

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING
AND MARITIME USES

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April 1, 2014
Start: 10:00 a.m.
Recess: p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room
City Hall

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Annabell Palma
Rosie Mendez
Inez D.Barron
Ben Kallos
Maria Del Carmen Arroyo
Stephen T. Levin

A P P E A R A N C E S

Jenney Fernandez

Director of Intergovernmental and Community Relations
for the Landmarks Preservations Commissions

Amanda Davis

Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

Simon Bankof [phonetic]

Historic District Council

2 [sound check]

3 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Good morning this is
4 council member Peter Koo Chair of the Landmark
5 committee. Today we have a committee hearing and
6 here our local council member Rosie Mendez on my left
7 and council member Barron, Johnson and Kallos. The
8 first item is item number LR-35. 3015 im sorry
9 30145280-HKN. South village historic district. And
10 this item belongs is in council member Chin's and
11 Johnson's district. And we have Jenny Fernandez,
12 Fernandez, Fernandez from Landmark Commissions to
13 testify. Thank you.

14 [pause]

15 JENNY FERNANDEZ: Thank you chair Koo.
16 Council members, my name is Jenny Fernandez, Director
17 of Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the
18 Landmarks Preservations Commissions. I'm here today
19 to testify on the commission's designation of the
20 south village historic district in Manhattan. On
21 June 25, 2013 the landmark preservation commission
22 held a public hearing on the proposed designation of
23 the South Village Historic district. 24 people spoke
24 in supported designation including representatives of
25 City Council Speaker Kristine Quinn, State Senator

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES 4
2 Brad Holloman, State Assembly Member, Debra Glick,
3 Manhattan Community Board to. Several residents and
4 property owners also spoke in support of designation
5 as did representatives for the Bleaker Area Merchants
6 and Resident Association, Charleston Street Block
7 Association, Greenwich Village Society for Historic
8 Preservation the Historic Districts Council, Newark
9 Landmark Conservance and Society for the Architecture
10 of The City. The commission received a letter in
11 support of the designation from city council members
12 elect Corey Johnson. The commission also received 5
13 letters and emails regarding the proposed
14 designation. 3 in support of designation and 2
15 requesting the property be removed from the proposed
16 historic district. As well as the postcard campaign
17 comprising 104 submissions supporting designation.

18 On December 17, 2013th the commission
19 voted to designate the south village historic
20 district. The south village historic district
21 consists of approximately 250 buildings. Including
22 roadhouses, tenements, commercial structures and
23 institution with streets gates to illustrate the
24 growth of neighborhood from its origin and as
25 affluent resident area in the early 19th century, to

2 a vibrant community of artist and working class
3 immigrants in the early 20th century. Throughout the
4 20th century the blocks of the south village historic
5 district have served as one of the most important and
6 famous centers of artistic social and cultural
7 movements in that ferment the city. The area was the
8 center of 20th century life as we live in New York.
9 With numerous sights representing the history of the
10 LGBT community from the end of the 19th century to
11 the present. The south village was one of the first
12 neighborhoods in New York City that allowed and
13 gradually accepted an open gay and lesbian presence,
14 which resulted in its emergence as an early
15 significant LGBT enclave. While its music scene
16 nourished generation of artist from jazz to folk to
17 rock. Bohemians and beat mix congregated in its
18 famous café's and a flourishing off Broadway scene
19 developed in its small theaters. Development in this
20 area began in earnest [sic] 1820's and 1830's.
21 When unprecedented growth pushed them into the city
22 northward and for some 4 decades, made the blocks of
23 the historic district one of New York's most
24 prestigious residential neighborhoods. Many blocks
25 were developed with architecturally harmonious

2 rows of houses. Which were often given their own
3 addresses address schemes and distinguished sounding
4 names. Among these are the nucleus of a community of
5 African Americans established by the mid 1800's. In
6 which remains into the mid-20th century in south
7 village. By the time of the 1863 draft riots, which
8 targeted several locations in the south village.

9 The area was home to nearly a quarter of the city
10 African American population. By the mid-19th century
11 the blocks were on Menata Street and Menata Lane
12 became known as little Africa. The largest such
13 community in New York. Within the south village the
14 history of the community of little Africa with its
15 core residing in the Menata's provides important
16 documentation on African American life in New York
17 City before 1910. Several houses remain from its
18 earlier period that recalled the south village as
19 history as a fashionable residential district. That
20 includes federal gothic revival and Greek revival
21 styles. Tenements designed in the neo grad queen and
22 romaness revival and renaissance revival styles are
23 in the historic district. The south village historic
24 district contains notably intact historic buildings,
25 nevertheless, this stylistic and commercial

