

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 28, 2010
Start: 10:21am
Recess: 10:33am

HELD AT: 250 Broadway
Hearing Room, 16th Floor

B E F O R E:
Mark S. Weprin
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.
Daniel R. Garodnick
Robert Jackson
Jessica S. Lappin
Diana Reyna
Larry B. Seabrook
James Vacca

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

Good morning everyone. My name is Mark Weprin. I am the Chair of the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises of the Land Use committee. Welcome everybody today. We are here today to consider the following items: Land Use numbers 140-145, known in the vernacular as Flushing Commons and Macedonia Plaza. This project is the subject of a very long hearing we had recently, a six hour hearing where we heard from a lot of the people in the area, a lot of people involved in the project, a lot of people who were affected by the project and we learned a lot.

The information, we talked about what the project would bring from people we heard from. The project will bring about the following long term benefits for the Flushing community. It will bring approximately 2,600 construction jobs, 1,900 permanent jobs, 1.5 acres of public outdoor space to support community sponsored cultural events and performances as well be used by the community. A 62,000 square foot state of the art YMCA, which will include a full size gym, basketball court, adjoining track, two pools,

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2 daycare and a significant youth center. 36,000
3 additional square feet of community space. The
4 creation and implementation of a compromised
5 strategy to identify local businesses and
6 residents to work on the project during and after
7 construction. The use of low impact development
8 techniques and green buildings technology by the
9 Flushing Commons Developer to achieve LEED
10 certification. A 1,600 square foot parking
11 garage, sized to meet parking demand and priced at
12 below market rate. Dynamic retail options that
13 will compliment existing retail supply including
14 outdoor cafés and seating areas. Parking capacity
15 at Muni lot 2, increased spaces to 275 spaces and
16 1,144 additional interim parking spaces within
17 four blocks at the construction site.

18 There was a lot of concerns raised
19 obviously at the hearing. In particular out of
20 the small businesses in the area. And this was of
21 great concern to Council member Koo and to many
22 members of the committee of what to do to help
23 protect these merchants. So in discussions with
24 the administration and at the request of the
25 council and in particular, Council member Koo.

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2 The administration has agreed to a
3 six million dollar of benefits package to support
4 businesses of Flushing during the construction
5 period. The package includes 2.25 million for
6 marketing and advertising support for small
7 businesses impacted by the project construction
8 and the development of a parking validation plan
9 for the small businesses to help validate people
10 who park in the complex. A 3 million dollar
11 additional parking relief spanning five years post
12 construction capping the price of the parking in
13 the site. \$200,000 for Flushing in services
14 including legal assistance, guidance for loan
15 applications, employee hiring, training services,
16 business courses, guidance in assessing government
17 services, and assistance in understanding
18 government regulations and access to government
19 contracts. Half a million dollars for loan
20 guarantees in the city for Flushing businesses
21 through the New York City EDC's capital assessment
22 program which could leverage up to 1.5 million
23 dollars and \$50,000 for additional wayfaring
24 signage on the streets around the construction
25 sites and interim lots directing customers and

1 shoppers to the Union Street area.

2
3 In addition, we are working towards
4 with the developer to create more parking spots in
5 the Queens crossing site, 75, that has to go
6 through an application process in order to allow
7 the non-accessory parking. Create more as there
8 as well as walking with some local businesses and
9 merchants in the area and try to find other ways
10 of parking, other areas of parking and to try to
11 help increase the amount of parking for these
12 local businesses.

13 This is the package that was put
14 together and agreed to and it really is in my
15 opinion, a visionary project, a dynamic project
16 and one that will really bring a new spirit to
17 Flushing. And a lot of the concerns that the
18 businesses had and this meant a lot to us, members
19 of the committee were very adamant about trying to
20 protect those small businesses during construction
21 who were going to be hurt by the lack of parking,
22 by all the intense construction. There really was
23 an effort to try to help those businesses
24 especially those on Union Street. Their plight
25 was heard and we tried to do everything we can to

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2 try to make that work. And it is the opinion of
3 the Chair that this makes a lot of sense, that
4 this is going to be a good project long term for
5 the area and with the benefits to help develop
6 even greater businesses, help the local businesses
7 in the area but not only during construction but
8 even going forward.

9 So, I would like to couple all of
10 these items and make a recommendation for an aye
11 vote from the committee. And I will now to turn
12 to counsel now to call the roll on this item or
13 these items.

14 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Christian
15 Hylton, counsel committee. Chair Weprin.

16 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Aye.

17 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council member
18 Reyna.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: I just want
20 to thank and appreciate all the work on behalf of
21 the Chairman Weprin and council member Koo who did
22 a fantastic job with issues concerning small
23 businesses and I as the Chair of the small
24 business committee, I'm very proud of what has
25 been leveraged here and I vote yes.

