

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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December 19, 2024
Start: 9:48 a.m.
Recess: 10:09 a.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Shekar Krishnan, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

David M. Carr
Robert F. Holden
Linda Lee
Julie Menin
Mercedes Narcisse
Vickie Paladino
Sandra Ung

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Gale A. Brewer

A P P E A R A N C E S

Raphael Lopez, self

James Robert, Jr., self

Gary Cooper, self

Judith Gorsuch, self

Lyndie Callan, self

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Check, check, this is a
3 microphone check for the Committee on Parks and
4 Recreations, located in the Committee Room, recorded
5 on December 19, 2024, by Pat Kurzyna. Check, check.
6 That was good.

7 This is another check, microphone check
8 for the Committee on Parks and Recreations, located
9 in the Committee Room, recorded on December 19, 2024,
10 by Pat Kurzyna.

11 Check, check, this is a microphone check
12 for the Committee on Parks and Recreations, located
13 in the Committee Room, recorded on December 19, 2024,
14 by Pat Kurzyna. Check, check.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
16 welcome to the New York City Council hearing of the
17 Committee on Parks and Recreation.

18 At this time, can everybody please
19 silence your cell phones.

20 If you wish to testify, please come up to
21 the Sergeant-at-Arms' Desk to fill out a testimony
22 slip.

23 At this time and going forward, no one is
24 to approach the dais. I repeat, no one is to approach
25 the dais.

2 Chair, we are ready to begin.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Good morning. Thank
4 you so much, Sergeant. [GAVEL] I am Shekar Krishnan,
5 Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation.
6 Today, the Committee will vote on a pre-considered
7 bill that would ceremonially co-name 109
8 thoroughfares and public places throughout the city.
9 Co-naming bills are the result of the Council's
10 periodic process where we seek to honor individuals
11 and organizations that have made lasting
12 contributions to our city. I always say it's far more
13 than just a street naming, but we are permanently
14 changing the landscape of New York City to recognize
15 individuals for their contributions to their
16 community and to our city, or to communities that
17 have made historic contributions to our city. Some of
18 these individuals include co-names for active
19 community members, heroic New Yorkers who sacrificed
20 their lives for others, people who committed their
21 lives to public service, or those who greatly
22 enriched the city's cultural landscape. It is only
23 fitting that their names and their legacies
24 permanently become a part of the history and the
25 geography of New York City.

2 Of the many honorees proposed by this
3 piece of legislation, I'd like to call attention to a
4 couple of co-namings that I am proud to have
5 sponsored. My first nomination is to co-name an area
6 in my District as Patty G Way after Patrick Patty
7 Gilmartin. Patty started a career in the bar business
8 in the early 1970s, attended Bishop DuBois, an All
9 Boys Catholic High School in Harlem, before deciding
10 to put college on hold to serve in the Vietnam War
11 where he was wounded and received a Purple Heart. He
12 established Patty G's and created a welcoming and
13 inclusive environment that became a community hub for
14 46 years. I was proud to go there and meet with him
15 too. His dedication extended beyond his business with
16 providing free home-cooked meals during the holidays
17 for those in need. After his death, he was honored
18 with the United States Army Honor Guard Funeral, and
19 his bar continues to operate under the care of his
20 children, ensuring the legacy of this neighborhood
21 institution.

22 My other nomination is for Cathedral Prep
23 Way, which will commemorate Cathedral Preparatory
24 School and Seminary, which has served as a Catholic
25

2 high school and seminary for over 70 years of service
3 to our district and city.

4 I'd like to welcome all who have come to
5 participate in today's hearing, and I urge all of my
6 Colleagues to vote in favor of this legislation
7 before us. I just want to announce the Council
8 Members we have so far. We are joined by Council
9 Member Holden, Council Member Narcisse, Council
10 Member Lee, and on Zoom virtually we have Council
11 Members Menin and Ung.

12 While we wait just a bit longer for
13 quorum to take the actual vote, we do have witnesses
14 who are here today to testify about the special
15 namings that we have with today's legislation so I'd
16 like to call up first Raphael Lopez to testify.

