

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

—————X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEES ON WOMEN'S ISSUES AND VETERANS

—————X

January 21, 2011

Start: 10:00am

Recess: 12:30pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:

MATHIEU EUGENE
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Council Member Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.
Council Member Lewis A. Fidler
Council Member Daniel Dromm
Council Member Vincent J. Gentile
Council Member James Sanders, Jr.
Council Member Fernando Cabrera
Council Member David S. Greenfield
Council Member Margaret S. Chin
Council Member Ruben Wills

A P P E A R A N C E S

Pat Toro
President
Vietnam Veterans of America, Queens Chapter 32

John Chichester
Vets Helping Vets

Steven Epps
Community Service Officer
Proctor-Hopson Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 1896

Andrea Scarborough
Member
United Coalition for Veterans and Community Rights

Rene Hill
President
Addisleigh Park Civic Organization

Jane Green
Member
Reach Out America

Mark McMillan
Deputy Counsel
Office of the Queens Borough President

Paul Nichols
Office of Senator Malcolm Smith

Nelson Davis
Concerned Citizen

Doris Salsbury
Concerned Citizen

Loretta Humphrey
The Triangular Block Association

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

Pierre Grace

Member

United Coalition for Veterans and Community Rights

[background noise]

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Good morning.

I think we are going to start. Please put your phone on vibration or turn them off. We would appreciate it.

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Good morning and welcome to a joint oversight hearing with the Committee on Veterans and the Committee on Women's Issues. My name is Mathieu Eugene and I serve as the chair of Veteran's Committee. Let me also take a moment to thank all of the veterans here today for your service to our country. I believe it is important that we recognize the contribution you have made to defend our freedom and quality of life. I deeply respect and admire the sacrifices you and all service members have made and continue to make.

As the chair of the Veteran's Committee, I promise to do all I can to assist the veteran's community and enhance the services you deserve. Today we will be conducting a hearing on the St. Albans Community Living Center, a medical facility in Queens, which is managed by the

1
2 Federal Veterans Administration, better known as
3 the V.A. The Veteran's Committee hope to examine
4 the current status of St. Albans facility, discuss
5 the proposed development at the site and its
6 impact on the community, and evaluate the extent
7 to which services for women will be provided. In
8 addition, we will consider Resolution 422 and to
9 Council Member James Sanders, Jr., which calls
10 upon the V.A. to renovate and utilize the existing
11 facility at St. Albans as a full service hospital
12 with an emergency care center, as well as a
13 primary and extended care facility for female
14 veterans and separate facility for homeless
15 veterans.

16 To provide some background on the
17 facility, the St. Albans Community Living Center
18 was first opened as the St. Albans Hospital and
19 turned over to the V.A. in 1974. According to the
20 U.S. Census from 2000, approximately 200,000
21 veterans live in Queens, in Nassau County.

22 [pause] The counties in which the V.A. center
23 cover since it's open, the V.A. center located at
24 St. Albans has been and continues to be a valuable
25 resource for veterans, where an individual can be

1 treated for a variety of medical issues and also
2 receive assistance with applying for benefits
3 offered by the veterans.
4

5 A large population of the city's
6 veteran population is indigenous. In 2009, New
7 York State estimated that there were some 3,300
8 homeless veterans in New York City. There was
9 certain a clear need to provide treatment and
10 shelter. Approximately 20,250 veterans in the
11 city are female and the number is growing. Over
12 20 percent of the veterans between the age of 17
13 and 45 are female. There is a growing need to
14 provide comprehensive medical care for these
15 women. In the past few years, the V.A. has worked
16 on plans to renovate the site and lease the site
17 to a private developer.

18 Joining today's hearing, we will
19 hear testimony from veterans groups and fellow
20 elected officials. We will also discuss the
21 impact any change this facility will have on both
22 veterans living in Queens and Nassau County, the
23 growing population of women veterans in the
24 surrounding community of St. Albans. Finally, we
25 will examine the proposal to build a full-service

1 hospital for veterans and decide as stated in the
2 Resolution 422. Thank you again for your
3 participation in today's event, and if you wish to
4 testify, please speak to the Sergeant-at-Arms at
5 the front room. Now I would like to recognize the
6 members of the two committees who are here. We
7 have with us Council Member Lew Fidler, Council
8 Member Margaret Chin, Council Member Leroy Comrie
9 and also from the Veteran's Committee, Barbara
10 Butter [phonetic], and... [pause]

11
12 THAI MIA: My name is Thai Mia
13 [phonetic].

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: For the
15 Women's Committee, Women's Issues Committee?

16 THAI MIA: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Now I know
18 that my colleagues have very, very busy entire
19 schedule. We would like to call to Council Member
20 Leroy Comrie for comment.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Good
22 morning. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm glad that
23 the—I want to thank you and the Women's Issues
24 Committee and the Speaker's Office for allowing
25 this resolution to come before the Council today.

1
2 The St. Albans Veterans Administration Center is
3 located within my district. I've been working
4 with the Addisleigh Park Civic Association, the
5 United Coalition for Veterans and Community
6 Rights, the Queens Vietnam Veterans and everyone
7 to try to push back against the present proposal
8 that the Veterans Administration has for the St.
9 Albans Hospital.

10 Right now, we need to—the - -
11 primary reason for doing this resolution is that
12 the Veterans Administration is still moving
13 forward with a proposal process and timeline,
14 looking to create a retrofitted hospital center,
15 looking to destroy a historic property and
16 historic building and a historic opportunity. The
17 physical facility there at St. Albans V.A. has
18 already been considered a state landmark. The
19 opportunities to ensure that the population for
20 veterans in the Nassau, Suffolk, Queens and
21 Brooklyn area is unprecedented. The need to
22 recognize that the statistics that were used back
23 in 2006, are antiquated and need to be thrown out
24 and redone, yet and still the Veterans
25 Administration is moving forward with the plan.

1
2 They would not put a full service hospital and
3 rehab facility at that—at the St. Albans V.A.,
4 where we have over 30 acres of land with the
5 opportunity for parking, with the opportunity for
6 rehabilitative services, with the opportunity for
7 full in care and out care patient services, with
8 the opportunity and need to place a full-service
9 hospital because we've lost two hospitals in
10 Queens.

11 We've lost Mary the Immaculate
12 Hospital, which was right in the community, and
13 there is a high need to ensure that there is a
14 full-service hospital that has an ability to not
15 just take care of veterans, but to actually take
16 care of the community, but they have not tried to
17 be creative; they have not tried to be
18 collaborative. They have been stuck in this 2006
19 proposal, unfortunately for the community and for
20 their own benefit. We have other examples of
21 locations around the country that have come up
22 with alternative plans to the Veterans
23 Association, and they have accepted. We are
24 chagrined, upset and angry that the Federal
25 Veteran's Association has not looked to redo this

1 proposal.

2
3 Right now we have a developer that
4 selected a name which really aggravates me because
5 none of the people that are in the development
6 team live in St. Albans, and yet they chose a
7 name, St. Albans Village LLC, for their
8 development team, which is an embarrassment. They
9 did not follow the proper process. They did not
10 file a public plan. They did not have a
11 legitimate public meeting. They snuck into a
12 meeting or were invited into a meeting
13 unknowingstly [phonetic] to the public, that the
14 public attended that was held to discuss the
15 project, and it discussed the need to change the
16 project, yet they came and did a negative
17 presentation without details, yet and still they
18 have filed a development plan with the Veterans
19 Administration, without getting any proper
20 community support or even doing a full community
21 meeting to talk about any details of their plan.

22 So I'm here today to encourage my
23 colleagues to pass this resolution. I'd like my
24 name—I don't know why it's not on the resolution.
25 It should be on the resolution. I don't know what

2 happened. I have asked to be put on the
3 resolution before. And I will do everything I can
4 to continue to work with my civic community,
5 Addisleigh Park Civic, that is right adjacent to
6 the Veteran's Association with the Queens'
7 veterans and every other group that is looking to
8 ensure that the present CASS [phonetic] process is
9 overturned and that we really find--realize the
10 full potential of that site, to take care of our
11 veterans, that are in sore need of making sure
12 that they have a full-service hospital medical
13 rehab facility to take care of the needs of
14 veterans. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
16 much, Council Member Comrie. Let me say that we
17 have been joined by Council Member Fernando
18 Cabrera from the Bronx, member of the Veteran's
19 Committee and also Council Member Ruben Wills from
20 Queens, member of the Committee on Women's Issues.
21 Now I would like to call Council Member Lew Fidler
22 for some comments.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chairperson. I'll be brief. I, having heard
25 Council Member Comrie, I'd like my name added to

1 this resolution as well. And I just want to make
2 this comment—the opportunity—I know this is just a
3 resolution; this Committee held a hearing I think
4 in the last six or seven weeks on one of my
5 resolutions regarding organizational friends for
6 relating to the burial of indigent veterans and
7 people sat at that table and told us that nothing—
8 there was no need and there was no problem—that
9 indigent veterans being buried appropriately in
10 the National Cemetery and we haven't resolved the
11 issues of the resolution, but we did find out was
12 that there were 22 indigent veterans waiting for
13 burial. I am very pleased to say that I think as
14 a result of this Committee holding that hearing,
15 the pressure was put on and those 22 veterans were
16 buried in Calverton in the last two weeks. So,
17 you know, what we say here matters and I hope that
18 when we—this hearing on this resolution will
19 matter and the Veterans Administration will hear
20 what this community and what the Council believes.
21 Thank you.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
24 much, Council Member Fidler. Now we are going to
25 call the speakers.

2 [background conversation]

3 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I would like
4 to ask Mr. John Chichester, will you please come?
5 Thank you very much. [pause] And Pat Toro, Pat?
6 And also, Steven Epps, will you please? Thank you
7 very much.

8 JOHN CHICHESTER: [off mic] Tough
9 last name.

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Tough. I will
11 have to practice it.

12 [laughter]

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

14 [pause]

15 [background conversation]

16 PAT TORO: Okay. To Councilman
17 Mathieu Eugene Chair of the New York City Council
18 Veteran's Committee, members of the New York City
19 Council Veteran's Committee, the Council on
20 Women's Issues-Veteran's Women's Issues and Guest-
21 -

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [Interposing]
23 I'm sorry. Okay. Go ahead.

24 PAT TORO: -as President of the
25 Vietnam Veterans of America, Queens Chapter 32 and

1 on behalf of the executive board, board of
2 directors, and the membership, I would like to
3 express our outrage on the decision of the
4 Department of Veterans Affairs to assign a
5 development of the St. Albans V.A. Healthcare
6 Facility to develop a St. Albans Village LLC.
7 This decision by the V.A. showed their total
8 disregard for the wishes of the Queens Veterans'
9 Community, along with the community in general.

11 For several years, the V.A.
12 conducted capital asset realignment for enhanced
13 services - - studied under the guise that it
14 wanted what was best for veterans and also to
15 provide a state of the art medical facility at the
16 St. Albans campus. Numerous hearings were held to
17 allegedly listen to the wishes of the veterans and
18 to take said wishes into account, when designing a
19 new facility. In an effort to work with the V.A.,
20 Queens and Nassau veterans submitted proposals at
21 these hearings for the following: full operating
22 hospital emergency room, veteran's hospice
23 facility, women's veterans domiciliary, veterans
24 assisted living. As a result of these hearings,
25 the V.A. has chosen not only to turn their backs

1 on the wishes of the veterans, but to also
2 implement and enhance use lease program which
3 would give them the authority to turn over 25
4 acres of the 55 acres that make up the St. Albans
5 Healthcare Facility. As stated by a V.A.
6 representative at the last hearing, we are holding
7 these hearings only because by law we are required
8 to.

