICK OU: So, at this point, the
24 project has not been designed or bid, but the typical
25 cost for new construction is approximately 100,000

2 per seat. So, at about 450-seat school facility,
3 we're looking at over 40 million dollars.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: How much are
5 you paying for the property?

6 KENRICK OU: The negotiated price with
7 the property owner is 6.3 million dollars.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: You don't
9 have an estimate? I mean, aside from the generic
10 estimate, you haven't yet estimated what this
11 particular site would cost you?

12 KENRICK OU: The estimates are going to
13 be dependent upon site specific information, like
14 geotechnical borings and structural design, which is
15 at this point we've gotten access for preliminary
16 borings, but the more advanced design work will have
17 to wait until we actually have closed on the
18 property. As I said, for budgeting purposes and
19 planning purposes, it's not just specific to this
20 site, but for new school construction projects, the
21 typical cost is approximately 100,000 dollars per
22 seat.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, so what
24 are you estimating this project at?

2 KENRICK OU: I think I explained to you
3 that the overall budget, we would estimate at if it's
4 450 seats at 100,000 a seat, we'd look at over 40-45
5 million dollars.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Forty-five
7 million dollars plus the cost of acquisition.

8 KENRICK OU: Correct.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: So we're
10 looking at 51.3 million. Is that roughly the
11 estimate for this project?

12 KENRICK OU: That's the best numbers we
13 can provide right now, yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Got it.
15 Okay. And the reason you're unable to give us more
16 specific numbers, I mean, that seems to be just very
17 generic, right? I mean, in terms of just throwing
18 out there and saying 100,000 a seat, right? Every
19 project's different, where it's located, right? You
20 guys do this for a living. You're pretty good at
21 this. So, you have no ability to give us more
22 specific numbers. Why?

23 KENRICK OU: Because more specific
24 numbers really are dependent on project-specific
25 conditions and the design and the actual engineering

2 requirements, which require extensive site
3 investigations, which we will conduct after we own
4 the property. That will involve taking multiple
5 borings all across the site, extensive investigations
6 of the existing structure to understand what it will
7 take to demolish and remove foundations and a lot of
8 destructive testing that quite frankly is not
9 practical until such time as we actually own the
10 property.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay. So,
12 then I guess the correct answer is you don't really
13 know what the project is going to cost you, right?
14 Because if you're saying that you haven't been able
15 to -- or even though there's what you'd like to spend
16 which is 100,000 dollars a seat, if you don't have
17 that information today then the answer is it could
18 cost you somewhat less; it could cost you a lot more.
19 You could run into issues that you haven't
20 considered. Is that fair?

21 KENRICK OU: Yes, but as I was trying to
22 explain, the 100,000 dollars a seat is based off of
23 current bids and a range of existing projects, which
24 will hopefully capture an average or a typical
25 condition, but you're absolutely right, the final

2 numbers, which is why we go through a design--a site
3 specific design and estimating process to actually
4 get the specific project cost when the project
5 actually goes out to bid.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay. So,
7 when would you expect to have those numbers?

8 KENRICK OU: The design process has
9 recently commenced. I would anticipate that probably
10 within three to four months is when we would have our
11 first round of submissions where there would be a
12 very preliminary round of estimates, during which
13 time we hopefully will have some more site-specific
14 testing information. Probably within about three
15 months after that there will another submission with
16 another round of estimates, and then ultimately--our
17 typical design process is about a year, at which
18 point upon design completion there will be full
19 construction documents that will be estimated and
20 will go out for public bidding with the sort of
21 estimated range identified.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: How large is
23 the site?

24 KENRICK OU: The site is 20,000 square
25 feet.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, so--

3 KENRICK OU: [interposing] It's 200 feet
4 by 100 feet.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Got it. So,
6 when you're paying the 6.3 million is based on the
7 square feet or buildable square feet, or what's the
8 metric that you've decided to pay this number?

9 KENRICK OU: Well, it's based on
10 appraisal. So, what has--what the appraisers do is
11 they look at the highest and best use of a given
12 property under the zoning as well as the existing
13 conditions. They look at comparable sales in the
14 area, and they identify an opinion of value, and the
15 appraisal is the basis of negotiations with property
16 owners.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, thank
18 you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Any more questions from
20 the other members? So, we'll go to the next item
21 now. We have any questions from the members? From
22 the public? Alright. So, we'll close the public
23 hearing on this item and we'll go to the next item.
24 This will be Pre-Considered Land Use Application
25 Number 20155388 SCK. It's a 240-seat pre-

2 kindergarten in Council Member Gentile's district in
3 Brooklyn. Would you like to begin?

4 KENRICK OU: Thank you again, Chairperson
5 Koo. Just for the record my name is Kenrick Ou. I'm
6 Senior Director for Real Estate Services for the New
7 York City School Construction Authority. The New
8 York City School Construction Authority has
9 undertaken the site selection process for a new
10 public pre-kindergarten school facility on a site
11 consisting of lots 42 and 43 on block 6103 in the Bay
12 Ridge section of Brooklyn. The site is located on
13 the north side of 93rd Street between Third and
14 Fourth Avenues within Brooklyn Community District
15 Number Ten and Community School District Number 20.
16 The proposed site contains a total of approximately
17 13,800 square feet of lot area and is currently
18 occupied by a medical office building and residence.
19 Under the proposed plan, the SCA would acquire the
20 properties comprising the site assemblage demolish
21 the existing onsite structures and construct a new
22 public pre-kindergarten facility containing
23 approximately 240 seats. The SCA has negotiated and
24 executed contracts of sales for the purchase of the
25 properties comprising this assemblage, and the

2 closing of this purchase is contingent upon final
3 approval of the site by the--proposed site by the
4 Mayor and the City Council. The notice of filing of
5 the site plan was published in the New York Post and
6 the city record on February 13th, 2015. Brooklyn
7 Community Board Number 10 and Community Education
8 Council Number 20 were also notified of the site plan
9 on February 13th, 2015 and were asked to hold public
10 hearings on the proposed site plan. At that time,
11 the school site depicted in the site plan consisted
12 only of lot 43 on block 6103. Brooklyn Community
13 Board Number 10 held a public hearing on the site
14 plan on February 25th, 2015 and subsequently
15 submitted written comments recommending in favor of
16 the proposed school site. Community Education
17 Council Number 20 held its public hearing on February
18 19th, 2015 and also submitted written comments in
19 support of the site. The City Planning Commission
20 was notified of the site plan on February 13th, 2015
21 and it recommended in favor of proposed site.

22 Following publication of the notice of filing, the
23 SCA learned that lot 42, which adjoins lot 43, was
24 available for purchase. Given the limited size of
25 lot 43, the SCA determined that expansion of the site

2 to include lot 42 would be beneficial for the
3 development of the proposed pre-kindergarten
4 facility. Therefore, the site plan has been amended
5 since publication of initial notice of filing to
6 include lot 42. The SCA has considered all comments
7 received on the proposed site plan and affirms the
8 site plan as amended to include lot 42 pursuant to
9 Section 1731 of the Public Authority's Law. In
10 accordance with Section 1732 of the Public
11 Authority's Law, the SCA submitted the proposed site
12 plan to the Mayor and the City Council on August 4th,
13 2015. We look forward to your subcommittee's
14 favorable consideration of this proposal and are
15 prepared to answer any questions from the
16 subcommittee. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Mr. Ou, you mentioned
18 there's a residential property located at 381 [sic]
19 93rd [sic] Street.

20 KENRICK OU: Correct.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So is this property
22 vacant now, or?

23 KENRICK OU: Yes, the house had been--it
24 was a two-family house that was rented to tenants.
25 That building is now vacant.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: You guys find
3 accommodations for them to move or?

4 KENRICK OU: We're not involved in the
5 relocation of the tenants, but the seller has advised
6 us that the building is vacant, and we would
7 certainly not close on the property, on the purchase
8 with tenants in place.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. Then how much you
10 pay for this two lots?

11 KENRICK OU: So for the medical office
12 facility, which is lot 43, which is by far the larger
13 of the two properties, the negotiated contract price
14 is three million dollars. For the price of the two-
15 family residence it's 900,000 dollars. So, the total
16 purchase price for the assemblage will be 3.9 million
17 dollars.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So the cost is like
19 before, it's 100,000 dollars per seat?

20 KENRICK OU: In terms, yes. Similarly
21 for construction, although I will say and I should
22 note, pre-kindergarten facilities are somewhat
23 simpler school buildings than, you know, the larger
24 school facilities. So there may be some cost
25 savings. I think--we are still working through our--

2 we don't have as much data and experience with pre-
3 kindergarten facilities as we do, you know, with the
4 larger school facilities, but I certainly would
5 believe that the cost of construction should be
6 comparable to or less than 100,000 per seat.

7 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Any
8 questions from our members? Mr. Chair?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yes, thank
10 you, Mr. Chairman. Where is the money coming from to
11 build this pre-kindergarten? Is this from the state
12 bond that was passed last year?

13 KENRICK OU: Quite frankly, I understand
14 the money's coming from the Department of Education's
15 capital plan which has multiple sources. I don't
16 know if specifically state bond funding is funding
17 this project.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Can you find
19 out and get back to us? Just send us a note as to--

20 KENRICK OU: [interposing] We'll look
21 into it.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Specifically
23 for the pre-k funding. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Any questions from the
25 public? So we'll close out on this item. We'll go

2 to the next item, which is Application Number
3 20155170 SCQ. It's a 504-seat primary school
4 facility located in Council Member Ulrich's district.
5 Mr. Ou, would you like begin?

