

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DISPOSITIONS
AND CONCESSIONS

----- X

November 12, 2013
Start: 1:43 p.m.
Recess: 2:29 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room
 City Hall

B E F O R E: STEPHEN LEVIN
 Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Inez E. Dickens
 Peter Koo
 Vincent J. Gentile

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

3 Chris Grove
4 City Planner
5 NYC Department of Citywide
6 Administrative Services

7 Josephine
8 Beckman
9 District Manager
10 Community Board 10

11 Karen Tadross
12 Managing Director
13 Ridge Chorale

14 Chris Gonzalez
15 Associate
16 Commissioner
17 Office of Policy and External Affairs
18 HPD

19 Thebia Walters
20 Director of Manhattan Planning
21 HPD

22 Karen Dixon
23 Executive Director
24 Harlem Dowling

25 Gary Sloman
Director of Operations
Division of Housing Supervision
HPD

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [gavel] 'Kay, good
3 afternoon. Welcome to the Subcommittee on
4 Planning, Dispositions and Concessions. I'm
5 Council Member Stephen Levin, chair of the
6 subcommittee, joined this afternoon by my
7 colleagues on the committee. To my right is
8 Council Member Inez Dickens of Manhattan, and to my
9 left is Council Member Peter Koo of Queens, and we
10 are joined this afternoon by Council Member Vincent
11 Gentile of Brooklyn, and we have one, two, three,
12 four, five items on the agenda today. We're going
13 to start with Land Use Number 956, disposition of
14 city-owned property in Brooklyn Community District
15 10. That's Application C130266PPK, application
16 submitted by the New York City Department of
17 Citywide Administrative Services pursuant to
18 Section 197-C of the New York Charter for the
19 disposition of two city-owned properties located on
20 Block 6037, Lot 102 and Block 6339, Lot 164
21 pursuant to zoning. To testify on this item is
22 Chris Grove of DCAS. Mr. Grove, and Council Member
23 Gentile, do you want to speak prior to his
24 testimony or would you like to ask questions?
25 Okay, thank you very much. Mr. Grove.

2 [Pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: If the light is on,
4 it's on.

5 CHRIS GROVE: Okay, here we go. Thank
6 you. Good afternoon, Chair Levin and members of
7 the Subcommittee on Planning and Dispositions and
8 Concessions. I am Chris Grove, a city planner at
9 the Department of Citywide Administrative Services.
10 Thank you for this opportunity to discuss DCAS
11 ULURP Application for the disposition of two city-
12 owned properties in Brooklyn Community Board 10.
13 The Bay Ridge building on 621 86th Street in this
14 ULURP Application is a two-story, unoccupied former
15 Department of Sanitation Section Station that was
16 also the former office for Community Board 10.
17 This property has been city-owned since 1935, and
18 the Department of Sanitation surrendered this
19 building to DCAS three years ago. Brooklyn
20 Community Board 10, a former occupant of this
21 building, vacated to new offices in 2009. DCAS
22 canvassed city agencies that would be able to take
23 over this building and no city agency was
24 identified due to the size, configuration, location
25 and the high cost associated with redeveloping this

1 building, nor did any city agency reach out and
2 request this building from DCAS; therefore, DCAS
3 initiated this ULURP Application to seek approval
4 to sell this property.
5

6 DCAS submitted this ULURP Application
7 seeking disposition approval to the Department of
8 City Planning in April 2013. In June, Community
9 Board 10 held public hearings, and after careful
10 consideration, the community board approved this
11 building for unrestricted disposition. After the
12 City Planning Commission's public hearing in late
13 August, a site inspection was arranged immediately
14 afterwards for elected officials and not-for-profit
15 representatives from the community to inspect the
16 building for a reuse proposal.

17 In early August of this year, the
18 Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department
19 of Design and Construction jointly conducted a site
20 evaluation to determine the feasibility to convert
21 this vacant building into a cultural facility.
22 Both agencies concluded that renovation of this
23 building was infeasible due to the estimated five
24 to seven million redevelopment costs. This
25 estimated figure does not take into consideration

2 the future ongoing cost to operate this building or
3 to run future programs. The building has many
4 exterior and interior problems, including extensive
5 water damage, ADA Non-Compliance and much needed
6 mechanical repairs and roof replacement.

7 Throughout this process, a feasible and
8 financially viable reuse proposal has not emerged.
9 At this time, DCAS expects to offer this property
10 for sale at the December 4th, 2013 Real Estate
11 Public Auction. This property can be purchased by
12 a private purchaser, and thus, be productively
13 redeveloped according to zoning requirements to
14 support the local Land Use pattern. Without ULURP
15 approval, the property will remain a vacant
16 building that will continue to deteriorate and be a
17 blight along this vibrant 86th Street retail
18 corridor. Therefore, based on the Department of
19 Cultural Affairs and the Department of Design and
20 Construction's recent analysis of this Bay Ridge
21 building in August, DCAS continues to seek
22 unrestricted disposition approval of this property,
23 in order to facilitate a successful disposition and
24 productive mixed use of the building in the future.