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2 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council member
3 Comrie.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: I want to
5 congratulate council member Peter Koo for all of
6 his efforts to finalize this project, his chief of
7 staff, where is he? James is in the back, he's
8 taken his tie off, he is ready to do everything
9 necessary to complete this project. And just as
10 an FYI, this is a 6+ year project. The municipal
11 lot is a project that the city had identified and
12 worked with the community board in different
13 turrets in community meetings. There have been, I
14 would dare say a hundred meetings at the minimum
15 ever before it got to this last stage putting this
16 project together. The community in the Flushing
17 area identified as a primary need the expansion of
18 the Y and the creation of community space. If
19 anybody's been in downtown Flushing, there's a
20 real need for community space. This partnership
21 with the Rockefeller Center will give this project
22 an opportunity to have an atrium space, a concert
23 space, and yes, council member Arroyo is here, and
24 also a public space for not just concerts for
25 amenities for everything from people just relaxing

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2 outside in downtown Flushing to having a full on
3 opportunity for the Queens Symphony orchestra and
4 the Queens Parks Department and other public uses
5 for an atrium space, not atrium space, a concert
6 area type space in the public area in downtown
7 Flushing that is really hurting for public space.

8 There is a real opportunity here to
9 double the size of the Y with two Olympic size
10 pools which is something the community has
11 desperately asked for as well. There's a serious
12 package as Council member Weprin has said, that
13 was put together. Council member Koo has put in a
14 lot of efforts to listen to the community and
15 wanted to make sure that businesses would be
16 protected and enhanced. There's a traffic
17 engagement plan that's already been promised and we
18 are already working to make sure that there are
19 more spaces during construction and post
20 construction available on Union Street and I
21 believe 39th Street is the street adjacent to Union
22 Street.

23 There's an opportunity to leverage
24 federal dollars and to make sure that the
25 businesses assistance plan is a permanent plan.

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2 It's not just a temporary plan. This plan can
3 last way past the life of the construction of the
4 project. It can say, plan will last throughout
5 the duration of businesses in downtown Flushing
6 because it's an evolving loan fund.

7 There's an opportunity also to
8 continue to work, one of the things that I
9 identified with was the fact that we had too many
10 parkers in that area that are city parking through
11 police department and other municipal agencies
12 that need to relocate so their businesses can
13 thrive.

14 I represent downtown Jamaica where
15 we have too many municipal parkers that sit all
16 day in public spaces inhibiting small business
17 opportunities because small businesses thrive on
18 the people who can stop and jump in and out of
19 their car for five minutes. The parking study
20 will go a long way and we'll be working and
21 monitoring that closely and make sure that the
22 city does more to eliminate city workers who are
23 parking all day. We understand people have to get
24 out of their car and when they're working, they're
25 using their car to move around but there are

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2 plenty of municipal workers who come and park in a
3 public meter all day taking away available spots
4 from businesses. There's a commitment from the
5 city to do that, so I'm proud of this project.

6 To the folks that, there's over a
7 100 million dollars in public amenities that the
8 developers put into this project at the request of
9 the city that the developer will be making to keep
10 work in perpetuity. He's not putting in this
11 money and then walking away from the project.

12 It's a significant project. The public benefits
13 from this project will be permanent. The
14 opportunities for the project to work in a
15 progress way and a permanent way is critical. And
16 I'm proud to all of the people that worked on this
17 project and I'm proud of the Land Use staff, Gail
18 Benjamin, Carol Stein, et al. The subcommittee
19 Chair Mark Weprin who put in yeoman hours on the
20 project as well and everybody else that came to
21 testify and gave us opinions and ideas on the
22 project and I would really be encourage, call
23 encouraged to all members to vote on the project.

24 And I would have to say it again.

25 Aye, I vote aye.

2 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council member
3 Garodnick.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GARDONICK: Thank
5 you and congratulations to council member Koo. I
6 vote aye.

7 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council member
8 Lappin.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN:
10 Congratulations, council member Koo. Aye.

11 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council member
12 Vacca.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA:
14 Congratulations to council member Koo. I vote
15 aye.

16 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: By a vote of
17 vote of 6 in the affirmative and none in the
18 negative with no abstentions, LU 136, excuse me,
19 LU 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, an
20 145 are approved and referred to the full Land Use
21 committee.

22 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you. The
23 rolls will be left open until the formal Land Use
24 meeting actually gets underway. I guess any other
25 comments or business to bring up here? Hearing

none, the meeting is now adjourned.

CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council member Seabrook.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: I vote aye.

CHRISTIAN HYLTON: By a vote of 7 in the affirmative and none in the negative with no abstentions, LU 136-145 are approved and referred to the Land Use committee.

Council member Jackson.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I vote aye on all.

CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Vote stands at 8 in the affirmative and none in the negative on LUs 136-145.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Sung Bin Park-Boudreau, certify 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.

Signature _____

Date _____ August 16, 2010