

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DISPOSITIONS AND CONCESSIONS

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June 20, 2013
Start: 11:30 pm
Recess: 2:12 pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E: STEPHEN T. LEVIN
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Inez E. Dickens
Charles Barron
Sara M. Gonzalez
Peter A. Koo

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

Dorothy Lewandowski
Queens Parks Commissioner

Gordon Smith
Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer
United States Tennis Association

Don Tone
Traffic Engineer
AKRF

Edwin Westley
President
Jackson Heights Beautification Group

Giovanna Reid
District Manager
Community Board 3

Will Sweeney
Jackson Heights Green Alliance

Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe
United States Tennis Association

Katrina Adams
Executive Director
Harlem Junior Tennis and Education Program

Holly Light
Executive Director
New Yorkers for Parks

Jim Carlson
MJI

Felipe Adrorro
Board Member
Make the Road New York

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

John Tordash
Triumph of Civic Virtue

Jeffrey Croft
New York City Park Advocates

Yvette Ramirez
Make the Road New York

Carlos Aguirre
Make the Road New York

Eric Abrams
Queens Chamber of Commerce

Rob McKay
Director of Public Relations, Marketing and Tourism
Queens Economic Development Corporation

Shrinavaz Mahankali
Concerned Citizen

Scott Daly
New York's Junior Tennis and Learning

Ed Stanishevski
General Manager
Sheraton LaGuardia East Hotel

Tommy Cassino
Electrician
Local Union 3

Eric Rebhuhn
Men's Tennis Coach
St. John's University

Jonathan Gamberg
City Parks Foundation

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning
3 and welcome to the Subcommittee on Planning,
4 Dispositions and Concessions. My name is Stephen
5 Levin. I am council member and chair of the
6 subcommittee. I am joined this morning by my
7 colleague, chair of the Zoning Subcommittee
8 Council Member Mark Weprin of Queens, Subcommittee
9 member Council Member Inez Dickens of Manhattan,
10 Council Member Julissa Ferreras of Queens whose
11 district this item is in. We have Council Member
12 Peter Koo of Queens, Council Member Sara Gonzalez
13 of Brooklyn, chair of the Land Use Committee,
14 Leroy Comrie of Queens, Council Member Diana Reyna
15 of Brooklyn and Council Member Charles Barron
16 Subcommittee member of Brooklyn. Today we have
17 one action on our agenda, and it is the United
18 States Tennis Association, Land Use number 852,
19 USTA expansion that is in Queens Community
20 Districts 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9, C130155PPQ is an
21 application submitted by the New York City
22 Department of Parks and Recreation and the USTA
23 National Tennis Center Incorporated pursuant to
24 Section 197-C of the New York City Charter for the
25 disposition of a lease of city owned property to

2 the USTA National Tennis Center Incorporated
3 northerly of United Nations avenue north between
4 Meridian Road and Path of the Americas. That is
5 Block 2018, Lot 1 within Flushing Meadows Corona
6 Park. Testifying on this item this morning will
7 be Dorothy Lewandowski, the Queens Parks
8 Commissioner and Gordon Smith of the USTA, but
9 before I call you to the witness table, I would
10 like to ask Council Member Julissa Ferreras to
11 make an opening statement.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Thank
13 you, Chair and good morning. I am Council Member
14 Julissa Ferreras, and I represent Council district
15 21 in Queens, which includes the National Tennis
16 Center in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. I'd like
17 to thank the Subcommittee Chair, Council Member
18 Steve Levin, and the Land use staff for their hard
19 work on today's hearing. The community has been
20 very engaged in this ULURP process, With six
21 community boards weighing in, we have also seen
22 the community galvanize around protecting Flushing
23 Meadows Corona Park and calling on the USTA to be
24 more accessible and open to the community
25 residents. In response to requests from myself

1 and other electeds and after listening to the
2 concerns of the community, the USTA agreed to
3 return 1.56 acres of their current alienated and
4 leased land to Flushing Meadows Corona Park for
5 public use in exchange for the .68 acres of
6 parkland they seek to alienate. It includes open
7 space and five tennis courts, which the USTA will
8 maintain and repair and the Parks Department will
9 control for most of the year. While the return of
10 parkland is a welcome concession by the USTA there
11 are still many outstanding issues that must be
12 resolved before we can conclude the review of this
13 project. We must start it off with sufficient
14 resources so that it will be able to take on the
15 challenge of improving its long term neglect. The
16 community deserves an adequately maintained park,
17 and it has been loud and clear on this subject.
18 We must be certain that there is a comprehensive
19 traffic management plan in place for the vehicle
20 traffic in and around the park both for the U.S.
21 Open and for the years to come that takes all the
22 multiple construction plans that are proposed for
23 this area into account. Parking cars on the grass
24 in the park must be the absolutely last resort.
25

1 We cannot sacrifice the quality and maintenance of
2 Flushing Meadows Corona Park for the convenience
3 of parking on the grass. Throughout this ULURP
4 the USTA has been more engaged with the
5 surrounding community. We see a plan for further
6 community outreach and engagement on the part of
7 the USTA so that the community can truly feel that
8 the National Tennis Center is a public space. I
9 look forward to the testimony the Department of
10 Parks and Recreation and the USTA regarding this
11 project. I am also happy to see that so many of
12 my constituents from the community are here today
13 to testify. Their testimony will bring an
14 important perspective on the proposed project.
15 While I take my responsibility as a council member
16 representing this district very seriously, I'd
17 like to also make mention that I am also a member
18 of the budget negotiating team and I take that
19 seriously as well, and they are actually holding
20 meetings as we speak, so I will be popping in and
21 out and it means no disrespect or that I take one
22 over the one; it's just very, very hard to be in
23 two places at one time and seven months pregnant,
24 so thank you very much, Chair.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
3 much, Council Member Ferreras. I think Council
4 Member Barron can ask the tough questions if you
5 are not in the room, so I will leave it to
6 Charles. With that, I would like to ask Dorothy
7 Lewandowski, the Queens Parks Commissioner and
8 Gordon Smith of the USTA to come to the witness
9 table and make their presentation. Okay. Please
10 proceed.

11 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: Good
12 morning, Chair Levin and members of the
13 subcommittee. I am Dorothy Lewandowski. I am the
14 Queens Borough commissioner for the New York City
15 Department of Parks and Recreation. I am joined
16 today by Larry Scott Blackmon, our deputy
17 commissioner and Janice Melnick, the administrator
18 for Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Thank you for
19 inviting us to testify on behalf of the Land Use
20 review application in support of the USTA Billie
21 Jean King National Tennis Center strategic vision
22 project. Parks is the co-applicant with the
23 United States Tennis Center, USTA, for the ULURP
24 application to allow for the disposition by long
25 term lease of 0.68 acre parcel within Flushing

1 Meadows Corona Park to the USTA. Parks in
2 coordination with the USTA is seeking the
3 disposition approval in connection with the
4 proposed improvements and an expansion to the
5 facilities at the United States Tennis Center,
6 Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, located
7 in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens--these
8 improvements collectively known as the NTC
9 strategic vision project. The Parks Department
10 believes that the strategic vision project will
11 benefit the park users and the city through the
12 USTA's commitment to upgrade and modernize the
13 National Tennis Center, which it has managed and
14 maintained since 1978. The purpose of the
15 proposed project is to sustain the long term
16 viability of the NTC as a world class spectator
17 venue and outstanding public recreational
18 facility. It would result in much needed
19 improvements to the visitor experience and provide
20 substantial long term economic benefits to Queens,
21 New York City and the region. The NTC is one of
22 the world's largest public recreational tennis
23 facilities. For 11 months of the year, its
24 facilities are open to the public for indoor and
25

2 outdoor tennis. The NTC is also host to the U.S.
3 Open, one of the sports four grand slam
4 championship tennis tournaments. The event is
5 staged during a two week period beginning late
6 August until early September, and is attended by
7 approximately 700,000 spectators and is broadcast
8 worldwide. The disposition of the 0.68 acre
9 parcel proposed is critical to the advancement of
10 the strategic vision project. The plan allows for
11 an improved NTC site plan, circulation, visitor
12 amenities and landscaping and will include
13 construction of two new stadiums to replace the
14 existing Louis Armstrong stadium in the same
15 location and the grandstand stadium in a new
16 location at the southwest corner of the NTC site
17 as well as possible improvements to Arthur Ashe
18 stadium. The project would also include
19 modifications to tennis tournament courts and
20 ancillary buildings, the construction of two new
21 parking garages, the relocation of a connector
22 road and pedestrian enhancements, but most
23 important Parks has worked with the USTA to
24 minimize expansion beyond existing NTC lease
25 boundaries to reduce the amount of alienation of

2 parkland while meeting other project goals. The
3 project goals include maintaining and improving
4 the public availability of courts, improving NTC's
5 context within the park, the replacement and
6 upgrade of aging out of date infrastructure and
7 facilities that have reached the end of their
8 useful lives, improvement to the visitor
9 circulation and maintaining opportunities for
10 public programming throughout the year. The
11 proposed site improvements and other components of
12 the NTC strategic vision are intended to
13 collectively further the project goals set forth
14 above, addressing serious deficiencies in the
15 three existing stadiums and making the NTC more
16 comfortable and friendly to the public, fans,
17 sponsors and players and recreational users year
18 round. The 6.8 acre strip that would be alienated
19 is located north of United Nations Avenue north
20 and south of the existing NTC fence line. The
21 area is currently a mix of landscaped and paved
22 areas, including one lane of a three lane United
23 Nations Avenue north. The landscaped portion
24 includes a triangular median area near the
25 internal connector road, a median adjacent to the

2 northern most lane of United Nations Avenue north
3 and a narrow strip of lawn adjacent to the current
4 NTC fence line. The landscaping includes trees in
5 some areas, but no other park features such as
6 play equipment, benches or statues. Where trees
7 could potentially be impacted as a result of the
8 strategic vision project, Parks is evaluating
9 which ones are able to be transplanted without
10 compromising their health, and any trees which are
11 to be removed will be replaced within FMCP
12 [phonetic] or the neighboring communities as per
13 the city's tree regulations. As a result of the
14 public Land Use review process with the total of
15 six community boards and the borough president
16 Helen Marshal providing recommendations and
17 suggestions and modifications to this project as
18 well as comments received by the city planning
19 commission hearing held on April 24th regarding the
20 desire for replacement parkland. Parks has worked
21 with the USTA to identify a total of 1.56 acres
22 currently alienated for inclusion within the
23 USTA's lease premises that will now no longer be
24 permitted for USTA's exclusive use. Replacement
25 parkland for the project will be comprised of two

2 parcels totaling 1.56 acres that would be
3 rededicated as parkland. These parcels were
4 alienated in 1993 and are used as practice courts
5 with seating and related facilities during the
6 U.S. Open and other major tennis tournaments. The
7 two parcels we are looking at are the 1.31 acre
8 parcel located southeast of David Dinkins Circle
9 that contains five tennis courts and landscaped
10 areas and when not in use by the USTA these courts
11 are used by the city parks foundation for lessons,
12 hourly rentals, tournaments, leagues and special
13 events, a 2.5 landscaped parcel located just
14 beyond the eastern end of the bank of six other
15 tennis courts east of the - - the other parcel.
16 The USTA would have the use of the replacement
17 parkland parcels during the U.S. Open and subject
18 to the Parks Department's approval other
19 tournaments. In addition, the USTA would remain
20 responsible for the maintenance and repair of the
21 five tennis courts on an annual basis, so they
22 continue to be available in good condition for the
23 public use. Improvements to the park features in
24 Flushing Meadows Corona Park would also be
25 provided. The USTA is committed to Flushing

2 Meadows Corona Park, and will work with Parks to
3 facilitate park improvements to offset the .68
4 acre parcel to be added to the NTC lease premises.
5 Now I will turn it over to Gordon Davis, executive
6 director and chief operating officer of the USTA,
7 who will explain how this strategic vision plan in
8 greater detail and how the disposition before you
9 will allow for the USTA to continue its important
10 role in providing for tennis activities on behalf
11 of the public as well as hosting the U.S. Tennis
12 Open. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
14 much, Ms. Lewandowski, Commissioner. I appreciate
15 your testimony. Gordon Smith from USTA, if you
16 would like to present your testimony...

