

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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JANUARY 12, 2016  
Start: 12:50 AM  
Recess: 12:06 PM

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - COMMITTEE RM, 16<sup>TH</sup> FL

B E F O R E: PETER KOO  
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
INEZ BARRON  
BEN KALLOS  
PETER KOO  
STEPHEN LEVIN  
ANNABEL PALMA

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

MICHAEL OWEN

LPC

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM MANAGER

HORACE FELIX

COMMUNITY MEMBER

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND  
MARITIME USES

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2 CHAIR KOO: Good afternoon I'm Council  
3 Member Peter Koo, Chair of the Subcommittee on  
4 Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses. We are  
5 joined by Council Member Levin, Council Member  
6 Kallos, Council Member Palma and Council Member  
7 Barron. We will be holding a public hearing and  
8 voting on one item today. Land Use Item #318, the  
9 Morris Park Historic District Extension. This item  
10 will extend assisting Morris Park Historic District  
11 to cover an additional 276 properties in Council  
12 Members Dickens district. The Council Member has  
13 indicated her support for the destination. I will  
14 now open the public hearing for Land Use Item #318  
15 and we have Lisa Casavage (sp) of LPC and Michael  
16 Owen (sp) from Landmarks LPC here to testify. Please  
17 identify and (inaudible) yourself and you can start,  
18 thank you.

19 MICHAEL OWEN: Thank you, good morning  
20 Chair Koo and Council Members, my name is Michael  
21 Owen there Community Outreach Program Manager and I'm  
22 joined by Lisa Casavage on behalf of the Landmarks  
23 Preservation Commission, thank you for this  
24 opportunity to testify today on the designation of  
25 Mount Morris Park Historic District Extension. On

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2 MARITIME USES

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3 July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015 the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
4 held a public hearing on the proposed designation of  
5 the Mount Morris Park Historic District Extension,  
6 I'm number one was dually advertised in accordance  
7 with the prevision of the law, 23 people spoke in  
8 favor of the designation including; representative of  
9 Congressman Charles Rangle, Manhattan Borough  
10 President Gail Brewer, Community Board 10 the  
11 Historic Districts Council, the Landmarks  
12 Conservancy, Mount Morris Park Community Improvement  
13 Association, Save Harlem Now, The Society for the  
14 Architecture of the City, former Landmarks  
15 Preservation Commission Chair, Jean Norman and  
16 numerous homeowners in the proposed district  
17 extension area. The Real Estate Board of New York  
18 testified in support of the designation but question  
19 the inclusion of certain buildings. The commission  
20 received a support letter from City Council Member  
21 Inez Dickens and a statement of support from New York  
22 City Parks Department. Two people spoke in  
23 opposition to the designation. On September 22<sup>nd</sup>,  
24 2015 the Landmarks Commission unanimously approved  
25 the designation of the 276 building district bounded  
roughly by West 123<sup>rd</sup> Street to the north and west

2 118<sup>th</sup> Street to the southeast of Adam Clayton Powell  
3 Boulevard and immediately west of the existing Mount  
4 Morris Park Historic District. The Landmarks  
5 Preservation Commission work quickly and efficiently  
6 to designate this extension after calendaring it on  
7 April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, collaborating closely with  
8 community stakeholders and seeking extensive  
9 community input. The proposed district extension  
10 encompasses more than 250 row houses and  
11 approximately 12 apartment buildings and it share a  
12 character and sense of place and development history  
13 with the existing Mount Morris Historic District.  
14 Combined these districts include more than 550  
15 landmark buildings. Many of the architects and  
16 developers responsible for structures within the  
17 existing Historic District were also responsible for  
18 the buildings within this extension like the Mount  
19 Morris Park Historic, Mount Morris Park Historic  
20 District. The streets of the Historic District  
21 Extension align Masonry Row houses of exceptional  
22 quality that reflected Harlem's development as an  
23 affluent residential community following the  
24 extension of rapid transit into the area around 1880.  
25 Similar to the existing historic district the