2 The other building in this application,
3 Block 6339, Lot 164 is a vacant, interior lot that
4 is in the DCAS portfolio and is located in
5 Community Board 10 within the Dyker Heights
6 neighborhood. This property is approximately 41
7 square feet, and the city acquired it through the
8 In Rem Tax Foreclosure Process in the 1980s.

9 Thank you for this opportunity to speak
10 on behalf of this ULURP Application. I am
11 available to answer questions that you may have.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Mr.
13 Grove. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague,
14 Vincent Gentile I think for some questions.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thanks.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Chair Levin,
18 thank you so much and thank you for holding this
19 hearing is my first time being with your committee
20 for questioning and I appreciate...

21 [crosstalk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh, yeah, yeah.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: The
24 opportunity to get a chance to see how great this
25 committee works doing it in person. Since 2007, I

2 have said and reached out many times since 2007 to
3 DCAS to express my district's strong community
4 needs for this property at 86th Street, the Gowanus
5 Expressway service road, the building there, which
6 is Block 6037, Lot 102, the old Sanitation
7 building, as you described in your opening
8 statement, Mr. Grove. I can say unequivocally that
9 disposing of this building would not be in the
10 community's best interests. As DCAS has heard by
11 being present at the community board, the borough
12 presidents, borough board and the City Planning
13 Commission and we're here today at this hearing; if
14 you stay around for the subsequent panels that will
15 come; the local community strongly believes this
16 property can serve a city function. Yes, it is in
17 need of repair. It's in great disrepair, but
18 those... and those repairs are going to cost some
19 money, but it's ridiculous to say that because of
20 that concern, we shouldn't have an art center or a
21 youth center or senior center or a local branch of
22 one of our boroughs many amazing non-profits. As I
23 and the borough president said, the process for
24 looking at community uses is still very much
25 underway, so disposal of this property now would be

2 very premature. So to that end, I have a few
3 questions for Mr. Grove.

4 CHRIS GROVE: Great.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Mr. Grove, as
6 you know, the borough president at the borough
7 board made his certain recommendations, and I'll
8 indicate to you those recommendations include that
9 the Department of Citywide Administrative Services
10 take no further action to dispose of 621 86th
11 Street for unrestricted use during the remainder of
12 the administration and agree to transfer
13 jurisdiction to the Department of Cultural Affairs
14 or the Economic Development Corporation for the
15 purpose of the issuance of request for proposal.
16 We have further resolved that the borough president
17 calls on the Department of Cultural Affairs or the
18 Economic Development Corporation to obtain
19 jurisdiction of the property for the purposes of
20 holding the property until a determination is made
21 by the next administration to proceed with a
22 request for a proposal process and to dispose of
23 the property to a cultural organization. Given the
24 fact that both President Marty Markowitz and I have
25 recommended that DCAS take no further action to

2 dispose of 621 86th Street for the remainder of
3 this administration, I ask you why has DCAS ignored
4 my recommendation and the borough president's
5 recommendation?

6 CHRIS GROVE: Council Member Gentile,
7 we did respond to Borough President Marty
8 Markowitz's request and we wrote back to him, but
9 we have a letter of August 14th. We did respond.
10 The thing is, is that we've been... we've had this
11 property for over three years and it's
12 deteriorating. This is... disposition provides us
13 the opportunity to sell. It's been sitting here.
14 It is having a lot of problems in regards to, as we
15 said you know, the roof is not... has problems.
16 This gives us the flexibility to do that. In
17 regards to... you know, the community board sat
18 here in June of this year and reviewed this
19 application and they recommended for a disposition
20 unrestricted.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Well, let me
22 stop you right there because I read the minutes of
23 that community board and there was much confusion
24 on those minutes as to what exactly they're able to
25 do. We do not, in Community Board 10, have a lot

2 of city-owned property, so this is the first
3 disposition of city-owned property that they've had
4 to deal with and these notes reflect the fact that
5 they were very, very unsure as to what they could
6 recommend, and you were there and I don't see any
7 real clarification that you gave and so the fact
8 that the community board voted before the borough
9 president's recommendation is not that significant
10 because of the confusion that is clearly reflected
11 in these minutes.

