

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND
FRANCHISES

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July 14, 2025
Start: 3:37 p.m.
Recess: 3:50 p.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Lynn Schulman, Acting Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
Kamillah M. Hanks
Yusef Salaam
Lynn C. Schulman

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Kristy Marmorato
Amanda Farías

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone check on the Committee of Zoning and Franchises, recorded by James Marino on July 14, 2025, in the Committee Room.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon. Welcome to the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises.

At this time, we ask that you please silence all electronics, and at no point please do not approach the dais.

Chair, you may begin.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [GAVEL] Good afternoon, and welcome to a meeting of the Subcommittee of Zoning and Franchises. I am Council Member Lynn Shulman, and will be Acting Chair of the Subcommittee today. This afternoon, I am joined by Council Members Sean Abreu, Kamilla Hanks, Yusef Salaam, and Kevin Riley online.

Today, we are voting on one land-use proposal and two sidewalk cafes. The land use proposal is known as the Bally's Ferry Point Map Amendment in Council Member Marmorato's District. The two sidewalk cafe applications are for restaurants located in Majority Leader Fariás' and Council Member

Powers' Districts, and are known as Mykonian House in Ajo and Oregano.

The first vote concerns LUs 321, 322, and 323 regarding Bally's Ferry Point Map Amendment. In order to compete for a state gaming facility license, applicant is seeking multiple land-use actions.

By the way, I didn't mention that we've been joined by Council Member Marmorato and Council Member Amanda Farías.

The State is requiring that applicants obtain any needed local land-use approvals before the end of this final step. This is why the current proposal is before us today. To pursue its proposal, the Bally's applicant team is seeking three land-use approvals. The proposed development site for the casino is where Bally's currently operates a golf course and is located within Ferry Point Park. Because the proposed location is parkland, the site does not have a zoning district designation, and its development potential is very restricted. To build a casino, the applicant team must seek the mapping of a zoning district. The second land-use action is to amend the City map to reconfigure some of the nearby streets and to demap parkland where the proposed

buildings would be located. The third land-use action is an application by the New York City Department of City Administrative Services, and it seeks authority to convey a non-exclusive easement to Bally's, which would allow them to use an existing roadway for circulation purposes. There are two fundamental problems with the applicant's proposal to convert a relatively small golf clubhouse into a casino and entertainment complex that would attract tens of thousands of visitors from the city and the larger New York region. Ferry Point Park was a landfill for decades before it was a golf course. One of the reasons it was a landfill is that it is located in a part of the Bronx that is not easily accessible, and so it was not prime real estate land. Redeveloping the landfill into a golf course made a lot of sense because golf courses need a lot of space and do not attract very large crowds throughout the year. In fact, golf courses are inactive in the winter. The only access by car to the current golf course is a one-way service road locally known as Ring Road, and it is essentially one lane as people park along it. To make matters worse, the only access to the Ring Road is off the Hutchinson Parkway and narrow local

streets. Everyone knows that these local streets regularly back up throughout the week during school drop-off and pick-up and during peak times at the shopping center just to the west of the golf course. This limited access, although not ideal, works for the golf course because it does not generate a lot of car traffic and does not operate year-round. In strong contrast, applicants' proposal is to turn the site into a regional destination that will attract tens of thousands of visitors year-round, day and night, and all these visitors would come by car or bus, possibly ferry, because there is no easy public access to the site. Applicants answer to the site's lack of accessibility is to make Ring Road into a two-lane street and build a new overpass just south of the Lafayette Overpass. Applicants would also make small changes to a few intersections to improve their design. The issue is that these improvements do not change the fundamental problem that the proposed development is simply not easily accessible by car and was never planned to be a major regional destination center that operates 365 days a year. Everyone in the city knows that the Hutchinson Parkway and the Cross Bronx back up all the time,

every day. Applicant offers no improvements or solutions to these two highways, which will be the only way to access the casino for visitors outside the Bronx. It is well-known that there is terrible traffic on the local streets in this area of the Bronx. In fact, applicants' own traffic study confirms there is a real congestion problem in this area of the city. Today, we are being asked to approve a rezoning that could make this traffic even worse. For example, applicants' environmental study finds that during Saturday peak hours, up to 2,898 cars and buses will access the site through Ring Road. This means in a single hour, almost 3,000 cars and buses will be using Ring Road, and applicant would have us believe that simply improving Ring Road to a two-lane road will be enough to handle all this extra traffic. This makes no sense, neither from a practical standpoint nor from a land use perspective. The bottom line is that this project will create more congestion. The applicant has also failed to establish why or how it is appropriate to turn a green area along the waterfront that provides some peace and quiet to Bronx residents into a major entertainment complex that operates day and night.

