

New York City Economic Development Corporation
New York City Council Land Use
Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting, and Maritime Uses
1120 Commerce Ave – MTA Paratransit Facility Relocation
Joseph Coletti, Senior Vice President
June 22, 2015

Introduction

Good morning Chairman Koo, Council Member Vacca and members of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting, and Maritime Uses. I am Joe Coletti, Senior Vice President at the New York City Economic Development Corporation and I am here to speak about the application for relocation of an MTA Paratransit Facility from its current site at 65 Commercial Street in Greenpoint, Brooklyn to 1120 Commerce Ave located in the Zerega Ave section of the Bronx. Pursuant to Section 1266-c (5) of the New York State Public Authorities Law, we are required to submit this application for review and approval to the New York City Council.

Background: 2005 Greenpoint-Williamsburg Rezoning

The 2005 Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning outlined plans for the construction of a waterfront esplanade and related open spaces along two miles of Brooklyn's East River waterfront, including the creation of the future Box Street Park at 65 Commercial Street. The site is currently occupied by two MTA operations -- a Paratransit Facility and Emergency Response unit -- along with some additional uses. In order for the City to proceed with the design and construction of Box Street Park, the MTA must fully vacate 65 Commercial Street and relocate to a suitable location.

As defined in the "Points of Agreement" established with the City Council during the 2005 Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning, the City agreed to identify an alternative location for the MTA Paratransit Facility and provide capital funding for the relocation and creation of new open space. The City completed a search of appropriate City-owned sites across various agencies, and the parcel (zoned M1-1) at 1120 Commerce Ave in the Bronx was identified as the most suitable for relocation of the MTA Paratransit Facility. Approximately \$14 million was also previously allocated by the City for the creation of the open space and the relocation of the current MTA facilities.

Construction of MTA Facility

NYCEDC will manage the design, remediation and construction on behalf of the City for a one-story building on the 1120 Commerce Ave site in the Bronx that will house MTA offices and training facilities for paratransit operators. The site has existing contamination that will be addressed and cleaned up prior to construction of the new MTA facility. As part of the project, a public sidewalk will also be enhanced with new trees and plantings. Only a portion of the parcel closest to Commerce Ave will be developed to house the relocated MTA Paratransit Facility. Environmental investigation is already underway at the site, and pending City Council approval, NYCEDC anticipates remediation and construction to begin as early as the end of this year.

MTA Paratransit Facility Operations

According to the MTA, activity on the premises will include asset recovery of select vehicle equipment as well as training of drivers and maintenance staff on the operation and maintenance of vehicle systems. The facility will also serve as a center for the receiving of new vehicles until commissioned and disbursed to operators based at various other locations. Old vehicles will be held on site until decommissioned and either sold, released, or disposed of. A maximum of approximately 150 vehicles can be on site at one time and vehicles will not be transiting continuously to and from the facility on a regular basis, as is common with access-a-ride operations. The MTA expects operating hours to be from 6am to 5pm with approximately 3 permanent staff on-site daily.

Conclusion

We respectfully request the approval of this application by the subcommittee, which will allow the City to move closer to fulfilling its commitment to build Box Street Park. Now, I am happy to answer any of your questions. Thank you.

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING
AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF
THE BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY, STONE AVE BRANCH**

June 22, 2015

Good morning Chair Koo and Committee Members. I am Jenna Adams, the Director of Intergovernmental and Community Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the Brooklyn Public Library, Stone Avenue Branch located at 581 Stone Avenue in Brooklyn.

On April 7, 2015 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Brooklyn Public Library, Stone Avenue Branch. The hearing was advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. At that hearing there were five speakers in favor of the designation, including Council Member Darlene Mealy who represents the site of the library, David Woloch, Vice President of External Affairs of the Brooklyn Public Library, and representatives from the Historic Districts Council, Society for the Architecture of the City, and Citizens Defending Libraries. There were no speakers in opposition to the designation.

The Stone Avenue branch of the Brooklyn Public Library opened in September 1914, with the construction funded by a gift from Andrew Carnegie. Designed by the noted Brooklyn architect William B. Tubby, it was originally known as the Brownsville Children's Library and is believed to be the only public library of its kind, exclusively serving "grammar and primary grade children."

This building is notable for many reasons. The two-story structure is clad with red tapestry brick, and trimmed in Indiana buff limestone. Designed in the Jacobean Revival style, the library's distinctive projecting corner tower features stone steps leading to dual entrances with label molding and recessed entrances. Centered above the entrances are decorative stone plaques with the coat-of-arms of the Brooklyn Public Library. Stone banding marks the first and second floors and wraps the building. Decorative stone molding at the tower feature carvings referencing characters from children's literature; Aladdin's lamp, Robin Hood's cap, and Alice's rabbit.

The building has had several rehabilitations including in 1953-55, 1976 and 1993. In 2013, a \$1.7 million renovation was begun, and upon completion of the renovations the Stone Avenue Branch celebrated its centennial in 2014.

The architect William B. Tubby designed the Stone Avenue Branch in addition to three other Brooklyn libraries, including the Dekalb Branch, designated as a New York City Landmark in 2004. Several other Carnegie libraries in Brooklyn have been designated New York City Landmarks: in 1999 Williamsburgh (1903-05), in 1998 Park Slope (1906), and Macon (1907) as part of the Bedford Stuyvesant/Expanded Stuyvesant Heights Historic District in 2013.

Accordingly, the Landmarks Preservation Commission urges you to affirm the designation. Thank you.

**Testimony of Brooklyn Public Library
Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime
Designation of the Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch
June 22, 2015**

Good morning. My name is Michele Bonan and I am vice president for government and community relations at Brooklyn Public Library.

Thank you, Chair Srinivasan, and members of the commission for allowing Brooklyn Public Library to express our support for Stone Avenue Library's designation as a historic landmark.

Our Stone Avenue branch has served the residents of Brownsville for more than one hundred years. Several generations of patrons have browsed its collections and marveled at its elegant, castle-like design.

The library has been a constant presence throughout a century of change in Brownsville. When Stone Avenue Library was founded as the Brownsville Children's Library in 1914, the sons and daughters of recent immigrants flocked to what may have been the world's first freestanding library for children.

Young patrons regularly lined the block waiting for the library to open. In fact, area businesses complained that the lines were blocking their storefronts and making it impossible for customers to access their shops.

Inside the branch, the librarians could barely check in returned books fast enough for the children who waited in "swarms" – as contemporary accounts described them – to check them out again.

While Stone Avenue Library, as it is known today, now serves patrons of all ages, the branch remains a safe haven for children. Parents in Brownsville rely on the library to provide a place for their children to learn and play after school and over the summer.

And while the lines don't stretch quite as long as they did one hundred years ago, our staff members are greeted most mornings by patrons waiting for the doors to open.

In addition to being a trusted neighborhood institution, Stone Avenue Library is a triumph of architectural imagination. Its inspiring, stately design boasts unique literary embellishments—such as the tower's stone carvings of characters from children's literature—that have helped to make the building an iconic presence in the community it serves.

Brooklyn Public Library has invested considerable capital resources to maintain Stone Avenue Library for the patrons who value and depend on its services.

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

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Address: _____

I represent: New York City Economic Development Corp.

Address: 110 William St. N.Y., N.Y. 10038

**THE COUNCIL
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Address: _____

I represent: Landmarks Preservation Commission

Address: _____

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Name: Joseph Coletti, Senior VP

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