3 building within the extension display a variety of  
4 architecture styles popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>  
5 centuries. The buildings in the proposed district  
6 extension represent many styles of architecture  
7 expanding a period of over four decades, everything  
8 from second empire, neo grec, queen anne, roman  
9 esquivel, renaissance revival and bosart. The  
10 earliest buildings in the district are three second  
11 empires style brick row houses with mansard roofs.  
12 Between 1885 and 89, 88 row houses were erected in  
13 the district, all are extant. From 1900 to 1920's  
14 many beautiful apartment buildings were also  
15 developed in the neighborhood. The row houses mainly  
16 built as single family dwelling were originally  
17 occupied by prosperous, middle class households but  
18 by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a less affluent  
19 population consisting of mostly Jewish immigrants  
20 from Eastern Europe began to move in. Many of these  
21 residences were eventually converted into rooming  
22 houses and small apartment buildings. By the late  
23 1920s Mount Morris Park area began to attract a large  
24 African American population becoming an important  
25 part of Black Harlem and home to numerous prominent  
black residences. The area today remains one of New

2 York City's most vibrant African American  
3 communities. There have been many actors, artist,  
4 activist, doctors, lawyers, musicians and teachers  
5 that have helped to shape the Mount Morris Park  
6 community. Some of the prominent residences include;  
7 (inaudible) photographer James Van Der Zee, Hail  
8 House Founder, Mother Clara Hail,  
9 screenwriter/producer/novelist and sportswriter, Bud  
10 Wilson Schulberg, actresses/screenwriter and producer,  
11 Gertrude Berg and television and film actress, Anne  
12 Marie Horsford. Remarkable Watson family also lived  
13 in the district, who's head James Watson was one of  
14 the first African American elected to judicial office  
15 and whose wife Violet Watson founded the National  
16 Council of Negro Woman with Mary McCleod Bethune in  
17 1935. Their son Douglas Watson was the first African  
18 American aeronautical engineer in the US while their  
19 daughter Barbara Wilson, Barbara Watson excuse me  
20 became the first African American woman appointed  
21 Assistant Secretary of State in 1966 and Son James  
22 Watson was a New York State Senator, US Custom Court  
23 Judge and Federal Judge at the Court of International  
24 Trade. Many of these houses in the neighborhood  
25 retained a high degree of integrity, together the

2 buildings of the Mount Morris Park Historic District  
3 Extension represent a cohesive unit who's quality  
4 design and workmanship create an exceptional  
5 character and strong sense of place. On September  
6 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 the commission unanimously designated the  
7 Mount Morris Park Historic District Extension,  
8 accordingly the commission urges you to affirm the  
9 designation, thank you very much.

10 CHAIR KOO: Thank you. Any questions for  
11 our members? Comments, Council Member Barron.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you Mr.  
13 Chair, thank you for coming and presenting your  
14 testimony and I'm always concerned that the record  
15 reflect the contributions made by African Americans  
16 during the examination of the history of New York in  
17 particular and I noticed in the complete document, it  
18 does talk about on page 5 that the ordinance provided  
19 for inferior court of justice and village minister  
20 wants 20 to 25 families that settled there as well as  
21 a construction of a good wagon road from the village  
22 of New Amsterdam to be constructed with the negro  
23 with the companies Negroes are fairly and suitable  
24 scale and a cattle and horse market. So it talks  
25 about that construction of basically the area we now



2 know as Broadway and I always like for the record to  
3 reflect that this construction was done with enslaved  
4 Africans, people who's labor was exploited and for  
5 which they were not paid and which in fact led to the  
6 vibrancy and the economic status that New York has as  
7 now. So if we can include that comment in the  
8 reports, I would appreciate it.

9 MICHAEL OWEN: And it is included in the.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I don't see where  
11 it says enslaved Africans it says Negroes and I want  
12 to highlight the fact that it was labor that was not  
13 paid, that's what my point is, ok, thank you.

14 CHAIR KOO: Anymore comments, Council  
15 Member.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I just want  
17 second Council Member Barron's remarks and strongly  
18 encourage the commission to... to include that in the  
19 report, thank you.

20 CHAIR KOO: No more, ok. Seeing no  
21 questions from our members and so, we have one more  
22 speaker. Thank you. And we have a member Horace  
23 Felix. Please identify yourself and start.