The borough's regional and waterfront parks are among the Bronx' key assets. Why are we trying to convert Ferry Point Park, a wonderful green getaway along the water, into an entertainment complex that is only accessible by car? We need to preserve our green spaces in the city, including those located in the Bronx, and part of preserving them is to ensure that they are accessible and that they offer quiet, safe spaces for families to enjoy. Placing a casino and entertainment center in the middle of Ferry Point Park will make accessing the park much more difficult due to the projected traffic this proposal will generate, as shown in the applicant's environmental study. The proposal is also simply not compatible with maintaining green, quiet space along the waterfront that provides much-needed clean air to the Bronx. I do not think any serious person would suggest building a casino in Central Park or Prospect Park, so why would it be appropriate to build an entertainment complex in this park? Bronx residents have the same right as other New Yorkers to green spaces, to clean air, and to streets that are not congested. For these reasons, I recommend that this

Subcommittee disapprove these land use applications.
Council Member Marmorato, do you have remarks?

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you so much. Hello? Hello? Can you hear me? Is it on? Okay. All right. Thank you, Chair. I speak today as a representative of District 13 in the Bronx. To state clearly and firmly, I oppose this application. I've done the work, I've sat with my community, with the applicant, and with my Colleagues. I've taken the meetings, I reviewed the proposal, and I kept my door open to discussion. Some of those conversations came far too late. My community has made their voice crystal clear. They do not want a casino, and I was elected to represent them, not outside interests. So, Colleagues, I ask you to stand with me and stand with my District, because this is how we value each other's communities and their wishes, especially when a community's position is disunified. Please vote no, and I urge you to respect that. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: The second vote...

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Oh, to vote yes. I'm sorry. Vote to disapprove the application. I apologize.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: The second vote concerns LU-326 regarding an application for a sidewalk cafe by Mykonian House, a restaurant located on the Upper East Side. Council Member Powers supports this application.

The third vote concerns LU-327 regarding an application for a sidewalk cafe by Ajo and Oregano, I hope I didn't screw that up, a restaurant located along White Plains Road next to the Parkchester Residential Development in the Bronx. The site plan for the proposed sidewalk cafe raises concerns with the operation of neighboring businesses, so we are proposing to modify the application by removing the proposed entrance to the sidewalk cafe on the northern side of the restaurant, leaving the entrance at the southern end. Our modification will also permit up to eight tables and ten chairs.

UNIDENTIFIED: 16 chairs.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: 16 chairs? Oh, sorry. And 16 chairs, provided all applicable sidewalk cafe rules are followed. Majority Leader Farías supports this application as modified. You want to make a statement? Go ahead.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you, Chair.

And it was very close, Ajo y Oregano. Today we're voting to approve the modified sidewalk application for Ajo y Oregano located on White Plains Road in my District. As many of you will recall, I previously raised specific concerns regarding the initial application, particularly around the proper siting of the cafe and the safe, unobstructed flow of pedestrian traffic. These are not minor details, but essential considerations for the safety, accessibility, and overall quality of life in our neighborhoods. Since that time, my office has worked closely and consistently with Ajo y Oregano's ownership to review, revise, and improve this application. I want to commend the restaurant for their responsiveness and their commitment to being good neighbors. Through this process, all outstanding issues have been resolved. The updated site plan now reflects thoughtful modifications that fully address the concerns I laid out during our public hearing. This is a great example of what can happen when businesses, local government, and the community work together in good faith. In light of the collaborative solutions achieved, I'm proud to vote in favor of Ajo

y Oregano's modified application, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same. Thank you again to the Land Use Committee and Planning Staff for your partnership throughout this process. I look forward to seeing this restaurant continue to thrive while contributing positively to the vibrancy and walkability of White Plains Road and the Parkchester community. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you very much.

Counsel, are there any council members with questions or remarks at this time? Members appearing remotely who have questions or remarks about today's items should use the raise hand function now. Counsel will announce members in the order that hands are raised.

I now call for a vote to disapprove LUs 321, 322, and 323 relating to the Bally's Ferry Point Map Amendment, to approve LU 326 relating to the Sidewalk Cafe application by Mykonian House, and to approve with modifications LU 327 relating to the Sidewalk Cafe application by Ajo and Oregano.

Counsel, please call the roll.

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2 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Acting Chair

3 Schulman.

4 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yes.

5 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Riley.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I vote aye or no with

7 the exception of LUs 321, 322, and 323, is which I

8 vote no.

9 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Council

10 Member Hanks.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: I vote aye.

12 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member

13 Salaam. Council Member Salaam.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: I vote yes.

15 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member

16 Abreu.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: I vote aye.

18 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: All items are

19 adopted by a vote of five in the affirmative, zero in

20 the negative, and no abstentions with the exception

21 of Land Use items 321, 322, and 323, which are

22 approved by a vote of four in the affirmative, one in

23 the negative, zero abstentions, and all items are

24 referred to the full Land Use Committee.

25

ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: That
concludes today's business.

I would like to thank the members of the
public, my Colleagues, Subcommittee Counsel, Land Use
and other Council staff, and the Sergeant-at-Arms for
participating in today's meeting.

This meeting is hereby adjourned. [GAVEL]

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 July 31, 2025