17 GORDON SMITH: I agree with
18 everything you said, except I am not Gordon Davis.

19 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: I do
20 apologize. I worked for Gordon Davis. Gordon
21 Smith.

22 GORDON SMITH: Even though we all
23 know and love Gordon Davis... I am Gordon Smith. I
24 am the executive director and chief operating
25 officer of the USTA. Thank you for this

2 opportunity to present the USTA's strategic vision
3 for the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center
4 located of course in Flushing Meadows Corona Park.
5 Our strategic vision is critical to the future of
6 the U.S. Open, and the mission of the USTA, which
7 is to promote develop and grow the sport of tennis
8 at every level across the United States. Our plan
9 is to transform the tennis center into the most
10 modern fan, player and community friendly tennis
11 facility in the world, which will also continue to
12 serve the city of New York and more than 100,000
13 citizens a year, the great majority of whom are
14 New Yorkers, as one of the preeminent public
15 tennis facilities in the world. The two week U.S.
16 Open is one of New York City's largest and most
17 valued annual public sporting event generating
18 more than 750 million dollars in economic impact
19 for the city and creating more than 6,000 seasonal
20 jobs, the vast majority of which are filled by
21 Queens and New York City residents. In addition
22 the U.S. Open is the best postcard that Queens and
23 the city of New York has. The tournament is
24 televised to over 185 countries worldwide. Since
25 moving to Flushing Meadows Corona Park in 1978,

2 the U.S. Open and the NTC with the benefit of no
3 public funds has already invested over 500 million
4 dollars in the facility, have created billions of
5 dollars in economic activity, attracted millions
6 of visitors, created thousands of permanent and
7 seasonal jobs, paid tens of millions of dollars in
8 rent to the city and enhanced the surrounding
9 community in so many ways. If approved, our plans
10 call for us to invest an additional 500 million
11 dollars and create many more jobs during the
12 construction phase. Why are we doing this?
13 Because the NTC is at a crossroads and the U.S.
14 Open is at risk of becoming an - - facility and
15 sporting event. Given the fierce competition in
16 today's sports landscape and marketplace locally,
17 nationally and internationally, it is crucial that
18 we improve the NYC and we do so now. The
19 principal goals of the vision include replacing
20 and upgrading aging infrastructure and facilities
21 that have reached the end of their useful lives.
22 Two of our stadiums were built from the old Singer
23 Bowl, built in the early 1960s for the 1964
24 World's Fair. An equally critical goal is to make
25 sure the U.S. Open is safer, more accessible and

2 more fan friendly by improving circulation for our
3 visitors, expanding public plazas and promenades
4 and increasing seating capacity to accommodate
5 additional attendees who want to come to our
6 event. We made clear to our architects at the
7 outset that we needed to accomplish these goals
8 and to make these improvements to our site with
9 the least amount of impact possible to Flushing
10 Meadows Corona park; however, in order to
11 accomplish these goals, we need a narrow strip of
12 land, which is primarily an underutilized asphalt
13 road making up .68 acres just to the south of the
14 facility. It is the green strip that you see John
15 pointing out there, but in order to ensure that
16 our footprint in the park will not expand we will
17 return almost twice that amount of land, two
18 parcels that are currently alienated and leased to
19 the USTA. John is pointing those out in the upper
20 right hand corner. Let's talk a little bit more
21 about our vision. Here is the facility and just
22 to orient you, John, do you want to show the
23 unisphere? The grand central, the seven train and
24 LIRR and where Citi Field is off to the left up in
25 that corner just to get everyone oriented. Louis

1
2 Armstrong stadium and grandstand are the two
3 stadiums--John, you may want to point up in the
4 upper right hand corner--built from the Singer
5 Bowl, which is over 50 years old. They have long
6 passed their useful lives. You can also see they
7 are located right at our east gate entrance where
8 over 90 percent of our fans enter the facility.
9 For security reasons and for comfort reasons, you
10 really don't want two stadiums right at your front
11 door. It has created a very significant security
12 and congestion and safety issue going forward. So
13 we actually have a piece of underutilized land in
14 the southwest corner that is being pointed out
15 there. That land is within our lease, and is
16 already alienated, but we have not utilized it.
17 It has been underutilized in the past. So the
18 plan is to move the grandstand stadium from where
19 it is at the northeast corner to the southwest
20 corner. The problem as you will see is there are
21 no walkways or pathways of any size whatsoever to
22 get 8,000 people from the east entrance down to
23 our new grandstand stadium. You need to have an
24 appropriate way to get large crowds in and out for
25 security, for safety and for the comfort of your

2 fans. As a result, we will need to move these
3 courts that you see at the bottom about 30 to 40
4 feet to the south of where they are now. This
5 will allow us now to have a 42 foot walkway.
6 John, if you will point out, right here, that
7 allows us to get fans spread out and down to this
8 area. We actually were advised that we needed a
9 larger walkway, but we requested that it be made
10 the minimum necessary to move those crowds, which
11 is 42 feet so that we would need as little land as
12 possible. What is that land made up of now? As
13 you will see, the red line is our current lease
14 hold and just below the south of our lease hold is
15 a three lane roadway. That three lane roadway
16 comes from the '64 World's Fair. The middle lane
17 during the fair was for trams and the outer two
18 lanes were for pedestrian walkways. That is how
19 old this asphalt roadway is. In order to be able
20 to create the passageway and walkway that we need,
21 we will only need to take one of those three lanes
22 of this three lane park roadway, and here again is
23 the area that makes up the .68 acres. As you can
24 see there are still two roadways there. What does
25 the three roadway area look like today? Here is a

1 photograph of it. As you will see on the left,
2 the fence and those trees, that is the current
3 border of our facility. As you can see there is
4 not a great deal of planning and buffer there
5 between the three roadways and where we are now.
6 In working with the parks we believe that we will
7 create a much superior park experience by taking
8 away one roadway, but by adding a very substantial
9 buffer, which will look something like this going
10 forward. The two lanes are clearly sufficient for
11 pedestrian walkway. You can see the much better
12 buffer and a much better overall park experience
13 going forward. Again, we understand that every
14 square inch of parkland is precious. There is
15 just no way to make the NTC and the Open, safer,
16 more accessible and friendly to the public and
17 fans without a minimal amount of additional
18 parkland, amounting to .68 acres, which as I said
19 is mostly made up of an existing asphalt road.
20 Our design minimally impacts the park and
21 maximizes safety and circulation within the site.
22 After listening closely to elected officials and
23 community board members and local park users as I
24 said, we will be returning almost double that
25

2 amount of land, 1.56 acres that has already been
3 previously alienated to us. This isn't about
4 expanding our footprint in the park. This is
5 about using minimal additional land to
6 substantially improve the facility. Other
7 critical projects that are part of the vision, but
8 which do not require a vote include rebuilding a
9 new Louis Armstrong stadium, building a retail
10 building to the right of that, improving our
11 parking garages on each of the north ends, redoing
12 our practice court facilities and some other
13 stadium courts along the way. We believe that
14 this vision and the USTA capital investment over
15 the next seven plus years will build upon the
16 strong foundation we have built in the park over
17 the past 35 years and continue to increase the
18 economic benefit to the city, employment and
19 community services from this Queens jewel. Thank
20 you for the opportunity to present our vision, and
21 I am happy to answer questions. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
23 much. We have been joined by Council Member Peter
24 Vallone of Queens, and I am going to turn it over
25 to my colleagues for some questions first, so I

2 will start with Council Member Julissa Ferreras.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Thank
4 you, Chair, and I am going to ask a few questions,
5 and then we will open it up because I know some of
6 my other colleagues sit on the budget negotiating
7 team also and then we will circle back for the
8 second round. Let's talk specifically about the
9 expansion, and I guess this either Department of
10 Parks or you, Mr. Smith, can answer. Once the
11 construction is complete, how many additional new
12 visitors do you anticipate the expansion will
13 bring to the National Tennis Center on a daily
14 basis during the U.S. Open?

15 GORDON SMITH: Additional fans?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Yes.

17 GORDON SMITH: The plan would be
18 that there would be an additional 10,000 fans for
19 the day session only for the first eight days of
20 the tournament.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Why is it
22 only the day session?

23 GORDON SMITH: The night sessions
24 only have programming in Arthur Ashe stadium and
25 does not include programming in the outer courts,

2 so it wouldn't make sense to have additional fans.
3 We don't have additional programming at night to
4 provide to them.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Dottie,
6 can you speak on the impact that this could
7 potentially have the on - - walkway if any from
8 the seven line?

9 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: We don't
10 see any major impact in relation to the - - from
11 the seven line. It is used regularly not only by
12 tennis fans during the open, but yearlong by
13 everyone else who uses the park, so no impact.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Sorry I
15 called you Dottie, Commissioner. What has the
16 USTA done to examine the holistic impact of the
17 construction for the NTC expansion, which will be
18 occurring at the same time possibly as the
19 Willet's Point redevelopment plan?

20 GORDON SMITH: Well, we have done
21 the planning sufficient to tell us that all of our
22 construction and all of the staging will be done
23 within our 42 acre premises so that we would not
24 have an external impact during construction on
25 other areas in the Park.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: so let's
3 bring this is because these constructions--both
4 potentially very large constructions are going to
5 be done within .30 miles of one another. So when
6 we talked about the traffic plan in some of my
7 conversations it seems that there is no taking
8 into account that you will lose space that you use
9 currently at Citi Field that could potentially be
10 where we have a 1.4 million square foot mall being
11 built, so at what point do you take that into
12 consideration for your fans because that seems to
13 be the place where the bulk of your fans park?

14 GORDON SMITH: Are you talking
15 about after the completion of the Willet's
16 project?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Well,
18 during, I mean and during construction or whatever
19 the process.

20 GORDON SMITH: As we understand it,
21 there will be parking beneath the Willet's project
22 and that there will be sufficient and excess
23 amount of parking that we would need during the
24 event. We certainly would work very closely with
25 Willets and with the city during construction to

2 make sure we have enough parking, but we believe
3 that the part of City Field parking that will not
4 be impacted will be sufficient for the tournament
5 during construction.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: So I know
7 this is a pretty long ULURP process, and I would
8 like that at some point we get something more
9 concrete because it needs to be part of a traffic
10 plan, and there might potentially be enough
11 parking spots eventually, but while both sites are
12 under construction, I need to better understand
13 where are your people parking. I think it has
14 been clear after hearing from six community boards
15 that parking on the grass is a very big issue in
16 our community, and it is just not something that
17 we can take lightly and I am sure you don't
18 either, but even as a last resort it shouldn't be
19 an option at all, and to not take into account the
20 other huge projects that are happening around you
21 at this point in this process concerns me. So
22 Commissioner, can you explain to me the engagement
23 of NYPD, the National Tennis Center and Parks?
24 How do you engage for a traffic plan because it
25 seems that I have been asking for a traffic plan

2 and there really is one, but not really, and so
3 how do you roll out one of the largest events in
4 New York City, how do you engage with NYPD on a
5 yearly basis for parking?

6 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: The NYPD
7 coordinates with all of the city agencies prior to
8 the U.S. Open and in most cases during this month;
9 upcoming month of July begins that process so that
10 we coordinate all the activities that would be
11 affected in terms of this year's Open. In terms
12 of parking, the parking that we currently use for
13 the Open for the public are within the Citi Field
14 parking lots, and the only time that we go into
15 the park for public parking on days where there
16 are what's called overlap parking, so if there is
17 a game--the Mets are playing we use then Flushing
18 Meadows Park to accommodate the patrons who would
19 not be able to park in the Citi Field lots. All
20 of those plans are coordinated with the police
21 department on an annual basis dependent upon the
22 number of games that may impact in terms of
23 overlap or any other conditions that may be
24 existing.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Is there

2 any community input at any point within the
3 traffic plan? When you identify the traffic
4 process is there a point where the community is
5 engaged?

6 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: You
7 know, I need to coordinate with PD. We do make
8 advisories to the local community boards. Beyond
9 that, I am not certain.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Okay. I
11 think we need to perhaps follow up on those
12 conversations to engage the community on why the
13 decisions are being made and what the process is,
14 so let's find a way and maybe that is including
15 the community board representatives in these
16 conversations at a minimal. When there is the
17 grass parking on the lots, can you explain to me
18 because we need clarity on when--there are lots
19 that seem to have grass now that the tennis center
20 can park in now. Is that correct? In overflow
21 lots? Or better yet, scratch that. What are the
22 lots that are currently under the purview of the
23 National Tennis Center?