24 HORACE FELXI: Myself, my name is Horace  
25 Felix I'm a homeowner in the Mount Morris Historic

2 District the extension was just approved by Landmark.  
3 I own two properties which happen to be the buildings  
4 that were constructed in 1885 by Hatch Kimble (sp).  
5 These are on the national registrar, however, I just  
6 need to add that when I moved into this neighborhood  
7 in the early 90s, most of the houses in that area  
8 were rooming houses and I've lived long enough to see  
9 the demographic changes that have occurred because of  
10 speculation done by people who had the means to  
11 disposes so many of us from the neighborhood. I've  
12 happen, I'm lucky to have been able to retain these  
13 two building to this point and I'm seeking even  
14 though I must, I must preface my statement by saying  
15 I support Landmark, I believe that it's important to  
16 maintain the historic identification of a  
17 neighborhood and I think that the character of the  
18 neighborhood is good and the people who've been there  
19 before the ones who (inaudible) who are congenial and  
20 more interactive with their community. The  
21 demographic changes that have occurred seem to  
22 evidence isolation of the new people in the block  
23 even though efforts have been made to include them in  
24 the activities of the neighborhood. I happen to be  
25 the president of block association and I've been that

3 for the last 3 years more or less. I support  
4 Landmark. I have presently an issue which I'm  
5 raising with the Landmark Commission regarding my  
6 property because the house that were built in that  
7 row of 6 houses were designed as was said in the  
8 testimony before for people who had the means to  
9 afford them and the issue I have at the moment is  
10 that on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor which is the highest floor of  
11 the building the rail roof happens to be lower than  
12 the 4<sup>th</sup> roof and that is because in those years  
13 people were brining, they were storing trunks in that  
14 section of the house. That's where the trunks were  
15 stored because they didn't need that space. Now the  
16 space that I'm talking about is 17 feet in length by  
17 no 25 feet in length by 16.8 feet in width which  
18 requires if the roof is not lifted to allow activity  
19 dwelling space it would be wasted space so I've made  
20 my representation to the Landmark Commission which  
21 has reflected that they would be interested in seeing  
22 how far this could be address but I'm just stating it  
23 for public record because in that same neighborhood  
24 before Landmark got their approval, there has been  
25 changes to the, to the building similar to what I  
live in and I mean it is, it is not added to the

2 character for that matter one or two houses before  
3 the 6 houses I speak to is now a 6 story where most  
4 of these building are 4 stories 3 ¼ stories, so the  
5 fact that Landmark is coming is a plus. It would  
6 assist in maintaining the character as long as they  
7 are resolute in seeing that there's no more  
8 alterations made to the community. That's all I need  
9 to offer.

10 CHAIR KOO: Thank you Mr. Felix, any  
11 questions from our members? Thank you. Are there  
12 anymore members of the public who wish to testify?  
13 Ok, seeing none I will now close the public hearing  
14 on this item. We will now move on to a vote to  
15 approve Land Use Item #318, please call the vote  
16 counsel. I want to put on the record that Council  
17 Member Dickens wrote the committee a letter of  
18 support to designate Landmark Item #318 as a Historic  
19 District. Please call the roll.

20 CLERK: Chair Koo.

21 CHAIR KOO: I vote I.

22 CLERK: Council Member Palma.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: I.

24 CLERK: Council Member Levin.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I vote I.

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2 CLERK: Council Member Barron.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Permission to  
4 explain my vote or just add a comment to my vote.

5 CHAIR KOO: Sure go ahead.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Ok. I'm very  
7 pleased to see that the commission does have a  
8 section which talks about those significant African  
9 Americans living in the community and I just wanted  
10 to comment to say that I had the distinction of  
11 meeting the famed photographer James Van Dee Zee and  
12 I do have some of his work as well and a really well  
13 known and well recognized and I think that this is  
14 great and I vote I.

15 CLERK: Council Member Kallos.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I.

17 CLERK: Land Use Item 318 is approved  
18 with 5 votes in the affirmative, 0 in the negative  
19 and 0 abstentions and referred to the full Land Use  
20 Committee.

21 CHAIR KOO: Meeting adjourned.

22 [gavel]

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2 MARITIME USES

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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 January 12, 2016