12 CHRIS GROVE: There also was a Land Use
13 Committee and I listened to their conversation as
14 well. I don't want to speak on behalf of them, but
15 I know that they took careful deliberation of why
16 they decided to have it unrestricted, and I know
17 one of the things is that they definitely looked at
18 other agencies maybe having an opportunity to use
19 this and they felt that that cost in renovating it
20 was too high as well. Now, in regards to... this
21 building has been vacant for over three years, as I
22 mentioned before. We've been waiting for a
23 sponsoring agency to come forward. We still do not
24 have a sponsoring agency that's looking to do
25 something of some type of reuse.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And I have
3 been asking you since 2007 before it was vacant to
4 deal with me and to deal with the community to try
5 to dispose of this property in a way or deal with
6 this property in a way that it can have a community
7 use as a rehearsal space, cultural center, youth
8 center, some type of a senior center. That's since
9 2007. The response I've gotten each time up
10 through the years was, "We're not ready to dispose
11 of the property yet. We're not ready to dispose of
12 the property yet." Then you come to the community
13 board in June and say, "Oh, here we go. We're
14 going to dispose of the property," and I'll read
15 you here one remark that one board member said.
16 She thinks that keeping the property for a
17 community use is an admirable goal, but asked if
18 there was any way it can be brought back to
19 committee for research, and one other board member
20 said that we have a motion asking that the agency
21 be required to assume ownership of property. It
22 seems that they are asking us for approval for
23 disposition 'cause they want to get rid of it, not
24 assume it back. So it was clear sentiment on the
25 community board to keep this property for public

2 use, and they were confused on how it should be
3 done. So to go back and say the community board
4 considered this and voted in such a way is not
5 dispositive of the feeling of the community board
6 and it's reflected in the presentation that was
7 made before the borough board and the
8 recommendations that you see in the borough
9 president's report.

10 CHRIS GROVE: I'm sorry, is there a
11 question that you want me to...

12 [crosstalk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Well, let me
14 ask you, so throughout the community board, the
15 borough board and the City Planning hearings,
16 all... many local non-profits testified at each of
17 those hearings about the community's desperate need
18 to have property like this; not much city-owned
19 property in Community Board 10. What outreach did
20 DCAS do, if any, to these very, very interested
21 parties?

22 CHRIS GROVE: DCAS is mandated by the
23 City Charter in Section 384 that we are not to go
24 into direct negotiated sales, and with the way that
25 DCAS sells property is through public auction and

2 in smaller instances where the property is not
3 developable on its own, we can make direct sales,
4 and like the small property that we're asking for
5 disposition approval now, which 41 square feet,
6 it's undevelopable on its own. That was just a
7 recent change. The other way is through a long-
8 term lease and through an LCD and EDC has not
9 approached us and again, I will reiterate that we
10 have not heard from one of our sister agencies or
11 any of other agencies that have come forward and
12 said that they want to pursue this avenue. We do
13 not have the disposition authority to make a direct
14 sale.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: We're not
16 asking... I'm not asking you about a direct sale.
17 I'm asking you for outreach through those
18 interested parties to take a look at this and I
19 assume that...

20 [crosstalk]

21 CHRIS GROVE: Even with... even...

22 [crosstalk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And I assume
24 that by not answering that question, the answer is
25 no. You did not outreach any of those parties.

2 [crosstalk]

3 CHRIS GROVE: No, we did not, but we
4 did open up the building for the elected officials,
5 which included yourself, and for any of the non-
6 profits' representatives that day and...

7 [crosstalk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: That was after
9 you had the ULURP in the process here.

10 CHRIS GROVE: Well, we have... we have
11 other properties, Council Member, with our
12 portfolio. We have vacant lots; small ones, big
13 ones, everything. We don't outreach to everyone
14 about our properties. We make a public
15 announcement in a brochure that this property is up
16 for sale. We asked our sister agencies, "Do you
17 have a need for this?" None has come forward.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Well, let me
19 ask you this. In your discussions with other
20 agencies, did you ever mention to them that I had a
21 commitment to put capital money into that building
22 to renovate it or to replace it? Did you ever
23 mention that as you were shopping it around to
24 other agencies?

25 CHRIS GROVE: I...

2 [crosstalk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: 'Cause if you
4 did, I think that the actual...

5 [crosstalk]

6 CHRIS GROVE: Well, I think that might
7 be more of an opportunity for you to talk to those
8 agencies in regards to your financial commitments
9 that you have rather than us. I mean did we sit
10 there and say that you had a suggestion of having
11 some kind of cultural use there? We did. We spoke
12 to DCA and that's what's in my testimony. We
13 reached out to DCA. We asked them to review this
14 site. We asked EDC to tell us what is the...

15 [crosstalk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: I know you
17 asked them to review it, but when I checked with
18 DCA, they had no knowledge of the fact that I had
19 made a commitment to put capital money here in
20 this.