17 We're also joined by Council Member
18 Palladino. Welcome.

19 You may testify.

20 RAPHAEL LOPEZ: My name is Raphael Lopez.
21 I moved to 84th Street in Amsterdam in 1984 and
22 immediately was greeted into the neighborhood. We
23 have two parks. We have the Brandeis Yard and we have
24 the PS9 yard right there so I was in there playing
25 basketball. Ended up meeting Ms. Linda Carter-Cooper,

2 who was very involved in the community and with the
3 children and was kind of like a second mother while
4 our mothers were at home or busy doing other stuff.
5 She was out there watching us all day and really
6 creating that sense of community that's really
7 important because there's edifices and there's
8 businesses, but it's the people that make the
9 community, and she created that sense of community
10 where you could always come to her or she would come
11 to you to check to see if you were doing all right in
12 school, how is your family doing at home, is
13 everything going all right with rent, stuff like
14 that. A lot of our families were getting pushed out
15 at that time so she helped a lot of us switch into
16 Mitchell-Lama so a lot of us are apartment owners as
17 opposed to renters and that's only because of her.
18 She was very involved with getting ESL so that a lot
19 of the Spanish-speaking families could get jobs, even
20 in education, which they thought would be impossible,
21 but they became ESL teachers so she created a lot of
22 lasting legacies in the neighborhood. We are reeling
23 since she has left us. We have a huge hole. She is
24 still here in our hearts, but we would love to have
25 her up there on that street so we could still have

2 her there watching over us. Community was huge to
3 her. The other people will speak on how big religion
4 and the community inside the church was, how big her
5 family was with her. She had a large family. I'm just
6 here to speak about the neighborhood and how much she
7 was beloved. And people will say she needed us, but
8 only when she needed to and it was always lovingly,
9 and it was always because she knew what was best for
10 us, and as we wonder now what to do, we only need to
11 think about what she told us before, and that's how
12 we carry on. I don't want to take up too much of your
13 time.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much
15 for your testimony. I'm sorry for your loss, but I'm
16 glad that someone, an incredible New Yorker like her,
17 will now be part of our streets in New York City to
18 remember her legacy. Thank you for your testimony.

19 We now have James Robert, Jr.

20 We've also been joined by Council Members
21 Menin and Paladino and Carr.

22 JAMES ROBERT, JR.: Good morning. I met
23 Linda Carter Cooper about 30 years ago when I became
24 involved with St. Matthew's and St. Timothy's, and I
25 quickly became a youth leader, and I had three of her

2 four kids with me and I noticed something with these
3 children. They behaved, and they just didn't get in
4 trouble, although they could have. They didn't get in
5 trouble because of Linda, and so that worked for
6 dozens and dozens, hundreds of children, with Linda
7 helping them out, helping to keep them straight,
8 through her work at Brandeis School, through her work
9 in the church down the block at 26 West 84th Street
10 but, more importantly, from her work on the street.
11 She would hold court, we joke, on the corner of 84th
12 and Amsterdam by the garden that she helped to get
13 put open after they took the garden that she built,
14 almost with her own hands, next to her building on
15 84th Street, and everybody, everybody loved Linda
16 because they knew that they could come to her and
17 say, we got this problem, we got this, this landlord
18 has given us a hard time, or we can't get Con Ed to
19 work with us. Linda would find a way. Dozens and
20 dozens and dozens and dozens of families have
21 benefited from her presence on 84th Street, as I did
22 too. I implore you to allow the neighborhood to
23 remember her. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much
25 for your moving testimony.

2 I'd next like to call up Gary Cooper.

3 GARY COOPER: Good morning. I lost it. I
4 lost it.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: If you'd like, we
6 could call up another witness in the meantime while
7 you look for your testimony.

8 GARY COOPER: I'm there, I'm sorry.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Sure, don't worry,
10 take your time, but didn't want to rush you either.

11 GARY COOPER: Okay. I'm sorry about that.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Don't worry.

13 GARY COOPER: Linda Carter Cooper was born
14 in West Palm Beach, Florida. She and her husband
15 migrated to New York in the early '70s. At that time,
16 the Upper West Side was not a very safe place for
17 families to live. Seniors in the area was often shut
18 in and was fearful. Linda somehow gained their trust
19 and confidence. She would bring them outside into the
20 garden in the middle of the block on 84th Street
21 between Amsterdam and Columbus. There, they would
22 garden and sit around and enjoy the outdoor. Linda
23 Carter Cooper became a dedicated advocate for the
24 seniors and ensuring they received all the necessary
25 services, including legal and medical support. Every

2 holiday, she and her family would prepare food for
3 all the seniors that she knew in the community before
4 sitting down to her own family meal. They trusted her
5 and relied on her. She served as their spokesperson.
6 Linda Carter Cooper became an advocate for the youth
7 in the community, creating opportunities and outlets
8 for them through programs in tennis, basketball,
9 baseball, football, which she and her family
10 organized. She was deeply involved in supporting the
11 educational needs of the youth, visiting schools
12 wherever she was needed, advocating on behalf of the
13 children in the community. She even hung an extension
14 cord out of her apartment window to power basketball
15 tournaments held in PS9 Yard next to her home.