24 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: the lots
25 that are currently used by the Tennis Center, they

2 are divided into two categories. There are
3 lettered lots and numbered lots. The numbered
4 lots in general are used for general public within
5 the park primarily on those days where there is
6 overlap with the Mets and we bring persons into
7 the park. The lettered lots is part of the lease
8 agreement. The city is required to provide a
9 certain number of park spaces that are what we
10 call dedicated and non-dedicated and that those
11 parking lots, the lettered lots A through H are
12 located within the park for the tennis event.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And those are
14 paved lots? That is not...?

15 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: It is a
16 combination of both paved and grass areas.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: So which
18 are the grass areas?

19 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: The two
20 that we currently use that are on parkland are
21 parking lot letter C and letter H.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Letter C
23 and H.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: - -

25 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: I am

2 sorry. C and G.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: C and G are the
4 grass ones or the paved ones?

5 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: Grass.
6 Two small grass lots.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What is the
8 condition of those lots at any given time? And
9 how many days a year are those lots used by
10 National Tennis Center?

11 GORDON SMITH: Just on overflow
12 days--I am sorry. Just on conflict days with the
13 Mets, which is usually somewhere three to five.
14 It varies on the schedule year to year. We
15 obviously work with MLB trying to reduce that
16 number, but there will be some conflict days.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We can't play
18 away games during--

19 GORDON SMITH: Not for a full two
20 week period. It is very difficult.

21 [background conversation]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: We are
23 talking about future years.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And how many
25 spaces are in those two, three lots?

2 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: I don't
3 have the exact numbers, but they are relatively
4 small grass areas. The C lot--

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I am hearing
6 from somebody in the audience who says 3600.

7 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: No,
8 those are the total numbers. The C lot and the G
9 lot are relatively small. The C is a small grass
10 area just south of the--

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Like 15 spaces
12 or like 200 spaces or 800 spaces?

13 GORDON SMITH: This is a
14 representative from AKRF that can answer that
15 question if he may.

16 DON TONE: Hi. My name is Don Tone
17 [phonetic]. I am a traffic engineer with AKRF and
18 contributed to--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Can you
20 put your mic a little closer please?

21 DON TONE: --and contributed to the
22 EIS [phonetic] traffic and transportation chapter.
23 There is a methodology that the police follow
24 during conflict dates when the Mets are home at
25 the same time as the U.S. Open. Typically the

2 offsite parking that is most active during the
3 first week of the tournament when the daytime
4 session is busiest and the methodology that the
5 police follow is that there is paved lots that
6 exist within Flushing Meadows Corona Park. The
7 largest one is what they call the number 4 lot,
8 which is located adjacent to the right of way of
9 the LIE, and then there is another large paved
10 parking lot under the Van Wyck.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: When you
12 describe them, tell me how many spaces and whether
13 they are paved or not, if you could do that.

14 DON TONE: Yes, the first lot that
15 is prioritized is the number 4 lot, approximately
16 950 spaces.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And that is
18 paved.

19 DON TONE: And it's paved. On
20 those overflow days, the police will direct the
21 people to that lot first. When that lot gets
22 full, they will start parking people on lot number
23 2 and 3, which are on the north side of the LIE.
24 Those each have been 3 and 500 spaces.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Each.

2 DON TONE: Yes, each, and they are
3 the land banked grass parking areas.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Those are
5 grass.

6 DON TONE: Those are grass.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, and what
8 is the use of those lots throughout the rest of
9 year? There is 362 days or 360 days of the year
10 where that is not being used--

11 DON TONE: [interposing] The paved
12 lots is not used--it is used for the people who
13 enjoy the park that would come and park.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What about 2
15 and 3?

16 DON TONE: 2 and 3 are used as
17 recreational fields.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Not parking?

19 DON TONE: Not parking.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So these are
21 recreational like a regular park with grass and
22 kids run around and they play and - - that kind of
23 thing.

24 DON TONE: That is correct.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so what is

2 the impact then of the parking for those days
3 where the cars where there is 3 to 500 cars on
4 those lots, and what is the impact to the general
5 upkeep or condition of the parkland?

6 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: Well,
7 first for those few days that those areas are used
8 for parking, the public who would recreate on
9 those spaces use other locations within the park.
10 We also do work with the USTA post event where we
11 go back and do any restoration on those lawn areas
12 that need to be done, so we do restoration
13 afterwards--a combination of aerating and seeding
14 as needed to put the field back in shape.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In other words
16 is the grass trampled? Does it need to be
17 reseeded every year as a result? I am trying to
18 visualize what it looks like in September after
19 the U.S. Open.

20 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: They are
21 still grass areas, but as any lawn area that we
22 use in a number of spots throughout the city for
23 recreational purposes as well, we go in in the
24 fall and do an aeration of the field and then over
25 seeding, so we do these on these fields as well.

2 They are not severely impacted by the use of this
3 for vehicles.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And people pay
5 a fee to park in these lots on overflow days?

6 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: They do.
7 In the absence of having the Citi Field parking
8 lots available, the numbered lots within Flushing
9 Meadows Park are available for patron parking.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Same price as
11 Citi Field?

12 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And the
14 proceeds from that go to USTA or to the Parks
15 Department or...?

16 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: They go
17 to the city.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: To Citi
20 field or to the city?

21 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: City
22 Field, the City Field collects the revenue through
23 their parking - - in park.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So it goes to
25 Citi Field, not the city.

2 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: Citi
3 Field has the concession through their in park
4 parking operator to run that facility.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So it doesn't
6 go to the general fund of New York City?

7 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: It goes
8 to the Mets.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: To the Mets.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Yeah,
11 that is confusing. So that goes to the Mets. If
12 you park on the grass area that goes to the Mets
13 also?

14 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: The Mets
15 parking operator in park manages the parking in
16 the park when Citi Field lots are not available,
17 so yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So when we
19 collect revenue of whatever it is 15 or 20 or 35
20 dollars for a day so people park on city owned
21 land, the revenue goes to the New York Mets. I
22 just want to make that clear.

23 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: I
24 believe that is true.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Now as a

2 result of--if the plan is to move forward as
3 proposed that would--so there is two additional
4 parking lots that would then on the northwest and
5 northeast corners of your footprint that would
6 eliminate the need for this overflow parking on
7 grassy areas or no? how many parking spots is
8 this proposed--

9 GORDON SMITH: [interposing] There
10 is actually just a few hundred extra places
11 something less than--

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I am sorry, Mr.
13 Smith, can you identify yourself. Every time you
14 speak you have to identify yourself for the
15 record.

16 GORDON SMITH: I am sorry. Gordon
17 Smith again. The answer is that that is just less
18 than 400 additional parking, and so that really
19 wouldn't alleviate the problem. The parking
20 onsite that we are adding is about 400 spaces
21 only, and really wouldn't alleviate the problem on
22 overflow days.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So it would cut
24 into it though if there is between 3 and 500, so
25 there is 600 and 1,000 parking spots on the grassy

2 areas in the park now that are utilized on
3 overflow days. 400 of those would be absorbed by
4 your new lots?

5 GORDON SMITH: 400 additional
6 places are not general parking places. The people
7 can come in without a reservation and park. They
8 are parking for broadcasters, for suite holders,
9 for other purposes that we don't have enough
10 parking for, not for general parking.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And where do
12 they park now? Where do those people park now?

13 GORDON SMITH: They would park in
14 the general parking areas, so that we will be
15 reducing that to some degree.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You have a
17 breakdown of the number of your patrons percentage
18 wise that drive and that use public
19 transportation, so if you can provide for me a
20 breakdown of what--

21 GORDON SMITH: [interposing] Yeah,
22 it is substantially greater than 50 percent now of
23 our patrons take public transportation. We have
24 worked very hard on that. We have substantially
25 increased public transportation usage in people

2 coming to our event. We will continue to do that,
3 and we have driven that number up very
4 substantially over recent years.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What percentage
6 drive now?

7 GORDON SMITH: Go ahead. I am
8 sorry.

9 DON TONE: Donald Tone again. 26
10 percent will use personal cars.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: 26
12 percent.

13 DON TONE: Out of 100 percent of
14 the patrons.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Get me a
16 number.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How many
18 patrons a day?

19 DON TONE: Let me break it down,
20 your first question. The proposed increase in
21 attendance would be 10,000 or so.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: I am
23 sorry. I didn't hear you.

24 DON TONE: The proposed increase in
25 attendance for example is 10,000.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That is now
3 what we are asking. What we are asking is how
4 many patrons a day are currently going. We know
5 what the increase is likely to be. What is the
6 current number of patrons.

7 DON TONE: 26 percent will drive,
8 approximately 35 to 4,000.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm not asking
10 that. Take one step back. What is the current
11 number of patrons per day that go to see the U.S.
12 Open? Hard number. How many patrons a day?

13 GORDON SMITH: Gordon Smith, USTA,
14 between 30 and 35,000 a day will attend the U.S.
15 Open, so whatever 26 percent of 35,000 maximum is
16 would be your number.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Go ahead and
18 proceed. I just wanted to clarify exactly how
19 many we are talking about in terms of real numbers
20 and percentage. That is helpful for us to be able
21 to get a better understanding here. So proceed.
22 26 percent of 30 to 35,000 per day are driving to
23 the event.

24 DON TONE: That is correct.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: An additional

2 10,000 per day, so we are looking at between 40
3 and 45,000 per day as a result of the
4 redevelopment scenario.

5 GORDON SMITH: Gordon Smith. Yes.
6 That is correct.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So I guess I
8 would ask what additional measures maybe are you
9 looking at taking to disincentivize [phonetic]
10 people driving or to incentivize people taking the
11 train? I represent downtown Brooklyn where the
12 Barclays Center just opened up this year, and the
13 number of people driving was significantly less
14 than I had predicted and many others had predicted
15 and the parking spaces are not used significantly
16 and are underutilized and one thing--they did a
17 number of measures. They worked with Sam Schwartz
18 [phonetic] and the city decreased the number of
19 available parking spots. They have obviously a
20 huge transportation hub right underneath with the
21 LIRR, but I am just curious what efforts--are you
22 working with MTA, are you talking to MTA about
23 this, and what are they willing to do? What are
24 you willing to do? What is the city willing to do
25 to decrease the number of people driving?

2 GORDON SMITH: We have for years,
3 and will continue to work closely with the MTA,
4 and we also have the LIRR that has a stop there as
5 well. They add extra trains, both of them do
6 during the tournament. When we send out our
7 ticketing materials we make it clear how easy it
8 is and more convenient it is to take mass transit.
9 We advertise on the seven train and throughout all
10 of our materials. We work very hard to push our
11 fans to realize that it is inexpensive, it is much
12 easier, and we have been extremely successful in
13 having year over year increases in public
14 transportation ridership and we continue to want
15 to do that. Traffic and parking is a continuing
16 problem, and the answer is mass transit and we
17 intend to pursue it in every way we can.

18 DON TONE: This is Don Tone again.
19 It has been reflected over the past five or so
20 years with the continuing trend in market share of
21 transit to the U.S. Open. It used to be in the
22 mid-40s, and every year it is up or two a tick,
23 and now it is into 55 percent of the people arrive
24 using mass transit to the open.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: I wanted

2 to--I am going to ask just one or two more
3 questions because I want to give my colleagues an
4 opportunity to respond, and actually you said were
5 a part of the EIS, and so I will ask in developing
6 the EIS. I wanted to circle back on the plans.
7 You had to take into account the future of the
8 area, and that included the redevelopment of
9 Willets Point, and I am very concerned as I said
10 earlier that the traffic plan will be reviewed on
11 a yearly basis when you no longer have this
12 general lot, which I am assuming is the larger lot
13 where most of your people park. What will happen
14 when ground breaks there? What is your plan?