21 CHRIS GROVE: Well, in regards to
22 commitments, I think that's more of your
23 responsibility to do.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So you're
25 shopping it around knowing that the City Council

2 and a City Council member is willing to put
3 significant funding in that building to keep it a
4 public building for public use and you didn't
5 mention it to any city agency.

6 CHRIS GROVE: We offered it a variety
7 of city agencies and none have come forward to sit
8 there and ask to take this property.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Well, now
10 that... now that I have told DCA of my
11 commitment...

12 CHRIS GROVE: [interposing] Mm-hm.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Capital
14 commitment, they remain interested and want to work
15 with me on finding a combination that will work for
16 this building. We're in the process of doing that.
17 Why would you or DCAS stop that process from going
18 forward?

19 CHRIS GROVE: We have not heard from
20 them and I don't think...

21 [crosstalk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: I've heard
23 from them.

24 CHRIS GROVE: Well, I haven't and so
25 until I have that proposal that I can show my team;

2 you know, my commissioner and the people in my
3 agency, then we will discuss that. I don't have
4 that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Have you ever
6 discussed with me a non-auction option for
7 disposition of this property?

8 CHRIS GROVE: You and I have not. I
9 don't know if you've spoken to my commissioner and
10 what the...

11 [crosstalk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: In fact, the
13 first time... I've... I've tried repeatedly. The
14 first time I've spoken to your commissioner was
15 three weeks ago.

16 CHRIS GROVE: Okay.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And I've been
18 trying to deal with this property since 2007, and
19 you may have not been there back then, but this
20 property, as I've been told, "Well, we're not ready
21 yet. We're not ready yet," and finally three weeks
22 ago, your commissioner got on the phone with me and
23 there's been no discussion about a non-auction
24 option for disposition of this property, none.
25 None at all; LDCs, EDCs, none. Have anybody... has

2 anyone at DCAS ever asked for either my vision or
3 the community's vision of what they want to see
4 this property to become?

5 CHRIS GROVE: No, sir. As I said
6 before, this building has been vacant since 2009.
7 It was surrendered to DCAS in 2010. Now, listen,
8 there... I don't know what your conversations that
9 you've had in the past with any of the
10 commissioners. I'm saying that it has been
11 available and it's... we've been asking other
12 agencies. It's not like we've never been proactive
13 in any way. We have.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: You know, you
15 say it's been vacant since... for three years.
16 Gracie Mansion's been vacant for 12 years.

17 CHRIS GROVE: What... what has?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So Gracie
19 Mansion's been vacant for 12 years. Should you
20 dispose of that?

21 CHRIS GROVE: That is not a surplus
22 city-owned property that's deteriorating and I
23 think that's a little silly.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Look, this
25 really is... you know, our Mayor; our new Mayor has

2 talked about a tale of two cities, and this I think
3 is one example of Mayor de Blasio's tale of two
4 cities where when it comes to a cultural in... in
5 the big cultural, DCAS is willing to work with
6 property and the big cultural, but when it comes
7 to a small property in the outer boroughs with
8 small cultural groups, they want to just wipe it
9 off the books, sell it and get rid of it after we
10 have made repeated, repeated pleas to sit down and
11 work with us.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Just for a second,
13 so Mr. Grove, I think one thing to keep in mind is
14 that space is a premium in New York City.

15 CHRIS GROVE: Mm-hm.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And city-owned
17 space especially is a premium in New York City and
18 especially for cultural institutions. So this
19 morning, I was at a groundbreaking ceremony for a
20 dance organization, a not-for-profit in downtown
21 Brooklyn. They're acquiring or they're entering
22 into a long-term lease on a space that is owned by
23 a not-for-profit right now.

24 CHRIS GROVE: Mm-hm.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And the space is a
3 raw space. It's a garage. There's nothing... you
4 know, it has its problems, but with city resources,
5 my office put capital funding towards it... the
6 borough president's office put capital funding
7 towards it; they're going to be able to transform
8 that space into a dance rehearsal space for this
9 not-for-profit and now hundreds and hundreds of
10 kids in Brooklyn will be able to have access to
11 dance programming in downtown Brooklyn. There are
12 hundreds of not-for-profits in the city; thousands
13 of not-for-profits in the city; hundreds in
14 Brooklyn that desire space, particularly city-owned
15 space that doesn't acquisition costs, doesn't
16 require the type of rents that would be charged if
17 it was... the site was privately owned and so, I
18 think it's incumbent upon the city to put in a real
19 good faith effort working with the other agencies;
20 if it's Department of Cultural Affairs for cultural
21 space or HPD for housing space that we should be
22 doing everything we can to make sure that there's a
23 public benefit that the communities... that's
24 community centered and I think that's what Council
25 Member Gentile is getting at, is that there