6 KENRICK OU: Yes. Thank you, Chairman
7 Koo. Again, my name is Kenrick Ou. I'm Senior
8 Director for Real Estate Services for the New York
9 City School Construction Authority. The New York
10 City School Construction Authority has undertaken its
11 site selection process for a new public primary
12 school facility on a site assemblage consisting of a
13 portion of lot one on block 11558, a portion of lot
14 one on block 11560 and the intervening mapped but
15 unbuilt bed of Huron Street in the Ozone Park section
16 of Queens. The site is located on the south side of
17 Albert Road between Raleigh Street and 99th Place
18 within Queens Community District Number 10 and
19 Community School District Number 27. The proposed
20 site contains a total of approximately 73,500 square
21 feet of vacant land that was conveyed by the New York
22 Racing Association to the SCA for future school
23 construction pursuant to state legislation in 2009.
24 Under the proposed plan, the SCA would construct a
25 new public primary school facility on the site

2 containing approximately 500 seats. The notice of
3 filing of the site plan for this site was published
4 in the New York Post and the city record on September
5 24th, 2014. Queens Community Board Number 10 and
6 Community Education Council Number 27 were also
7 notified of the site plan on September 24th, 2014 and
8 were asked to hold public hearings on the proposed
9 site plan. Queens Community Board Number 10 held its
10 public hearing on the site plan on October 2nd, 2014
11 and subsequently submitted written comments
12 recommending in favor of the proposed school site.
13 Community Education Council Number 27 did not hold a
14 public hearing and did not submit written comments on
15 the proposed site. The City Planning Commission was
16 also notified of the site plan on September 24th,
17 2014 and it recommended in favor of the proposed
18 site. The SCA has considered all comments received
19 on the proposed site plan and affirms the site plan
20 pursuant to Section 1731 of the Public Authority's
21 Law. In accordance with Section 1732 of the Public
22 Authority's Law, the SCA has submitted the proposed
23 site plan to the Mayor and City Council on August
24 6th, 2015. We look forward to your subcommittee's
25 favorable consideration of this proposed site plan

2 and are prepared to answer any questions that you may
3 have. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Again, Mr. Ou, how much
5 you pay for these properties?

6 KENRICK OU: This is a property that was
7 conveyed in 2009 pursuant to state legislation. I do
8 not have the numbers in front of me. We can get back
9 to you on that. The way that--structurally, though,
10 what had happened back at that time was, my
11 understanding, was part of the requirement for the
12 New York Racing Association to extend its franchise
13 and the state legislation that was required at that
14 time. The Racing Association agreed to among other
15 things convey this property for future school
16 construction to the SCA, but we will get back to you
17 on the purchase price of the property.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. Any questions
19 from our members on committee? Hearing no further
20 questions, any questions from the public? No? We're
21 going to close this item. Now, we go to this one,
22 right? [off mic] Now we go to Land Use Item Number
23 20155364 SCR. It's a 345-seat annex to Curtis High
24 School in Council Member Rose's district. Mr. Ou,
25 would you like to begin?

2 KENRICK OU: Good morning. My name is
3 Kenrick Ou. I'm Senior Director for Real Estate
4 Services for the New York City School Construction
5 Authority. The New York City School Construction
6 Authority has undertaken its site selection process
7 for a new annex to Curtis High School to be
8 constructed on the grounds of Curtis High School on a
9 portion of lot one on block 22 in the borough of
10 Staten Island. The site on which the annex building
11 would be built is an existing paved area adjacent to
12 St. Mark's Place west of Nicholas Street within
13 Staten Island Community District Number One. The
14 proposed site contains a total of approximately
15 12,000 square feet of lot area that is owned by the
16 City of New York and under the jurisdiction of the
17 New York City Department of Education. Under the
18 proposed plan, the SCA would construct on that site a
19 new annex facility containing approximately 345 seats
20 to relieve the overcrowding at Curtis High School.
21 The notice of filing for the site plan was published
22 in the New York Post, Staten Island Advance [sic] and
23 city record on January 20th, 2015. Staten Island
24 Community Board Number One and the Citywide Council
25 on High Schools were also notified of the site plan

2 on that date and were asked to hold public hearings
3 on the proposed site plan. Community Board One and
4 the Council on High Schools held a joint public
5 hearing on February 10th, 2015 and both submitted
6 written comments in support of the site. The City
7 Planning Commission was also notified of the proposed
8 site plan on January 20th, 2015, and it recommended
9 in favor of the site. The SCA has considered all
10 comments received on the proposed site plan and
11 affirms the site plan pursuant to Section 1731 of the
12 Public Authority's Law. In accordance with Section
13 1732 of the Public Authority's Law, the SCA has
14 submitted the proposed site plan to the Mayor and the
15 City Council on August 4th, 2015. We look forward to
16 your subcommittee's favorable consideration of this
17 proposal and are prepared to answer any questions
18 from the committee. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Before we
20 have questions, Council Member Rose would like to
21 make some comments on this application.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, I want to thank
23 you, and I'm sorry for being late, but today Senator
24 Gillibrand was in my district talking about the
25 reauthorization of the Zadroga Bill, and it's very

2 important that we maintain those benefits for our
3 heroes of 9/11. So, I want to say good morning and
4 thanks to Chairman Koo of the Subcommittee on
5 Landmarks, Public Sitings and Maritime Uses for
6 allowing me to briefly address application Number
7 20155364 SCR of the New York City Construction
8 Authority for a new 345 seat annex to Curtis High
9 School which is in my district. I look forward to
10 hearing the testimony of SCA and to learn more about
11 the design of the Curtis High School Annex, and I
12 also look forward to hearing the feedback and
13 concerns of my community. I thank you all for your
14 work on this important project and for taking time to
15 be here today for this hearing. Addressing the
16 capacity and overutilization of schools on the north
17 shore has been a top priority of mine for many, many
18 years, from the time that I was the director of the
19 Liberty Partnership Program at the College of Staten
20 Island where I helped at-risk youth stay in school
21 and go on to college in successful years to now--and
22 Curtis High School is one of my schools--to now, my
23 many years on Community Board and my second term in
24 the City Council representing the north shore of
25 Staten Island. Curtis is an excellent example of the

2 challenges that schools in my district face. It's
3 operating at over 140 percent capacity. So, while
4 I'm happy to be here today to discuss this project, I
5 see an annex as a stop-gap measure. As in other
6 districts in New York City, the students in my
7 district deserve more than annexes and renovated
8 former Catholic schools. They deserve brand new
9 state of the art facilities to help stimulate their
10 imaginations and give them access to resources that
11 other students have. I've made no secret of the fact
12 that I want a brand new K through 14 school for the
13 north shore, and I've already identified the
14 location. I will continue to advocate for this new
15 facility as energetically as possible, especially now
16 with the new housing proposed for the north shore,
17 which will bring families with children that will
18 need schools and will not be attracted to over-
19 crowded and over utilized schools. I just want to say
20 that I know the School Construction Authority went
21 through painstaking measures to try to maintain the
22 character of the community. Curtis High School is
23 over 100 years old, and the design for the annex, I
24 want to thank you, is in keeping with the historical
25 nature context in the community, which is a historic

2 district. So, I thank you. I look forward to
3 hearing the comments from all who are here to testify
4 on this item. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, Council
6 Member Rose. So, Mr. Chair, you want to ask some
7 questions first?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yes, if I may.
9 Thank you very much. Let me--so, per the Council
10 Member, currently we're at 140 plus percent capacity,
11 is that correct? What's the exact number on
12 capacity?

13 KENRICK OU: It's 143 percent, I believe.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: 143 percent,
15 that's pretty high.

16 KENRICK OU: That was during the 2013 to
17 2014 school year. The 2014 to 15 school year data
18 has not yet been audited and released.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Good enough.
20 We'll go with that. And is that significantly higher
21 than other schools in Staten Island?

22 KENRICK OU: I think Curtis is, and the
23 Council Member would remind us, that this is the most
24 overcrowded high school in Staten Island.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Got it. And
3 so you're going to be adding 345 seats. What's the
4 number going to come down to once this is built?

5 First of all, when is it going to be built? How long
6 does the process take?

7 KENRICK OU: The anticipated--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [cross-talk]

9 KENRICK OU: Assuming we get site
10 approval, the anticipated completion date for
11 occupancy would be September 2017 because this is an
12 annex that would be connected to the existing rest of
13 the campus, there will probably be additional
14 construction work within other parts of the campus
15 running for another year thereafter.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, so in
17 two years from now, assuming that it stays the same,
18 which is a big assumption, because one would imagine
19 based on growth in the community are probably going
20 to have more people in this school. If it stays the
21 same, what would the capacity, percentage above
22 capacity be? So you're going to go from 143 percent
23 to what percent? What's your projection?

24 KENRICK OU: You know, I'll have to do
25 the math while you're asking me, because right now

2 the--I'm sorry. In 2013-2014 the enrollment was
3 approximately 2,400 students within a building that
4 was with a 1,672 seat target capacity. So if we're
5 going to add 345 seats to that, that will bring us
6 basically to, assuming the enrollment still is around
7 2,400, the capacity would go up to about 2,000, but
8 that's of course assuming static capacity. I think
9 part of what we have seen and part of what the
10 conversation has been in Staten Island for many years
11 is that borough--the way the Department of Education
12 assesses high school need is typically borough-wide,
13 and the in part of the recognition of the
14 availability of choices available to students. That
15 has been the approach that has been taken, and for
16 many years notwithstanding similar numbers at Curtis,
17 I think there has been a, numerically, a belief
18 within Staten Island there was not necessarily the
19 need for the additional seats. I think part of what
20 we have recognized is in recent times is both that
21 the numbers at Curtis continue to increase and that
22 the fact that there may be available capacity at
23 other high schools that are geographically more
24 distant in Staten Island, I'm sure the Council Member
25 could explain it better, is one of the boroughs where

2 unlike some of the other boroughs does not have the
3 network of transit that can help students travel.
4 So, therefore the Department has acknowledged that
5 need and is proposing this project at Curtis.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Well I'm
7 certainly familiar with the geographic limitations of
8 Staten Island, especially the north shore versus the
9 south shore and it seems to be that the north shore
10 seems to be overcrowded and the south shore seems to
11 be under crowded, underutilizes. I would point out
12 there's also racial differences, significant
13 differences between the north shore and the south
14 shore and disparate impact seems to be falling on the
15 north shore which is predominantly or significantly
16 minority community. So, first, I would say
17 hallelujah that you guys have finally found the
18 ability to actually build more seats, but this leads
19 to my next obvious question is which is the Council
20 Member has been advocating for a while and has
21 actually found a location to build an actual high
22 school which is clearly what you need over here
23 because even based on your projects, the best case
24 scenario, you're going to be 25 percent over capacity
25 if we stay stagnant for the next couple years and

2 every indication is that the numbers are actually
3 growing. Where are you on actually building a brand
4 new high school that can actually have significant
5 capacity that could take the significant overage so
6 that we can have schools at actual capacity instead
7 of 125 or 135 or 143 percent capacity?