15 DON TONE: Don Tone again.

16 Willet's Point was an important component of our
17 FDIS. We looked closely at phase 1a, and to
18 clarify that, the parking that will be displaced
19 during the first phase of Willet's Point will not
20 be lost. It is going to be relocated to a point
21 across to another lot located across 126th Street
22 on the other side of the city. So although the
23 number of spaces won't be lost, it will just be a
24 different location.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Now I

2 know currently when you transport people from
3 parking lot H, which is a significant walk from
4 the stadium, this new lot space will be an
5 additional walk to the stadium, so do you plan to
6 add more shuttles into the park to get your
7 patrons to your games?

8 DON TONE: We haven't discussed any
9 changes in shuttle service. The actual location
10 of the temporary lot on phase 1a is still very
11 much within walking distance of the - - .

12 GORDON SMITH: When we see where
13 the lots are on how much usage they have, we will
14 address the transportation issue. It is something
15 very much on our radar.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: I think
17 we need to address that rather soon. Is there a
18 shuttle service from your parking lots 4 and 7
19 which seem like a I would think the distance is
20 about maybe a mile, Commissioner, - - .

21 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: The
22 answer to your question is yes. The numbered
23 lots, the four--and we have rarely used seven. We
24 have not used that in quite some time, but from
25 the four lots, yes, there is a shuttle.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: So why
3 wouldn't we use seven as opposed to parking on
4 grass?

5 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: You
6 could. Seven though is also on the southern end
7 of the park where a number of persons who use the
8 lake area park as well, so we made the balance of
9 also having spaces available for the general
10 public.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: So the
12 general public clearly can't park on grass because
13 that is part of the USTA's kind of security I
14 guess where you encompass--anyone who visits the
15 stadium during the U.S. Open is probably one of
16 the safest times to be in Flushing Meadows Park
17 because there is cops everywhere, and the lighting
18 is incredible, but I am asking if we are having an
19 issue with parking on grass, why wouldn't we
20 motivate patrons to park on seven? It is only a
21 couple of days, between three and five days, and
22 have whatever appropriate services you have now.
23 So is it because it is an inconvenient lot at
24 seven as opposed to parking really close on the
25 grass?

2 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: You
3 would have the potential to shuttle from seven.
4 We have not reached the numbers where we needed to
5 go in there and let that lot available for general
6 public - - . we could revisit that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: I would
8 like to revisit that depending on what is the
9 total number of the grass parking that we
10 currently have, so if it is 700 cars, 1,000 cards,
11 3,000 cars, however many the number of the cars
12 are, which I would like a number at some point, I
13 think that we should prioritize the lots that you
14 have highlighted and you have numbered already,
15 and they are asphalted lots used as parking
16 currently, and that way we can address the grass
17 issue.

18 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: We will
19 certainly look at that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The grass use
23 issue seems to be important, and I think that it
24 is an impact that park users really see and feel
25 because what you are seeing there is a constant or

2 consistent or repetitive impact on what is green
3 and open space, and so I think that I would urge
4 you to through this process come up with a plan
5 that would come as close to full elimination of on
6 the grass parking as possible. That's what I am
7 hearing from community members. I would like to
8 call on Council Member Peter Koo first,
9 subcommittee member to ask a couple of questions.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Hi. Mr.
11 Smith, I just wanted to ask you a few questions
12 about what kind of community benefits USTA
13 provides for the neighborhood, either the
14 neighborhood schools or neighborhood business? Do
15 you have any plans to increase the community
16 benefits?

17 GORDON SMITH: As you know,
18 Councilman, we have been involved with the schools
19 through our Aces [phonetic] program for some time.
20 We provide many free hours in programming to
21 communities. We plan to have quarterly
22 communications and meetings with the community
23 boards. We plan on having a newsletter. We are
24 exploring having a Queens Day during our qualis
25 [phonetic], which will provide discounts, local

1 entertainment to emphasize the diversity of the
2 community. We have a mobile unit called smash
3 zone that we are going to try to get into the
4 community during the summer and during the open.
5 As you know, we recently relocated our anthem
6 singer tryouts to Queens. We used to have it in
7 Manhattan. We have made arrangements for--we have
8 6,000 seasonal jobs. We have made arrangements to
9 be a local Queens specific job fair open only to
10 Queens residents. We plan to open up our
11 facilities more to the community to have
12 graduations, to use our meeting rooms. We are
13 going to distribute 5,000 tickets through local
14 agencies to Arthur Ashe kids day. We also are
15 going to introduce a program so that local people
16 from the community and their entire family can
17 come and learn tennis for a very nominal fee and
18 then continue in the program if they want to for a
19 highly discounted fee. We have been looking very
20 hard and working very hard, working closely with
21 the community boards and with the bids as well on
22 the business side to try and expand our community
23 involvement with Queens.
24

25 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Can you put a

2 price tag--if you add everything together, how
3 much is it? One million dollars? Or two million
4 dollars?

5 GORDON SMITH: I haven't tried to
6 put a price tag on it, and a lot of the things we
7 are talking about are new, and we really don't
8 have a price tag. We have been working closely
9 with Commissioner Ferreras [phonetic] and her
10 staff and trying to put these new community items
11 together. I don't have a number for you today.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So I represent
13 Flushing. In my community always complains to me
14 that they don't get any benefits from the U.S.
15 Open because even though U.S. Open produces a lot
16 of revenues, a lot of tourists, a lot of
17 everything coming to Flushing, if you only get the
18 traffic congestion, we don't get any benefit from
19 it. So I am hoping you can produce a package, a
20 concrete package to show how much benefits we can
21 get either by allowing the small business around
22 U.S. Open to have opportunities to do business
23 inside the stadium or when the game is finished
24 when they come out, they will go to the
25 neighborhood or they will go to Corona or they

2 will go to Flushing, enjoy dinner there, or do
3 sightseeing or buy some stuff in the neighborhood.
4 You have to have a plan to increase that. - -
5 concrete plan, not just empty talks. Before we
6 used to ask you, but only we get lip service. Oh,
7 we are going to do it, but nothing came out of it.

8 GORDON SMITH: As you know, Council
9 Member, for the first time last year we actually
10 had a kiosk at the open in a very prime location
11 to provide information to our patrons about
12 Queens, about Flushing, about Corona. We are
13 going to expand and improve that kiosk this year,
14 so we have heard you and we are starting to do
15 concrete things. we will reach out to the
16 Roosevelt BID and to the Flushing BID as well to
17 work directly with how we can in addition to the
18 kiosk do more things to have our patrons go to
19 Queens and eat there and stay there and visit
20 there.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: What about job
22 opportunities? Of all those jobs what is the
23 percentage going to the local neighborhood to
24 Corona, to Flushing - - ?

25 GORDON SMITH: It is a very

2 substantial percentage of the jobs. I believe it
3 is greater than 40 percent of all the seasonal
4 jobs go to Queens natives and the great great
5 majority to New York City citizens for all of the
6 jobs, but something north of 40 percent go to
7 Queens, and we think that number will rise because
8 for the first time, we will have a Queens specific
9 job fair, which will precede the other job fair
10 for persons who do not live in Queens to come. So
11 we are working hard to increase that percentage of
12 jobs being given to Queens people.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: One more last
14 question. How many board members do you have on
15 the executive board?

16 GORDON SMITH: Of the USTA?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah, USTA.

18 GORDON SMITH: 15.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: 15. Can you
20 give me the description of the composition like
21 how many minorities you have on the board?

22 GORDON SMITH: I can get back to
23 you with the specific numbers of that, okay?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: We want to
25 encourage you--I want to encourage you for the

2 board to comprise of some local and minority
3 leaders in our board.

4 GORDON SMITH: I can tell you one
5 of them is with us today, and you will hear from
6 her shortly. Katrina Adams [phonetic] is the
7 first vice president of our board. She will be in
8 all likelihood the next president of the USTA.
9 She runs the Harlem Tennis and Education program,
10 and you will hear from her shortly, and she is one
11 of those 15 board members.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Okay. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
15 much, Council Member Koo. Council Member Vallone?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Thank you.
17 Council Member Koo asked most of my questions.
18 Let's follow up. We will have to do a little
19 better than a kiosk as we are discussing, and I
20 know you have been in my office many times. I
21 appreciate that, and I want to follow up on what
22 the community boards have done. As you are well
23 aware, there are two community boards. One
24 approved it with conditions, and one said no
25 unless conditions are met, and the conditions are

2 basically the same. So I want to know whether you
3 intend to meet those conditions and what progress
4 you have made. For example, they have asked for
5 more park security. They have asked for more
6 discount courts for seniors, for you to make sure
7 to replace the damaged or removed trees, for you
8 to work with Parks Department to keep our parks
9 clean and to mitigate the traffic as Council
10 Member Ferreras who has done a great job leading
11 this has requested, so let's start with those
12 conditions. What progress have you made and do
13 you intend to honor those conditions?

14 GORDON SMITH: We live in the park.
15 We hope we treat the park as a good citizen. We
16 want there to be improvements to the park and
17 improvements in security. There are discussions
18 ongoing now about an appropriate mechanism by
19 which to do that, and we intend to be fully
20 involved in that process.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Part of
22 that mechanism was a conservancy, which I know
23 that again our chair has been working on, and into
24 that conservancy, both community boards requested
25 that there be an issue of 15 million dollar

2 investment and then between 350 and 500,000
3 dollars per year. Have you reached an agreement
4 as to what money would be paid into that
5 conservancy?

6 GORDON SMITH: No.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Is that
8 part of ongoing negotiations right now?

9 GORDON SMITH: The organization of
10 the conservancy is being discussed now, and
11 exactly what it should look like and how it should
12 be funded and who should fund it, we are involved
13 in those discussions and we will be a part of
14 that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Part of
16 your plan involves expanding retail space. How
17 much money is right now generated from your retail
18 space, and how much will this increase add to
19 those revenues?

20 GORDON SMITH: I cannot give you a
21 number as I sit here today of what we make from
22 our retail or how much we would expect it to
23 increase, but I can provide that to you right
24 away.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: That is

2 important because if the community boards have set
3 these conditions then I intend to see that those
4 conditions are honored because they represent as
5 well as we do the surrounding communities. One of
6 our chairperson's last hearings we learned that
7 both the U.S. Tennis Center and the Mets give less
8 combined in direct payments to the city than the
9 Terrace in the Park does, and now I realize there
10 are additional economic benefits that the Mets and
11 that U.S. Tennis Center provide to Queens that a
12 restaurant may not, but in light of that, I think
13 it is very important that additional money be
14 provided to our parks and that that money not be
15 used in place of city that that money be used for
16 additional improvements to the parks, and I know
17 that the community boards have made that clear.
18 As I have traveled to Queens, they have made that
19 clear. You look like you want to comment.

20 GORDON SMITH: Just to make
21 directly clear on who contributes what we are
22 presently paying, the USTA, about 2.7 million
23 dollars a year in rent to the city of New York,
24 and so we are very substantial contributor of the
25 amount that was dealt with at the last hearing.

2 The contribution of others is minimal.

3 [crosstalk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: We are
5 wondering what your actual revenue actually was?

6 GORDON SMITH: Revenue?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Annual
8 revenue?

9 GORDON SMITH: From the Open in its
10 entirety it is substantially north of 200 million
11 dollars. I can't give you an exact number, but
12 substantially north of 200 million dollars.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Let me
14 just jump back to one condition that we mentioned
15 then the trees that you are replacing. How many
16 are going to be removed completely? How many are
17 going to be damaged, and what is your plan for
18 these trees?

19 GORDON SMITH: We won't know those
20 exact numbers until we get into the construction
21 because every effort will be made to save as many
22 trees as possible. I believe the environmental
23 impact statement indicates that there could be
24 impact to as many as something north of 390 trees.
25 We expect that number to be very substantially

2 less than that. Many of the trees that we are
3 talking about, the USTA planted 20 years ago, and
4 we are investing in seeing that those trees are
5 either maintained where they are or are replanted
6 somewhere. To the extent that trees are
7 eliminated by the construction, there are very
8 strict formulas and guidelines, and we have worked
9 and will work very closely with parks to ensure
10 that replacement is done in the appropriate way
11 and as required by the Parks Department.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Obviously
13 replacement is nice, but replacing a flourishing
14 full grown tree with a new tree is never what we
15 are looking to do. It takes a while to get these
16 beautiful old trees that we have in the park.
17 Most of those trees are actually on your property
18 now. I know that because you've come to my office
19 and shown me a map of the ones that you are going
20 to move and replace. The property that you have
21 offered to the city as part of the land swap most
22 of that is taken up with tennis courts now, which
23 you would be able to use during the open, and
24 there has been some news reports about that, about
25 how that is not actually giving anything to the

2 city, since you are able to use it, but it is
3 surrounded by some other land. Does that land
4 itself without the tennis course make up for the
5 Land that you would be reacquiring from Parks
6 Department?