2 needs... you know, it's a... this is... space is a
3 real resource and it's more than just dollars and
4 cents because we have such limitations in New York
5 City, and so the value there is greater than just
6 the amount of money that we can get on a sale to a
7 private developer to develop it into whatever they
8 want to develop it into; you know, that the benefit
9 to the community is greater if we can make a good
10 faith effort to get a community group of some kind,
11 a cultural group or otherwise, to use the space
12 because from a non-for-profit's perspective it's...
13 even if the building is deteriorating unless it's
14 landmarked, then it's better than having to go out
15 and buy their own space or enter into a long-term
16 lease where they're stuck paying rent month after
17 month and it comes out of their budget. So I think
18 that that's... that's I think what Council Member
19 Gentile is getting at.

20 COUNCIL GENTILE: Yeah and the fact is,
21 as I have said and reiterate again, there are
22 really no other... maybe one other space that is
23 city-owned in Bay Ridge. There's very few pieces
24 of city-owned property, and when we have this great
25 need for cultural institutions; theater groups; to

2 use this new space, why we're rushing to get rid of
3 this property when there's so few properties like
4 this in the community is beyond me and why we can't
5 wait until the new administration takes over and we
6 take another attempt, since the attempts since 2007
7 has not been successful with this group of city
8 officials, we take another attempt in January and
9 February to sit down and work out some deal where
10 our theater groups, our cultural groups have the
11 opportunity to use city space. So Mr. Chairman, I
12 guess in the end, what I'm asking for this
13 committee to do is to allow the next administration
14 to look at this issue, work with me on it and as
15 such, I ask that this committee vote to deny this
16 application.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you
18 very much, Council Member Gentile. Mr. Grove, do
19 you have anything else you want to add?

20 CHRIS GROVE: No, I don't.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you.

22 CHRIS GROVE: Thank you very much,
23 Council Member.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So we're going to
25 call two members of the community to testify in

1 opposition to this item; Josephine Beckman of
2 Community Board 10 and Karen Tadross of Ridge
3 Choral.
4

5 [Pause]

6 JOSEPHINE BECKMAN: Good afternoon,
7 Councilman Levin and members of the committee. My
8 name is Josephine Beckman and I am the District
9 Manager of Community Board 10. The community board
10 did hold a public hearing regarding the disposition
11 of this site of city-owned property at 621 86th
12 Street at our June general board meeting. I'm
13 looking back at the minutes, as Council Member
14 Gentile described. There were several board
15 members who wanted to proceed with the motion that
16 the city property at 621 86th Street be acquired by
17 a city agency or department for use or for a local
18 not-for-profit organization and/or philanthropic
19 groups. But the information that was provided to
20 us by the Department of Citywide Administrative
21 Services, it seemed that that option had been
22 exhausted. At the public hearing, we did hear some
23 testimony from groups outside of the community
24 board district and in the weeks following, we also
25 heard from several Brooklyn-wide community groups;

2 arts groups that expressed interest. We referred
3 all of those calls to the borough president's
4 office because we had had our hearing. At this
5 time, we are here to ask that because of this
6 interest in some of these not-for-profit
7 organizations, that the property not be disposed of
8 at this time and delayed. Since our recommendation
9 on this matter last June, again, as I said, we've
10 heard from other not-for-profits beyond the CB 10
11 area explaining that city agencies didn't reach out
12 to some of the local borough or citywide not-for-
13 profits who could potentially develop this site.
14 So we've always felt strongly at the board that
15 this city-owned property could serve a city
16 function and that could be a community use and
17 would like you to consider that as you deliberate t
18 this. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
20 much, District Manager.

21 KAREN TADROSS: Good afternoon. My
22 name is Karen Tadross. I am the Managing Director
23 of Ridge Chorale. We are a not-for-profit theater
24 company homed in... our home base is Bay Ridge. We
25 do entertain all of Brooklyn though; I'd like to

2 think that. We were founded in 1968. We are the
3 longest running continuous theater company in
4 Brooklyn. We take pride in that and 48 years
5 later, we do not take pride in the fact that we
6 have never had a home. We have never had rehearsal
7 space on a continuous basis. We've never had
8 performance space that we can count on from year to
9 year. The only thing we can count on is the
10 constant support we get from Councilman Gentile and
11 his office, and I want to thank you very much for
12 coming forward and fighting for this piece of
13 property so vigorously. We do need this space.
14 Bay Ridge is home to not only Ridge Chorale, but
15 also Narrows Community Theater; BrooklynOne; Regina
16 Opera; Rhapsody Players; the Bay Ridge Festival of
17 the Arts; the SAW Arts Council. We have a
18 historical society. We have a number of
19 photography clubs. We have poetry groups. We have
20 book clubs. We have choruses and we have
21 orchestras, and for a small community that is an
22 abundance of arts activity going on on a regular
23 basis, and the one thing that we all do not have is
24 a home of our own. And the one thing that I do
25 want to stress is we are all... all of these arts