8 KENRICK OU: The Department of
9 Education's five year capital plan does not currently
10 allocate any more funding for Staten Island high
11 school seats beyond the seats that would be provided
12 at this Curtis High School location. I know the
13 Council Member has taken great issue with the
14 Department of Education's current position, but I can
15 only speak to what the current adopted capital plan--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]
17 Sure.

18 KENRICK OU: only funds the 345 seats
19 that we're proposing here.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: So, I'm a
21 little perplexed, perhaps. On the one hand you tell
22 me that you acknowledge that the school is over
23 capacity. You acknowledge that this annex will not
24 bring it to 100 percent or even below capacity. On
25 the other hand what you're saying is that we

2 acknowledge that Staten Island has a need, but you're
3 not willing to actually fulfil the complete need of
4 Staten Island. So, this is a little bit of a mixed
5 message over here. Would you mind explaining the
6 policy of the School Construction Authority and the
7 DOE why it is that you see fit to just give them some
8 schools some classes, but not enough to actually
9 solve the problem?

10 KENRICK OU: The Department of Education's
11 capital plan has, I think, for the past two or three
12 years been quite frank about the limitations and the
13 extent of need across the city and just the practical
14 limitations of funding that exist in terms of
15 addressing overcrowding, both existing overcrowding
16 and projected overcrowding. Ideally, and I had the
17 pleasure of speaking with many Council Members about
18 the overcrowding in their districts, ideally we would
19 be building probably twice as many schools as are
20 funded in the capital plan, but that's, you know,
21 that is--we work within a practical budget, and I
22 think the efforts at Curtis are to try and make a
23 meaningful difference in that school's overcrowding
24 as best we can.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay. I mean,
3 I hear you, but just to be clear I'm not speaking of
4 the whole city. We're talking about one particular
5 neighborhood over here which is the north shore of
6 Staten Island that historically has been underfunded
7 when it comes to overcrowding, an area that happens
8 to be overcrowded that also happens to be significant
9 minority representation when the south shore which
10 doesn't have those situations obviously seems to have
11 plenty of space. The disparity I would say as the
12 Chair of the Land Use Committee seems to be pretty
13 significant in terms of the treatment of one
14 particular portion of the city which happens to be
15 the north shore of Staten Island. Let me move on and
16 talk to you about some questions about historic
17 context. So, we know that you're trying to work on
18 this, but my understanding that much of this area is
19 a historic district and part of the concern is in
20 terms of preserving a particular wall, which my
21 understanding is that SCA currently intends on taking
22 down portion of this wall. Can you tell us a little
23 bit of history about this and sort of you're thinking
24 about preservation versus demolishing this wall?

2 KENRICK OU: Sure. So, I think we
3 recognize that and I think the Council Member alluded
4 to Curtis High School and that neighborhood's
5 historic context. Curtis High School itself is a
6 designated New York City landmark and has been
7 determined eligible for listing on the state and
8 national registers. As a--given those circumstances
9 and in that setting, the SCA as part of our
10 legislative requirements, but also as part of our
11 policies and procedures has consulted with the State
12 Historic Preservation Office in Albany regarding the
13 proposed project to including the partial demolition
14 of this wall and the construction of this annex to
15 the point where the State Historic Preservation has
16 concluded that our proposal would have no adverse
17 impact on resources in or eligible for the state and
18 the national registers.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Have you
20 consulted with the Landmarks Preservation Commission
21 on this?

22 KENRICK OU: I believe there have been
23 notifications to the Landmarks Preservation
24 Commission. Under the law, the LPC does not have
25

2 jurisdiction over school construction projects
3 undertaken by the School Construction Authority.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Oh, no, and I
5 completely understand that, but the general process
6 if it was a private applicant, for example, they
7 would have to go before Landmarks Preservation
8 Commission and seek a waiver. So, it would make
9 sense to me at the very least that you would consult
10 with the Landmarks Preservation Commission which is
11 responsible even though you don't have to and you can
12 do whatever you want willy-nilly. So, my question is
13 have you in fact consulted or got any feedback from
14 the Landmarks Preservation Commission?

15 KENRICK OU: I certainly believe we have,
16 and just joining us to my left is Fred Malley who's
17 Director of our External Affairs Department. But
18 yes, the answer is at various points, I believe, our
19 Architecture and Engineering Department, they have
20 consulted with state historic, but they have also
21 made presentations to the Landmarks Preservation
22 Commission staff. Whether those presentations have
23 been to the Commission itself, I can't speak to that.
24 I don't know if Fred can speak to that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thanks.

3 Fred, if you don't mind just identifying yourself,
4 please, and speak into the microphone, please.

5 FRED MALLEY: Fred Malley, Director of
6 External Affairs for the New York City School
7 Construction Authority. As our Senior Director
8 Kenrick Ou just alluded to, it's not normally the
9 case where the SCA goes with their designs to
10 Landmarks Preservation first. Normally, we go to the
11 state, I'll call it SHPO [sic], Historical
12 Preservation, and they in this letter, which I have
13 copies for if you need them, determine this rubber
14 [sic] wall as it's referred to has no architectural
15 significance. But what happened in one of our
16 community meetings, what came out was--well actually
17 afterwards. The Architectural and Engineering
18 Division of the SCA, our architects did in fact have
19 meetings with Landmarks Preservation prior to
20 submission to SHPO. So, they were very much
21 cognizant of our plans.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, so then
23 what you're saying is--I just want to be clear. The
24 normal procedure just for those folks who are
25 watching at home is that you are in a landmark

2 district and you have a home or you're a private
3 applicant and you want to make any sort of change, if
4 you want to change the windows, for example, on the
5 house of your home which is in a landmark district,
6 you need to receive approval from the Landmarks
7 Preservation Commission. Due to the fact that as
8 tends to happen with these things that certain
9 authorities are carved out from laws, generally
10 because we want to make your lives a little bit
11 easier or I want to make it as smooth as possible,
12 there's a carve out that exempts you from doing that.
13 And so we understand that technically you're not
14 required, but still this is a significant important
15 area in terms of Landmarks Preservation, otherwise we
16 wouldn't have landmarked the entire district. So,
17 the question specifically is that when you in your
18 conversations with the Landmarks Preservation
19 Commission have they said what you're saying the
20 State has said, which is its okay to knock down this
21 portion of the wall. This portion of the wall has no
22 historic value, or do they say meh [sic], or o they
23 say something sort of in between. So, I guess that's
24 really the question. So, I appreciate and thank you
25 for reaching out. I'm just curious as to what that

2 response was and whether the response was formal,
3 informal, was it a conversation, was it in writing?
4 What sort of feedback can you give us on that? As
5 you know, there's a large community of folks who are
6 very concerned about preserving historic districts
7 and especially historic features including what is my
8 understanding or at least what we've been told is a
9 historic wall that seems to be part of this property.

10 FRED MALLEY: Actually, I'm not--first of
11 all, I'm very much aware of the trials and
12 tribulations for a lack of a better phrase that our
13 residents went through. When we met with them they
14 had very distinctive landmark homes directly across
15 the street, and I do know they've made us aware of
16 the problems that they have to go through with
17 landmarks. As far as our architectural divisions
18 meeting with landmarks--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]
20 Fred, I'm just going to correct you on one point.
21 These aren't problems, and I just want to be fair
22 because it's an important distinction. I don't mean
23 to quivel [sic], I just think it's important. The
24 reason we have laws in New York City is because we
25 actually believe in preserving these landmarked

2 properties and homes. So, it's not a problem. In
3 fact, in most of these districts the community
4 voluntarily accepts upon themselves this designation
5 because they want to keep that historic landmark
6 designation. So, I think it's more of a process where
7 we just want to ensure that, you know, a similar
8 finding has been found, even though technically it
9 may not be required, and I'm not saying that it is
10 dispositive. Certainly as Chair of the Committee
11 it's an issue that concerns us and we do spend a lot
12 of time trying to preserve landmarks, so I'm just
13 curious what that feedback was from LPC, as we like
14 to call it.

15 FRED MALLEY: I'm not--although I've been
16 made aware by our architectural division that they
17 did meet, I'm not privy to the tone or the tenor of
18 the response other than that they were notified and,
19 you know, things are moving forward.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Can you find
21 out for us?

22 FRED MALLEY: Sure [sic].

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: It is possible
24 that you would get back to us on that?

25 FRED MALLEY: Certainly can.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I appreciate
3 that. Thank you.

4 FRED MALLEY: Want to do that? Should I
5 do that now? [sic].

6 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Council Member Rose
7 have questions.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. I know
9 that there's been some challenges with this project.
10 And so in your conversations with the community did
11 you discuss the design and what elements you would be
12 able to preserve or if there was the ability to
13 preserve the wall?

14 FRED MALLEY: Well, yes, that discussion
15 did occur and the Saint George Civic Association who
16 is well-represented here now made the recommendation
17 that we do in fact preserve if not the whole wall,
18 because we're building the addition on where the lies
19 140 feet of it and we're restoring 30 feet of it.
20 But the request was then to a plan B, if you will,
21 was to take some of the stones from the wall and
22 incorporate them in the façade, and what was pointed
23 out by our architectural team was that this was
24 explored, this possibility, but what we do is once we
25 design a design and we go to what they call peer

2 review, other architects review the work of the
3 architects/consultants that do the work for the SCA
4 schools. They gave praise to our design because we
5 maintained the collegiate gothic architecture of the
6 original buildings, but as far as incorporating the
7 stones into the façade, the peers, not just our
8 architects, but the wider group of architectural
9 firms came back and said no, because then you would
10 be taking away from the significance that you're
11 putting into the addition in terms of mirroring, if
12 you will, the collegiate architectural, collegiate
13 gothic architecture of the original structures. So,
14 they felt that that would take away from the overall
15 look, and I think that's quite evidence. We have
16 photographs of renderings if you'd like for the
17 committee if they haven't already seen that our
18 addition does in fact mirror the existing collegiate
19 gothic architecture.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Sergeant, could you
21 get those? Is there any way that you could adjust
22 the footprint of the building that would accommodate
23 the wall so that the wall would not have to come down
24 the 140 feet?