10 In an article which appeared in the
11 June 24th edition of the *Times Ledger* it was stated
12 that the top administrator of the St. Albans
13 Village LLC has been surrounded in controversy in
14 the past few years over housing projects and has
15 been accused of neglect by several tenants in
16 several Jamaica apartment buildings. The article
17 further stated that this administrator was also a
18 board member of the New Direction Brooklyn
19 Development Corp, which is currently under
20 investigation by the Federal Government and it has
21 completely astonished me that not one Queens
22 elected official as a result of the V.A.'s
23 decision has spoken up and come to the defense of
24 the same Queens veterans that have elected them to
25 office.

I am also in receipt of a copy of a letter sent to Congressman Gregory Meeks by the Secretary of Veteran's Affairs, Eric Shinseki. This letter is in response to Congressman Meeks letter to the Secretary, stating that the position of both the veterans' community and the St. Albans' community as it pertains to the St. Albans V.A. Healthcare Facility. As I stated earlier, there has been an ongoing battle by both the veterans' community and the St. Albans' community to put an end to the enhanced use lease proposal, which the Department of Veterans Affairs has steadfastly insisted on implementing on the site of the current St. Albans V.A. Healthcare Facility. The said letter to Secretary states that due to the diminishing veterans' population. The V.A. is not considered a full-service medical center for the St. Albans campus. As the veteran's community and St. Albans' community has continually stated, the population data used to reach this conclusion is based on the results of a 2000 census. This census was taken prior to the United States being involved in two wars simultaneously, Iraq and Afghanistan, and is

1
2 thereby flawed. Also the Secretary does not take
3 into account the veterans of Nassau County who
4 also use the existing facility. Secretary
5 Shinseki also states that veterans can travel to
6 the V.A. in New York Harbor Healthcare Systems
7 Manhattan and Brooklyn campuses by using what the
8 V.A. calls VHA Access Standard. As we in the
9 veterans' community know, this system is
10 unacceptable as it does not take into account
11 weather and the ability of the veteran and/or
12 their dependents to get to a V.A. facility. Also,
13 the Secretary does not provide a response to the
14 concerns of the St. Albans community as they
15 pertain, but are not limited to increased
16 population, increased traffic and the overall
17 quality of life in the community.

18 As president of Vietnam Veterans of
19 America, Queens Chapter 32, and on behalf of the
20 executive board, board of directors and the
21 membership, I respectfully request that the New
22 York City Council, headed by the Veteran's
23 Committee, step forward and adopt a resolution
24 calling for the Veterans Administration to put an
25 end to the enhanced use lease program, as it

1 pertains to the St. Albans V.A. Healthcare
2 Facility. This issue has gone on long enough and
3 it is time for our elected officials to provide
4 the support they've continuously promised. As
5 always, the veterans' community and the St. Albans
6 community is available to discuss these issues
7 with you at either of your district offices or
8 Albany offices. Respectfully, - - President
9 Vietnam Veterans of America Queens Chapter 32. I
10 just would like--just to take a real quick minute
11 to add to something that Councilman Fidler said,
12 and I have been in contact with his office on the
13 indigent burials or whatever. I have requested an
14 oversight hearing on the way that whole situation
15 was done because of the fact that the only elected
16 official from this city who was present at the
17 burials was Councilman Ruben Wills, who is present
18 here today, and I commend him for doing that.
19 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
22 much, Mr. Pat. Thank you. Next speaker please.

23 JOHN CHICHESTER: Good morning. My
24 name is John Chichester, and I'm here to address
25 the Committee on Veterans, regarding Resolution

1 422. I am speaking on behalf of Vets Helping
2 Vets, an organization from southeast Queens that
3 was formed to provide services to needy combat
4 veterans as well as veterans returning home from
5 Iraq and Afghanistan. This services we provide
6 range anywhere from providing food to the hungry,
7 clothing to those in need as well as providing
8 direction and support to all veterans entitled to
9 any and all benefits from the Veterans
10 Administration, the city and/or state government.
11 In addition, we concentrate on eliminating all
12 bureaucratic road blocks that they may encounter
13 after returning home.

14
15 Mr. Chairman and members of the
16 Committee on Veterans, I'd like to thank you for
17 putting this important subject on the Council
18 agenda. Vets Helping Vets is in full support of
19 Resolution 422 and has been in a battle along with
20 other organizations with the Veterans
21 Administration for years as it progressively
22 limited the available services and discussed
23 privatizing the land.

24 The existing St. Albans Veterans
25 Facility requires a complete renovation with the

1 goal of having it become a full-service hospital,
2 which should mirror other major veterans'
3 hospitals. With the closing, I have three
4 hospitals here in Queens—the Queens area and more
5 and more veterans returning from war; the need is
6 to add and not take away. This facility should
7 have an emergency room, a primary and a extended
8 care facility for men and women, a full-scale
9 women's section to deal with OB-GYN care,
10 mammograms and oncology, as well as other female
11 specialty areas of medicine. In addition, there
12 should be an adequate in size and comprehensive
13 treatment facility with a nursing home and
14 domiciliary services for all homeless veterans.
15 Homeless and suicide among the veteran population
16 is greater than in any other category of the
17 population. If my statistics are correct, and I
18 believe they are, there were 58,000 plus deaths
19 that occurred during the Vietnam War, and there
20 have been more than 60,000 that have committed
21 suicide since then.

22
23 When I speak about the St Albans
24 V.A. Facility, I speak from experience. I am a
25 Vietnam veteran. I was wounded in action and was

1
2 subject to the inhalation and digestion of Agent
3 Orange, one of the most potent toxins known to
4 man. In addition, I was wounded in right ear; I
5 have limited hearing. I live with severe back
6 pain caused when my parachute failed to open
7 properly. I have post-traumatic stress disorder
8 and take significant medications. It is for these
9 reasons, as well as the fact that I visit the St.
10 Albans facility several times a month, that I am
11 very concerned over the pending development of the
12 land.

13 The St. Albans facility has
14 continued to eliminate services and force veterans
15 to go to either Brooklyn or Manhattan. Wounded or
16 disabled veterans should not have to travel for
17 treatment after putting their lives on the line
18 for their county. The Brooklyn facility is
19 congested and it is nearly impossible to locate
20 parking and has also been mentioned by the
21 Veterans Administration as a possibility for
22 closure in the recent past. The Manhattan V.A.
23 hospital is located in one of the most congested
24 area in New York City and costs for tolls and
25 parking are prohibitive. Please remember, many of

1 these veterans are disabled and unable to take
2 public transportation. While the Veterans
3 Administration does offer some shuttle bus
4 service, it is not normally available on a regular
5 and frequent enough basis. If you use the shuttle
6 service, you are prohibited from having early
7 morning appointments.
8

9 Of more pressing concern is the
10 Veterans Administration's plan to close down the
11 existing facility, build a much smaller center in
12 its place and practically give away 25 acres of
13 land to develop a large number of housing units
14 that are simply not needed. The St. Albans
15 neighborhood infrastructure would never be able to
16 accommodate the addition of thousands of vehicles
17 and pedestrians. Why would the Veterans
18 Administration build thousands of housing units in
19 an area that has a 13 percent of greater vacancy
20 rate? Why would the Veterans Administration
21 select a developer that has a less than stellar
22 reputation and is closely tied to a former
23 congressman who has a dubious history? This
24 certainly reeks of cronyism or worse. Why would
25 the Veterans Administration build unnecessary

1 housing in a minority community without the input
2 and approval of the local residents? Why would
3 the Veterans Administration completely ignore the
4 veteran community and not provide us with a full-
5 service hospital we have earned?
6

7 When I was drafted in 1967, I was
8 promised the government would take care of me once
9 I finished my tour. As is evidenced here, they
10 did not keep their word. I would be remiss if I
11 did not mention the fact that the Veterans
12 Administration had previously given 53 acres of
13 this same land to the City of New York, so a park
14 could be built. There is something dramatically
15 wrong with this math and process. Of the total
16 pie, the V.A. has determined the veterans that
17 have fought and died for their country only
18 deserve 25 percent of that pie. Why is it that
19 the Veterans Administration feels so strongly that
20 the existing property is underutilized? As most
21 combat veterans have some sort or another type of
22 depression, why can't they make the grounds
23 depression-friendly? A fountain, benches, green
24 grass, birds, places to sit on the grass, possibly
25 a basketball court for those that are physically

1
2 capable of exercising. This would be therapeutic
3 and would help the mental state of veterans more
4 than all the pills the V.A. can prescribe. The
5 V.A. believes that every square inch of property
6 must have concrete on it. Using the V.A. theory,
7 imagine if New York City sold City Hall Park,
8 Bryant Park, Central Park and Riverside Park to
9 private developers. While I am not an expert in
10 real estate, I'm certain this would turn—the
11 number is wrong—the 20 billion dollar deficit into
12 a billion dollar bonanza. The reason they don't
13 do this is because we need trees, parks and places
14 to gather, et cetera.

15 In closing, I'd like to state that
16 the Veterans Administration has the moral and
17 legal responsibility to take care of all veterans,
18 men and women. The V.A. should begin upgrading
19 the existing St. Albans Facility to a full-
20 service, state of the art facility that can
21 provide the immediate and necessary care for
22 conditions such as diabetes, known to be caused by
23 Agent Orange exposure, post-traumatic stress
24 disorder, post-traumatic brain injury and other
25 mental health illnesses, as well as all other

2 preventive medicines required to keep veterans
3 healthy. Install an updated physical therapy
4 unit, a complete radiology department and have the
5 services available that are common and normal in
6 hospitals. Vets Helping Vets supports the
7 Resolution 422 put forth by the Committee and is
8 most appreciate and grateful for their support of
9 its members. I am confident that the City Council
10 will closely monitor this process and scrutinize
11 every request from the developer or the V.A. as
12 they relate to zoning issues, permits and all
13 other all land use laws that may be involved.
14 Again, the community and the veterans are against
15 this development. Thank you for your time.

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
17 much, Mr. Chichester. Did I get it right this
18 time?

19 JOHN CHICHESTER: I like the way you
20 say it better.

21 [laughter]

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

23 Next one please.

24 STEVEN EPPS: My name is Steven
25 Epps and I'm here from the UCVCR and Proctor-

1 Hopson Post 1896 Veterans of Foreign Wars. I
2 can't add to anything that my colleagues have said
3 so I'll - - that everything I was going to say,
4 they spoke on. Thank you.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
7 much. Yes sir?

8 PAT TORO: I just want to add that--
9 John mentioned some stats and V.A. and they were
10 caught doing it during the whole CASS hearing.
11 What they were doing was, they would say--and I've
12 said this before--that St. Albans does not need an
13 optometry clinic 'cause the stats don't show there
14 is a need for it. What they failed to say is the
15 reason the stats don't show that is because they
16 farm everybody to either Manhattan or Brooklyn,
17 and this is a continual process that they have
18 done with all sections and areas in the St. Albans
19 area. That's why they claim that the stats are
20 down. You have a clinic on 42nd Street and Queens
21 Boulevard that is run by the Bronx V.A. I am
22 still trying to get somebody to explain to me how
23 the hell that happened--when it's in Queens and on
24 42nd Street, not only that, it's named after a
25 Medal of Honor recipient from Vietnam, Tommy

1 Noonan, but nobody anytime you go to the V.A.,
2 these are the stats they give you. When Price
3 Waterhouse did this whole Cass thing, we asked
4 them point blank, where are you getting your stats
5 from? Where are you getting your figures? And
6 they said from the V.A., so right then and there
7 we knew there was problems.
8

9 JOHN CHICHESTER: And if I could
10 add one more thing fast. I went to my primary care
11 physician approximately a week ago, and sitting in
12 his office, they were doing construction behind
13 his office and they had a kind of curtain up to
14 block anybody from seeing it all—from the dust
15 coming out, so I asked the doctor what are they
16 building in there because you know, you hear the
17 rumor the place is being closed down. He said
18 they're taking that room and making a women's
19 facility out of it, one room—a women's facility.