1 groups are willing to work together for the common
2 goal of developing this space so that we can all
3 use it; so that the community has a place to go if
4 their children would like music lessons or if their
5 children would like to learn how to sing, dance,
6 act or a place to go on a weekend for an exhibit of
7 some kind. We see this space as being multi-use;
8 multi-functional; an empty canvas that you know,
9 just with a little bit of imagination and hard work
10 could create something so wonderful and so useful
11 for a community that has never had this. We see
12 the development that goes on in other communities
13 for the arts and I have to tell you, we're a little
14 bit envious that Bay Ridge has been ignored for so
15 many years. And Councilman Gentile has fought for
16 some kind of cultural center for our community for
17 so long, and we really would appreciate the
18 opportunity for you to hold off on selling of this
19 building; to recommend that it gets held over to
20 the next administration. Let's explore all the
21 possibilities. We've waited 48 years for a home.
22 Three months is going to kill the council. Thank
23 you.
24

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
3 much. Council Member Gentile, do you have anything
4 to add?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Yeah, thank
6 you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me just ask you,
7 Miss Beckman. So it clear that once you held the
8 community board meeting, it was thereafter that you
9 started to hear from non-profits that called and
10 said that they were not aware that the city was
11 going through this process because agencies did not
12 reach out to them.

13 JOSEPHINE BECKMAN: That's correct,
14 yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And that's
16 when you referred those...

17 JOSEPHINE BECKMAN: [interposing] Calls
18 to the borough president's office.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: The borough
20 president's office in time for the borough board
21 hearing on this issue.

22 JOSEPHINE BECKMAN: Correct.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And a
24 resulting report that they... that... that they...

25 [crosstalk]

2 JOSEPHINE BECKMAN: In a resolution
3 to... yes, that resulted in... they testified at
4 those hearings. They contacted the borough
5 president's office, which is why he made his
6 recommendation differ from ours.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And would you
8 agree with me, as I've read over these minutes from
9 that community board meeting, that there was a
10 strong sentiment among the board members that this
11 property be held for public use of some type?

12 JOSEPHINE BECKMAN: Yes, we... at the
13 time and the information that was provided to us,
14 we didn't feel that was an option on the table
15 because as presented to us the agencies had
16 exhausted their... DCAS had exhausted their
17 reaching out to the agencies. No one seemed
18 interested in the property, so putting that as one
19 of our recommendations didn't appear to be an
20 option, but there were two not-for-profit groups
21 that did come to testify. That's why that
22 discussion was included during the public hearing.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And at that
24 point we or you as a board were not aware of the

2 possibilities of non-auction options like going
3 through EDC or a local development corporation.

4 JOSEPHINE BECKMAN: No, we were not.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: You're not...
6 you're not aware.

7 [crosstalk]

8 JOSEPHINE BECKMAN: That's correct.

9 [crosstalk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: You're not
11 aware.

12 JOSEPHINE BECKMAN: We were aware.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: At that time,
14 yeah. Listen and now, Miss Tadross, with your
15 group, you and I have had many, many discussions
16 about this and you just gave somewhat of the vision
17 of what we'd like to see out of the use of this
18 building or at least this location. Is it fair to
19 say that there a lot of options out there and we're
20 not confined to just rehabbing this building? We
21 could be taking this building down and doing some
22 other type of structure there. Is that fair to
23 say, that that's part of the vision?

24 KAREN TADROSS: That's very fair to
25 say. The one thing that the arts community is is

2 very flexible. We can work in any kind of space.
3 We just recently finished our production of 'Les
4 Mis,' which was a grand production with 65 in the
5 cast and a 25-piece orchestra. We rehearsed in a
6 room that was 12x15 for three months, so we are
7 flexible. We... the space can be multi-functional;
8 an open room with just maybe dividing walls. It
9 doesn't have to be fancy. It doesn't have to be
10 high tech. It has to be just bare bones walls and
11 we'd be thrilled with that. We're not asking you
12 to put in gilded you know...

13 [crosstalk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Right.

15 KAREN TADROSS: Windows or things like
16 that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: But there are
18 options there, right?

19 KAREN TADROSS: Absolutely.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: That we could
21 use this property for. Now, the building... the
22 property...

23 KAREN TADROSS: [interposing] The
24 property...

25 [crosstalk]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Right.