2 FRED MALLEY: That was another well termed
3 question from the Saint George Civic Association, but
4 unfortunately what this project entails is removing
5 temporary classrooms units and then building on that
6 space so that the students would have permanent seats
7 rather than the temporary nature of the existing
8 seats. And there is like a 30-foot wall that it's a
9 retaining wall, because the athletic field is just
10 beyond. So, then we would have to go into that
11 retaining wall which then brings in structural
12 considerations so that it would not be a workable
13 solution.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Would you sort of,
15 you know, break down what sort of structural confines
16 that, you know, you find yourself, or what would this
17 open you up to in terms of structural issues?

18 FRED MALLEY: Well, a retaining wall is
19 meant to keep the soil in a stable condition, and
20 once you start reducing the depth and the mass of a
21 retaining wall, you--now it's more of an engineering
22 question. How much can you tinker with it before
23 you're undermining it? And then also reducing the
24 size of the gymnasium that is planned in addition to
25 classrooms in the addition, that would have an impact

2 also on the student's ability to have, you know, the
3 full-fledged operational gymnasium.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So it would affect
5 the FAR of the building, the floor area ratio of the
6 building by changing the footprint by pushing it
7 back?

8 FRED MALLEY: I really haven't done the
9 analysis, so I couldn't speak to that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: But it would change
11 the dimensions of the gym you're saying, right?

12 FRED MALLEY: Yeah, it would. In other
13 words, once you start changing the footprint, you're
14 definitely changing the dimensions.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And you met with
16 the community and tried to come to some sort of, I
17 guess, middle ground where you--

18 FRED MALLEY: [interposing] To be honest,
19 the meeting, it was very cordial, but you could see
20 that they did not want what we refer to as the rubble
21 [sic] wall, which has been considered part of the
22 landscaping. The term, I realize--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] Would
24 you define that because, you know, community--

2 FRED MALLEY: [interposing] It's a term
3 of art.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: really, you know,
5 has taken exception to that term. So, could you
6 define what you're talking about when you say a
7 rubble wall, because if I did not know what that wall
8 looked like, I would think it was just concrete
9 something that had no, you know, artistic value.

10 FRED MALLEY: Well, as you can see from
11 the pictures, it's to the right of the addition, 30
12 feet of it, and then there's the overall. There's one
13 overhead shot that shows the entire campus which
14 shows more of the extension. Its field stones. Back
15 in the day when they made the wall, they gathered
16 stones from the field, you know, stony property, and
17 they made it out of, you know, for a lack of a--I'm
18 told by our architects it's a term of art. Its field,
19 you know, it's field rubble if you will. I know that
20 the members of the community objected to that term,
21 but I'm not the architect and the architect said
22 that's what it's referred to as.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, Landmarks or
24 SIPA [sic], you call--

2 FRED MALLEY: [interposing] SHPO [sic],
3 yeah.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Do they refer to it
5 as a rubble wall?

6 FRED MALLEY: Let me--it's in the last
7 paragraph of their conclusion and if you bear with me
8 I'll just read that once I get my eyeglasses. What
9 do they--how do they refer to it as? Okay. it is in
10 the, for lack of a better word, the OPRHP's opinion
11 that the proposed new construction planned for Curtis
12 High School will have no adverse impact upon historic
13 resources. If there are a substance of changes or
14 unexpected conditions, consultation with our office
15 will resume. Let me just check where it actually
16 refers to the wall. Okay, they refer to it as
17 temporary removing sections--they refer to it as a
18 stone wall. Okay, so a stone wall is how SHPO refers
19 to it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Alright. So, then,
21 can we refer to it as a stone wall?

22 FRED MALLEY: I think it might be
23 advisable--

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] It
3 seems that there's been iss--yes, it diminishes, you
4 know--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]
6 Tensions.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: No, it diminishes,
8 it seems, the value of the wall as well as tensions.

9 FRED MALLEY: That was not my intent. I'm
10 quoting what architects refer to it as.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, there is no way
12 that this project could be constructed to accommodate
13 the occupancy that we're looking, the number of seats
14 we're looking to address and accommodate the wall?

15 FRED MALLEY: To be quite frank, in
16 construction you can do anything, but the question is
17 now you're sacrificing architectural significance of
18 the addition in trying to replicate the 100 year old
19 main building. we've been given--I don't want to say
20 the word praise, but you know, salutations from
21 peers, architectural peers for the way we preserve
22 the look of the original structures that are
23 landmarked, and the cost of doing that is not
24 incorporating the stonewall pieces of it into the
25 façade. So--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] Would
3 the cost change significantly if you incorporated the
4 stones into the design?

5 FRED MALLEY: I think the significant
6 thing from an architectural and landmarks pers--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] It's
8 basically architectural but not so much financial.

9 FRED MALLEY: Well, if it had been
10 designed that way or if that's the intent, but then
11 you're taking away, you're diminishing. You know,
12 then I don't know if SHPO would approve the project
13 as a whole and at least there would be a delay in
14 much needed seats has been clearly stated. So, once
15 we got our peer review from architects saying you'd
16 be better off not putting, incorporating stone wall
17 into the façade, we move forward without the stones
18 from the original wall.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Chair, I--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you
21 Council Member Rose. I'm sorry. I find this to be a
22 curiosity. So, that's why I'm a little bit intrigued
23 by this, Fred. So, these architects, were they aware
24 that this is within the Saint George Historic
25 District, the architects who were peer reviewed?

2 Were they notified? When they looked at this
3 building, right? I mean, because there's two
4 different kind of answers. It's one thing to say,
5 "Oh, it's a very nice stone through your old wall."
6 There's others actually say, "Well, we actually have
7 a historic district that is intended to preserve this
8 area." So, do you know for a fact that these
9 architects that engage in a peer review were aware
10 that Saint George which this is located and is in
11 fact a designated historic district by New York City?

12 FRED MALLEY: Well, do I know for a fact?
13 No, but the whole significance of their review was
14 preserving landmark structures.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: That was why
16 the architects were reviewing this, or that's why--

17 FRED MALLEY: [interposing] No, they
18 review it as--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]
20 the state was reviewing it?

21 FRED MALLEY: They always review all of
22 our work, but the understanding is we're trying to
23 make this addition go with the landmark original
24 buildings. So, they knew that the school was
25 landmarked. Do I know for a fact the dimensions of

2 the historical district were explained to them? I'm
3 not privy to that information.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay. The
5 other thing I'm trying to understand as I'm just
6 looking at this wall, so this would be the remainder
7 of the wall, is that correct? So a portion of the
8 wall would in fact be intact, but another part of the
9 wall would be destroyed. So is this a fair--this
10 rendering, is that correct rendering?

11 FRED MALLEY: That's a partial. I would
12 ask whoever has the overview of the whole campus,
13 look at that. The majority of the wall is not on
14 school property. So we're maintaining 30 feet. The
15 rest of it runs down the street.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay. So
17 here's what I don't understand. The wall appears to
18 very close to where you're ending the current
19 building. I mean, I can't tell from the rendering
20 because it doesn't have exact dimensions, maybe like
21 a foot or two. Am I wrong? So I'm not really
22 understanding why you need to knock down this wall
23 for that extra--

24 FRED MALLEY: There's a hundred--
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]

3 I mean, it's not like--you see what I'm saying? It's
4 not like the--for those who can't see on television,
5 I'm not--it's like we see a wall running through
6 right the middle of the property, right? This is the
7 wall at the end of the property and it seems like you
8 have just, I don't know, a foot or two setback. So,
9 is that--am I misunderstanding this design? This is
10 the best that we have. This is what I'm working off
11 of. So, is it basically you're knocking down a 150
12 year old historic stone wall so that you can get an
13 extra couple of feet. Is that pretty much what
14 you're proposing?

15 FRED MALLEY: According to the State
16 Historical Preservation Office there's no historical
17 significance.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Not my
19 question. That's not my question. My question was
20 specifically is it correct that you're knocking down
21 150 year old historic stone wall in the Historic
22 Preservation District to get an extra foot, right?
23 Because that's what it looks like over here.

24 FRED MALLEY: We're building it on the
25 wall, on top--what would be the top of the wall.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Fred, I got
3 to tell you, honestly, to me this is very
4 disappointing. You are the School Construction
5 Authority of the New York City, and I know that you
6 don't have an obligation to do so. I understand it
7 that you guys can just do willy-nilly, but it really
8 seems to me that you guys haven't really worked very
9 hard to make a very small accommodation, which is to
10 preserve 150 year old historic stone wall within a
11 historic district, and I have to tell you as the
12 Chair of the Land Use, I've got private applicants
13 who come in who jump through hula hoops that you
14 cannot imagine what they do. They'll spend millions
15 of dollars to preserve a window or a façade or
16 literally the frontage of a building. They will do
17 everything they can, and your response is, "It's
18 going to cost us a couple dollars more, so too bad."
19 It's not very inspiring and it's a little bit
20 disappointing, honestly. I would sincerely ask that
21 you guys go back and look at a way to do this. It
22 doesn't seem like you really tried to do it, and
23 quite frankly, it doesn't seem like it'd be that
24 difficult or that expensive considering that it's
25 physically roughly the same proportions. There's got

2 to be a way to incorporate it where you can keep the
3 community happy and you can preserve the historic
4 nature of the district even though you don't
5 technically have to. It's not a good practice, and
6 it's a little bit embarrassing, honestly, for SCA,
7 the City of New York, the Mayor's Office that's
8 represented over here to simply say, "Too bad, so
9 sad. We're knocking down your historic wall because
10 we need an extra foot because we can't really spend a
11 few more bucks on what's going to be a 40 or 50
12 million dollar project." I don't know, Fred. I
13 think you guys can do better, honestly, and I really
14 would ask you to take a second look at this and see
15 if there's a way to at least incorporate the design
16 of the wall into the new building for a historic 150-
17 year-old stone wall that is part of a very important
18 historic district that we've designated in the City
19 of New York.

20 FRED MALLEY: Okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Council Member Levin?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you. So, I
23 just want to just make clear a little bit of the
24 jurisdiction here. So, SHPO has jurisdiction because
25 why, why is SHPO the agency to go to?

2 FRED MALLEY: Right.

3 KENRICK OU: So, Council Member, the
4 reason we go to SHPO is because the SCA's enabling
5 legislation establishes requirements, and it says
6 that the SCA shall be exempt from LPC and the SCA
7 shall consult with the State Historic Preservation
8 Office.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. So, then
10 you're not required to go to LPC.