2 alterations from the early 20th century are also
3 defining characteristics of the neighborhood. The
4 north facing studio windows installed on houses on
5 Bleaker Street for example, are typical of the
6 renovations undertaken during the Bohemian
7 rediscovery of the village. The commission urges you
8 to affirm this designation.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Are any questions from
10 the committee members.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you Mr.
12 Chair. I wanna thank you for your testimony and I
13 just want to put into the record that the report that
14 was prepared was much more inclusive of the
15 contributions of Africans during that time. So I
16 just wanted to add it to the record of what we have
17 here today. And to say that going back to the 1640's
18 there was land that given to free and so-called half
19 free Africans and that they farmed the land, they
20 cleared the land and that they owned the land until
21 about 1667. When the Europeans took possession and
22 took the land from them and gave into white settlers
23 so as we, those of us who talk about reparations, I
24 wanna make sure we have this in the record that for
25 that period of time it was owned and farmed by

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES 8
2 African Americans and then as you said it was known
3 as little Italy. The Medneata Lane was the area
4 where there was a large the largest concentration
5 actually in the United States of African Americans
6 was there in Greenwich Village area. So just to put
7 that on the record and to say that also during that
8 time it became a hub of a persons of African descent
9 who were highly recognized nationally as well as
10 internationally and it included Henry Highland-
11 Garnett. So I just wanted to put that on the record
12 in terms of going back a little further then when
13 your testimony starts to have that noted. Thank you.
14 But it was in your report. I do wanna thank you for
15 that.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you council member
17 Barron. I wanna acknowledge Annabel Palma our council
18 member is here on our committee and Mr. Johnson is
19 going to comment on this issue.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you chair
21 Koo. Thank you Jenny for being here today. I also
22 wanna than Marybeth Betts who contributed a great
23 deal to this designation report and also to the
24 advocates who have been involved for a very long
25 time. The Greenwich Village society first to work

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES 9
2 preservation historic districts council and many
3 other preservation groups that spent many, many, many
4 years working on this. I am very proud that a
5 significant portion of this new district is in my
6 council district. For folks that don't know the
7 district gonna be bounded by 6th avenue on the west.
8 On the north its west 4th street. On the east it's
9 Sullivan Street and on the Sullivan Street and
10 LaGuardia Place and on the southwest Housen Street.
11 The jigsaw boundary encompass the ridge and Sundry
12 architecture styles of the neighborhood. It's
13 changing make up is in capsulated through the
14 architecture as the neighborhood went from an
15 affluent residential homes in the early 19th century
16 and to that of a working class African American
17 enclave and I think council member Barron spoke very
18 eloquently of the deep and rich history there. There
19 were old lot tenements that were added and commercial
20 buildings that were constructed. The south village
21 continued to involve into a Bohemian district as you
22 mentioned and played and important social and
23 cultural role in our city and our nations arts and
24 literary scene. In specifally as you said a deep
25 history on the LGBT movement and the beginnings of

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES 10
2 the LGBT movement. This new historic district will
3 protect centuries of history from being destroyed
4 through development and increase building heights.
5 Greenwich Village faces tremendous pressure from
6 developers and it long time neighbors like the NYU.
7 Who's expansions plans threatens to forever scare the
8 low hung light filled village. This district which
9 is note a panicia [phonetic] and the and the name all
10 the development. When sure that buildings remain
11 intact and regions stays true to its historical
12 architecture character. There is significant
13 community support for this historic district and I
14 hope that this community will affirm that support and
15 vote to approve this landmark historic district. And
16 I also like to say that I look forward to working
17 with the upper C staff and whoever the leadership may
18 be LPC and coming years. On expanding this district
19 and hopefully finally getting section 3 of the south
20 village designated as well. Thank you all and I hope
21 you'll take into account my testimony today.

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you Mr. Johnson.
23 Anyone else additional comments or questions for the
24 committee members. See you, well commence now. Thank
25 you Ms. Fernandez.

2 [pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON KOO: The next item, number
4 36 [background talk]. 20145287 HKK the 88th Police
5 Precinct Station house. Voting in council members
6 Konvo [phonetic] district. And we have a Linda
7 Davis.

8 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: [off mic] They
9 gonna testify in South Village first.

10 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [off mic] They gonna
11 testify huh?

12 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: They gonna
13 testify for south village first.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: And we have Simon
15 Bankof (phonetic)?

16 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: [off mic] Simon
17 Bankof (phonetic).

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah. Are you
19 recording? Are they here? No, alright

20 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: [off mic]

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Please continue to
22 representing Greenwich, on Greenwich Village society
23 of historic preservation. Thank you.