3 [crosstalk]

4 KAREN TADROSS: Really, yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Right.

6 KAREN TADROSS: Absolutely.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay.

8 KAREN TADROSS: It's a large piece of
9 property and we envision it as you know, the first
10 floor possibly being a large empty space with
11 rehearsal rooms on the second floor and the
12 basement being used as storage and set shops for
13 people to learn stage craft. It's...

14 [crosstalk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank...

16 [crosstalk]

17 KAREN TADROSS: It has so many
18 possibilities.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank you.

20 Mr. Chairman, I just think now that some of these
21 agencies now know of my commitment to use capital
22 money, and certainly working with the new borough
23 president to make something like this happen, there
24 would be significant capital available for
25 something like this. It would be a dastardly thing

2 to do at this point to cut it off and to sell off
3 this property, so again, I'd ask for a denial of
4 this application.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
6 much, Council Member Gentile. Thank you very much
7 to the panelists. We're going to close the public
8 hearing [coughs] excuse me, on Land Use Number 956,
9 and on the request of Council Member Gentile, I'm
10 going to call the role on this item and we'll be
11 calling for a motion to disapprove Land Use Number
12 956, so this would be a motion to disapprove Land
13 Use Number 956. I recommend a disapproval vote.
14 Aye... excuse me, aye means... just for members of
15 the committee, aye is a vote for a disapproval.

16 LEGAL COUNSEL: Chair Levin.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Aye.

18 LEGAL COUNSEL: Council Member Dickens.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Permission to
20 discuss my vote.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So granted.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you,
23 Chair. Because of the concerns of the Council
24 Member Gentile, in whose district this is, because
25 I rely very much on the council members'

2 discussions about development that occurs in their
3 respective districts because who knows better their
4 districts than they do, I take it very seriously in
5 discussing about it and talking about it because I
6 am not against development. I am for development
7 that's responsible, so as a result, I'm going to
8 rely upon and support Council Member Gentile's
9 request and vote aye.

10 LEGAL COUNSEL: Council Member Koo.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I agree with
12 Council Member Dickens; Inez Dickens that we can
13 delay this for a couple months, and so I vote aye
14 to disapprove that right now, yeah.

15 LEGAL COUNSEL: 'Kay, by a vote of
16 three in the affirmative, zero abstentions and zero
17 negatives, Land Use Item 956 is disapproved and
18 referred to the full Land Use Committee.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you
20 very much. Thank you very much, Council Member
21 Gentile. We have three other items on the agenda
22 here. Land Use Number 954 and 955, Harlem Dowling.
23 It's Application C130272HAM and C130271ZMM in
24 Manhattan Community District 10, and that's in the
25 council district represented by committee member

2 Council Member Inez Dickens. Council Member
3 Dickens, do you want to speak prior to the
4 testimony or... okay, here to testify on behalf of
5 HPD, we have Thebia Walters and Chris Gonzalez.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GONZALEZ: Good
7 afternoon, Chair Levin and members of the
8 committee. I am Chris Gonzalez, Associate
9 Commissioner of HPD's Office of Policy and External
10 Affairs and I am joined by Thebia Walters, Director
11 of Manhattan Planning and Karen Dixon, Executive
12 Director of Harlem Dowling. Land Use Item Number
13 954 consists of the proposed designation of vacant
14 city-owned land located at 2135-2139 Adam Clayton
15 Powell Jr Boulevard, also known as the Harlem
16 Dowling Project as an urban... excuse me, also
17 known as the Harlem Dowling Project, as an urban
18 development action area and project and for
19 disposition approval. Under the low-income rental
20 program, the sponsor proposes to construct a 10-
21 story mixed use building that will include, in
22 addition to approximately 16,125 square feet of
23 community facility space, 60 dwelling units for
24 low-income families making up to 60 percent of AMI,
25 so that's 100 percent affordability. This project

2 will also create a new permanent home for Harlem
3 Dowling to enable the organization to provide much
4 needed services to the Central Harlem community,
5 while also creating affordable housing
6 opportunities. The sponsor intends to set aside a
7 portion of the units for youth aging out of foster
8 care. Land Use Item 955 consists of the proposed
9 amendment of the zoning map, changing from an R72
10 district to an R88 district, property bounded by
11 West 127th Street, Adam Clayton Powell Jr Boulevard
12 and West 126th Street to facilitate the
13 construction of the project. Council Member
14 Dickens has been briefed and has indicated her
15 support.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great. Thank you
17 very much, Commissioner Gonzalez, and Council
18 Member Dickens.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you, Mr.
20 Chair, and thank you for coming down to give
21 testimony. I strongly support this development
22 because it is responsible. It is 100 percent
23 affordable with 60 percent AMI, and the very most
24 important point about this development is that the
25 units will be first offered to those that are aging