11 KENRICK OU: Correct.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Have you gone to
13 LPC?

14 KENRICK OU: We have gone and made
15 presentations as I think Fred has--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] And
17 has LPC responded in writing with an advisor? Are
18 you seeking an advisory opinion from LPC on whether
19 or not the wall should be maintained in totality?

20 FRED MALLEY: I tell you the truth, I was
21 told that they went to LPC and--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] If
23 you could speak into the mic, please.

24 FRED MALLEY: Oh, I'm sorry. I don't--
25 I'm not privy to what reaction LPC, whether it was in

2 verbal or written, other than the fact that they were
3 aware with it and it was okay to move ahead.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Because I'll be
5 honest with you, I mean, I've experienced this in my
6 own district, LPC is a different standard than SHPO
7 does in terms of how they view a historic structure
8 and the necessity to maintain it or what types of
9 modifications are appropriate to be made. My
10 experience has been that LPC is--holds a higher
11 standard than SHPO does in my experience in my
12 district when I've experienced it. So, I think--I
13 mean, I would be very interested to see what LPC has
14 to say on the matter in a formal way, whether it's in
15 a letter to SCA or something where LPC is engaged in
16 the process. As the City Landmarks Agency in a
17 historic district, that might make some sense. The
18 other agency that I was curious about is the Art
19 Commission. Does that have any role in this
20 whatsoever?

21 KENRICK OU: No. Among the city
22 jurisdictional exemptions that the SCA has, the
23 Public Design Commission is the SCA capital projects
24 are exempt from Public Design Commission as well.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Because I've had
3 numerous public projects in my district whether it's
4 a park, a DEP wastewater treatment facility that are
5 subject to Public Design Commission. So SCA is
6 exceptional in that regard that it's--as opposed to
7 other city agencies like DEP, which is--it's because
8 SCA is an authority and has its own enabling
9 legislation, is that correct?

10 KENRICK OU: Correct. So, the SCA is a
11 public authority established under the Public
12 Authority's Law. The State Legislature defined
13 specific exemptions and obligations on the part of
14 the SCA. Among the exemptions were exemptions from
15 the Art Commission, now Public Design Commission, the
16 Landmarks Preservation Commission, the Uniformed Land
17 Use Review Procedure, and other things all in
18 keeping, I think, with the findings that animated the
19 legislature in creating the SCA in the late 1980's,
20 which was a spirit of trying to expedite school
21 construction.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: You can understand
23 why this is an issue. You know, this is in a
24 landmarks district. I mean, I have eight landmark
25 districts in my council district, and it's--you know,

2 everything. Not just the houses and not just the
3 buildings, but everything is, you know, is part of
4 that historic fabric. So, whether it's a cobble
5 stone street or a historic retaining wall that was
6 built in the 1870's or 1880's or whatever, you know,
7 that all contributes to the historic fabric, and so I
8 think that's why you're seeing this type of
9 opposition to this is that everything is important.
10 Whether, you know, whether it's a retaining wall or,
11 you know, a grand building built by some famous
12 architects. Thanks.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Mr. Chairman?

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Any comments from other
15 members?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yeah, final
17 comment. You know, here's what I'm going to do,
18 Fred, to make your life easier. I'm going to send a
19 letter today as the Chairman of the Land Use
20 Committee to the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
21 I'm going to ask them for their opinion on what they
22 think about knocking down this stone wall and whether
23 they approve it, and let's see what they say, and
24 that way we'll get their opinion. And I understand
25 that the law allows you an exemption, but just

2 because you can do something doesn't mean that you
3 should. I think that's really the critical point
4 over here. The law was not intended so that you guys
5 should simply ignore landmarks. It was intended so
6 that your life should be easier, but as the City of
7 New York which you represent, you have a
8 responsibility as well to at least try to accommodate
9 the landmark district, which this is, and quite
10 frankly doesn't seem like you guys have done much of
11 that, and it just seems like for a couple more feet
12 and perhaps a few more bucks you guys are ready to
13 knock down a 150 year old historic wall, and I got to
14 tell you I find that disturbing. So, I'm going to
15 send a letter over. I hope we get a response. I
16 hope that you guys will take this issue seriously. I
17 hope you go back, put your heads together and see
18 whether you can make some sort of accommodation to
19 try to keep intact as much of this historic 150-year-
20 old stone wall as possible. I appreciate your
21 testimony today.

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. Any comments
23 from the public? We're going to do another session
24 right now, yeah. So, thank you.

25 FRED MALLEY: Thank you.

2 KENRICK OU: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Mr. Curtis? Angela
4 Curtis, Ms. Aurelia Curtis? Peter Gambardella,
5 Thomas Hepworth and Eric Ritzer. [off mic] Two or
6 three minutes? Each will have two minutes speaking
7 time, and you can start wherever.

8 ERIC RITZER: Good morning. I'm sorry,
9 good afternoon. My name is Eric Ritzer. I'm the
10 Curtis High School Athletic Director and Assistant
11 Principal for Physical Education and JROTC. I would
12 like to speak in support of the application to
13 construct a new annex to our school on the site
14 presently occupied by the four temporary trailers.
15 Curtis is well-known as a school that produces
16 student athletes who excel both in sports and
17 academics. We take our athletic program extremely
18 serious because we know that it is very often a young
19 person's interest in sports that serves as the
20 foundation for the success in school. That's why we
21 are so excited about this project. When the new
22 annex is completed, it will be the first time in the
23 110 year history of our school that we will have a
24 competition-ready facility for our indoor sports
25 programs. The school currently has two gyms. Both

2 were built in 1936 and are adjacent to the site
3 proposed for the annex. The boy's gym is at street
4 level on the Saint Marks Place and the girl's gym is
5 directly above that. This is very little room in
6 either gym for seating, which means that spectators
7 must sit in hazardous close to the action. There is
8 even less room for storage for sports equipment such
9 as wrestling mats, volleyball nets, stands. So,
10 they're often on the floor during the games and
11 practices. Locker rooms and training rooms are in
12 very poor condition as well. This new construction
13 will give us a sports facility with new locker rooms,
14 new fitness center, room for storage, and more
15 adequate and safe seating for spectators. In
16 addition, the plan calls for space conversions to
17 accommodate dance, wrestling, gymnastics, drama, and
18 other sports and performing programs, but this isn't
19 just about playing games. In a new, nice facility
20 it's about using the love of sports so that our young
21 people become engaged with their education, have
22 supervised, wholesome after school activities and
23 come to learn the life lesson that team sports and
24 competition offers. By building this annex we will
25 not be increasing our student population, but we will

2 be increasing our percentage who are positively
3 engaged in supervised activities inside the buildings
4 every afternoon instead of out being on the streets
5 without direction or adult mediation of any kind. I
6 would think that this is any goal--I would think that
7 would be the goal any community could support. Thank
8 you.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Next? Will
10 you please identify yourself first?

11 PETER GAMBARDELLA: Good afternoon. My
12 name is Peter Gambardella. I'm an Assistant
13 Principal at Curtis, the Head Football Coach and a
14 proud graduate of Curtis High School. When it was
15 determined that Curtis High School would finally get
16 the much needed annex where the temporary current
17 classrooms were located there was much excitement and
18 joy. Having graduated from Curtis in the early 90's
19 and working there for the last 18 years I've
20 witnessed the growth and desire for students to
21 attend Curtis High School. The building currently
22 sits at over 140 percent capacity and has to function
23 on three different time schedules to accommodate the
24 students. These three different time schedules
25 create conflicts for students, staff, parents, and

2 community members. As the north shore continues to
3 grow, this will only create more overcrowding. This
4 addition that will link a century of history to the
5 present will accommodate the current population and
6 provide much needed space for the demand on the
7 island's oldest public high school. The new addition
8 was specifically designed to fit into current
9 structure of our castle on the hill. The design of
10 this new additions replicates the current landmarked
11 building so that it will fit in the community and not
12 be an eyesore. The new addition will also finally
13 make the entire building handicap accessible. The
14 current building does not provide an opportunity for
15 handicapped students to reach the gymnasiums, library
16 or even meet their college advisors. The new
17 addition will provide much needed space to
18 accommodate our growing population and provide us
19 with modern classrooms. Four walls that will benefit
20 the children of the north shore for years to come is
21 more important than a single wall.

22 TOM HEPWORTH: Hello, Committee, Chairman
23 Greenfield. My name is Tom Hepworth, and I'm a
24 parent coordinator with Curtis High School. We heard
25 some of the numbers. The school is 143 percent

2 utilization. That's just a number. What that means
3 in real life, we're talking about children here, is
4 that our kids start at a three-bell schedule. They
5 come in at 7:25 in the morning, some of them, some
6 start at 8:13, some start at 9:00, and they leave the
7 building in a staggered ways too. What this means is
8 that many of our children do not have access to our
9 after school programs or our sports because they're
10 leaving at times that are out of sync with those
11 programs. What it means is we have lunches that
12 start at 9:00 a.m. in the morning because there are
13 no seats for those children. So we have no place to
14 put them but in the cafeteria to have lunch. What it
15 means is that right now we have four temporary
16 trailers on the site that this annex is to be sited
17 on right in back of that stone wall we've spoken
18 about. Those trailers were put there in 2002 as a
19 temporary measure. They were used when they were put
20 there. In other words, they were brought through
21 another site and put in that spot. Those trailers
22 are aging and show the signs of aging. Those
23 trailers are not in connection with the school. It
24 means our students have to walk outside to get there
25 in the inclement weather. We have to close those

2 trailers because the kids can't get there. When
3 they're housed in the auditorium they miss
4 instructing time. These are important things to
5 consider in weighing the value of the wall, and I do
6 understand the wall, because it does extend all the
7 way down the street. The entire wall won't be lost.
8 Thirty feet will still be there as will the entire
9 rest of the block. So, I think that the historic
10 district is preserved to some extent, but I think
11 when you put--when you weigh children against a wall,
12 I think you come up short there. I think it needs to
13 be known that the footprint is important because it's
14 going to be a gymnasium. You cannot shrink a
15 gymnasium and have a correct size for competition.
16 These are important points that I wanted the
17 committee to be aware of. Thanks so much for the
18 opportunity.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Next?