16 Together with her husband, she organized sports
17 teams, social gatherings for all the kids in the
18 area. Linda also advocated the legal... [TIMER CHIME]

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: That's okay, you
20 may finish.

21 GARY COOPER: Can I continue? She also
22 organized legal services for the youth, keeping
23 lawyers on speed dial due to the frequent unjust
24 profiling of the local kids. She educated the
25 parents, accompanied them to court, and sought legal

2 advice and political support to counteract this
3 unfair treatment. She would also take the children to
4 the museum, introduce them to different aspects of
5 the city, always emphasizing it's not where you
6 start, it's where you finish. In addition to her work
7 with the seniors and the youth, Linda Carter Cooper
8 was a political activist in the community. She
9 educated people about the power of their vote and
10 worked for the Board of Elections for 40 years as a
11 coordinator. She canvassed the neighborhood, knocking
12 on doors to encourage people to vote, starting in the
13 early '80s with City Council Member Ruud Messinger
14 continuing to support all the local politicians, such
15 as Jerry Nadler, Scott Stringer, Mark Landis, and of
16 course, my heart, Gale Brewer. Linda and her husband
17 created an Angels program, a mentoring program that
18 has been running for over 30 years. This organization
19 used basketball and other activities to keep kids off
20 the street and involved in positive community
21 engagement. Every year, college graduates come back
22 to thank her for the pivotal role she played in their
23 life. Linda was married to Gary Cooper and had four
24 children, Taniqua, Gary, Shafiq, and Sanaa Cooper, as
25 well as a grandson. She worked and lived on the Upper

2 West Side her entire life. Sitting on the corner of
3 the northeast corner of 84th Street after mass, there
4 she would listen to the residents' concern, always
5 keeping her finger on the pulse of the community.
6 Besides being a devoted wife and mother, Linda was a
7 community activist, deeply religious and spiritually,
8 and dedicated to bettering the lives of everyone
9 around her. Her family and friends continue her
10 legacy to this day. This is just a small glimpse of
11 Linda's life. Linda usually had a saying, if you
12 don't know, ask somebody. This morning, I'm asking
13 each and every one of you to pass this petition for
14 my wife. Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Well, thank you so
16 much, Mr. Cooper. Your wife sounds like an incredible
17 woman. I know we'd be honored to move this
18 legislation forward today in her honor and on behalf
19 of you all.

20 I'd like to also recognize that we've
21 been joined by the sponsor of this incredibly
22 meaningful street naming today, Council Member Gale
23 Brewer.

24 We have two more witnesses to call. The
25 next one is Judith Gorsuch.

2 JUDITH GORSUCH: My name is Judith
3 Gorsuch. Linda was a guiding light to countless young
4 people in our neighborhood. She devoted many hours to
5 the Angels basketball program at the Church of St.
6 Matthew and St. Timothy. This program was open to all
7 the children in the neighborhood. She provided a
8 listening ear to many of the program's participants.
9 Students felt comfortable approaching her with their
10 school issues and sometimes came to the Cooper home
11 for moral support and encouragement. Linda, along
12 with Tony, stressed the importance of education and
13 encouraged young people to do their best in school,
14 and they were fortunate enough to see many of these
15 young people grow up, graduate from college, and in
16 graduate school and come back and let them know about
17 it. Linda often went to bat for program participants
18 and neighborhood youngsters who were falsely accused
19 of wrongdoing. She was a caring figure for many young
20 people in the community, and they reached out to her
21 when they were frightened. She was tough, and they
22 knew that she would not be afraid to take a stand for
23 them. She was also a trusted friend to her neighbors
24 and served the community for years. She was on the
25 Board of Elections, active in many tenants'