7 GORDON SMITH: I think the
8 important thing is that that land is currently
9 within our leasehold, therefore we could do other
10 things with it. By giving this land back to the
11 city, this land is now parkland and assured to be
12 parkland. It also is given back to ensure that
13 our footprint in the park is actually smaller
14 after this .68 acres if it is indeed transferred
15 to/alienated to us that our net area in the park
16 with be smaller, so the city gets two things. it
17 gets parkland back and ensures that it will be
18 parkland going forward and a smaller footprint for
19 the USTA and the park going forward as well.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: I am going
21 to want you to read what was handed to you because
22 I think it is going to help you but the tennis
23 courts now and the fact that they are going to
24 stay tennis courts doesn't do all that much for
25 the community, but I am interested in knowing the

2 actual amount of parkland that is surrounding
3 those courts that the city will be getting?

4 GORDON SMITH: The area that is not
5 tennis courts is .45 acres. Excuse me. The area
6 that is not tennis courts is .75 acres, slightly
7 more than the .68 acres alone, and in addition the
8 area of the tennis courts is an additional .81
9 acres.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Trying to
11 be fair to you. I wanted to make sure that that
12 was put out there because it was told to me in my
13 office, but I want everyone else to know that also
14 because I am going to end up with something that
15 isn't all that great. As you know from what
16 Council Member Koo said and so many others on the
17 community board, there is a perception that you
18 haven't been the best of neighbors when it comes
19 to having your office in Westchester and I know
20 that another one of the conditions was to do
21 something as simple as having your auditions for
22 the Star Spangled Banner in Queens. These are
23 things that the people of Queens want to see you
24 do to reach out to us since you are asking to take
25 our parkland, and we hope that you would agree to

2 do things like have the National Anthem addition
3 in Queens.

4 GORDON SMITH: We just did it.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: I didn't
6 even know. I wanted to sing.

7 GORDON SMITH: Sorry. It was at
8 the museum. We had the auditions in Queens, and
9 that is where we are going to have it. We already
10 have done it.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Well,
12 great. Things like that we shouldn't have to ask.
13 We hope that you work with us in the future, and I
14 am well over my time, but I again want to thank
15 the Chairs for doing such a great job in oversight
16 on this issue. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you,
18 Council Member Vallone. Just a couple of
19 questions that came to mind. First off, can you
20 explain why you wouldn't be able to do the
21 proposed action under your existing footprint?
22 Why is this action necessary? Why do you need--I
23 mean it's .68 acres. It is not a tremendous
24 amount of space, and this is a construction of
25 large facilities. Why is it necessary to go

2 through this step?

3 GORDON SMITH: I asked that same
4 question.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Why are you
6 putting yourself through this?

7 GORDON SMITH: I ask that question
8 almost every day, and I asked my staff that before
9 this started because this is a substantial and not
10 inexpensive procedure to go through and I
11 challenged the architects, the designers, the
12 engineers, and my staff to tell me why is this
13 necessary, and the answer is if we cannot move our
14 fans to the facilities that we are going to build
15 in a safe and secure and comfortable way we simply
16 can't do this expansion, and we are stuck with
17 where we are, and frankly, we are coming close to
18 being a second rate facility. We know what has
19 happened in New York City over the last five
20 years. we have got Barclays. We have got Met
21 Life. We have got the new Madison Square Garden,
22 so on and so forth. Internationally, all of the
23 other grand slam tournaments are building world
24 class facilities and if we can't move this stadium
25 to this different place, the grandstand, and if we

2 can't open the land that we have up to safe
3 circulation we simply can't make ourselves into a
4 facility that can compete in the local, national
5 and international marketplace. .68 acres may seem
6 like very little, but it is absolutely the
7 lynchpin for making this facility what it needs to
8 be to compete.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I am going to
10 ask Council Member Ferreras to ask a few more
11 questions, and then I just have a couple more
12 before we wrap up. Council Member Ferreras?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: I know
14 that you had stated that the annual revenue was
15 substantially north of 200 million. My
16 substantial and your north could be totally
17 different. What does that mean?

18 GORDON SMITH: I think it is not
19 250, but it could be close to that, and I can
20 provide you with a number, but it is closer to 200
21 than 300.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Okay, can
23 you just provide it for the committee please?

24 GORDON SMITH: Sure. I just don't
25 want to state anything inaccurately.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: I agree.
3 How much money will the expansion bring to the
4 USTA every year?

5 GORDON SMITH: I do not have an
6 estimate of that. I can certainly provide you
7 with that. Obviously 10,000 more people a day at
8 - - typically would be - - so that is a number we
9 can come up with.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: So in
11 your analysis in your plan for a better site you
12 have those numbers--

13 GORDON SMITH: [interposing] Oh, we
14 have some numbers. Absolutely. I can get them to
15 you. I don't have them at the top of my head.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Okay. If
17 you can provide that, I would greatly appreciate
18 it. Commissioner Lewandowski, what compensation
19 will be given to the lost trees that can't be
20 replanted?

21 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: This is
22 Dorothy Lewandowski. The city is working closely
23 with the USTA and the design plans, but any of the
24 trees that would be affected through the process
25 would be covered under the restitution requirement

2 of Local Law 3, which was passed by the Council in
3 2010.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: And the
5 restitution I know there is--can you explain the
6 restitution for us? I know that there is some
7 dollar amount potential that has to be paid for by
8 the USTA? Am I correct?

9 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: The
10 restitution is basically a formula that is devised
11 based on the diameter of the tree, so dependent
12 upon how large the tree you would then get X
13 amount of smaller trees to replace that lost
14 canopy and there is formulas that equate to that,
15 so it is not necessarily a dollar value. It
16 depends on the tree as far as the tree determines
17 what that replacement would be.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: And in
19 the restitution is it clear that those trees will
20 be replaced within Flushing Meadows Corona Park?

21 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: Yes, the
22 goal for us is to replace as many of the trees
23 that need to be taken down and replanted in this
24 process or ones that we would be transplanted
25 within Flushing Meadows Corona Park. That said,

2 given the design of the park and such, we would
3 also look around the affected community to add
4 trees within that area or the parklands as well.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: so do we
6 see that there is a substantial need outside of
7 the community where those trees would be replaced
8 outside of the park?

9 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: There
10 would certainly be potential, and as we go forward
11 on this, each one of the projects distinctly will
12 have X amount of trees within that zone that
13 potentially will be affected by this, and that
14 would then determine how far we may need to go
15 outside of the Flushing Meadow Corona Park.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: So could
17 we potentially see trees from Corona be moved into
18 I don't know Jamaica Estates?

19 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: The goal
20 would be to keep these within a relatively tight
21 area around the Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: And there
23 is a formula for tight area?

24 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: Yes, I
25 am going to say there is. I don't have it, and I

1 will share that with you.

2
3 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: I would
4 appreciate that, and my last question before we
5 hear from the community, and we are going to be
6 engaging in many conversations is back to the
7 1990s one of the challenges that I had faced in
8 the original lease agreement from the 90s is that
9 there were commitments that were made in the 90s
10 and I wanted to hear what is still relevant and
11 present today from the 90s commitment as we begin
12 to engage in commitments for 2013. For example,
13 and this is something that we have talked about
14 frequently Queens Day. It was something that was
15 discussed then. Today in 2013, nobody remembers
16 what that was. So how do I engage in this process
17 of talking about community outreach and
18 involvement so that when the next council member
19 comes hopefully a few years from now that we have
20 something that doesn't disappear as your
21 administration changes, as our administration
22 changes, so can you speak to what benefits you
23 still currently have because I want to make sure
24 that whatever we commit to is substantial for many
25 years to come and we are trying to figure out

2 those tools and ways to do that now, but if you
3 can just speak of your 90s community benefits
4 agreement?

5 GORDON SMITH: I can't recite the
6 90s community benefits agreement. I wasn't here.
7 You weren't here. I can't really address what was
8 or was not done from that period of time. What I
9 did try to address when Mr. Koo was asking
10 questions, and what we are trying to work out with
11 you is to ensure that we have a list of specific
12 community benefits where there are
13 representations, where they are known and there
14 will be affirmations as to what will happen going
15 forward and there won't be confusion 10 or 15
16 years from now looking back over what those are.
17 We plan to continue to work with your staff to
18 come up with more specifics of the types of things
19 that I have already outlined here in my testimony.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: I just
21 think that I wanted to highlight and put that in
22 testimony because it is frustrating for us all. I
23 am sure it is frustrating for you, for me that in
24 the 1990s is where agreements that were made, and
25 there is no history of it other than someone's

2 memory--a couple of council members' memory of the
3 experience that they had and even then, and I also
4 wanted to briefly ask about improvements for
5 access into--is this potentially a safety issue
6 when you have access like off of Roosevelt Avenue
7 where I know there is people that actually--Park
8 staff comes in and also people coming to the
9 games. Is that considered a security point by
10 Roosevelt Avenue in the Corona side?

11 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: This is
12 Dorothy Lewandowski. Are you asking in terms of
13 pedestrian or vehicles coming in?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS:
15 Pedestrian.

16 COMMISSIONER LEWANDOWSKI: During
17 the U.S. Open, the police department does control
18 all of the traffic control issues on there, so a
19 combination of vehicular traffic, and they also
20 have the traffic agents who assist with pedestrian
21 traffic entry into the park as well.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Okay.
23 Chair, thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you,
25 Council Member Ferreras. I just had one question

2 that came to mind, and then I will ask the public
3 to come up and to testify, but with regard to the
4 amount of rent that you pay annually to the city
5 of New York for your lease, how is that
6 negotiated? How are the terms, and does it
7 change, does it amortize? How does that work?

8 GORDON SMITH: There is a base
9 amount of rent plus a percentage, and over the
10 years as our income has gone up, the amount of the
11 lease payments have gone up. it was negotiated
12 when the lease was negotiated. It is a 99 year
13 lease, and so the rent provision has changed, but
14 only because of the percentage piece of the lease
15 agreement.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So there is a
17 base rent, and then there is a percentage of your
18 revenue that goes towards the city?

19 GORDON SMITH: Correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What is that
21 percentage?

22 GORDON SMITH: One percent.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That term
24 hasn't gone up?

25 GORDON SMITH: There is no

2 escalator in the lease for that.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And there is no
4 provision for any renegotiation of the lease with
5 the city?

6 GORDON SMITH: Not provision. No.
7 Not in the lease.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.
9 Obviously in a city where the average New Yorker
10 usually pays around 30 percent of their income in
11 rent, it's a negotiated lease. I am just curious
12 about the terms of it, and how and so if you were
13 to get more revenue, so as a result of this 10,000
14 people more a day, your revenue goes up, the
15 amount of rent you pay then goes up.

16 GORDON SMITH: It does go up, and I
17 would simply note that although we pay substantial
18 amounts of rent, we also bring to the city 750
19 million dollars in economic impact every year.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member
21 Ferreras?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Of course
23 this was going to happen. I got to go downstairs
24 and ask this question, so I will be quick. I just
25 wanted to--I know that you have been engaging for

2 the small businesses and talking to the bids in
3 the area, but I think as you plan out and perhaps
4 as an evaluation after the kiosk what I have heard
5 is that the kiosk has become more of an
6 information center 'cause people just go to the
7 first kiosk they see, and I know that it was in
8 the hopes that let's put this as prominently as we
9 can. I think we need to think that out, and maybe
10 its signage is improvement whatever the case is, I
11 think you should speak to the experts, which I am
12 not on this. I know that you mentioned the Harlem
13 Tennis Program and I had spoken to some other of
14 your experts that have come in and told me about
15 all the things you do across the country--the U.S.
16 Open that is. Not the National Tennis Center.
17 Corona is where you live, and that is my top
18 priority. Flushing and all of these communities
19 around us, so it is almost as if you disrespect
20 our communities--not disrespect, but you discount
21 our immediate opportunities, and we shouldn't just
22 have the schools come in and participate. We need
23 enrichment programs that are real just like you
24 provide in California or in Chicago. I know you
25 have a great program with the first lady, but

2 these are things that are not trickling in to our
3 local communities, and that is the concern that
4 our communities have amongst all the other things,
5 but that is a real issue, and when I am faced with
6 childhood obesity and the largest elementary
7 school, the most populated elementary school in
8 the country just ten blocks away from your
9 stadium, we really need to do a better job.