20 AURELIA CURTIS: Chairman Koo, thank you
21 for the opportunity. My name is Aurelia Curtis. I'm
22 the 12th Principal of Curtis High School having
23 retired effective June 30th, 2015 after 31 years of
24 service. The Department of Education has not found a
25 successor who's willing to change the name to match

2 the school. So, here I am. I'd like to speak in
3 support of the application to construct an annex to
4 our school on St. Marks Place replacing the temporary
5 classroom units and providing much needed
6 instructional space. Curtis was the first secondary
7 school built on Staten Island after the consolidation
8 of the New York City public schools in 1898.

9 Architect CBJ Sneider [sp?], designed the school to
10 allow for expansion in response to the growing north
11 shore population. As such, the first two expansions
12 of the original building that opened in February 1904
13 were constructed from plans that he had the
14 forethought to make available. Since that time, the
15 school's population has continued to increase in five
16 buildings that comprise the campus of Curtis High
17 School can no longer effectively provide the safe
18 learning environment that our students need and
19 deserve. When I came to Curtis in 1984 as a teacher
20 of mathematics and computer science, the enrollment
21 was a little over 1,600 students. All students were
22 on the same time schedule. Since then, the school's
23 enrollment has grown to as much as 3,000 students, a
24 utilization rate of 179 percent in 2005 due in large
25 part to the offering of excellent instructional

2 programs in the north shore's fast-paced population
3 growth. While the utilization rate of 143 percent is
4 improvement over the days when Curtis was extremely
5 overcrowded, you've heard the adverse conditions that
6 currently exist. We're constantly trying to fit 10
7 pounds of candy in a nine pound bag. And time will
8 not allow me to complete my remarks, so I'll stand on
9 the record that I submitted.

10 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you very much.

11 Chair?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you,
13 Mr. Chairman. Before you leave, I want to just make
14 one thing crystal clear. We very much support the
15 annex. Nothing, no concern over there. I don't want
16 you to think that you're getting a mixed impression.
17 In fact, we're more outraged than you are at the fact
18 that you guys have been in trailers for 12 years and
19 the fact that the DOE is providing you with a 20
20 percent solution to a problem, right? The real
21 solution is you need another high school, you need
22 more space. Principal Curtis, I blame you as well.
23 Obviously, you've done a very good job and so you've
24 attracted many more students to this school. But the
25 issue that we're discussing is not whether to build

2 the annex or not. The issue, and just to explain
3 this to you from someone who does this literally
4 every single day, is a contractor can create a design
5 that incorporates an existing wall. It's not
6 difficult to do. It's matter really of a few dollar
7 and cents and some design, right? So we're not
8 talking about not doing the project. We're in favor
9 of the project. We like the project. We think that
10 it's a long time coming, and in fact I would say
11 we're a little disappointed that there's not more
12 happening over here. We're just talking about one
13 particular piece of it which has to do with historic
14 preservation. You can have your cake and eat it too
15 in this case. We can have a project and we can also
16 preserve the historic nature of the district and
17 quite frankly, I think that would also send a great
18 message to your students that, you know, the city can
19 continue to build and can expand while protecting the
20 history of that very important community as well.
21 So, I don't want you to misunderstand in any way,
22 shape or form. We support it. We like what's
23 happening. We think it's too little quite frankly,
24 but we'll certainly take what we can get, and we just
25 want to make sure that while the city does it that

2 we're retaining the historic nature of that
3 particular district.

4 AURELIA CURTIS: May I respond, Council
5 Member Greenfield.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: You're not a
7 good principal, is that what you want to respond to?
8 I would leave on a high note if I was you, but sure,
9 yes.

10 AURELIA CURTIS: That the campus is five
11 buildings.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yeah.

13 AURELIA CURTIS: It's expanded several
14 times, and if you look at photos of that campus,
15 portions of that wall have come down before in
16 response to the expansion. This team sat with the
17 SCA for over a year in the design phase of this
18 school, and we were particularly impressed with the
19 dedication that the SCA made to preserving the
20 historic nature of the community and the school in
21 particular. So, while the SCA takes a lot of beating
22 for not doing the right thing, when they do do the
23 right thing, I want to publicly say that they
24 invested quite a bit of time over the last year in
25 working with me, my assistant principals, our school

2 community in coming up with a design that will meet
3 the instructional needs of our students, the safety
4 needs of our students, preserve the landmark nature
5 of the original building, and the historic nature of
6 the community that we're a part of.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: And I

8 appreciate it. They've gone to great lengths, but
9 just speaking fairly, honestly, the expertise when it
10 comes to landmarks really is the expertise of the
11 Landmarks Preservation Commission. And so, honestly,
12 it's a little bit challenging for school
13 professionals as much as you to come up with a
14 fantastic design which we all appreciate to really
15 weigh in in terms of an expert opinion as to the
16 landmarks. That's really why we rely on an expert
17 group of folks, and we call them Landmarks
18 Preservation Commission. So, we're not saying the
19 design isn't great. we think that overall that's
20 good and we're grateful for that, but our job is to
21 look at the entirety of the project, and we have an
22 obligation as Council Members to make sure that if
23 not the law, at least the spirit of the law is being
24 followed when it comes to landmarks preservation and
25 that's what we're concerned about. And once again,

2 no one's trying to stop the project. We welcome the
3 project. If anything, our complaint was very clear.
4 The Council Member has a location. She can build a
5 brand new high school tomorrow, and the response from
6 SCA is, "We're not interested in doing that." So,
7 certainly, we're all excited that we're getting
8 something. I would say quite frankly it's a little
9 bit late and a dollar short, but we'll take it
10 anyway, right? But what we're really looking at is
11 from our perspective of the--incidentally, this is
12 the Committee of Landmarks and Public Siting. It's
13 actually under the portfolio of this very exact
14 subcommittee that reviews landmarks all the time. So
15 this is what we do every day. We're pretty good at
16 it, and trust us when we tell you that this could
17 easily be done and incorporate the concerns of the
18 landmark community, and that's what we're trying to.
19 So, we're not being critical. So, thank you all for
20 your testimony, and I will give it back to the Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, any comments?

22 Oh, Council Member Rose have a question, before you
23 guys leave.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I don't have a
25 question, but I do have a statement. First, I want

2 to publicly, you know, say to Principal Curtis,
3 Doctor Curtis, what a wonderful job you've done at
4 Curtis High School, and you're going to sorely--your
5 leadership's going to be sorely missed since you're
6 retiring and you won't be around to see this project
7 at its conclusion, but I'm sure you'll be there for
8 the ribbon cutting. I want to thank you for being
9 able, and your leadership team for dealing with the
10 challenges that working in a school that's 140
11 percent over enrolled, you know, comes with, and the
12 fact that, you know, you're working with TCU's also.
13 The challenges have been great. I've been an
14 advocate, you know, for Curtis High School and we do
15 want to see this project come to fruition to address
16 the overcrowding. I just wanted to publicly say on
17 the record that this is an excellent and a great
18 leadership team under your direction. And you know,
19 I wish you well in your retirement.

20 AURELIA CURTIS: Thank you, Council.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Council Member Mendez
22 have a question for you guys.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Yes, to anyone
24 who could answer the question? This historic
25

2 district was designated when? Do we know? Does
3 someone here know?

4 [off mic]

5 AURELIA CURTIS: In 1995.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: The district and the
7 Curtis property--

8 UNIDENTIFIED: In 82.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Okay.

10 AURELIA CURTIS: The Curtis, not the
11 Curtis property, the original building.

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Wrong [sic], the entire
13 property, and we have the documentation.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: When it's a
15 historic district, it's the entire property, usually
16 several blocks that get designated.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: The historical
18 district encompasses the homes that are along the
19 street that lines Saint Marks Place. The school has
20 its own historic designation.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Okay. Principal
22 Curtis, you mentioned that some other walls have come
23 down. When, what year were those walls taken down?

24 AURELIA CURTIS: The school consists of
25 five buildings. The one that original building was

2 in 1904. In 1922 there was construction done to put
3 up the next building. Portions of the wall were
4 taken down for that to happen. In 1936 two buildings
5 went up. Portions of the wall were taken down then.
6 In early 1960's, I think 62, 64, another building
7 went up and portions of the wall came down for that--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: [interposing] So
9 all of that was prior to the designation in 1995.

10 AURELIA CURTIS: That doesn't make the
11 wall any less historic.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Well, in 1995 it
13 was given a different type of historic designation,
14 and then after that no walls have come down and that
15 makes a difference in my opinion. I want to thank
16 you. You referenced CBJ Schneider [sp?]. He is a
17 renowned architect creating many schools in this
18 city. I actually have a landmarked building, school
19 building that he built, in my district. So, I'm
20 familiar with his architecture, and I thank you not
21 for--you know, you're here not just during summer
22 vacation, you're here on a retired vacation. So, it
23 is clear that this is very important to you, and it's
24 all important to use that students not be in
25 trailers. But I think a little extra leg work has to

2 go in to preserve the historical and architectural
3 integrity including adjacent walls to these
4 properties, and I'm confident that the School
5 Construction Authority have the people who can do
6 that. And so I'm looking forward to seeing how this
7 gets resolved. Hopefully without taking down the
8 wall. That's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, thank you
10 Principals and your staff. Thank you. So, the next
11 group of panelists will be Mr. Rama Chorpash, Theo
12 Dorian, Richard Humphrey [sp?], and Michael Harwood
13 [sp?]. Please identify yourself before you speak and
14 each of you have two minutes. You may begin. Just
15 identify yourself first, yeah.

