

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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July 20, 2015
Start: 11:33 p.m.
Recess: 11:41 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room
16th Floor

B E F O R E:
PETER A. KOO
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Annabel Palma
Maria Del Carmen Arroyo
Rosie Mendez
Stephen T. Levin
Inez D. Barron
Ben Kallos

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

Mike Owen
Land Marks Preservation Commission

Mark Silberman
General Counsel
Landmarks Preservation Commission

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PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES

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2 [sound check, background comments, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Are we ready?

4 [gavel]

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Good morning, everyone.

6 This is the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting
7 and Maritime Uses. I'm the chair of the committee.

8 I'm Peter Koo from Queens, and on our committee today

9 we have Council Member Kallos, Council Member Mendez

10 and Council Member Barron. And today we have

11 Application No. LU 256, Application No. 201455730

12 HKQ, the Bank of the Manhattan Company Building in

13 Long Island City in Council Member Van Bramer's

14 district, which Council District is 26. And today,

15 we have Mike Owen and Mark Silberman from LPC to

16 testify for this item. Would you like to begin.

17 MIKE OWEN: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: You look like the first
19 person. [sic]

20 MIKE OWEN: Good morning Chair Koo and
21 committee members. So, I'm Mike Owen and this is
22 Mark Silberman and we are representing the Landmarks
23 Preservation Commission to testify on the
24 Commission's designation of the Bank of Manhattan
25 Company Building at 29-27 Queens Plaza North in

1
2 Queens. For clarity on the lot that was designated,
3 LPC designated as a landmark site Block 4030, Lot 21
4 in part to reflect the footprint of the original
5 tower and extension. After the building was
6 constructed in 1927, the tax lot was modified to
7 include later crucians [sp?]and a parking lot. The
8 designated site does not include these later portions
9 of the lot. So as it was going to designation the
10 lot was combined with the adjacent lots, and then
11 subdivided and re-numbered and a new lot number 9 was
12 created to coincide with a designated site.

13 On April 21, 2015, the Land Marks
14 Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the
15 proposed designation of the Bank of Manhattan Company
16 building. The hearing was advertised in accordance
17 with the provisions of law. At that hearing, there
18 were six speakers in favor of the designation,
19 including representatives of the owner, the Historic
20 Districts Council and the Society for the
21 Architecture of the City. There were no speakers
22 opposed to the designation, and the Commission also
23 received approximately 100 letters supporting the
24 designation including letters from Queens Borough
25 President Melinda Katz, Council Member Van Bramer and

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2 Queens Community Board One. In addition, as well,
3 there was a petition signed by nearly 1,600 people.

4 The Bank of Manhattan Company building
5 has been a recognizable structure in Long Island City
6 for nearly a century. The opening of the Queens
7 Borough Bridge in 1909 helped a section of the city
8 to develop into an important commercial center. The
9 bank building was dedicated in May 1927, indicating
10 instant landmark. Thereby, thousands of people from
11 passengers cars and elevator transit routes.

12 Designed by Architect Morrell Smith, the building
13 served as a reminder of the bank's far reaching
14 commitment to the citizens of the borough. It
15 received the award for the best business building in
16 Queens in 1927 from the Queens Chamber of Commerce.
17 This building is notable for many reasons. The 11-
18 story building's most prominent feature is the
19 slender clock tower with four large glass faces with
20 Roman numerals and crenulated crown. The building
21 also features a double height limestone base, curved
22 [sic] continuous balustrades, and tan and brown brick
23 facades with terracotta details.

24 Even with alterations to the base in the
25 1960s, the elevations retain the Neo-Gothic style

2 including the small rooftop reliefs with the God
3 Oceanus, symbol of the bank and the bank's initials.
4 Accordingly, the Landmarks Preservation Commission
5 urges you to affirm this designation. Thank you very
6 much.

7 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. So what is
8 the current use of the building now?

9 MIKE OWEN: Um, it's--it's mostly a
10 commercial building and it's--yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: And they have a bank
12 there now?

13 MIKE OWEN: Currently--currently, no I
14 don't believe so. I believe that's sort of--it's
15 commercial in those spaces.

16 MARK SILBERMAN: I think it's vacant
17 right now.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So it's vacant?

19 MARK SILBERMAN: Yeah.

20 MIKE OWEN: At the base yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So there's nobody using
22 the building?

23 MARK SILBERMAN: So the building is--it's
24 Mark Silberman, General Counsel. The building was
25 purchased by a developer as part of a much larger

2 site, and will at some be incorporated in some form
3 into that new development.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Fine, sir. Thank.
5 Council Member Barron, do you have a questions.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Council Member Barron.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you so a
9 new developer has purchased this building. Presently
10 it's commercial. What are the plans for the new
11 developer who's coming with that space? And the
12 reason I asked is because there's a similar building
13 to this one located in Downtown Brooklyn, the bank on
14 Lafayette and Flatbush Avenue, and that was converted
15 to tenants for residential. So I was wondering what
16 are the plans for this one going forward? Do you
17 know?

18 MARK SILBERMAN: The--the developer is
19 putting from what I understand primarily a
20 residential building behind it. There will be
21 commercial buildings, portions of it on the sides,
22 and I'm not sure they themselves know how they're
23 going to use the historic building yet.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, thank you.
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2 MARK SILBERMAN: And Council Members,
3 just so it's clear, the Designation Report that--that
4 we sent you has as the landmark site as--as Mike
5 said, um, Tax Map Lot 21 in part, and we will be
6 doling a Scribner's correction due to lot
7 subdivision, and we renaming of it to Lot 9.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [off mic] Any more
9 questions? [on mic] Any more questions from the
10 public? Yeah, so we are going to close the public
11 hearing on this item.

12 MIKE OWEN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. So, we're
14 going to call the roll for today, and--and the Chair
15 recommends a yes vote, and Council Member Van Bramer
16 also recommends a yes vote. I vote yes.

17 CLERK: Council Member Mendez.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: I vote aye.

19 CLERK: Council Member Barron.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I vote aye.

21 CLERK: Council Member Kallos.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I vote aye.

23 CLERK: Land Use No. 256 is approved with
24 4 votes in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and 0

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abstentions, and is referred to the full Land Use
Committee.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON KOO: So the meeting is
adjourned.

[gavel]

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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 July 21, 2015