10 GORDON SMITH: I will tell you,
11 number one, we are proud of the things we do do in
12 your area. We are proud of the Aces program. We
13 are proud of NYJTL, which provides free court time
14 and instruction, but we can do more and we should
15 do more, and we are in discussions with you on
16 doing more, and we will.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Thank
18 you.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you,
20 Council Member Ferreras. I want to thank this
21 panel. We have had you up here for close to two
22 hours peppering you with questions, but I do want
23 to thank you very much for your testimony and for
24 your forthright answers. I would like to ask you
25 as this process moves forward that you continue to

2 have an open dialogue particularly with Council
3 Member Ferreras, but with this committee as well,
4 and if there is information that is requested that
5 you can get it to us in an expedited fashion
6 because that will help us do our due diligence,
7 and so I do want to thank you again. I appreciate
8 your testimony. Thank you. We are going to call
9 on the public. We have over 30 people that have
10 been signed up to testify, and I appreciate the
11 public's patience as we have gone through the
12 testimony of USTA and the Parks Department. I
13 just want to speak for a second about the ground
14 rules. Each member of the public will have three
15 minutes to testify. I ask you to keep your
16 testimony to those three minutes. After three
17 minutes, I will ask you to wrap it up, so keep an
18 eye on the clock and try not to go too far over,
19 and if you could refrain from applause or boos or
20 however you want to express yourself, if you could
21 refrain from doing that in a verbal way that would
22 be appreciated. If you want to note your approval
23 by doing this and your disapproval by doing that,
24 I would appreciate that. First panel is a panel
25 in opposition to the proposed action. Will

1
2 Sweeney [phonetic], Edwin Westley [phonetic],
3 Giovanna Reid [phonetic] and Carlos Aguirre
4 [phonetic]. Please identify yourself before you
5 deliver your testimony. Whoever is ready can go
6 first. Thanks.

7 EDWIN WESTLEY: Thank you very
8 much, Mr. Chairperson, for inviting us to
9 participate in this hearing. I am here as the
10 spokesperson for the Jackson Heights
11 Beautification Group. I am the president of the
12 Jackson Heights Beautification Group, and we are
13 opposed to this application. The National Tennis
14 Center is a gated community on 42 acres--

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: If you can
16 identify yourself by name please.

17 EDWIN WESTLEY: I am sorry. Edwin
18 Westley.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

20 EDWIN WESTLEY: The National Tennis
21 Center is a gated community of 42 acres of prime
22 parkland in Flushing Meadows Corona Park
23 surrounded by an eight foot fence. Since it
24 opened, it has expanded further and further into
25 the park. It now wants to expand once again and

2 take more parkland. The Jackson Heights
3 Beautification Group strongly opposes handing over
4 more parkland. We love tennis. In principle, we
5 don't oppose expansion of the tennis center within
6 the current 42 acres it already has. We may even
7 be prepared to live with the transportation
8 headaches and the environmental impact of the
9 extra 100,000 people coming to tennis matches, but
10 we absolutely oppose turning over more public
11 parkland for this purpose. We are asked to
12 comment on the draft environmental impact
13 statement, but it is like pinning jello to a tree.
14 How can you vote on a work in progress? You need
15 to have the final product. The tennis center has
16 room to expand within its current boundaries. The
17 extra land is only being used to accommodate a
18 miracle mile walkway within the NTC; however, this
19 land is essential to Queens communities that rely
20 on the park as an oasis of precious green space
21 and a haven for tranquility in this crowded city.
22 The United States Tennis Association says that the
23 tennis center is open to the public 11 months of
24 the year, but access isn't cheap. While playing
25 on the outdoor courts costs 22 dollars per hour,

1 access to the indoor courts during the colder
2 months comes to a steep price of 40 to 66 dollars
3 an hour. You might think that Flushing Meadows
4 Corona Park benefits from the money the USTA pays
5 to the city to lease the land, but you would be
6 wrong. The money goes to the city's general fund.
7 It does not find its way directly back to the park
8 to support general maintenance. As it is the USTA
9 pays less than two percent of its revenue on the
10 parkland. You might think that the USTA makes
11 substantial charitable donations to help pay for
12 the park's upkeep and improvements, you would be
13 wrong again. It gave only 6,000 dollars to
14 organizations in Queens in 2010. Our top priority
15 though is preserving parkland. We want you to
16 break to tie of the community boards. The
17 community boards voted three against and three
18 for. We want you to be against this proposal and
19 this application. We want you to say no to the
20 creeping annexation of Flushing Meadows Corona
21 parkland. Any expansion of the tennis center can
22 and should remain within its current boundaries.
23 Turn over any more parkland now, and it is gone
24 forever. Thank you.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
3 much, Mr. Westley.

4 GIOVANNA REID: Good afternoon. MY
5 name is Giovanna Reid, district manager of
6 Community Board 3. Community Board on March 14th
7 this year where over 200 residents participated in
8 our public hearing and vote, the Community Board
9 recommends that the application for expansion of
10 USTA be disapproved with modifications for the
11 following reasons. One, USTA plans to construct
12 parking garages on mapped public park land.
13 Central Park nor Prospect Park do not have parking
14 garages. Also the elimination of .68 acres of
15 parkland. Further USTA's current proposal does
16 not include developing a comprehensive parking
17 plan by consulting with the surrounding community
18 boards, mitigation of the traffic congestions
19 through the commissioning of a new traffic study
20 that would include Roosevelt Avenue, 108th Street,
21 Northern Boulevard, Astoria Boulevard, - -
22 Boulevard, 34th Avenue and 37th Avenue, all of these
23 avenues impacted by the current operation. There
24 is no evidence that these areas in CB3 were
25 includes in the EIS. We were advised that the

1 proposed changes would have no impact on our
2 district. Further, USTA's plan for replacement of
3 trees we still do not understand exactly how the
4 removal of the trees will be replaced. We are
5 very concerned about their safety plan. In
6 particular, we feel that improving the lighting to
7 ensure the safety of the patrons coming to and
8 from the U.S. Open at night should be seriously
9 looked at. Further, there is no community
10 benefits agreement. USTA has not committed to
11 establishing a new credible conservancy that would
12 include representation from all of the surrounding
13 community boards and a conservancy that would work
14 hard to protect the park from further commercial
15 development. The USTA has not committed to
16 working with women and other minority businesses.
17 Our board strongly suggests that they work with
18 the community and that storefronts be set aside
19 for community businesses, our local restaurants
20 have a stand within the perimeters of that
21 business, not just the kiosk, but actually having
22 a physical site where our local restaurants can
23 participate lucratively in the business during
24 those two weeks. I want to underscore the fact
25

2 that the Flushing Meadows Corona Park is very
3 important to our community. It is the equivalent
4 to Manhattan's Central Park and Brooklyn's
5 Prospect Park. It is the largest green
6 recreational space in the borough of Queens and
7 perhaps, the city of New York. It is used by many
8 who what little or no access to recreational
9 space. That is why it is important that the
10 recommendations put forth be seriously considered.
11 If USTA incorporates the aforementioned, it would
12 go a long way in gaining the support of the
13 community. Community Board 3 has submitted our
14 recommendation to City Planning, and you can
15 review it in its entirety. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
17 much, Ms. Reid.

18 WILL SWEENEY: Hello. My name is
19 Will Sweeney. I am here on behalf of the Jackson
20 Heights Green Alliance, and I am a member of the
21 Fairness Coalition of Queens, a coalition of 20
22 community groups in Queens that have major
23 concerns with the development proposals for
24 parkland in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. I am
25 here today to talk about how we want the USTA to

2 be a good neighbor and a part of the park and the
3 community. The USTA makes hundreds of millions of
4 dollars, and that money does not really reach the
5 park and it does not really reach the community.
6 Flushing Meadows Corona Park is grossly
7 underfunded and understaffed and has been for a
8 long time. With the USTA it has been a one way
9 relationship. The community gives and gives
10 parkland and public resources and the USTA doesn't
11 give back to the community and the park. It is
12 the park and the community that bear the brunt of
13 the negative impacts of the USTA, and it is the
14 park that should benefit and the local community
15 from a fair share of benefits from any proposed
16 expansion and activity within the park's
17 boundaries. Those negative impacts include
18 traffic, air pollution, parking on grass, litter,
19 noise, loss of park access, loss of parkland. We
20 are proud to host the USTA in our community, but
21 it does create a tremendous burden for the park
22 and the community. Over time New York City
23 taxpayers have provided 300 million dollars in
24 city bonds for USTA construction. 85 percent of
25 the USTA's over 200 million dollars in revenue is

2 generated on parkland in Queens. The USTA pays no
3 property taxes, no sales taxes, a minimal rent and
4 a tiny portion of its revenue to the city.

5 Despite massive New York City taxpayer subsidies,
6 the majority of the organizations fulltime high
7 salary jobs are based in Westchester. The USTA
8 currently harms large sections of the park by
9 encouraging more than 3600 cars to drive and park
10 on grass during the U.S. Open. The USTA's new
11 proposal will result in decimating mature trees
12 including endangered species trees. Despite the
13 enormous negative impact of the USTA the USTA pays
14 nothing towards the park's maintenance, and I want
15 to point out finally one thing for an apples to
16 apples comparison. New York Roadrunners, which is
17 a non-profit, which generates hundreds of millions
18 of dollars for New York City every year through
19 the marathon and other running events pays Central
20 Park to use it for the marathon and other running
21 events millions of dollars a year. New York City
22 Roadrunners also pays the NYPD. Why is the USTA
23 not held to the same standard, and also I will
24 mention all of the jobs at New York Roadrunners
25 are inside of New York City, and they don't ask

2 for any taxpayer subsidies, but the USTA does and
3 generates far more money.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
5 much, Mr. Sweeney. I want to thank this panel for
6 your testimony, and we will be calling up the next
7 panel in favor. Thank you. On behalf of USTA
8 Jeanne Ashe [phonetic], on behalf of Harlem Junior
9 Tennis, Katrina Adams, on behalf of New Yorkers
10 for Parks, Holly Light and on behalf of MJI, Jim
11 Carlson [phonetic]. If you could please identify
12 yourself for the record before you proceed with
13 your testimony. If you could identify yourself
14 for the record before your testimony, thank you.
15 Whoever wants to go first...

16 JEANNE MOUTOUSSAMY-ASHE: Thank
17 you. I am Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe. Good
18 afternoon, esteemed members of the City Council My
19 name is Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, and I am a
20 photographer. I have considered myself a New
21 Yorker for more than 40 years, since I moved to
22 New York City to attend college. Thank you for
23 the opportunity to testify in support of this
24 strategic vision for the USTA Billie Jean King
25 National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows Corona

2 Park. I am here today to speak to you not only in
3 my capacity as a New Yorker, but also as the wife
4 of the late Arthur Ashe. Arthur was a great
5 tennis champion and the first African American
6 male to win a grand slam title and to be ranked
7 number one in the world. His accomplishments
8 proved to the world that tennis was indeed an open
9 sport. But Arthur was an even greater champion
10 off the court. Arthur viewed himself as a citizen
11 of the world, and he took that responsibility very
12 seriously. The positive changes he helped foster
13 and the causes he championed both within tennis
14 and society at large will live on forever. He
15 transcended the game of tennis to reach all of
16 humanity and did so with great courage, conviction
17 and dignity. For these reasons the USTA in 1997
18 named the new stadium at the National Tennis
19 Center after Arthur and erected a statue in his
20 honor outside the stadium. Etched in stone
21 beneath the statue are the profound words of
22 Arthur "From what we get, we make a living, what
23 we give however makes a life." Over the years many
24 people and organizations have honored Arthur for
25 his life, work and contributions to society.