16 MICHAEL HARWOOD: My name is Michael
17 Harwood. I reside at 103 Saint Marks Place across the
18 street from the location of this school expansion.
19 I've owned my home for the past 12 years, but before
20 that resided at 199 Saint Marks across from the main
21 entrance to Curtis starting 30 years ago. I
22 supported the Saint George [sic] landmark district
23 when it was proposed in '94 and bought my house
24 specifically because it was in the district. We've
25 worked very hard in our neighborhood to preserve the

2 historic context and encouraged others to move in to
3 do that as well. The neighborhood has a long and
4 important historical role in the development not only
5 of our city, but our country, the British fort on
6 Fort Hill Circle in 1776, a block from the school,
7 Governor and the Vice President Tompkins created the
8 transportation and government hub in Saint George.
9 Cornelius Vanderbilt started his fortune with the
10 Staten Island Ferry just down the hill from the
11 school in 1812 and freed slaves used our neighborhood
12 as a stop on the Underground Railroad before and
13 during the Civil War. In the 1860's, the 1880's the
14 huge estates on this property were combined and
15 surrounded by this impressive stone wall, and there's
16 a picture of the wall attached to my testimony that's
17 being handed out. Curtis High School was constructed
18 in 1902 to 04 on a portion of what had been the Green
19 Estate, and although a large section of the wall was
20 removed at that time, a significant portion on the
21 property all along Saint Marks Place was preserved
22 and other portions around the rest of the estate were
23 kept in place as well. In fact, when McKee [sp?]
24 High School was built up the block the wall was in
25 fact incorporated into the design of McKee High

2 School and still exists in the wall at that school,
3 just as can be done here. When Curtis was designated
4 a landmark, the entire property was designated in
5 1982. That includes the wall. When our neighborhood
6 was designated a landmark district, all the
7 homeowners were obligated to preserve the exteriors,
8 including those homeowners who have the wall in front
9 of their house. And we accept the restrictions with
10 happiness, because we know it protects our
11 neighborhoods. Except the School Construction
12 Authority has told us repeatedly they don't care
13 because they don't have to. They'll knock down over
14 100 feet of this 150-year-old wall so they can build
15 the expansion, and why? Because it's in their
16 capital plan and that's where the money is. And the
17 reason they need to knock down the wall is because
18 the size of the gymnasium requires them to have three
19 feet extra of bleacher space, which requires them to
20 knock, to extend the wall of the building to knock
21 down the wall rather than accommodate the wall into
22 that. And they talk about classrooms, its seven
23 additional classrooms at a school that's at 146
24 percent of capacity. That'll only bring it down to
25 maybe 135 to 140 percent when borough-wide the high

2 schools are at a 105 percent. That means Curtis and
3 our minority communities bearing the brunt of over
4 capacity of high school, and this is nothing but a
5 drop in the bucket. We understand athletics is
6 important and we encourage athletics, but there is no
7 reason why they can't incorporate the wall into the
8 design of the building in order to accommodate
9 slightly less bleacher space.

10 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Would you like to
11 finish up?

12 MICHAEL HARWOOD: I will. My summary: I
13 call on the Subcommittee and the Full Land Use
14 Committee to tell the School Construction sorry, that
15 if you have to build, respect the history that's
16 taught inside the school walls and save the wall
17 that's outside. I've attached to my testimony a
18 petition signed by over 250 local residents,
19 including graduates of Curtis and parents of students
20 of Curtis who are asking that the school preserve the
21 wall. In addition, the Community Board which was not
22 mentioned in the Construction Authority's testimony
23 specifically included in the resolution a request
24 that the School Construction Authority preserve this
25 wall. And just to answer the last question that the

2 Council Members asked about what did the LPC say.

3 The answer from the LPC was, "It's not our

4 jurisdiction. We have no authority, so we can't

5 answer your question." So, they never gave an answer.

6 They didn't say we have no opinion or we say okay.

7 They told the School Construction Authority we have

8 no jurisdiction. That's what they told us when we

9 contacted them.

10 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Next. This

11 gentleman.

12 RAMA CHORPASH: Okay. My name is Rama

13 Chorpash. I'm a property owner across the street

14 from the proposed construction. I'm also an educator

15 as Director of the MFA in Industrial Design at

16 Parsons. So, I'm an expert in design. Frank Alva

17 [sp?] Parsons also lived on Saint Marks Place. The

18 so-called field stones are Dravidian [sp?] blue

19 stone, which would have been carried by water or by

20 carriage, because this is pre-car, the 19th Century.

21 Many of those stones are 24 inches in size, large

22 shelf [sic] stones. This is part of the Ancenphelps

23 [sp?] Stokes Estate, this wall. The son of Stokes is

24 arguably New York's most prominent architectural

25 historian, and the Phelps-Stokes wall creates a sense

2 of place for the heart of the landmark community. As
3 Curtis High School is over 100 percent overpopulated,
4 and as I understand the expansion, the construction
5 does not deal with this fundamental problem.

6 Overcrowding is a major issue outside the school
7 would increase litter, traffic from stopped cars,
8 buses, security issues. When school and basketball
9 games let out of the main entrance, a small police
10 force must be present to diffuse tensions day and
11 night. And the egress into the historic area across
12 a blind corner only open at night, and this is the
13 proposed site, for sporting events will cause
14 dangerous conditions to pedestrians. Saint Marks is
15 one of the longest streets in New York City without
16 stops. Pablo Vequechea [sp?], and I believe this is
17 hearsay from the Landmarks Commission, said he
18 believes it's the third longest street in New York
19 City without a stop. As a father of two girls who
20 will likely go to Curtis, I plead that another school
21 is built to decrease population, and I ask that this
22 commission recommend this expansion as an
23 inappropriate site.

24 RICHARD HUMPHREY: Thank you. I will go.
25 I'll let Theo finish. Thank you for the time today,

2 and we're excited to have Councilwoman Rose with us
3 today. Thank you for your support. I am Richard
4 Humphrey and reside at 115 Saint Marks Place in Saint
5 George on a block that has been historically
6 landmarked for over 20 years. I've been asked to
7 appear today on behalf of my friends and neighbors on
8 Saint Marks Place who take pride and have paid an
9 enormous price and work and treasure to maintain
10 their properties according to the strict standards of
11 Landmark Preservation. Suddenly, when it suits the
12 School Construction Authority, the centerpiece of our
13 landmarked block 150-year-old stone wall has suddenly
14 been re-categorized as a rubble wall and is about to
15 be demolished to build the proposed addition. Curtis
16 High School is also landmarked property as is
17 according to deed its lot in part. The community has
18 only heard of this proposed addition and the plan to
19 place it in the center of our historic block late
20 last winter when we in the Saint George Civic
21 Association reached out. It was a project presented
22 to us a fe de compli. There had been no significant
23 public hearings or community involvement. Upon
24 contacting Landmarks Preservation I was told there
25 was no knowledge of the project and received a

2 lengthy runaround until I mentioned legal counsel.
3 My request was escalated to a supervisor who said
4 that we would have to file for Freedom of
5 Information. We have and we are still awaiting
6 response. I was further informed that the School
7 Construction Authority had the authority and would
8 override any objections. We have filed multiple FOIA
9 requests to SHPO, to School Construction Authority
10 and Landmarks Preservation. We believe that we've
11 been told that no one from Landmarks Preservation has
12 even visited the site. The community is not against
13 Curtis High School. We're very much in support, but
14 we have paid a huge price to preserve the historical
15 nature of our community and would appreciate
16 consideration of the same. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Next
18 gentleman, please?

19 THEO DORIAN: Chairman Koo and
20 Greenfield, Council Member Rose and public, my name
21 is Theo Dorian. I'm the longtime President of the
22 Saint George Civic Association, a respected group of
23 renters and owners of homes and businesses in the
24 area surrounding Curtis High School whose expansion
25 you're considering. At a crowded meeting, our

2 association including educators and numerous parents
3 who educated their children at Curtis voted
4 unanimously to oppose this deeply misguided project.
5 The plan was in substantially completed form before
6 ever having been presented to our community as it is
7 now. It was not approved by CB1, and we are now left
8 scrambling to persuade you that all of the school--
9 that of all the schools in Staten Island that could
10 be expanded in this way, this is the last one you
11 should even consider. Curtis is currently one of the
12 most overcrowded schools in the city and by far the
13 most overcrowded in the borough at nearly 150 percent
14 or 140, if you will, capacity. It is the only
15 academic high school situated in the only
16 neighborhood of Staten Island with a largely minority
17 population. While in-demand high schools such as New
18 Dorp [sic] High and Patreti's [sp?], distinguished
19 high schools in majority white areas remain well
20 below capacity while the city overcrowds Curtis. Yet
21 even though it's right in the middle of a
22 neighborhood heavily strained by the traffic and
23 parking problems it provides, it presents, the school
24 provides no picket barriers and virtually no parking
25 for its staff, students and parents. This results in

2 massive daily congestion and safety hazards on what
3 were meant to be peaceful neighborhood streets. The
4 puzzling one way nature of the main arteries creates
5 constant problems for drivers and pedestrians, a
6 burden that we have borne unrestrained without
7 complaint. Now the city proposes some of its biggest
8 development projects ever, including the world's
9 largest observation wheel and much needed shopping
10 mall, both designed to draw thousands more to a
11 neighborhood with nowhere near the needed traffic
12 infrastructure to support them. In this context,
13 it's startling and bewildering that it chooses the
14 school that is burdened with many times the
15 overcrowding of other schools to expand. The
16 additional building proposed would be constructed on
17 one of the only remaining stretches of Saint Marks
18 that enjoys a modicum of peace. May I finish? I
19 just have a few more things?

20 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [off mic]

21 THEO DORIAN: Okay. I can tell you it's
22 shocking to learn that the city that imposes the very
23 strict regulations that are required of us is not
24 required to abide by them. I have neighbors who were
25 forced to change their building materials and in fact

2 even their designs for stone walls, yet, when it
3 comes to respecting the same laws it has placed on
4 its own property, the city tells us they have no
5 power to enforce its law if the state has chosen not
6 to. And so, they have chosen not to. When we met
7 with--as Mr. Malley reported, when we met with the
8 SCA what we were told by them was that they will not
9 give us any information. We asked for environmental
10 studies that are required. They will not provide
11 them. None of the city's agencies we've contacted
12 have provided them. So, we've still not even seen
13 the environmental reviews on which this is based, and
14 it is probably being built upon serpentine rock,
15 which contains asbestos that will then be released. I
16 would like to see the environmental impact on the
17 neighborhood. We're told by the SCA file the FOIA
18 request, which we've done and are waiting for
19 results. In the meantime, this project has been fast-
20 tracked and Chairman Greenfield has told us it's
21 already approved and we're going to approve it and do
22 approve of it. Fine, if that's the case, and we--

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [interposing] Please
24 finish up, please.

2 THEO DORIAN: Alright. I'm just going to
3 say--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]
5 I'm pretty sure I didn't say that.

6 THEO DORIAN: I'm sorry. I don't want to
7 misquote you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I'm pretty
9 sure I didn't say that. I know what I said. I didn't
10 say that. I said we support the concept.