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Wow. Thank
21 you very much gentleman and you say that and that
22 we all know that the V.A. they want to give the
23 land to developers to build housing units. What
24 is the status right now? Do you know what is the
25 status?

1
2 PAT TORO: The last we heard the
3 V.A. was very quiet for a couple of years and then
4 all of a sudden, boom, out popped the information
5 that they've gotten the St. Albans LLC to do the
6 building and whatever. We weren't even told that
7 they had even reached that time--whatever--now
8 supposedly what we heard in meetings that we had
9 with Congressman Meeks, we were told that the V.A.
10 had stated, and this is Secretary Shinseki, that
11 if the veterans community and the community in
12 general did not want the enhanced use lease
13 program to be used that they would cancel it.
14 They were given the stats. We had the hearings.
15 We were told--they were told how we felt, and
16 they're still running it. As far as we know, it
17 is still continuing, but we are kept in the dark
18 until they feel like releasing any kind of
19 information.

20 JOHN CHICHESTER: According to the
21 plan, as we know it, the developed had 'til the
22 end of December to submit to the V.A. his plans
23 and from what we can gather from speaking to
24 people at the V.A., he made the deadline and
25 submitted plans. We don't know what the plans

1 are, what they look like or anything else.

2 PAT TORO: - - community.

3 JOHN CHICHESTER: Never met with
4 the community, never met with the veterans.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Do you know
6 also the process by which the developer was
7 choosing?
8

9 PAT TORO: No.

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: No?

11 JOHN CHICHESTER: Nor will they
12 release that information. The Daily News
13 attempted to get it via the Freedom of Information
14 Act, and they rejected it.

15 PAT TORO: Originally there were
16 four developers that had placed bids, originally.
17 Alright? The St. Albans Village LLC was not one
18 of them, so where they came from we don't know.
19 They just popped up out of-

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [Interposing]
21 Mm-hmm. At the beginning of the process, any
22 veteran group or any one of your friends has been
23 contacted or has been part of the process?

24 JOHN CHICHESTER: No.

25 PAT TORO: No. You got to

1 understand that this goes further than just the
2 developers. As far as we're concerned, there
3 should be no developers because they--the only
4 developers that should be there are whoever is
5 planning to build the full-service hospital that
6 we want and we deserve. We don't need developers
7 there. We don't need to talk to developers there
8 about housing, about all this stuff, which is what
9 the V.A. wanted at the very beginning. When they
10 announced their decision, they stated in the
11 article that they wanted the developer to sit with
12 the community and the veterans' organization.
13 That's not going to happen. It's not going to
14 happen unless we get what we want. Now it's been
15 done in other countries. Look, I'm sorry, not
16 countries, but states.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Mm-hmm.

19 PAT TORO: I jumped ahead of myself
20 there for a minute. It's not a coincidence that
21 the installations in the V.A. hospitals throughout
22 this country that the V.A. has attempted to close
23 have all been on prime land--23rd Street, Brooklyn,
24 Montrose, which is 200 acres, and they're getting
25 a fight for their money up there also, alright?

1
2 Would they have known how we felt from the very
3 beginning? One of the problems that we have is
4 that the congressional leaders, or the
5 congressional delegation from Queens, we seem to
6 have a hard time getting them to get into the mix
7 and get into the trenches and get this thing done.
8 'Cause they could put a stop to this. We know
9 that. It's been done in California, I believe.
10 It was done, I believe was in Missouri. It can be
11 done, but we need them to step forward and do
12 this. We can't do this alone.

13 JOHN CHICHESTER: And Congressman
14 Meeks did state at a meeting that in order for it
15 to pass, it needs—requires congressional approval.

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. Could
17 you tell me right now what are the medical
18 services that are provided in St. Albans right
19 now?

20 PAT TORO: I'll put it to you this
21 way, my past president of the chapter, Ron Powers
22 [phonetic], was in the clinic a couple of years
23 ago, fainted, and they had to take him to Jamaica
24 Hospital because he could not be treated at St.
25 Albans.

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CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Why?

PAT TORO: This is exactly what we asked and this is why the V.A. keeps saying we don't need a hospital there. We don't need this there. We don't need that there. Alright? So it's not so much the services that they provide, it's what they're not providing—especially, and I can't emphasize this more, when it comes to women's issues. Even on 23rd Street, they've cut back.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Let me put it another way. Do they have emergency service—

JOHN CHICHESTER: [Interposing] No.

PAT TORO: No.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: —or primary care medicine?

JOHN CHICHESTER: Let me tell you. I'm pretty—I frequent the place, so... What they have is—they have a little outpatient center that has two medical doctors. You can go in there to see a medical doctor. He'll take your blood pressure, your temperature and if anything else is required, he sends you to Brooklyn or to Manhattan. They have two mental health doctors,

1 who visit—they're probably the busiest people in
2 all of the V.A. There is lines of people to see
3 mental health doctors. They have a ophthalmology
4 clinic. Again if anything is required, you get
5 farmed out. They do they basis. They do a couple
6 of tests, but they can't do—they can't perform any
7 fixing, if you will. You know you get—they have
8 an audiology department that was built I think at
9 somewhere around the Civil War period. That's
10 what you deal with. You go in, you get little
11 bits and pieces, then they tell you okay.

12
13 Just as another example, in order
14 to see a orthopedic doctor for my back, I had to
15 go to Brooklyn. So I was going to Brooklyn once a
16 month. I get needles in my back. I went to
17 Brooklyn and I said, "I need to see my doctor.
18 They said, "Oh no." I said, "Why not?" They said,
19 "All orthopedics have been shipped to Manhattan
20 now." They don't call anybody, so now in order to
21 see a orthopedic doctor, - - to go to Manhattan.
22 If you pay to park, that's \$23, \$25. There's no
23 free parking anywhere unless you sleep over and
24 get a parking meter, so... They move you around.
25 St. Albans itself does little; it's the other

1 facilities that get the work.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Let me ask you
4 one thing. How long have you been waiting before
5 you are able to see the orthopedic doctor? How
6 long approximately? Do you have an idea?

7 JOHN CHICHESTER: The waiting
8 period to see one?

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yeah.

10 JOHN CHICHESTER: It could take up
11 to a month to see one.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: A month?

13 JOHN CHICHESTER: And that's not
14 the bad part, the bad part is once you get there
15 and you sit in the waiting room and you have a two
16 o'clock appointment; you get called at 4:30 or
17 five.

18 MALE VOICE: [off mic] And then
19 they rush you through 'cause they want to - - .

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Let me get
21 back to - - . So you are telling me there is no
22 emergency service?

23 JOHN CHICHESTER: Nothing.

24 PAT TORO: No.

25 STEVEN EPPS: [off mic] No.

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CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: This is—

PAT TORO: [Interposing] If you need emergency, you cannot go to St. Albans.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So that means... because we're talking about an emergency. Emergencies are about time—the time is big factor.

STEVEN EPPS: [off mic] I had a heart attack two blocks away. I had a heart attack and they could not help me. I had to go to Jamaica hospital.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: That's serious. This is serious because when we are dealing with emergencies, we have to respond right away. It's about saving life. This is something we've got to look into. This is very serious.

PAT TORO: I have extended an invitation and I can't say if it got back to him or whatever to Secretary Shinseki and I said, come down to the city. And on a day like the snowstorm we had a few weeks ago, I want you to take public transportation from St. Albans and try and get to Manhattan or to Brooklyn, and let me know—I will even go with you and pay your carfare, your train fare. Let me see how long it takes you to go

1
2 there 'cause according to them, it's a hop, skip
3 and a jump. It's no problem.

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: It's tough to
5 see that. People that put their life in danger
6 for us, you know, to give us the opportunity to
7 sit in this room so quietly in peace to do
8 whatever we are doing and they cannot be served or
9 provided the services that they need.

10 JOHN CHICHESTER: The Secretary—

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [Interposing]
12 This is not acceptable. This is tough.

13 JOHN CHICHESTER: The Secretary has
14 never had to take the Belt Parkway—

15 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [Interposing]
16 This is tough.

17 JOHN CHICHESTER: —to Brooklyn when
18 they have two lanes closed and it's flooded. You
19 know.

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Wow. Now let
21 me call my colleagues. I know that Council Member
22 Ruben—you have questions. Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you,
24 Chair. I don't really have questions, but more of
25 a statement. We have to get ready to leave. We

1
2 have to go to the snow hearings in Queens. In my
3 previous—or before being elected to the City
4 Council, I actually came down to these chambers
5 and sat in this hearing room and testified before
6 the City Council on this very issue last year and
7 I testified with Ms. Rene Hill, who is in the room
8 today, who has been a staunch advocate on the
9 veterans' issues.

10 There are certain things that we
11 have been dealing with that we should not be
12 dealing with, having indigent veterans is a term
13 that shouldn't even be in our vocabulary. You
14 know, this whole process has been cloaked in
15 secrecy and back-room deals from the very
16 beginning, from the inception of it, and a lot of
17 people who are playing both sides of the fence
18 have not been forthcoming or truthful. This
19 facility needs to be 100% veterans. They've
20 already given up more than half of their land to
21 the City. This facility needs to be veterans.
22 This facility even with the blueprints and the
23 layouts that they have is not, is not adequate to
24 expand later when we have veterans coming home.

25 I know Steve Epps was modest in him

1 not wanting to add his comments to it, but while
2 we were doing this fight in I think 2008, Steve
3 Epps actually had a heart attack. He didn't have
4 a murmur. He didn't have a, you know, congestion
5 or gas. He had a heart attack and he lives a
6 stone's throw from the hospital and with that
7 heart attack, and he had a heart attack, while
8 fighting this fight. He lives a stone throw from
9 the V.A.'s hospital and or the campus, and had to
10 be taken to Jamaica and then to the city, and we
11 had to go visit Steve Epps, a veteran that served
12 this nation, with wires and tubes inside of him
13 because he had a heart attack, and I have no doubt
14 that was linked to this fight.
15

16 It is a travesty that we're still
17 going through this when other states have their
18 congressional delegations and their members who
19 have - - certain things into their legislation to
20 stop their V.A. hospitals from undergoing the same
21 fate. No we have already had hearings on this.
22 We've had meetings in our area, and I know that
23 the United Veterans Coalition, which my
24 organization is a part of, Councilman Comrie and
25 Assemblyman Scarborough, Senator Utley [phonetic]

1 and Assemblywoman Cook have supported since—for
2 the last two years—this fight has been going on a
3 lot longer than that. We definitely need an
4 action plan and if the Secretary does not come
5 here, then we need to go to the Secretary. And we
6 need to turn out some of those 200,000 veterans
7 that we have in Queens and Nassau because all of
8 this is basically about money. And if this is
9 about money, then those developers who have their
10 hands in our pockets as taxpayers should actually
11 be—if that's the case, then let's devise a plan
12 where somebody can do construction, but do
13 construction for the veterans that need it. Have
14 a full women's facility on that land. Have an
15 emergency. Have a full-fledged hospital, and
16 let's have housing because the housing that
17 they're proposing now is going to do nothing, but
18 destroy our community that we have there now, that
19 we're fighting for. They're going to have to try
20 to take housing from Addisleigh Park and different
21 places to expand the roads to come in and out.
22

23 We cannot stand for any of this to
24 go any further, so whatever we need to do as a
25 City Council, as a body, and I need to be signed

2 on to that resolution, but I think that, Chair, we
3 need to have you come out to the St. Albans
4 campus, the whole Committee, as a tour, Councilman
5 Comrie, as a tour so you can exactly-see exactly
6 what is going on with the veterans and then have a
7 process or action plan developed from there.