2 Although Arthur was a man who eschewed awards and
3 titles I think he would be proud that the main
4 stadium at the National Tennis Center bears his
5 name because he was extremely committed to using
6 tennis to foster opportunities for those who need
7 it the most. In addition, his name on the stadium
8 displays how tennis as a sport has changed and
9 continues to change for the better growing to
10 include a larger and more diverse audience both
11 ethnically and socioeconomically every year. The
12 community outreach initiated by the USTA is
13 primarily responsible for this transformation.
14 Throughout his adult life, Arthur was committed to
15 developing tennis and education programs for
16 America's inner city youth. To that end, he
17 cofounded the National Junior Tennis League in
18 1969 with the vision to "use tennis as a way to
19 gain and hold the attention of young people so
20 that we can teach them about matters more
21 important than tennis. Through tennis lives can
22 be changed and spirits reclaimed." The USTA and
23 National Tennis Center share in the mission to
24 help develop the character of young people through
25 tennis and education. They have been a great

2 partner in the local Queens communities striving
3 to build better lives for local youth through the
4 sport of tennis. During hundreds of annual
5 community programs at the National Tennis Center,
6 they host more than 100,000 participants of all
7 ages, many of whom are from Queens. In addition
8 through their partnership with the New York Junior
9 Tennis League, they have been better the lives of
10 kids in Queens, providing them with the necessary
11 tools to excel both on and off the court. The
12 program reaches thousands of local youth each
13 year, providing 70 public schools in Queens with
14 free tennis equipment and direct mentoring,
15 training opportunities for 15,000 students as well
16 as after school programs. One such program is
17 their project Aces, which brings the game of
18 tennis to thousands of kids in Queens who might
19 not otherwise have the opportunity to be exposed
20 to and participate in the game of tennis. The New
21 York Junior Tennis League program gives children
22 the opportunity to experience the sport of tennis
23 through an education seminar, a guided tour of the
24 National Tennis Center, including Arthur Ashe
25 stadium and on court tennis instructions from the

2 professional staff. The educational component of
3 the program raises awareness and appreciation
4 about the legacies of both Arthur and Billie Jean
5 King. The important takeaways that children
6 receive are that these two players were more than
7 great champions. They transcended the sport to
8 become iconic world figures because they gave back
9 and gave a voice to key social and cultural
10 issues. The Aces program also extends back into
11 the schools where the USTA's tennis professionals
12 work with the physical education teachers to
13 ensure that the students, 96 percent of whom have
14 never been to the National Tennis Center or have
15 ever watched a tennis match, have ongoing exposure
16 to tennis. Participants in the Aces program also
17 receive scholarships to the National Tennis
18 Center's summer camp program by submitting a
19 winning essay in the my day ta the USTA Billie
20 Jean King Tennis Center essay contest. There is
21 much more good will that the USTA does at the
22 tennis center than benefits the people of Queens
23 from participating in Queens based community
24 outreach events to providing more than 5,000 free
25 tickets to Queens based community groups for

2 Arthur Ashe kids day. The USTA and the tennis
3 center staff view themselves as being part of the
4 Queens community and they take that responsibility
5 seriously. In fact, this summer, the non-profit
6 Arthur Ashe learning city of which I am chairman,
7 is hosting a free educational exhibit based around
8 the life and values of Arthur Ashe at the New York
9 Hall of Science and partnering with the USTA to
10 help promote the exhibit in the community. As
11 part of our partnership, the New York Hall of
12 Science will not charge admission during this
13 period, allowing for all visitors to access the
14 museum and our inspirational tour exhibit for
15 free. This is just one example of how the USTA is
16 working with neighboring organizations to support
17 and enrich the community of Queens. We are
18 pleased to be a part of these efforts. The life
19 and work of Arthur will live on forever, and I am
20 grateful that his name, his memory and many of the
21 important causes he stood for will live on at the
22 National Tennis Center. I urge you to support
23 this strategic vision because not only will it
24 preserve the National Tennis Center's stature as a
25 top public recreational facility and world class

2 spectator venue, but also help the USTA and
3 National Tennis Center continue its tradition of
4 improving the lives of youth and the Queens
5 community as a whole. In closing, I'd like to
6 thank the Council for its time and would be happy
7 to answer any questions.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
9 much, Ms. Ashe.

10 KATRINA ADAMS: My name is Katrina
11 Adams. Good afternoon and thank you for the
12 chance to testify before this Subcommittee in
13 support of our strategic vision for the USTA
14 Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in
15 Flushing Meadows Corona Park. My name is Katrina
16 Adams, and I am the first vice president, a
17 volunteer board position, of the USTA as well as
18 executive director of the Harlem Junior Tennis and
19 Education program, whose mission is to bring
20 tennis to youth from high risk, low income
21 intercity neighborhoods and offer opportunities
22 for self-development while highlighting education
23 and a positive code of behavior. I am also a
24 former professional tennis player and coach. I
25 played on the WTA tour from 1988 through 1999.

2 Our strategic vision which entails a replacement
3 and renovation of stadiums that have long outlived
4 their useful lives is vital to the long term
5 viability of the National Tennis Center as both a
6 top public recreational facility and
7 internationally renowned spectator venue. It
8 should be noted that problems resulted from the
9 declining conditions of the National Tennis Center
10 facilities has plagued the tournament in recent
11 years, and will only worsen if we don't act on the
12 required reconstruction. As a former pro tennis
13 player and a long time USTA volunteer, I can
14 emphatically tell you that we need the strategic
15 vision in order to stay ahead of the international
16 competition and ensure that NTC remains a top
17 flight tennis facility and the U.S. Open remains
18 one of the world's showcase sporting events, all
19 of which greatly benefit New York City. I have no
20 doubt we will fall behind and lose our standing
21 atop the tennis world if we don't upgrade and
22 renovate the National Tennis Center. Indeed, our
23 - - as a major championship is being challenged as
24 never before. The competition is nipping at our
25 heels. That is the reality. From growing up

2 playing tennis in the public parks and recreation
3 programs sponsored by the Martin Luther King Jr.
4 Boys' Club in my native Chicago to my work with
5 the Harlem Junior Tennis Education Program, I know
6 how important it is to continue to grow tennis
7 programming in public parks and elsewhere and to
8 build better lives for youth through the sport of
9 tennis. That said, when it comes to tennis, there
10 is no better community partner, neighbor and
11 supporter than the USTA and National Tennis
12 Center. During hundreds of annual community
13 programs at the NTC the USTA hosts more than
14 100,000 participants of all ages. For example,
15 through its partnership with the New York Junior
16 Tennis League, the USTA helps provide 70 public
17 schools in Queens with free tennis equipment and
18 direct mentoring training opportunities for 15,000
19 students as well as after school programs. The
20 economics of the U.S. Open is not what ultimately
21 drives these programs. It is therefore critical
22 that we act on the strategic vision because a
23 vibrant viable NTC benefits the U.S. Open and New
24 York City and also ensures the continued vitality
25 of the sport of tennis in America. Thank you for

2 allowing me to testify and for your consideration
3 of my remarks.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
5 much, Ms. Adams. Ms. Light?

6 HOLLY LIGHT: Good afternoon,
7 Councilman. I am Holly Light, executive director
8 of New Yorkers for Parks, and we support this
9 proposal with conditions. The USTA would like to
10 expand the 42 acre Billie Jean King National
11 Tennis Center to increase spectator capacity by
12 10,000, accommodate VIP parking and better
13 facilitate pedestrian movement. What complicates
14 the proposal is that the complex is located on
15 mapped parkland within Flushing Meadows Corona
16 Park, the largest park in New York's largest
17 borough. Flushing Meadows is among the city's
18 most heavily used public spaces, especially by
19 residents of surrounding park starved communities,
20 like Flushing, Corona, Elmhurst and Jackson
21 Heights. It is a recreational mecca for soccer,
22 baseball and cricket players, a gathering place
23 for families and a favorite locale for bike rides,
24 runs and walks, and a quiet escape for nature
25 lovers, but despite the park's beloved status it

2 has been under resourced and ill maintained for
3 decades. We hear frustrated complaints about the
4 park's endemic maintenance woes from flooding and
5 drainage problems to a constant battle against
6 litter. Given these challenges and the park's
7 international exposure is the backdrop for the
8 U.S. Open, one might expect the USTA to be an avid
9 steward, but historically there has not been an
10 ongoing relationship between the USTA and the
11 park. The USTA proposal calls for .6 acres of
12 parkland to be alienated an increase in the
13 leasehold, new and refurbished stadiums, a multi-
14 story parking facility and a new access road
15 through passive open space outside of the
16 leasehold. We commend the Parks Department and
17 USTA for reaching an agreement to replace the
18 alienated parkland on site, and we are glad
19 conversations are underway to broaden public
20 access to the complex throughout the year, but the
21 USTA's annual rent of about 2.5 million dollars,
22 which will not increase after expansion goes
23 entirely to the city's general fund, not to the
24 park. In fact, not a dime of the estimated 250
25 million dollars the center nets annually goes into

2 Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Before approval of
3 this expansion that would allow the USTA to profit
4 further from the park, the USTA must commit to a
5 significant long term investment in the park.

6 This doesn't mean just one time capital projects
7 to help for during review of this proposal. New
8 Yorkers for Parks commissioned a study of what it
9 would cost to bring this park up to level 2, which
10 is the national standard for park care from its
11 current subpar level 3. The estimate is that it
12 would cost an addition 2.6 million dollars above
13 what the city currently commits. The USTA should
14 make an ongoing annual contribution to help fund
15 this maintenance gap as well as an upfront capital
16 commitment, a commitment and actual plan to cease
17 using public laws for parking during the U.S.

18 open, and a redefined relationship with park users
19 and the surrounding community to make the tennis
20 complex a truly public facility. We appreciate
21 the steps taken by the administration and the USTA
22 during ULURP to mitigate the impacts of this
23 private use on Flushing Meadows Corona Park. We
24 hope the Council will call for these additional
25 commitments to ensure that Flushing Meadows is no

2 longer a forgotten stepsister among the city's
3 largest parks.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
5 much, Ms. Light. Ms. Adams, sorry earlier for
6 misreading your name. Mr. Carlson?

7 JIM CARLSON: Good afternoon
8 members of the city Subcommittee. My name is Jim
9 Carlson and I operate a local union 638
10 steamfitter's shop called MJI. We have been
11 providing heating and air conditioning services to
12 the United States Tennis Association for the past
13 15 years, and I was also part of the union
14 mechanical contractor for the construction of
15 Arthur Ashe stadium back in the 1990s. I am happy
16 to be here to pledge my support for the United
17 States Tennis Association's plan to improve and
18 expand the NTC and Flushing Meadows Corona Park.
19 As a union contractor, they provide me year round
20 work, and it is a major source of revenue for our
21 business, which means I can employ 35 people, many
22 of which that live in Queens. The NTC is an
23 important revenue source for countless businesses
24 in Queens and MJI and our local 638 shops supports
25 all the efforts to ensure that the NTC remains a

2 world class venue. I thank you for allowing my
3 testify before you today, and I urge you to lend
4 support to this plan.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
6 much, Mr. Carlson. I want to thank this panel
7 very much for your time and for your patience and
8 for sitting through the questions that we had at
9 the Council here. So I appreciate your time and
10 before we get to the next panel, I do want to
11 introduce we are joined by class 702 from I.S. 377
12 and Council Member Dilan's district. Hi guys,
13 thank you very much for coming. I hope you enjoy
14 the hearing here. This is the Subcommittee on
15 Planning, Dispositions and Concessions, and we are
16 hearing about a proposed expansion of the US
17 Tennis Association facility at Flushing Meadows
18 Corona Park. Thank you very much for joining us.
19 We are hearing next a panel in opposition Felipe
20 Adrorro [phonetic] from Make the Road New York,
21 Yvette Ramirez [phonetic] from Make the Road New
22 York, and John Tordash [phonetic] from Triumph of
23 Civic Virtue and Jeffrey Croft [phonetic] of New
24 York City Park Advocates. Also, the previous
25 panel in opposition, Carlos Aguirre was called.