2 associations, and as you've already heard, stood up
3 for many people who were in need of housing. She was
4 the eyes and ears of the neighborhood, keeping track
5 of the ups and downs of neighborhood lives. There
6 were always small gifts for new babies and birthdays.
7 There were meals, emergency cash at times, and above
8 all, a listening ear and encouraging word when a
9 neighbor was in need. When you walked down the street
10 with Linda, so many people, young and old, would call
11 out to check with her. She was a wonderful mentor and
12 protector for our neighborhood, young people, and she
13 was an official mother, aunt, and sister to the
14 entire neighborhood. It would be a fitting tribute to
15 name the corner of West 84th Street and Amsterdam
16 Avenue in honor of Linda Carter Cooper, recognizing
17 her years of work in the neighborhood and her
18 dedication to the surrounding community. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,
20 Ms. Gorsuch.

21 And our final witness is Lyndie Callan
22 for Monnie Callan Way.

23 LYNDIE CALLAN: Good morning.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Good morning.

2 LYNDIE CALLAN: When I undertook this
3 project, I was thinking small but, once I got going,
4 searching the farmer's market in the neighborhood for
5 people to sign a petition, folks who knew and
6 respected my mother came out of the woodwork. I got a
7 letter of support from George Gresham, president of
8 1199 SEIU Health and Hospital Workers, a union of
9 450,000 strong. How did I do it? I asked. Monnie had
10 worked to get George elected many years ago. They
11 knew one another, Natch. I did not seek a letter from
12 Jerry Nadler, but he knew Monnie, as did Gale Brewer,
13 Ruth Messinger, and the former executive director of
14 Goddard Riverside Community Center, Stephan Russo.
15 Monnie was part of the fabric of the old guard that
16 made the Upper West Side great. Often after a long
17 day's work, she would head out to a meeting on
18 tenants' rights or to strategize with others
19 dedicated to ending the war in Vietnam. This was all
20 in addition to her paid job as a social worker, which
21 she took seriously. She seemed to have boundless
22 energy, rallying, marching, striking alongside local
23 politicians and neighbors to make the Upper West
24 Side, the United States, the world a better place. At
25 an advanced age, she accompanied retirees from her

2 union to Washington to meet with First Lady Michelle
3 Obama to discuss health care and challenges facing
4 seniors. In her 90s, when Monnie had dementia, and I
5 told her I was writing postcards to encourage people
6 to vote, she said, I want to help. It took me many
7 years to understand how important she was and how
8 many people genuinely loved and respected her and the
9 work she did. Co-naming a street in her honor will
10 give credence to the expression, because of them, we
11 can. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,
13 Ms. Callan, and I couldn't think of a more fitting
14 way to remember your mother's legacy than today's
15 street naming legislation.

16 Before we call the vote, I wanted to see
17 if Council Member Brewer had any remarks.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, I knew both
19 people, both terrific, wonderful representatives, and
20 we look forward to seeing their sign up on the
21 lampshade posted. I'm really excited because in
22 addition to all of these votes, you know that the
23 City's municipal library now has a website which
24 lists every single person who's ever been up on this
25 co-naming, and I'm excited that people will remember.

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2 and we're trying to get Google to include it in
3 Google Maps and then people could look up and see the
4 name so these two, everyone I'm sure here is equally
5 important, but these two individuals, known to me,
6 will add to this great array of New York City's
7 history. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,
9 Council Member Brewer.

10 This is a perfect example of why our
11 street namings are, as I said, so much more than
12 naming the streets, but leaving a permanent imprint
13 on the landscape of New York City for these great
14 individuals.

15 With that, I call on the Clerk now to
16 call the vote.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Good
18 morning. William Martin, Committee Clerk. Roll call
19 vote, Committee on Parks and Recreation on Pre-
20 Considered Introduction in reference to naming of 109
21 thoroughfares and public places. Chair Krishnan.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Aye.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Ung.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: Aye.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
3 you. Holden.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Aye.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Lee.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Aye.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Menin.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Aye.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Narcisse.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Aye.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Carr.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Aye.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Paladino.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Aye.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: With a
16 vote of eight in the affirmative, zero in the
17 negative, and no abstentions, the item has been
18 adopted by the Committee.

19 Mr. Chair, that is a full Committee.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much.

21 Thank you all for your testimony. We look forward to
22 voting for the legislation on the full floor of the
23 Council today, and this morning's hearing and vote is
24 now closed. Thank you. [GAVEL]

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. 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 December 23, 2024