8 Thank you-

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [Interposing]

10 Thank you for the suggestion I think the next-

11 [applause]

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: -for the next

13 hearing, we will go there, the full committee

14 should go there, and let me tell you that I have

15 been in Queens, so - - St. Albans and also at one

16 of the meetings organized by Council Member

17 Sanders. I have been there and I have been there

18 with you and I'm going to continue to fight with

19 you because this is not acceptable, not acceptable

20 for people who defend our nation, who put their

21 life in danger, who made so many sacrifices for

22 us, this is not acceptable. - - It is our

23 responsibility, not only my responsibility as a

24 chairperson of the Committee, but it the

25 responsibility of all elected officials in our

1 cities and in this nation and also the government
2 to stand together and to provide veterans with the
3 services that they deserve. It is a simple thing.
4 This is a simple way for us to show our gratitude
5 for what they have done for us. And I think that
6 this nation has the obligation to provide them
7 with the best that we can provide and thank you.

8 [applause]

9 PAT TORO: I just want to say for
10 the Chair, look around. Who is here from the
11 Mayor's office? Who is here from the Mayor's
12 Office of Veteran Affairs? This has been a
13 continuing thing in any item, in any topic that
14 the veterans have brought forth in front of this
15 committee. It doesn't matter whether you were
16 chairing it or back before Hiram Monserrate,
17 before him or whatever, alright. The mayor's
18 office jumped real quick when this whole CASS
19 process started at St. Albans and said, "We need
20 schools." Alright, you know what? I have yet to
21 meet a veteran who is coming back from Iraq or
22 Afghanistan who said, "I need to go to school."
23 Alright. They need medical care and they need
24 jobs and they need a place to live, but we have
25

2 yet to hear from the mayor's office and I notice
3 on the guests that were invited, Commissioner
4 Holliday was invited, who is the new Commissioner
5 of the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs. And I
6 know Commissioner Holliday and he has heard me say
7 this to him, alright, that's just a figurehead.
8 There's nobody in that position, in the Mayor's
9 Office of Veterans Affairs that's going to do
10 anything for veterans unless the Mayor wants them
11 to. That's the one who pays their salary, so it's
12 up to you as the Committee to go, grab the
13 Speaker, go to the Mayor and say this is what we
14 want and this is what we're going to do. You
15 either jump on board or you sit back.

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you
17 everyone. Thank you. We have been joined by
18 Council Member Daniel Dromm from Queens and
19 Council Member Vincent Gentile from Brooklyn. Now
20 I want to call to... [pause]

21 [background conversation]

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Council Member
23 Chin, please?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yes, thank
25 you, Chair. I just have a comment. I'm on the

1 Women's Issues Committee and I really want to
2 thank you for your service to this country and I'm
3 a proud granddaughter of a World War II veteran.
4 And I'm really happy to be one of the sponsors for
5 this resolution 'cause after hearing what you have
6 testified on, that is really shameful that our
7 government cannot take care of our veterans. And
8 this land, I think it's important to know that
9 this land is public land. And we really need to
10 fight to make sure it's going to be used for a
11 good public service. And that purpose would be
12 supporting our veterans, and I thank you for
13 supporting to have a full women's service-medical
14 service there for women veterans. There are more
15 and more women veterans in our city and they need
16 to be taken care of. And if they want to talk
17 about housing, well, it better be housing for
18 veterans who have no home. So I think right now,
19 once we get this resolution passed, I think the
20 City Council is committed to work with you to make
21 sure that a full-service hospital facility happens
22 there for our veterans, and I thank you for being
23 here.

24
25 [applause]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
3 much. Council Member Dromm?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you
5 very much, Mr. Chair. I came in from Queens this
6 morning, where we had a meeting out there. I'm
7 sorry I'm a little bit late getting here, but I
8 have to go back to Queens for the snow hearing as
9 well, but I wanted to make sure that I was
10 physically present at this hearing because of the
11 importance of the topic and I too agree with
12 Council Member Wills that we should have a
13 hearing, a visit to the site, and we should do
14 publicity and we should bring everybody out there
15 that we can to shine the light on the situation
16 out there. Thank you very, very much.

17 [applause]

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

19 PAT TORO: If you do have this
20 hearing at St. Albans, is there any way you can
21 have this hearing without letting them know that
22 you're coming out there?

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yeah, we will
24 talk together--

25 PAT TORO: [Interposing] Will we

2 just pop up? You'll get the true picture.

3 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Do you want us
4 to just go? Okay, so we will do a visit, I think
5 a visit instead of a hearing.

6 MALE VOICE: [off mic] I feel sick,
7 so you can take me if you want.

8 [laughter]

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you. We
10 will do a surprise visit, I believe. Thank you
11 very much. Thank you, gentlemen. Now, let me
12 call... [pause]

13 [background conversation]

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Andrea
15 Scarborough. Andrea? Andrea? Is that... [pause]
16 Rene Hill. Is that...?

17 [background conversation]

18 [long pause]

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Good morning.

20 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: I did not put
21 my name to speak—

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [Interposing]
23 Well, I'm sorry.

24 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: —but I have
25 testimony.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I'm sorry. I got your name here.

ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: Yeah, not sure how it happened, but that's okay.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Are you sure?

ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: Yeah. Yes. That's okay.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Alright, sorry about that, but we have somebody signed your name.

ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: [laughter] Okay. I basically echo everything that has been said before. A lot of the data that they stated are very accurate. What I find unfortunate at this point in time is that years later, we're still fighting this issue. We have sent thousands of petitions directly to the V.A.'s office. We know that they received it because they said that they received it. They are well aware that the community is totally against this project. They are well aware that our elected officials are totally—our local elected officials—are totally against this. We have sent—there's a letter that was sent by Congressman Meeks, along with Senator Schumer and Senator Gillibrand denouncing this

1 project, and the Secretary still maintains his
2 stand to move forward.

3
4 Now what I have an issue with is
5 when Guantanamo Bay came up and the trials came
6 up, our Mayor took a stand. Our Mayor said these
7 trials will not occur in the city and the federal
8 government, President Obama came out and said the
9 city doesn't want it, the Mayor doesn't want it,
10 the elected officials doesn't want it; it will not
11 happen. When Manhattan 23rd Street, they wanted to
12 close that particular facility, the V.A. facility
13 on 23rd Street, there was a rally, Congresswoman
14 Maloney stood up in the trenches, fought the
15 issue. It did not happen. Why now in St. Albans?
16 The community has said they don't want it, the
17 elected officials has said they don't want it, our
18 senators are in support of us, and yet still, now
19 the project moves forward. How can the federal
20 government try to force this on a community that
21 don't want it and on veterans that are saying they
22 don't want this? A precedence has already been
23 set in the sense that Guantanamo Bay, the city
24 didn't want it. We did not want it. You hear
25 your people when your people say they don't want

1 something, okay? 23rd Street didn't close; the
2 people didn't want it. Didn't happen. We are
3 here saying today we don't want it; we want to be
4 heard by the Veterans Administration, and we want
5 this process ended. If you guys can help us to
6 get to that point, we're still trying to get a
7 meeting with our Senator Schumer—the meeting was
8 recently cancelled to be rescheduled, but if the
9 City Council can help us in that regard because
10 this is fought at the federal level. This will be
11 fought at the federal level.

12
13 If City Council can put pressure to
14 help us to get this fight and get the EUL
15 terminated because ending basically—if they reject
16 the developer, it will not end the process. All
17 they will do—all they can do is as a result, go
18 back and start the process all over again and find
19 another developer. So our concern is not so much
20 the developer; our concern is to terminate the
21 EUL.

22 Once we terminate the EUL, we can
23 then move forward with the fact that what we
24 really want in the community is a full-service
25 hospital. And mind you, that hospital is not only

2 a benefit to our veterans, which is truly what it
3 should be, providing 100% appropriate full
4 healthcare service to our vets, but it's also good
5 for the community because when you bring services
6 into the community, that's where the community
7 begins to thrive. Okay? That's what will help to
8 bring jobs into the community in a time when jobs
9 is needed. Okay? So services is what strengthens
10 a community, not housing with temporary
11 contractors and having folks who come in and build
12 and it's a temporary job. Services is truly what
13 helps to build a community. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
15 much. Thank you.

16 [applause]

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Next speaker?

18 RENE HILL: I am Rene Hill,
19 president of Addisleigh Park Civic Organization,
20 vice president of Queens Civic Congress and member
21 of UCVCR, which stands for United Coalition for
22 Veterans and Community Rights. I have a letter
23 from Queens Civic Congress; they represent the
24 civic organizations in Queens as a group. So I
25 want to read that first to show you it's all of

1
2 Queens that's for this hospital. They had
3 addressed it to Representative Carolyn Maloney.
4 It's dated October 18th.

5 The Queens Civic Congress is a
6 coalition of more than 110 neighborhood-based
7 grass roots civic and community groups,
8 representing co-op condo owners, tenants and
9 homeowners living in every part of Queens. We are
10 writing to you concerning plans by the Veterans
11 Administration to close the remaining medical
12 facilities at St. Albans and lease the property to
13 a private entity for residential development. St.
14 Albans is the only VA facility in Queens and
15 western Nassau, which together have close to
16 200,000 veterans. Closing St. Albans would leave
17 Queens without any veterans' medical facility. At
18 a time when newly discharged veterans, many of
19 them with service connected disabilities, are
20 returning home from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
21 The Veterans Administration should expand its St.
22 Albans facilities with a new veterans' hospital,
23 not close it.

24 Moreover the developer's plans for
25 more than 1,500 housing units on the St. Albans

2 site would overwhelm nearby communities, which
3 already lack adequate infrastructure. As the only
4 Queens-wide civic organization, we are especially
5 concerned with the lack of hospital beds in
6 southeast Queens. Before any decision is made
7 regarding St. Albans, consideration must be given
8 to the healthcare needs of the underserved
9 communities of southeast Queens.

10 We are calling on you to urge the
11 Veterans Administration to terminate the enhanced
12 use lease it has entered with the developer and
13 instead, bring the St. Albans facility up to the
14 start-of-the-art healthcare standards that Queens
15 veterans deserve. Sincerely, Patricia Dolan,
16 President of Queens Civic Congress.

17 I have a copy of that letter.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
19 much.

20 RENE HILL: Okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Can you please
22 give us a copy at the end of the hearing?

23 RENE HILL: I have more to add.
24 I'm sorry. In doing research, if you go online,
25 they have, the V.A. has a chart of all the EULs,

1
2 enhance use lease programs, throughout the United
3 States. What they have is about, I guess about 60
4 EULs that's going on. So when they say, oh we
5 have this going on. We don't have any problems in
6 the rest of the states in all the other states,
7 except for our minority area here in St. Albans,
8 they are in coalition with a university or a
9 hospital, not with a private developer. This is
10 the only site out of all of the United States
11 where the EUL is with a private developer, putting
12 up 1,500 housing units--us and Montrose; they're
13 doing something for Montrose not even as big as
14 the 1,500 housing units, but in New York, we
15 should be fighting against it. We are the only
16 two places, sites, really St. Albans though, but--
17 the sites where they are planning to destroy the
18 communities. In Montrose, they're doing it 'cause
19 they have a Hudson view. Here, they're doing it
20 because they have land that's valuable and because
21 they were approached by the developer about it,
22 which is in their EUL. They had noted that
23 someone from our community came to them and said
24 they wanted to build there. Maybe that's why
25 they're giving it to them, but in other states,

1 they're in cahoots with universities and
2 hospitals, which is in benefit to a community,
3 rather than putting additional housing on the V.A.
4 sites, so I have that chart too.

5
6 The other thing is Queens Civic
7 Congress had the CEO of Jamaica Hospital there; he
8 said that we are in a disaster zone in Queens with
9 hospitals—they're overloaded. And if we close
10 that V.A. hospital when we should be using it—he
11 said he is willing to work with the City and the
12 community to expand the Jamaica hospital there.
13 We need other options, but we're in a crisis right
14 now in the healthcare system, so we need to
15 definitely think about not closing that and
16 expanding it, plus it brings jobs like Andrea
17 said.