2 out of foster care and families that are assisting
3 those that are aging out. That's very important
4 because that is an element of our society that has
5 been devoid of any assistance or much assistance,
6 so I commend them. Harlem Dowling has been a
7 standard-bearer in our community for more than 50
8 years and I thank them for the support that they
9 have given our community; they have given our
10 youth; the assistance that they have given our
11 families for the adoption of children of color,
12 which frequently is a little more difficult than
13 other children, so I thank them. I'm glad that
14 they will now have a permanent home that is large
15 enough as a facility that will also allow for
16 parents that have to have meetings with their
17 children so that they can get acclimated once again
18 to become a family unit. They will now have
19 sufficient space in which to do it. The
20 affordability is important, and I thank HPD for the
21 work that they put in and the developers for being
22 willing to develop such a project that is much
23 needed in Harlem. So again, I'm asking my
24 committee to please vote aye on this. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, very
3 much, Council Member Dickens and we'll send over
4 the link to the video for today's hearing to
5 Council Member Barron so that he knows that the...
6 you know, that you...

7 [crosstalk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Please do so,
9 because he's not a winner any longer at this; maybe
10 in Brooklyn, but not citywide.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We'll just have to
12 make sure that we reinforce it. Okay, thank you
13 very much to the panel and congratulations, Council
14 Member Dickens, on this item and we're going to
15 have a hearing on one more item here, Land Use
16 Number 957, Daily Apartments 20145153HAX.
17 Testifying on this item Chris Gonzalez, Assistant
18 Commissioner at HPD and Gary Sloman of HPD.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GONZALEZ: Good
20 afternoon, Chair Levin...

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing]
22 Sorry, Chris, before you begin, we want to close
23 the public hearing. We have no public hearing on
24 Harlem Dowling Land Use Numbers 955 and 954.

2 There's no one signed up to testify from the public
3 on those two items. Go ahead.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GONZALEZ: Good
5 afternoon, Chair Levin and members of the
6 subcommittee. I am Chris Gonzalez, Associate
7 Commissioner of HPD, and with me is Gary Sloman,
8 Director of Operations from HPD's Division of
9 Housing Supervision. Land Use Item 957 known as
10 Daily Apartments is an Article 5 housing company
11 located at Block 3125, Lots 9, 12 and 14; Block
12 3128, Lots 9, 13 ,29 and 32; Block 3129, Lot 29;
13 Block 3133, Lot 13 and Block 3134, Lot 1. Under
14 the proposed project, the new owner will finance
15 the acquisition and rehabilitation of the exemption
16 area, which contains Section 8 project based
17 Article 5 corporations. Together the exemption
18 area contains seven buildings with a total of 273
19 residential Section 8 based dwelling units. The
20 project will continue as Section 8 based
21 development for persons of low income. HPD is
22 before the council seeking approval to terminate
23 the current Article 5 partial tax exemptions, the
24 voluntary dissolution of the current owners and the
25 new Article 11 tax exemption for a term of 32 years

2 in order to ensure the continued long-term
3 affordability of the project. Council Member
4 Rivera has indicated his support for the project.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
6 much, Commissioner Gonzalez. Thank you very much,
7 Mr. Sloman. Do you have anything to add to...

8 GARY SLOMAN: No, I do not.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do any of my
10 colleagues have any questions on this item? Okay,
11 seeing none, we are going to close the hearing on
12 Land Use Number 957 and we are going to couple on
13 votes... sorry, before that we're... Land Use
14 Number 958 we're going to layover. That's Albert
15 Goodman Plaza, 20145154HAX in Bronx Community
16 District 3. We're going to lay that item over to a
17 future hearing and with that, we are going to
18 couple Land Use Number 950... excuse me, 957 with
19 Land Use Numbers 954 and 955 for a vote and I'm
20 going to ask counsel of the committee, Ann McCoy
21 [phonetic] to call the role, and I recommend vote
22 to approve.

23 LEGAL COUNSEL: Chair Levin.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Aye on all.

25 LEGAL COUNSEL: Council Member Dickens.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Aye on all.

3 LEGAL COUNSEL: Council Member Koo.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Aye on all.

5 LEGAL COUNSEL: We have voted three in
6 the affirmative, zero abstentions and zero
7 negatives. Land Use Items 954, 955 and 957 are
8 approved and referred to the full Land Use
9 Committee.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you
11 very much to my colleagues and this meeting is
12 adjourned. [background voice] I'm sorry. This
13 meeting is adjourned.

14 [gavel]

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

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: 11/20/2013