11 THEO DORIAN: You support the project.
12 You did not say you're going--okay. But you said you
13 strongly support the project.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: We support--
15 we support the project and we also support trying to
16 keep the wall.

17 THEO DORIAN: And I want to take nothing
18 away from your point.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: The two are
20 not usually exclusive.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: That's what he said--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Either I
23 speak myself or have an official spokesperson. If
24 you're interested in the job, you can apply. Other
25

2 than that, I'd appreciate you left it to the two of
3 us.

4 THEO DORIAN: I didn't mean to misquote
5 you, and that is how I understood you, the way you
6 said it. But anyway, I'm just going to say in
7 conclusion, an educational institution that's charged
8 with teaching respect for history and architecture
9 should not tear down its century's old defining stone
10 wall and the massive new building without undergoing
11 any landmarks review because the state says so.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, thank you.

13 THEO DORIAN: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, any question from
15 our members? Council Member Levin?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Hi, anyone can
17 answer this on the panel. So, SHPO is the one
18 governmental agency that has au pined on this matter,
19 right?

20 THEO DORIAN: Yes, and what they've said
21 is, "its okay with us." They haven't specifically--
22 they said we find it poses no--

23 [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But have you--

25 [cross-talk]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: My question is has
3 there been any--so, did they have a public hearing on
4 this?

5 THEO DORIAN: No.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Did--has there
7 been any correspondence?

8 UNIDENTIFIED: No.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Have you sent any
10 correspondence to them?

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And they haven't
14 responded to you?

15 UNIDENTIFIED: No.

16 RICHARD HUMPHREY: I've spoken to
17 everybody at Landmarks Preservation.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I'm not talking
19 about Landmarks Preservation. I'm talking about
20 SHPO.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Would you
22 mind speaking into the microphone because we can't
23 hear you with all this.

24 RICHARD HUMPHREY: Sorry. No, we haven't
25 spoken to anyone at SHPO, but we've tried to. And

2 when we referred to them I did speak with one
3 authority there who simply said, "File a FOIA." Which
4 we did. That's all. We've been stonewalled
5 everywhere we've gone.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: No pun
7 intended.

8 RICHARD HUMPHREY: We have filed--right.
9 We have filed. We have filed extensively. How many
10 have we filed?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: You have not been
12 rubble-walled.

13 THEO DORIAN: Four FOIA requests and
14 we've received either hold letters or nothing, any of
15 them. And School Construction Authority has
16 specifically said to us in person, sorry, we're not
17 going to cooperate with you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. What I--

19 THEO DORIAN: [interposing] File a FOIA
20 request.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: My question's a
22 little bit simpler than all that, right? My question
23 is why did SHPO say this is okay? Right? SHPO's the
24 state historical preservation agency.

2 THEO DORIAN: I could only speculate. Go
3 ahead.

4 MICHAEL HARWOOD: All we know is what's
5 in the letter that Mr. Malley read, which is that
6 they find that the wall has no historical
7 significance.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

9 MICHAEL HARWOOD: They don't state what
10 their reasoning for that or--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Can I
12 ask--okay. Have you spoken to the Landmarks
13 Conservancy or the Historic Districts Council?

14 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Which are two not
17 for profits that are--

18 UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: that whose mission
20 is to protect. Do you have letters of support from
21 them?

22 RICHARD HUMPHREY: I have extensive email
23 correspondence with multiple people at Landmarks
24 Preservation.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Not Landmarks
3 Preservation, Landmarks Conservancy, a not for profit
4 or Historic Districts Council. They're two not for
5 profits that whose mission is to preserve historic
6 districts or, you know, or landmarks and so that
7 they're, you know, they're kind of institutional
8 players in this.

9 THEO DORIAN: I'm familiar with both of
10 them and we have not been in touch with the Landmarks
11 Conservancy, but we have been in touch with the
12 Historic Districts Council. We are a member of the
13 Historic Districts Council, as a matter of fact, and
14 Simeon Bankoff [sp?] as President has expressed
15 verbal support. We have not had any official
16 correspondence with them. We--it's all we can do to
17 keep with our FOIA requests.

18 MICHAEL HARWOOD: And just one other
19 aspect of that. At the Community Board hearing, I'm
20 a member, the Chair of the Staten Island Landmarks
21 Preservation Committee did speak in favor of saving
22 the wall, but the answer we always get back from
23 people we contact is, "It's the School Construction
24 Authority. They're exempt. So there's nothing we can
25 do."

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I get it. I'm
3 just saying that you might want to like--

4 [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: It's a good
6 suggestion.

7 THEO DORIAN: Right. That is a good
8 suggestion to get all the supporting players we can,
9 because I can say that among--there's been a little
10 bit of misrepresentation that even among the great
11 supporters of Curtis High School including parents
12 who have sent their kids there, there is pretty much
13 unanimity in the neighborhood that the building
14 itself is inappropriate on the block and so if it's
15 going to--if we cannot stop this from being done
16 there, if they've selected our minority neighborhood
17 with the most overcrowded school to expand further
18 and there's nothing we could do, then at least we
19 would like to save that section of the wall. And all
20 the sections that Principal Curtis referred to as
21 having been torn down were torn down before Landmarks
22 Law. As we know, Penn Station and many, many of the
23 important houses in our neighborhood were also torn
24 down and that's why we have this Landmarks Law so
25 there will be some form of review. And it seems--and

2 this I don't think I'm misquoting you when I say that
3 you said pretty much what we have all been saying,
4 just because you don't need Landmarks to au pine on
5 it, that with the state's sign-off you can go ahead
6 and do what you want, doesn't mean that that's the
7 right message for the city to be sending, because
8 what one arm of the city does or what one hand does
9 has to be coordinated with what the other hand of the
10 city does.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you.

12 THEO DORIAN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you very much.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Any comments from the
16 public for this particular item? Seeing none? Okay.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: [off mic]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Ma'am, if
19 you'd like to come back, you have to go back and
20 actually testify. Just to be clear.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: I'm asking a question just
22 for clarity.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: No, there
24 really is no--there's no form for Q&A over here of
25 witnesses, questions or comments to us, not to--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Excuse me, Chair
3 Greenfield. Staten Island is an entity unto its own.
4 We're very different and we--

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [interposing] Please
6 go--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: operate in a
8 different framework.

9 AURELIA CURTIS: Especially someone--this
10 is your first time doing this.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Please identify
12 yourself.

13 AURELIA CURTIS: I apologize. I would
14 like to ask the--

15 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Identify yourself.

16 AURELIA CURTIS: My name is Aurelia
17 Curtis. I'm a resident of Staten Island and 12th
18 Principal at Curtis High School. I would like to ask
19 if the only objection to the building is the wall or
20 their objections to--as I heard in the testimony to
21 the students that recess to the building to the fact
22 that their recreation is an imposition on the
23 community, and the last comment that the school is
24 misplaced in this community. I think we're about 120

2 years too late. That was--it's on record that the
3 school was misplaced in this community.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Who said that?

5 AURELIA CURTIS: You said it. Maybe you
6 weren't even listening to what you were saying.

7 THEO DORIAN: I have it written down here
8 so you can--

9 AURELIA CURTIS: [interposing] You were
10 ad-libbing.

11 [cross-talk]

12 THEO DORIAN: It wasn't me.

13 AURELIA CURTIS: In 1898, after the
14 consolidation of public schools, a search was made
15 for a spot that would hold Staten Island's first
16 public high school and the citizens of Staten Island
17 offered up this location that has come to be known as
18 the castle on the hill, long before any of the
19 current residents were there. The citizens of Staten
20 Island at that time thought that would be appropriate
21 place for education to be lifted up. For members
22 that sat on this panel today to suggest that the
23 school is misplaced in this community I think is to
24 try to rewrite history. This happened long before
25 any of us were born, and I am confident that great

2 education at Curtis High School will continue long
3 after all of us are here.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: We agree. I--

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [interposing] Thank you.

6 AURELIA CURTIS: Thank you, Chairman.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you for
8 your testimony. We will focus on--

9 THEO DORIAN: [interposing] Can I just
10 make one comment since I've been misquoted? That,
11 what I agree with the principal that that was a very
12 appropriate location in early 1900's, late 1800's.
13 It continues to be a very appropriate location. What
14 I said, certainly what I meant to say and what I have
15 written in front of me is that the addition to expand
16 this particular school while Petritis [sp?] and the
17 white neighborhood high schools are vastly under
18 filled, and to take the one most overcrowded one,
19 which happens, maybe happens to be a minority
20 community, a heavily overburdened one, and to build a
21 whole new building there, that whole new building
22 would be misplaced. But the idea--I just want to
23 clear up. We support this high school.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: We got it.

25 We got it.

2 THEO DORIAN: And I'm also go out of turn
3 and congratulate Principal Curtis. She is very
4 respected in our neighborhood, and I don't want to
5 leave even the impression that anybody has the
6 slightest disrespect for her or for this institution
7 which we're very proud of.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you very much. We
9 will close the public hearing on this item. We will
10 delay the voting on item 20155364 SCR, which is the
11 Curtis High School, and I will couple the following
12 items for a vote to approve Pre-considered LU 456
13 primary school in Queens and Pre-considered LU 246
14 pre-kindergarten in Brooklyn, and Pre-Considered LU
15 504-seat primary school in Queens. We will vote on
16 those three items now. Chair recommends a yes vote.
17 Counsel, would like to call, make a call, roll call?

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Koo?

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
21 Mendez?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Just for
23 clarification, we're voting on everything but the
24 Curtis High School?

25 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Okay, I vote aye
3 on all, and I want to just on the record put my big
4 reservation about the removal of that wall at Curtis
5 High School. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Levin?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Aye on all.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
9 Kallos?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Aye on all.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Pre-considered Land
12 Use Item 450-seat primary school in Queens, Pre-
13 considered Land Use 240-seat pre-kindergarten in
14 Brooklyn and Pre-considered Land Use Item 504-seat
15 primary school in Queens are approved by a vote of 4
16 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and 0
17 abstentions and referred to the full Land Use
18 Committee.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. We will
20 recess the Subcommittee hearing until tomorrow at
21 10:45 a.m. in the City Hall Committee Room. Meeting
22 is in recess. Thank you.

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1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING & MARITIME USES 94

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1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING & MARITIME USES 95

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date August 13, 2015