18 I also want to say in their EUL,
19 and I'm going to read this because everyone keeps
20 on saying well, it's the federal government,
21 there's nothing that the City or State can do.
22 This is the RFP [phonetic] proposal. It says
23 environmental laws and other legal considerations,
24 the EUL and the project will be subject to all
25 applicable federal, state and local environmental

1 laws, codes, ordinances and regulations, including
2 but not limited to the Comprehensive Environmental
3 Response Compensation and Liability Act. So it
4 says NEPA, which is a National Environment Policy
5 Act requires that federal agencies, including V.A.
6 avoid adverse environmental impacts to the maximum
7 extent practical when considering major federal
8 actions that could effect the quality of the human
9 environment. The NEPA, the National Environment
10 Policy Act, analysis will be initiated by the V.A.
11 upon its selection of the offer. The offer will
12 be required to provide development-specific
13 information to support the analysis. This has not
14 been done. The NEPA document will be completed by
15 the V.A. prior to the execution of the EUL, so
16 they cannot execute this EUL that was submitted by
17 this developer because they haven't done a NEPA.
18 And it would adverse the community. I have here
19 from the New York City site, where this community—
20 this is from the newyorkcity.gov—it talks about
21 underserved neighborhoods without space, without
22 parkland. This is the V.A. right here and this is
23 a community, there is no parks here. No green.
24 If you put all that concrete that this developer
25

1 wants to put there and knock down that hospital or
2 if you build any more on that land, you're
3 jeopardizing the environment per the New York City
4 government of open space. This is on your site.
5 This is the V.A, right here. There's no green and
6 they want to put more cement there. Okay?

7
8 So I think that's the main thing
9 and as far as the homeless, if I don't say
10 anything about it 'cause my Addisleigh Park
11 members would be upset, we are overloaded in
12 Jamaica already with homelessness. We don't mind--
13 they already have homeless in that V.A. site that
14 they're taking care of. We have our limit. We
15 don't mind having homeless there, but we don't
16 want to take the full amount; it should be evenly
17 spread out throughout all New York City. Everyone
18 should take the brunt, not because we have that
19 big facility should all the homeless go there, so
20 I just want to--this article *Jamaica Haven for the*
21 *Homeless*--this has got to stop too. That's it.

22 [applause]

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
24 much. Before we hear the next testimony, let me
25 acknowledge my colleagues who have joined us. We

1
2 have been joined by Council Member David
3 Greenfield and also Council Member James Sanders,
4 Jr., from Queens. Council Member Sanders?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: [off mic]
6 Oh hold on, I would yield for—I will speak long
7 enough in basically a moment.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Alright.
9 Alright. [pause] Would you please, mis-

10 JANE GREEN: [Interposing] Good
11 morning.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Good morning.

13 JANE GREEN: Sure. My name is Jane
14 Green and I'm a member of Reach Out America, which
15 is in turn a member of the VCVCR. We have been
16 working steadily with VCR and—VCVCR, excuse me,
17 and the Addisleigh Civic Park Association to make
18 sure that a full-service hospital is provided at
19 St. Albans.

20 Most of the remarks I had have
21 already been covered. I just wanted to point out
22 that a few weeks ago in the *Times*, there was an
23 article about soldiers on the battlefield with
24 devastating injuries, who are being saved instead
25 of passing away and dying from them; therefore,

1 they will all be coming back as well, and will
2 need a full-service medical facility. The
3 Northport Hospital, which is what they claim is
4 the closest is about 100 away—50 miles away from
5 this particular geographical area. The V.A.
6 hospital in Manhattan is also away as is the
7 Brooklyn facility. And a statistic from the V.A.
8 themselves that says for the year 2010, there will
9 be a total of 129,000 returning veterans.
10

11 You've been told about the adverse
12 effect on the community as well as and I wanted to
13 mention that a high water table in this community,
14 which is now being held back by the open land,
15 which will be covered up by development; in
16 addition of course, the traffic problems which
17 exist now and are horrendous will be made even
18 more so.

19 There is a criteria for historic
20 designation and listing on the State of National
21 Historic Places, which is another topic which is
22 being covered as a separate issue. Briefly, I
23 would just like to say that I submitted a FOIA
24 [phonetic] request in June to try and find out who
25 these developers were, who the principals were,

1 where they came from, all the pertinent
2 information, and I was given an extraordinary
3 runaround by the V.A., the Attorney General of New
4 York State, which is where I started, and letters
5 went back and forth, back and forth and
6 essentially, they kept me spinning in circles with
7 bureaucratic jargon and I never could pin down who
8 the principals were, who else were the developers
9 who had submitted proposals, et cetera, all in my
10 view very important information, which we needed,
11 which we never could get. And I finally was just
12 beaten down by not getting a response from them,
13 so I urge you all to support this, to really get
14 on the case of our elected officials and our
15 congressional delegation and speak to them with
16 the passion that you've heard here today, as well
17 as the passion that you feel and that you have
18 expressed. Thank you very much.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
21 much. Now I would like to Council Member Sanders.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: Thank you,
23 Mr. Chair. Thank you for this very important
24 hearing. Well, let me start by saying can the
25 Committee join in that effort? Can we send a

1 letter request saying the information on the
2 principals of the development corporation? Why
3 not add our voices to it by just submitting a
4 letter? Let me apologize for my tardiness. My
5 train—the bridge froze.
6

7 [laughter]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: Getting
9 here has been interesting. It's so apropos
10 because I have to run soon to go to that hearing
11 in Queens over snow or the lack of its removal in
12 Queens. I'm glad that we're discussing my
13 resolution and I want to thank my neighbors for
14 coming in here. I, trust you had it a little
15 easier than I had this morning, and somebody has
16 to have it good. God bless you.

17 We have marched. We have picketed.
18 We have written letters. We have done a bunch of
19 things. First thing is let me commend these
20 folks, these leaders and other leaders, for
21 slowing this process. If you didn't do what you
22 did, we'd have a whole different conversation. It
23 would be a conversation of building taking place
24 now. My position is clear. My resolution—and I'm
25 the author of this resolution—calls for a full

1 medical facility there. It also calls for
2 remembering that we have women veterans that we're
3 now having a large population, and this country
4 has not done enough around the issue of female
5 veterans. And that this would be a tremendous—we
6 should go from the negative to something positive.
7 We should say okay, we do have a site, we can do
8 something positive here. And why not do it for
9 the women veterans who also have put their life on
10 the line serving this country overseas and other
11 places? They need a place; we happen to have a
12 place. All we need is an upgrade. All we need is
13 something that not only builds it better, but
14 takes into account the neighborhood, takes into
15 account that we have the most dynamic
16 neighborhood, the most beautiful neighborhood, and
17 we are going to fight hard to keep it that way.
18 Right there that if you can't have anything that
19 is just putting so much population here. The
20 water system won't handle it, the sewer system
21 won't handle it, the school system, the police
22 system; we can go on and on. There's nothing in
23 there as it stands that can handle it now.

24
25 We also go a step further and

1 encourage the Veterans Administration and others
2 to speak with these leaders and ourselves because
3 if you have to connect to the sewers of New York,
4 if you have to connect to the electricity of New
5 York, then you're going to speak to us. It's
6 better to speak now because you'll have to speak
7 later. I'm on the Land Use Committee there, and
8 I'm waiting on the fact—the Chair is from that
9 area too, and we're—I'm watching and I'm sure he
10 is watching too. If you need something extra from
11 the City, you're going to stand before a committee
12 similar to this one and you'll have to explain
13 why, so I urge everyone—negotiation, there's talk.
14 These are not unreasonable people here, the
15 leaders of this movement. They're not saying
16 nothing happens. They are saying we want to share
17 in the design. We want to come up with something
18 appropriate to our community, so I'm urging
19 everyone talk is better than trying to steamroll
20 something through. Figure this one through, so
21 that we all can come out of this one saying we
22 have done something good for veterans; we have
23 done something good for our community; we have
24 done something good for generations to come or
25

1
2 else we're just going to be out there in the
3 picket line. We're just going to be freezing this
4 effort. Whatever you think that you can have,
5 we're going to extend this three or four years
6 longer than it could be, if we all win at one
7 time.

8 So having said that, my Chair, I
9 commend you again for not only coming out to the
10 site and seeing and coming out there, but for
11 having this hearing, and I urge all of my
12 colleagues who have not signed on the resolution
13 to sign on so that the City Council voice can
14 speak as a whole and say to the developers, to the
15 Veterans Administration our position is clear and
16 we call for a full-service hospital with a focus
17 on the female veterans, women returning veterans.

18 Thank you very much and I will stay
19 until the last hour when I have to run across
20 there. I won't even try to take a train or a bus.
21 I'm going to try to go with that vehicle they have
22 leaving from here.

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
24 much, Council Member Sanders, but let me commend
25 you and congratulate you also for this resolution

1 that expresses the voice and the will of not only
2 the veteran people, but the people in Queens close
3 to St. Albans. Thank you very much. That's
4 exactly what our veterans need and exactly what
5 the people in Queens needs. As you expressed so
6 very clearly and eloquently, that hospital if we
7 have a state of the art, full-service hospital, is
8 not going to serve only veterans; it's going to
9 serve people in Queens and also is going to be job
10 opportunities. It's going to elevate the
11 community and I think you're right. And again
12 thank you very much, Council Member James Sanders
13 and I remember that you invited me to Queens
14 several meetings where you were addressing this
15 issue. That is exactly what we are going to
16 continue to do. With respect to our effort to
17 ensure that we succeed, I think that we have to go
18 to another state, another - - . Each group
19 separately have been very active in the term of
20 trying to stop this project and also in order to
21 ensure that our veterans be provided with a state
22 of the art hospital, but I think now we have to
23 create the - - coalition, all of us together--
24 elected officials, members of different veterans
25

1 groups, we are going to come together. As a
2 matter of fact, as the Chair of this Committee,
3 I'm going to sit down with my colleagues and
4 figure out what is the strategy, how we can we
5 create the necessary coalition to deal with this
6 very important issue.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: Thank you,
9 Mr. Chair.

10 [applause]

11 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: Councilman
12 Mathieu?

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes?

14 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: If I may just
15 say one last thing. In regards to the developer's
16 plan, which is housing-mixed use, three family
17 units and multi-family units. When you look at
18 Jamaica southeast Queens, the statistics will back
19 us up that Jamaica Queens is the fifth highest
20 ranking in the state when it comes to
21 foreclosures.

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Mm-hmm.

23 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: Just within
24 New York City, we hold Jamaica Queens 10 or 12% of
25 the vacancy rate, so when you look at that and you

1 say to yourself here's a developer that supposedly
2 I guess is in our area, works in our area, is
3 familiar with the area, present to the Veterans
4 Administration housing--additional housing as an
5 option to be placed there, your question is he
6 seriously thinking about the community when we
7 know we're in a depressed housing market? And we
8 know we have a high foreclosure vacancy rate or is
9 this just about lining your pocket with no concern
10 for the community that he is supposed to be a part
11 of and involved in. So the other question is why
12 would the Veteran Administration even entertain
13 that type of proposal? Maybe they don't know,
14 okay? So then it's up to us to let them know, but
15 how can you dump more housing in an over-housed
16 area? How do you dump more housing in an over-
17 housed area?
18

19 RENE HILL: [off mic] Can I say one
20 thing?

21 CHAIRPERSON MATHIEU: Sure.

22 RENE HILL: Per the EUL it says it
23 has to be feasible to do the project, I approached
24 - - at one of Councilman Sanders' meetings and I
25 said it's not feasible. He says well, I'm

2 estimating and hoping it gets better. He can't do
3 that. It has to be feasible now. So, the
4 government—I don't know what he is telling them,
5 but like Andrea is saying, it's up to you all and
6 the public officials to let them know this can't
7 happen. This is a depressed area. It's
8 distressed. It's overburdened already and like
9 she said, we have no jobs and most of our homes
10 are—a lot of our homes are in foreclosure, in the
11 process at least. So you have to get it out
12 publicly.