24 AMANDA DAVIS: Good morning, Amanda Davis
25 of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic

2 Preservation which is the largest membership
3 organization in Greenwich Village, the east village
4 and Noho. We strongly support the designation of the
5 south village historic district. Neighboring
6 residence have called for landmark designation of
7 this area since earliest days of the landmarks law in
8 the 1960's. In 2002, the Greenwich Village society
9 for historic preservation first approached landmark
10 preservation commission about considering this area a
11 new for landmark designation. And in 2006 submitted
12 a formal proposal for designation with boundaries.
13 The designation was a long time coming. And enjoy
14 enjoys overwhelming support in the affected
15 community. Earlier this year the district was listed
16 on the state and national registers of historic
17 places. In 2012 the south village was named on of New
18 York's 7 to save. One of the 7 most significant
19 endangered historic sites in the state by the
20 preservation league of New York State. Thus, the
21 south village's social, cultural and historic
22 significance have been bodily recognized. The south
23 village is one of the most important places
24 manifesting evidence of our nation's last great wave
25 of immigration in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

2 Practically of Italian Americans. The south village
3 is even more preeminent as home to a wealth of sites
4 associated with artistic and counter cultural
5 innovations inferment in the late 19th through 20th
6 century. The number of sites for the historic
7 significance in the south village and the reasons for
8 its landmarks worthiness would be nearly impossible
9 to enumerate here. But just a few of the people
10 named have lived and owned there craft there include
11 Bob Dylan, Edna St. Vincent Melange [phonetic],
12 Eugene O'Neal, Allen Ginsburg, Jack Carowak
13 [phonetic], Louise May Alcod [phonetic], Pete Segar,
14 Richie Havens, Bernie Savat [phonetic], Elizabeth
15 Iriwms, James Baldwin and Jackson Pollick [phonetic]
16 among many others. The work of architects including
17 Ernest Flag, Raymond Hood and Calvick Box [phonetic]
18 are represented there.

19 Among them areas incredible list of
20 credits include the birth place of modern American
21 theater, the problems down playhouse now sadly
22 largely demolished. The first non-profit theater
23 Circle in the Square. The city's first progressive
24 school, Little Red School House. The first coffee
25 house in America to introduce cappuccino, Café Regio

2 [phonetic]. The sight of don's earliest
3 performances, The Mud He Wrote, Blown in the Wind.
4 The sight of Lenny Brewster's last arrest for
5 obscenity and one of the earliest and largest
6 examples of reform housing in America, Nose House
7 number 1 at 160 Bleaker Street. The south village
8 was home to the city's most prominent African
9 American communities in the mid-19th century. Little
10 Africa located around Menata Lane and Street. And it
11 was probably the city's first visible gay community
12 centered around the big ole west 3rd and Bleaker
13 Street in the late 19th and 20th centuries. I
14 strongly urge the committee to uphold this
15 designation. Thank you.

16 SIMON BANKOF [phonetic]: Simon Bankof
17 [phonetic] Historic District Council. I'd like to
18 thank the council for this opportunity to speak and
19 also like to thank the council for all its support of
20 the south village historic district on this very very
21 long road to where we are today. As Amanda mentioned
22 we have been look for a south village historic
23 district for since 2001. Perhaps even earlier.
24 That's at least how far my memory goes back so this
25 is a long time and coming. The remarkable thing

2 about this historic district is that it was
3 designated its its it rather let me say the
4 architecture is very good and definitely worthy of
5 being protected but it being designated its being
6 protected because of its historic and cultural
7 meaning and residence. That through the agency of
8 the landmark commission, people in generations from
9 now will be able to experience the south village and
10 have a real continuity with their past. With the
11 birth of the LGBT rights movement, with all of those
12 wonderful Bohemian stories, with all the literary
13 figures from the 19th century who were there and the
14 beat movement and with the very fascinating history
15 of little Africa. Because landmarks is designating
16 this. Future New Yorkers will have a chance to
17 experience it. So thank you very much and I ask the
18 council to uphold this designation.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Any questions from
20 committee members? No? So we close this item. Thank
21 you.

22 UNIDETIFIED MALE VOICE: [off mic] Were
23 gonna layover?

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: No. We gonna lay over
25 item number item number 36 and we will make a roll

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES 16

2 call from earlier number 35. The south village
3 historic district. I'll ask the council to make a
4 roll call.

5 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: Chair Koo.
6 Council member Palmer, Council member Palma.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: I

8 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: Council member
9 Mendez.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: I

11 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: Council member
12 Barron.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I.

14 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: Council member
15 Kalob.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I

17 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: By the vote of 5
18 on the affirmative, 0 in the negative and 0
19 extensions. Land Use item 35 is adopted and referred
20 to the Land Use committee.

21 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: [off mic] Where
22 gonna hold open the vote.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: We will hold the
24 committee meeting open for what 30 minutes
25 [background talking] so other members can vote.

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES 17

2 [pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Meetings adjourned.

4 [gavel]

5 [pause]

6 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: Council Member
7 Arroryo.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: I

9 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: The vote stands
10 at 6 on the affirmative, 0 on the negative and 0
11 extensions.

12 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: Council member
13 Levin.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I.

15 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: By a vote of 7
16 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and 0
17 extensions. Land Use #35 is hereby adopted and
18 referred to the Land Use committee.

19 [pause]

20 UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: Meeting is
21 adjourned.

22 [gavel]

23

24

25

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. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 22, 2014