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. Thank
14 you very much. I have some more questions, but I
15 want to call my colleague Council Member David
16 Greenfield.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank
18 you, Mr. Chairman. I have a quick question for
19 you Rene. You know, there's been a lot of
20 conversations here, you know, about what exactly
21 is happening and I think you pointed out the fact
22 that this is an unusual arrangement that the V.A.
23 is making over here with this developer. Do you
24 have any theory or understanding as to why the
25 V.A. has engaged in this particular transaction?

1
2 RENE HILL: There's lots of
3 theories.

4 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: [off mic]
5 Careful.

6 RENE HILL: I have an - - brochure
7 over there that has Reverend - - talking about he
8 can't wait to put the village, the St. Albans
9 Village there. It's right there, so it started
10 there I believe. And you know, I don't-

11 [laughter]

12 -know why the Mayor hasn't gotten
13 involved and said this is going to happen. I've
14 tried to reach out to the Deputy Mayor Walcott to
15 come to our meetings. He said he couldn't make
16 the last one and I have had no response for
17 February meeting for the community meeting because
18 we need to let him know in case the Mayor, I guess
19 he doesn't know what's happening out in Queens.
20 This is a major issue. It's a major issue for
21 Queens and now also for Nassau County Veterans.
22 So this is not going away. This is more important
23 than any snow storm hearing. That's why I'm here
24 'cause I was supposed to be on the panel at the
25 snow storm, but I'm not going to be there. This

1 is more important, and I'm not here—my father is a
2 veteran. My brother is a veteran. I live across
3 the street. I started this only because I didn't
4 want this projects because that's what he wants to
5 be up there—projects across the street from my
6 house, but it turned into something bigger.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Rene, I
9 want to thank you. I will say this for the
10 record, bring from Brooklyn that both are
11 important—both the snow storm hearings and this
12 hearing. And you know, I do want to thank the
13 Chairman for consistently leading the fight here
14 in the City Council on behalf of the veterans and
15 I want to thank Council Member Sanders, who has
16 really worked tirelessly on behalf of not just the
17 veteran's community, but his constituency, and has
18 really led the issue and Mr. Sanders, I will
19 actually be asking to co-sponsor this resolution.
20 And the reason for me is simple; I'm actually from
21 Brooklyn, but you know, veterans is not an issue
22 that's based on what neighborhood you're in.

23 You know, as somebody from
24 Brooklyn, I admire and respect and I thank God
25 everyday for the soldiers who put their lives on

1 the line to protect us wherever we may live and I
2 think the—Council Member Sanders actually brought
3 up the best point inadvertently, the fact that it
4 took him a long time to get in today because of
5 the weather. How many veterans, how many disabled
6 veterans who live in Queens and who live in Nassau
7 and now are forced to schlep to Manhattan in this
8 kind of weather? They get stuck or when there's a
9 snow storm, which is why it is relevant for days
10 they couldn't get to Manhattan. Right? Because
11 the transit wasn't working. It's really vital
12 that where there are large veteran populations,
13 and we have some 200,000 veterans in these
14 neighborhoods that they have the adequate service
15 and it's the least that we can do. And I will
16 just point out that I think the efforts that
17 you're making and the efforts that the Chair and
18 Council Member Sanders are not in vain 'cause I'm
19 looking at the letter that was sent from the
20 Secretary of Veteran Affairs to Congressman Meeks.
21 At the end of the letter, the Secretary says that
22 we're going to seek the input of the local
23 government. Well, you know what? This is the
24 input of the local government that you're getting
25

1 here today. So I want to thank you all. I want
2 to thank all of you who came out here today to
3 support the veterans and I'm proud to be
4 supporting this legislation. Thank you very much.

5 [background conversation]

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
7 much, Council Member Greenfield—

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS:

9 [Interposing] Council Member Greenfield, I want to
10 thank you as your colleague and as a veteran for
11 signing on, but I must say that the real
12 leadership—that this panel right in front of you
13 they had driven this issue and I'm glad that I
14 helped to—to help push it a little, but they are
15 they drivers. I'm just a vehicle. Thank you and
16 thank them for coming out here.

17 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: Council
18 member.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

20 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: Okay. You had
21 asked us to—what was the driving force behind the
22 CASS process, the CASS process actually started
23 back when President Bush was in office and at a
24 time, the V.A. needed to maintain their properties
25

1 and they felt that this would be a good way to be
2 able to generate the necessary income to be able
3 to maintain their properties, mainly because the
4 V.A. said they don't have the money. That has
5 changed quite a bit, so over the last two
6 congressional—the 111th Congress, the 110th
7 Congress, what has happened is, we have had quite
8 a large influx of income going into the veterans
9 budget, so therefore, they now have the money to
10 maintain their properties. Above and beyond that,
11 in a letter from Congressman Meeks, he also
12 indicated appropriations to come from Congress to
13 assist in building a hospital, okay? So if you
14 have Congress willing to give appropriations, we
15 already know that their budget has increased—I
16 mean I don't have the statement right in front of
17 me, but the Chair at the time of the House - - was
18 so enamored with the fact that they were able to
19 give this much money to the V.A., so it's not a
20 matter of money at this point in time. It's a
21 matter of greed.
22

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I would
24 just state, you know, quite frankly, money should
25 never be an excuse when it comes to veterans.

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ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: I agree.

COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: We spend a trillion dollars on stimulus funding, we have plenty of money to bail out the car companies and Wall Street and the idea that we're cheap with our veterans who put their life on the line for our country is quite frankly shameful.

ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: Yes.

[applause]

COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. Could you allow me some few more questions before you go? Ms. Andrea you said that you sent thousands of petitions. To whom did you send them exactly?

ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: We sent it direct. We faxed it over to the Veteran Administration office in Washington, and they are in receipt of it because they called our office to discuss the petitions that they received, so we sent them petitions; we sent letters from veterans; e-mailed letters—we were about to e-mail direct to Secretary Shinseki's e-mail. There were

1 hundreds of letters that went out from the vets,
2 and this was prior to the letter of November 8
3 that the Secretary sent to the Congressman.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So no answers?

6 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: Well, that was
7 there response.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Just
9 acknowledge that they receive it?

10 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: Well, no not-
11 they acknowledged they received it and they wanted
12 to speak with us in regards to why it's a good
13 thing-

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [Interposing]
15 Mm-hmm. Ah okay.

16 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: -what they were
17 doing, but we sent this just to send home the
18 message that the community is totally against
19 this. Okay? With the thinking that if you
20 understand that you have a people in a community
21 and veterans that is against this, your thinking
22 would be to at least relook [phonetic] at this EUL
23 and hopefully, terminate it and begin
24 conversations with us as to what is viable for our
25 community and what is best for our veterans.

1
2 Instead, they sent a letter November 8 to
3 Congressman Meeks, basically stating that they
4 were moving forward. That's unacceptable.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You mentioned
6 also that you were supposed to meet with Senator
7 Chuck Schumer and-

8 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: [Interposing]
9 We were supposed to be-

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: -and that it
11 didn't happen.

12 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: November the
13 eig-I'm sorry. January the 18th, the day after MLK
14 Day - - pm.

15 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: January two
16 thousand-

17 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: [Interposing]
18 January 18th, 2011.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: and eleven?
20 Okay.

21 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: And we
22 received a response from one of his aids, Phil
23 Golfeta [phonetic], advising us that the meeting
24 will have to be rescheduled due to scheduling
25 issues.

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Would you like
3 me to contact the office of Senator Schumer?

4 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: [off mic] Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And then
6 should I—

7 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: [Interposing]
8 I believe if the Council Committee can get a
9 meeting with Senator Schumer that would be great.

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I will call
11 Senator Schumer personally—

12 ANDREA SCARBOROUGH: [Interposing]
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: —to...
15 [applause]

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And please, -
17 - , I would like to ask you to stay in touch with
18 my office and then we will do the follow up with
19 you and let you know what Senator Schumer said
20 exactly. I'm sorry, miss?

21 RENE HILL: No, I was just saying
22 the Senator knows about this and he is on our side
23 with—

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [Interposing]
25 Okay.

1
2 RENE HILL: -with what's going on.
3 We just have to make sure that now he presents it
4 to the other U.S. Senators and they squash it.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. Thank
6 you very much. Thank you so much. Thank you.
7 Thank you.

8 [applause]

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Now we want to
10 call Mark McMillan and Paul Nichols from Senator
11 Malcolm Smith. [pause]

12 [background noise, conversation]

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Oh, we have
14 three more?

15 [background conversation]

16 MARK MCMILLAN: Good morning,
17 Councilman. Thank you for having this hearing.
18 I'm here on behalf of Queens Borough President
19 Helen Marshall, who unfortunately is back at the
20 snow hearing in Queens, otherwise she would have
21 been here. Essentially, she is—she supports the
22 veterans and she thinks it's outrageous that the
23 veterans don't have a full-service hospital right
24 now. What she would like to be—for the St. Albans
25 facility to be a full-service, primary care, state

1 of the art hospital. Obviously, she would prefer
2 that the hospital be a brand new building, but
3 given the way that the V.A. has approached this
4 issue through the EUL process, she would prefer
5 whatever it takes to have the equipment in that
6 hospital be something that would be useful to
7 veterans coming back today—essentially, the
8 necessary equipment to have primary care. The
9 real issue is the fact that our federal government
10 doesn't seem to be showing the appropriate respect
11 to the men and women who have served and are
12 serving.

14 We've lost in the last few years
15 two hospitals in Queens, St. Johns and Mary the
16 Immaculate, which happened to be adjacent in the
17 southeast Queens area, so the need is there to
18 have more hospital beds and to have a primary care
19 facility and even an emergency facility. Many of
20 the veterans now are coming back with severe
21 injuries and this has already been mentioned—I
22 don't want to get into a lot of stuff that's
23 already been mentioned—there's over 200,000
24 veterans in this community and we need to have it
25 there as opposed to people going to Brooklyn or

1 Manhattan.

2
3 We support the issue with having a
4 hospital that would focus on women's issues
5 because women veterans have very specific issues
6 that are now different. And we will--the Borough
7 President supports and is very proud of the
8 community and the veterans' organizations that
9 have come out to pose leaving the situation as it
10 is right now.

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
12 much.

13 PAUL NICHOLS: Thank you. Good
14 morning, Mr. Chairman and the rest of the--

15 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Good morning,
16 sir.

17 PAUL NICHOLS: My name is Paul
18 Nichols, here on the behalf of State Senator
19 Malcolm Smith's office and I would like to read
20 the Senator's testimony for the Committee. The
21 Senator represents the 14th Senatorial District in
22 southeast Queens and - - Rockaway. And he would
23 like to express his support for the renovation of
24 the existing St. Albans Community Living Center.
25 The Senator would also like to urge the U.S.

1 Department of Veterans Affairs and your Committee
2 respectfully to push for completely to renovate
3 and utilize the existing St. Albans Community
4 Living Center to provide a full-service V.A.
5 hospital with an emergency room, primary extended
6 care facility to accommodate female veterans and a
7 comprehensive treatment facility that includes
8 housing for displaced veterans.

10 While the Senator is
11 enthusiastically supportive of a new Veterans
12 Administration hospital at the St. Albans site, he
13 must also that certain stop-gaps are put in place
14 to protect the integrity of the surrounding
15 neighborhood. For the Senator, this is a very,
16 very important issue and it's a very sensitive
17 issue since he lives just blocks away from the
18 current facility. The St. Albans Naval Hospital
19 was first opened in 1943 and while the community
20 has certainly grown around it, there is a certain
21 quaint feel to the neighborhood that we would like
22 to see preserved at all costs. Since that is the
23 last large tract of land left in the area, there
24 may be an urge by some outsiders to overdevelop it
25 and expand the project to include amenities and

1 the traffic that comes with them. The Senator
2 wants to encourage those to be strong supporters
3 of our veterans who need this new hospital
4 facility. The Senator is in strong support of our
5 veterans who now are forced to travel from all
6 parts of the state, city, and Long Island just to
7 receive treatment. And now as we are approaching
8 nearly several decades of service, the hospital
9 needs a major overhaul especially with the number
10 of veterans in the region expected to increase in
11 the coming years according to the Veterans
12 Advocacy Group, which the Senator has spoke with.

14 The facility was turned over to the
15 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as we know in
16 1974 and while it is not a full-service hospital,
17 it is clear that a full-service hospital is needed
18 with the veterans from Queens and Nassau County
19 being forced to travel to the V.A. hospital in
20 Brooklyn to access certain services. Currently
21 also as we know there are over 200,000 veterans in
22 Queens and Nassau County—there are estimated 65
23 female veterans in the state. Clearly the
24 building a new hospital in the 30 acres of the 55
25 acres site would be a great service to our

1 veterans, but the neighborhood concerns over
2 proposals being floated to lease the remaining 25
3 acres to private developers to build commercial
4 and residential buildings is also causing great
5 concern. The community has been in strong
6 opposition of such a development, local, civic and
7 community organizations nearby the St. Albans
8 facility fully support the veterans in their quest
9 for a full-service hospital, but most importantly,
10 they agree that residential or commercial
11 development on this site is neither appropriate
12 nor suitable by the local infrastructure. It
13 should be noted that the State of New York has
14 introduced resolutions in both the Senate and the
15 Assembly that call for the construction of a full-
16 service hospital at the St. Albans Veterans
17 Facilities. Again the Senator would like to
18 express his full support and solidarity with the
19 veterans and express need to have a full-service
20 hospital, and he would like to thank all the
21 members of the Committee for allowing his time to
22 express his views. Thank you.

24 [applause]

25 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

2 Thank you. Please when you get back, express to
3 the Senator and also the Borough President thanks
4 and our regards also. I thank them for standing
5 for our veterans. Thank you very much.

6 MARK MCMILLIAN: Thank you.

7 PAUL NICHOLS: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

9 [pause] Let me now call the next speakers. Nelson
10 Davis, Doris Salsbury, Ms. Doris? Thank you. Is
11 that Loretta? Loretta. Yes. Can you please
12 pronounce the last name?

13 LORETTA HUMPHREY: [off mic]

14 Humphrey.

15 [background conversation]

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Humphrey?

17 Okay. Thank you because...

18 LORETTA HUMPHREY: [off mic] - - .

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you

20 much. Would you please? [pause]

21 [background conversation]

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You may start
23 please.

24 NELSON DAVIS: Good morning

25 everyone.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Good morning.

NELSON DAVIS: My name is Nelson Davis. My personal testimony is very recent. My father a week ago today his heart gave out on him. He is still alive. He's at the Manhattan V.A. at the moment. He resides in Queens. Now my naiveté shows—I'm an Air Force veteran of 12 years—I'm rather unfamiliar with what's been going on in Queens, but briefly, my brother found my father on the floor last week and took him to Brooklyn. When I inquired as to why he wasn't in Queens, he said that Queens doesn't have the facilities. He spent the weekend in Brooklyn. He is now in Manhattan because Brooklyn only had temporary procedures to help him with his heart. Relating to what the previous speakers mentioned about parking and getting public access to both Brooklyn and Manhattan, I can attest to that because in both instances this past week, I've had problems with getting there and my brother along with me, we paid \$30 in a local parking facility in Manhattan.

But briefly, I just want to say that I just find it egregious that the Queens

1 facility does not have even an emergency facility
2 to deal with the veterans there and so basically
3 that's my testimony. I just find it devastating
4 that people from Queens, Long Island have to
5 travel such a distance to get adequate help and
6 again, as what's been spoken in the last ten years
7 or so concerning veterans I just think it's all
8 been smoke and mirrors with the government, with
9 politicians and people of that ilk whose—even
10 regular people who claim to be in support of
11 veterans, so that's all I have to say.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
14 much. Thank you, Mr. Nelson Davis. Thank you
15 very much. Next speaker, please?

16 LORETTA HUMPHREY: Good morning.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Good morning.

18 LORETTA HUMPHREY: My name is
19 Loretta Humphrey. I am one the opposite side of
20 Linden Boulevard, on the back-side of the
21 veteran's hospital and I represent the Triangular
22 Block Association, and we through Rene heard about
23 them wanting to destroy the property, the
24 hospital, the land.

25 Now I have been in this particular

1 community for over 25 years. I when I first moved
2 there, it was an unknown block, Baisley Boulevard,
3 a strip. Now I have horrendous traffic. I don't
4 even know my neighbors. We have at least six to
5 seven homes that are vacant, that can't be sold.
6 The Triangular Block Association's position is
7 that we do not want private developers. We don't
8 want a Jazz club in our community. We don't want
9 another Rochdale in our community. What we want—
10 my father was in that hospital for 20-something
11 years. He died in that hospital. Now I worked in
12 that hospital, as a matter of fact as a candy
13 striper. I volunteered. I took the vets to
14 different places, Atlantic City, et cetera, et
15 cetera. So I have a connection to that facility.
16 Now the people on Baisley Boulevard, we just can't
17 handle, we cannot handle the traffic. We can't
18 handle 5,000 more people. We just cannot handle
19 it. We have flooding in that area. We also—the
20 crime rate. We just don't want it. We don't want
21 our neighborhood to be overburdened, and I think
22 it's unfair that—the pastor you spoke about is my
23 pastor. I'm a member of his church, and I do not
24 want to be overburdened in my community.
25

1
2 I want my community to be a safe
3 haven for my children and my grandchildren, and
4 for my elderly, and that's really all I have to
5 say. I really wanted to question Mr. Sanders,
6 but he left. He left because I'm hearing
7 something that I'm not clear about in regards to
8 who is going to develop, but our position on
9 Linden and Baisley Boulevard is clear. We do not
10 want private or commercial development. Thank
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
13 much. Thank you. Ms. Humphrey. Thank you.

14 DORIS SALSBURY: I'm very pleased
15 with these remarkably articulate people making the
16 points that they've made, and I'm very grateful
17 for that. In 2007, a group of veterans who are
18 here today, some of whom are here, went to see
19 Shinseki. He made it clear as far back as then,
20 he was determined to have a private developer, and
21 it he made it very clear that it was the Alan
22 Corporation, which no longer is called that. It's
23 now called DNF, but no one has ever—and you said
24 that you would try to help us look into that—has
25 ever really determined who indeed are they, and

1
2 what's this all about. They never paid any
3 attention.

4 [background conversation]

5 DORIS SALSBURY: I'm sorry. I
6 didn't say I'm Doris Salsbury?

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
8 much.

9 DORIS SALSBURY: Thank you.
10 [laughter] I have been Doris Salsbury for so many
11 years, I figure everybody knows me.

12 [laughter]

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Well, it's
14 good to say for the record. Thank you.

15 DORIS SALSBURY: The National
16 Historic Preservation Act of 1966 made it
17 perfectly clear that any national or federal
18 agency must recognize the importance of--and that's
19 in Section 106--it makes it very clear that a
20 minority community cannot be--have their needs
21 totally disregarded, and that's exactly what
22 Shinseki is doing. He is disregarding the fact
23 that there are numerous amount of foreclosures,
24 disregarding the fact that the zoning regulations
25 are in opposition to what he - - to do, with the

1 high rise building far and above beyond what the
2 zoning regulations allow. He is totally
3 disregarding the needs of that community.
4

5 It is an outrage that this federal
6 entity is indeed the reason for the difficulties
7 not only that community has been having for the
8 years that there has been a struggle going on, but
9 a determination to continue to disregard the needs
10 of the community, which include not just the
11 veterans, which heaven knows must be handled. And
12 when you read some of the things that come out of
13 the Healthcare Department, which is put in place
14 by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Mr.
15 Shinseki, their assessment of what the needs of
16 these veterans coming home is absolutely an
17 outrageous disregard for the reality of the fact
18 that they need the healthcare they required.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
21 much, Miss. Thank you, but just one question for
22 Ms. Humphrey? You said that you have been working
23 at this facility, and what could you tell us in
24 terms of services provided before, let's say ten
25 years ago, and the service provided now? [pause]

1 Have there been improve - - ?

2 LORETTA HUMPHREY: No, no.

3 Everything has gone downhill.

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay.

5 LORETTA HUMPHREY: I worked as a
6 candy-stripe and I did volunteer work, so I worked
7 there as a youth because my father was in the
8 hospital. When we began I entertained there—they
9 had black history shows—I acted, I sang, I danced.
10 It wasn't a hospital at the time. It was a clinic
11 and a place where disabled veterans went to live
12 when they needed full-service. They could no
13 longer stay at home. But the quality of care was
14 excellent, and it was family-oriented at that
15 time. Now there used to be a small emergency room
16 there. It was a naval hospital at first, so it
17 only provided service for Navy, for military
18 people if I'm not mistaken. Help me out here
19 somebody. Military people.

20 [background conversation]

21 LORETTA HUMPHREY: ...started as a
22 naval facility. Mm-hmm, and they had a store
23 downstairs, a big cafeteria. I mean I enjoyed it
24 as a kid. The grounds, we were able to—they gave
25

1 barbecues on the grounds. It was a good facility.

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Alright.

3 LORETTA HUMPHREY: So as a
4 youngster, I really enjoyed the facility and to
5 have it taken away I think is unfair to the
6 community.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: What is the
8 last time that you went back to the facility?

9 LORETTA HUMPHREY: Well, I live—

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [Interposing]
11 Recently?

12 LORETTA HUMPHREY: I live right
13 around the corner, so you know? Maybe I'll say
14 inside the facility? Oh. We had a meeting in
15 that facility several years ago.

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Mm-hmm.

17 LORETTA HUMPHREY: And it was
18 dilapidated. I was surprised at the change that I
19 had seen take place. When you go into the main
20 corridor, it was—the climate to me was cold and
21 distant, where when I was younger, the climate was
22 more open and friendly, so you know, it's
23 definitely different. The building is crumbling.
24 The auditorium is crumbling. As a matter of fact,
25

1
2 I think the night that we had the meeting, the
3 lights were so dim, we could hardly see. The
4 hospital does need some updating.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
6 much. I got a last question, but probably Pat
7 would be better able to answer that, but I don't
8 know if one of you can...

9 [background conversation]

10 [laughter]

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I don't know
12 if one of you can answer it too before you go. I
13 know that you are looking to see a state of the
14 art hospital for the veterans.

15 LORETTA HUMPHREY: That is not
16 true. We know we're not going to get a state of
17 the art facility. What I believe what we are
18 looking for is an emergency room and a full-
19 service, up and running hospital. We want a
20 research center there at that hospital, a medical
21 research center at that hospital. And we want a
22 facility for female veterans. Yeah.

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes. Go
24 ahead. I'm sorry.

25 LORETTA HUMPHREY: My father had,

1 when he got sick, we had to ship him all the way
2 to Brooklyn, and I thought that was unfair. At
3 that time I wasn't driving and I had to take two
4 and three trains, buses or wait on the shuttle, I
5 thought it was very unfair to me, you know, to
6 visit, but we—I don't think we're looking for a
7 state of the art because I know we're not going to
8 get that. We're looking for an up and running
9 hospital. We're looking for a full-service
10 facility.
11

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you for—
13 you're very modest, but let me tell you that our
14 veterans deserve—

15 LORETTA HUMPHREY: [Interposing]
16 They deserve it.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: —a state of
18 the art hospital.

19 [applause]

20 LORETTA HUMPHREY: They deserve it.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: They deserve
22 it.

23 LORETTA HUMPHREY: They deserve it.

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: We spend so
25 much money - - and I don't understand for our

1 veterans those people allow us to have the
2 greatest country in the world we will not spend
3 money to give them state of the art?
4

5 LORETTA HUMPHREY: I agree.

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And I'm a
7 medical doctor by training also. I know right now
8 technology is very important in providing services
9 and treatment to patients and I think that we
10 should go for a state of the art hospital.

11 LORETTA HUMPHREY: I agree.

12 [applause]

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You know my
14 question—we all want the same thing, you know? To
15 see a full-service hospital, state of the art
16 hospital for our veterans, but don't you think
17 also that the veterans should play a role in terms
18 of the future of that hospital? And what would
19 you advise us to do, we elected officials, also
20 for the veterans to be part of the process also?

21 PAT TORO: Well, if you ask the
22 V.A., the V.A. will tell you that the veterans are
23 part of the process, and that's an outright lie.
24 Alright? We brought that to their attention
25 during the CASS hearings, and the CASS hearings

1
2 went on for I believe it was a little over four
3 years. Right. And we kept bringing that to their
4 attention. We basically, when it came to St.
5 Albans, told them what we needed. It wasn't a
6 question of what we demanded. It wasn't a
7 question of what we wanted. It was what we
8 needed—what the veterans of today needed at that
9 facility. And we were completely ignored. Now
10 the way it is now, unless it's a die-hard
11 emergency, they are doing no repairs to that
12 facility because they're contemplating knocking it
13 down. There's a full-fledged auditorium there
14 that's falling apart and cannot be—if you walk in
15 there—that's why I told you don't announce that
16 you're going there. Because they actually have
17 areas of that auditorium roped off. Because you
18 can't—it's dangerous to be sitting there. And
19 that's basically what they're doing.

20 Now we met there, Rene will
21 probably remember more than I do the date that we
22 met with the V.A. there at that facility. They
23 were supposed to show us around, instead we had a
24 meeting, and the engineers were there. One of the
25 arguments that the V.A. kept saying was we cannot

2 retrofit that building to the status that we need
3 to today, be it heating, air conditioning,
4 whatever. And we had the engineers, and we put
5 the engineers on the spot, where the engineers
6 actually came out and said yes, it can be done.
7 So that building does not need to be knocked down.
8 Now, you're going to get a lot of different
9 arguments from the V.A. only because I think
10 everybody here who has been in this fight has
11 heard every different kind—I mean, they've come
12 out and said that while they build a new one, the
13 old one will stay in place. If you tell them you
14 want to retrofit the old one, the first thing
15 they're going to say is well, then that means that
16 there's going to be no medical services provided
17 here 'cause we got to knock it down. So they're
18 looking to come from every angle and every time we
19 have a response to them, every time we tell them
20 something, they just come back with something new.
21 Meanwhile they're continuing their process in the
22 background, just like they did when they came out
23 with St. Albans LLC. They kept quiet for two
24 years. We didn't hear a peep from them and then
25 all of a sudden, boom; they had somebody to do the

1 work. I mean this has been going on forever when
2 it comes to St. Albans 'cause that's exactly what
3 it feels like.

4 RENE HILL: Can I say one thing
5 about—

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes, thank
7 you, Pat. Thank you. Yes.

8 RENE HILL: Firstly, you're not
9 going to get the quality material and the
10 structure like that building is. That building is
11 solid. The inside is crumbling, but the outside
12 is fit.

13 PAT TORO: That building is a
14 landmark.

15 RENE HILL: It is a landmark, but
16 that building is sold. What the stuff that I see
17 being put up now today is garbage, is junk. It's
18 always faulty. It's always something wrong with
19 these new structures that go up today, but that
20 building there was built to last.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Miss?

22 DORIS SALSBURY: I'm from Long
23 Island and somehow got involved in this, and we
24 had—because I passionately believe that this is a
25

1 travesty to destroy these men and women coming
2 back being forced to tour after tour after tour,
3 and then not be able to get the healthcare to keep
4 them alive and to keep them from committing
5 suicide in enormous numbers, but we had Michelle
6 Schimel in our community, an Assemblywoman I
7 believe, wanted to see what was going on there,
8 and we made an appointment. Unfortunately, we had
9 to include the existing chair of that facility at
10 that time. He is no longer there. Well, I went
11 with them and I was a good girl, I kept my mouth
12 shut, but let me tell you, she was given a
13 portrait of something that was a fairyland. I had
14 to make a phone call because we wanted her to meet
15 with the veterans after that meeting with the
16 people who were in charge. And we were going on
17 so long that I wanted to reach them, I wanted to
18 call them. Well, they didn't let me go anywhere
19 to make a phone call. They sent one of the people
20 with them to hold my arm and take me to a place
21 where I could make that phone call. And of course
22 I couldn't say anything. The point I'm making is
23 it is such a well-developed determination to
24 falsify what really is going on there that you
25

1 must be very careful not to let them know that
2 you're coming or when.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
5 much. Thank you to all of you for your testimony.
6 Thank you, Mister... Could you please? Thank you.

7 [pause]

8 [background conversation]

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Could you
10 please, gentleman?

11 STEVEN EPPS: Yes, Steven Epps,
12 UCVCR. You know Pat has asked you if you could
13 possibly when you come to come unannounced. They
14 mentioned the auditorium. I was talking with the
15 custodial staff there at the hospital on several
16 occasions. They have intentionally, intentionally
17 allowed that auditorium to decay because that is
18 where they take people when they come to visit, so
19 that they can get the—they can think that the
20 whole place is falling apart like that. If you go
21 on some of these unused wards, they are pristine.
22 That's what you got to do is demand that they take
23 you to all over the entire facility.

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay.

25 STEVEN EPPS: 'Cause some of these

2 of Montrose and the V.A., and the V.A. outright
3 told them no because they want that property.

4 [background conversation]

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.
6 Thank you, Pat. Thank you very much. Now we want
7 to call Mr. Pierre Grace. Would you please?

8 [long pause]

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Mr. Grays,
10 will you please state your name and you can start.

11 PIERRE GRACE: Yes. My name is
12 Pierre Grace. I am member of the UCVCR and also I
13 am the secretary treasurer of Vets Helping Vets,
14 Inc. I didn't realize I'd be sitting her by
15 myself.

16 I guess just to educate you a
17 little bit about St. Albans, I was ten years old
18 when I moved to St. Albans, so I've been there a
19 number of years. St. Albans itself over the years
20 and when I had moved there, the St. Albans Naval
21 Hospital was open. And St. Albans was a thriving
22 community. The Long Island Railroad station,
23 which is still there, also had a complimentary
24 taxi-cab stand. We had ice cream parlors; we had
25 a bank; we had a diner, et cetera. It was a

1 thriving village. Over the years, after the naval
2 hospital was taken over by the Veterans Affairs,
3 over the years we've seen the hospital and the
4 community deteriorate to the point that where we
5 are today, we have so many vacant homes because of
6 foreclosures. Property values has been going up
7 and down like yo-yos. I understand this year the
8 values are up again, so our property taxes are
9 going to be up again, but yet developers want to
10 come in and they want to build homes that have no
11 relationship and no identity to the homes that are
12 already in that area. We've had developers that
13 come into the area two or three years ago.

14 They've thrown up homes that have no
15 characteristics. Some of those homes are still
16 vacant. Last year, President Obama allocated 1.4
17 billion dollars to the Veterans Administration, to
18 their budget. And to this day, we don't know why
19 the Veterans Administration— they're harping on
20 selling veteran land or they don't have money to
21 do this or do that. I know there are several
22 hospitals around the country, several V.A.
23 hospitals around the country, that either have
24 been retrofitted or built. I think one was in
25

2 Fort Worth, Texas and there was another one
3 somewhere in the Midwest.

4 Two years ago, I was in Atlanta on
5 vacation and I had sprained my ankle, so I drove
6 the St. Albans—I'm sorry—the Atlanta V.A.
7 facility. And when I got there to my surprise,
8 they have parking for patients and for guests and
9 these parking privileges they have people that
10 come and park your cars for you. They have
11 employee indoor parking there. They have huge
12 parking garages on this particular campus. It's a
13 big campus. You're talking about the South, so
14 Atlanta is in the state of Georgia and they have a
15 lot of property and they are still building on
16 that property.

17 I was in the St. Albans V.A.
18 Hospital last week, last Thursday, I was going
19 there for physical therapy. And there was a smoke
20 condition—I can't say it was a fire—but there was
21 a smoke condition in a domiciliary, which is
22 outside in the back of the St. Albans V.A. The
23 alarms are going off. The engineers they're
24 running down the hallways. They were running
25 towards the auditorium, which at one time may be

2 connected to those buildings. Well, the engineers
3 they weren't quite sure if they can still go
4 through the auditorium to reach the domiciliary
5 buildings, so they might have had to go outside,
6 and at the time, the weather was pretty cold. I
7 don't know what the condition of the smoke, smoke
8 condition was. I'm sure it was taken care of. I
9 didn't see the fire department coming to that
10 particular area.

11 From the air, the St. Albans
12 hospital when it was build looks like an anchor-
13 the anchor of the United States Navy. The grounds
14 of that hospital and itself with the greenery with
15 the cherry blossoms that are coming out in the
16 springtime, you can't take that way. That's a
17 signature of that hospital. It's the signature of
18 the community. And as veterans, and as residents
19 of the community, we want that hospital to thrive
20 and be part of the community. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
22 much, sir. Thank you for your testimony. Any
23 other speakers? None. Let me say that-let me
24 commend all of you members-you know the veterans
25 and members of the community have been spoken,

2 addressing this very, very important issue. I
3 know that many veteran groups have been spoken
4 about the urgent need to build a full-service
5 hospital with emergency room, treatment facilities
6 for mental health disorders and other illnesses
7 and low-income affordable housing for homeless
8 veterans. If the V.A. facility is eliminated, all
9 its services are eliminated, this may severely
10 impact the population of veterans living in Queens
11 and Nassau county, who will then need to travel to
12 V.A. centers in Manhattan and in Brooklyn. In
13 addition, it is also important to consider that a
14 large portion of veterans are seniors over the age
15 of 60, pointing to a growing demand for healthcare
16 services and other forms of care. And I think
17 this is a golden opportunity for the government,
18 for the V.A., for all of us to fill the gap of
19 services and to provide to our veterans exactly
20 what they deserve. And this is exactly what we
21 were supposed to do. The veterans was not
22 supposed to beg and to cry to receive what they
23 deserve.

24 [background conversation]

25 [applause]

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You know, this
3 is overdue. That exactly—a gentleman said that
4 when he was engaged in the war and services, he
5 was told that after service, he would get this and
6 that, but he didn't get what they said. And I
7 think this is not acceptable. Our nation should
8 not treat out veterans like that, and it is our
9 responsibility, our moral responsibility, the
10 moral responsibility of each one of us to come
11 together and to demand to the V.A. to do exactly
12 what is right, what is proper, which is providing
13 the services that our veterans need, and I am
14 telling you that I'm going to stand with you as I
15 did before. And I'm going to call on the
16 different veterans groups and my colleagues and
17 government also to strategize and to see what is
18 the best way what we should do in order to
19 overcome and to get this state of the art and
20 full-service hospital for our V.A.—our veterans.

21 The first thing that I'm going to
22 do, I'm going to try to have a meeting with the
23 Mayor and also the other elected officials at the
24 city, state and federal level And I would like
25 to ask Mr. Pat to meet with me after the hearing.

2 Thank you again for your contribution. Thank you
3 for your—thank you.

4 [applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Meeting
6 adjourned.

7 [gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Uhlig 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 *Kimberley Uhlig*

Date February 7, 2011