2 If Mr. Aguirre is available, he should join this
3 panel as well. Come on up.

4 [long pause]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN:

6 FELIPE ADRORRO: Hello. Good
7 afternoon. My name is Felipe Adrorro. I am a
8 board member for Make the Road New York. We are
9 10,000 members. I am - - housing justice and
10 environmental. My brother has a damaged brain.
11 He is in the nursing home near to Park Terrace,
12 and today I brought in my - - , she translates for
13 my letter. This is my testimony.

14 YVETTE RAMIREZ: My name is Yvette
15 Ramirez. I am translating for Felipe.

16 FELIPE ADRORRO (through
17 interpreter): My name is Felipe Adrorro, and I am
18 a resident of Queens for 13 years and a member of
19 Make the Road New York. Right next to Flushing
20 Meadows Corona Park is Park Terrace Nursing Home
21 located on Van Doren Street one block from the
22 park. In this nursing home which I picked because
23 it is close to the public green space is my
24 brother Pedro [phonetic] who suffers from cerebral
25 damage due to an accident he suffered three years

2 ago. I take him to the park so he can enjoy the
3 open recreational space. Most importantly there
4 is liberty to freely move around with the fear of
5 private entities. I am very concerned that the
6 private developers with the backing of the mayor
7 have put their attention on our park, a place
8 where we can breathe liberty to build or expand
9 private development projects that would negatively
10 affect our communities. Most of all it would
11 affect community members that are so desperately
12 in need of this green space, such as children
13 dealing with obesity, the elderly and individuals
14 with asthma or special needs such as my brother.
15 The Flushing Meadows Park was no longer accessible
16 I would be obligated to hire an ambulance to take
17 him further away to a more distant park system so
18 scarce in our community. - - there should be
19 investment in the communities, but not at a social
20 environmental cost. Green spaces are essential to
21 the wellbeing of human beings and such is that we
22 must assure that our communities have access to
23 these spaces. He is ready to fight until the very
24 last consequences to keep our park free, open and
25 accessible. I am here speaking on behalf of my

2 brother, and I know if I was confined to a nursing
3 home, he would be speaking on my behalf as well.
4 So I urge you all as our city authorities to
5 listen to our voices and your conscience so that
6 our park does not end up overdeveloped. Please
7 save our park. Thank you.

8 FELIPE ADRORRO: We are ready to
9 fight for our green space. Make the road New York
10 is ready for fight for the green space.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, and
12 thank you very much for your testimony.

13 JOHN TORDASH: Hello. My name is
14 John Tordash, and I am here to tell you today as
15 an advocate for parks some of the things that the
16 USTA conveniently did not tell you in their
17 presentation. Most notably, you have heard a
18 member of a steamfitter's union come talk to you,
19 but the New York City Central Labor Council
20 representing 1.4 million members has come out
21 against this project, and why is that? Because
22 there is an effort underway for past umpires of
23 the U.S. Open to receive the names of all umpires
24 as part of a class action suit. According to
25 Sports Business Daily, after the USTA stoutly

2 resisted creating the class arguing that refs and
3 umpires ere independent contractors a federal
4 judge decided no, and in fact now just last year
5 alone 289 umpires would be open for the class
6 action suit. Multiply that by seven years going
7 back to 2005, all such people will be found
8 eligible. That is far more people than you will
9 have come testify in front of you in favor of the
10 USTA creating jobs. Furthermore, one other thing
11 that the USTA did not show you because they gave
12 you the short form of their presentation is their
13 rising revenues while these numbers were in fact
14 not inflation adjusted, and if you take that into
15 account, the amount will drop anywhere from 50 to
16 60 percent of the current revenues, and
17 furthermore, even though they discuss about their
18 brand new facilities, you would be wise to know
19 that the rates are anywhere from two to even four
20 times as much as what city tennis courts charge
21 residents for regular use. I would encourage the
22 committee not to vote in favor of this expansion.
23 The USTA has not proven itself to be good
24 neighbors, nor friendly towards labor relations in
25 New York City. They have enough. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Mr.
3 Tordash. Mr. Croft?

4 JEFFREY CROFT: Good afternoon. My
5 name is Jeffrey Croft. I am president of New York
6 City Park Advocates. There is absolutely no
7 reason to improve the expansion other than to
8 further enrich the USTA. They are not moving out
9 and they can build on their existing footprint as
10 they have repeatedly stated. They simply want a
11 more luxurious experience for their fans. I
12 apologize that Gordon Smith was not more
13 forthcoming when you asked him that question,
14 Council Member Levin. That is clearly stated in
15 their EIS, and this has been an issue we have gone
16 back and forth with. They can build on their
17 existing footprint. They made 275 million dollars
18 last year, 275 according to COO, Danny - - . it
19 was also embarrassing that the head of the USTA
20 couldn't provide a single figure of how much they
21 make and how much they plan to make on this
22 expansion, even though they are spending millions
23 and millions of dollars for this expansion. It is
24 simply not credible. They made 275 million
25 dollars last year, yet they gave the city only 2.5

2 million dollars back while spreading millions of
3 dollars in "profits" across the nation. That is
4 very important 'cause the money that they make
5 there they use in other facilities including
6 California and Arizona. Again, unfortunately that
7 kind of stuff doesn't make its way to the
8 PowerPoint. They stand to make hundreds of
9 millions of dollars more from the expansion over
10 the years. this is about greed, pure and simple.
11 They are using our public lands as a cash cow.
12 The USTA doubled its public parkland holdings in
13 the 90s going from 22 acres to 42 acres, but
14 evidently even that was not enough. The proposed
15 expansion would incorporate the 0.68 acre parcel
16 with land alienated in the 90s for a total of one
17 acre, so it is not just the .68; they need in
18 total almost one acre for their expansion. No one
19 denies that the USTA is an important economic
20 event for the city; however, our public parkland
21 must not be sacrificed every time they or any
22 other private business comes up with a plan to
23 generate more revenue. The USTA expansion in the
24 90s was supposed to be the final encroachment once
25 and for all. Furthermore, the USTA has refused to

2 commit itself to not requesting even more public
3 parkland in the future. Will more previous
4 parkland go to this private use? It is the city
5 and the state's legal responsibility to protect
6 our public parks, not give them away every time a
7 private business comes up with a plan to generate
8 more revenue. This would create a dangerous
9 precedent, and we need to protect our public
10 parklands from private businesses. As everyone
11 knows the USTA expansion is the first of three
12 irresponsible commercial projects being proposed
13 for the borough of Queens flagship park. The
14 irresponsible alienation of 25.3 acres of historic
15 parkland in the south Bronx and the permanent loss
16 of parkland to build Yankee Stadium is a recent
17 example. These are not public works projects, but
18 instead private businesses using their power to
19 privatize public parks for their own financial
20 gain. This is terrible ad irresponsible public
21 policy. As we heard the USTA's rationale for the
22 expansion is to prevent top players from defecting
23 to other venues like Dubai. This is not the role
24 of public parklands. Tennis is wonderful. Jobs
25 are important, but none of these are in jeopardy

2 if you vote no. I just want to comment on a
3 couple of things. This phony park replacement
4 deal--the applicants have misleadingly
5 representing that in the exchange for the 0.68
6 acre parcel. More than double this amount of land
7 will be returned the city without stating that the
8 public already has access to this land. In fact
9 under the terms as we heard the proposed new deal
10 the USTA is allowed to have exclusive use of the
11 tennis courts for a maximum of 30 days as they
12 have under the current arrangement. This is
13 nothing more than a shell game. We can go on and
14 on about this stuff, and I will wrap it up.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: - -

16 JEFFREY CROFT: We are talking
17 about transparency. The USTA wants city parkland
18 to expand, but they refuse to put their proposal
19 online despite repeated attempts, and I guess the
20 alliance we are against the alliance for a number
21 of reasons, and I guess that is about that.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Please submit
23 that in written form to us. I appreciate it.
24 Thank you, Mr. Croft.

25 YVETTE RAMIREZ: Hi. My name is

2 Yvette Ramirez, and I am a community organizer at
3 Make the Road New York, but most importantly I am
4 a concerned Queens resident as I was raised in
5 Astoria, but currently have lived in Elmhurst for
6 the past ten years. I am concerned because in all
7 of the years that I have come to Flushing Meadows
8 Corona Park I never felt a genuine interest in the
9 USTA to be part of the community. I grew up
10 seeing its year round padlock, eight foot metal
11 gates and gates empty facility except for those
12 few weeks during the U.S. Open when wealthy
13 tourists were welcomed with open arms. Even
14 though the USTA site is supposedly free and open
15 to the public, there is no signage indicating
16 that; thus, demonstrating a lack of outreach and
17 involvement with the community. The USTA has
18 shown time and time again it is a bad neighbor as
19 it blocks community soccer leagues from playing
20 during the U.S. Open and dominates the park with
21 car traffic thus limiting community access.
22 Occasionally personally as a teenager I would form
23 part of a Bolivian folklore dance group and we
24 would practice on the - - by the seven line;
25 however, during the U.S. Open we were prohibited

2 from practicing there and would be thrown out to
3 the parking lots on the adjacent lots. The USTA
4 continues to take over already scarce green public
5 space, but they have given very little to the
6 park's upkeep and maintenance and the park has for
7 years deteriorated and remain unkempt. They
8 should be more responsible and a conscious
9 neighbor and redirect more resources to maintain
10 and take care of the park. I would like to see
11 that the USTA sign a community benefits agreement
12 that would make it clear what the USTA's
13 responsibility is to the surrounding community,
14 and I call on you as members of the City Council
15 to protect our park and make sure it remains for
16 the community. Thank you very much.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.
18 Thank you very much. Mr. Aguirre?

19 CARLOS AGUIRRE (Through
20 Interpreter): My name is Carlos Aguirre, and I am
21 a community activist and a member of Make the Road
22 New York. I feel very upset on what I feel has
23 been intentional and lack of maintenance that our
24 park, Flushing Meadows Park, has suffered as well
25 as the aggressive and invasive opposed development

2 projects, such as this expansion of the USTA. And
3 I ask myself how is the USTA contributing to
4 creating jobs for the community and are they
5 paying taxes that are equal to the money that they
6 make. In what way are they supporting community
7 developments? Whether it is a successful U.S.
8 Open earning millions of dollars every year, our
9 park remains unkempt, deteriorated without
10 investment to maintain its upkeep. Our
11 communities are working class and full of workers
12 that have a need for jobs with good salaries and
13 benefits; however, the USTA has most of its
14 fulltime jobs located in Westchester, besides the
15 fact that they receive public subsidies from the
16 city. The new jobs created by the USTA and during
17 the U.S. Open should be prioritized only for
18 Queens residents mainly who live in the adjacent
19 communities. The USTA should sign a community
20 benefit agreement specifying clearly which are the
21 benefits for the community and the expansion that
22 they are proposing. This agreement should
23 guarantee local hiring of workers. And I ask the
24 support of you, City Council to please protect our
25 park and give a party to our voices, our needs and

2 the concerns of the community. Thank you very
3 much.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
5 much. Thank you very much to this panel. I
6 appreciate it.

7 JEFFREY CROFT: Council Member,
8 just one last thing. New Yorkers for Parks in
9 their testimony they should just be a little more
10 clear that they are supporting this project.
11 Their testimony we keep hearing it's not
12 reflective of that, I know that is a bit
13 confusing.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: At this point
15 we only have testimony left in support of the
16 proposed action. If there is anybody that signed
17 up in opposition and your name has not been called
18 yet, please let us know. We are going to do a
19 panel in support right now. We will do about four
20 people at a time. Scott Daly [phonetic], New
21 York's Junior Tennis League, Rob McKay [phonetic],
22 QEDC [phonetic], Eric Abrams [phonetic], Queens
23 Chamber, Shrinavaz Mahankali [phonetic]
24 representing himself. Also, if anyone that is
25 here to testify in support doesn't wish to

2 testify, but wishes to just be acknowledged, we
3 would be willing to do that as well, so let us
4 know. Whoever wishes to go first, go ahead.

5 Please identify yourself for the record. Please
6 turn on the microphone.

7 ERIC ABRAMS: Eric Abrams, Queens
8 Chamber of Commerce. Good morning, and thanks for
9 having me. I am sitting here on behalf of Jack
10 Friedman [phonetic], executive director of the
11 Queens Chamber of Commerce who is unable to be
12 here. On behalf of nearly 1,000 business members
13 of the Queens Chamber of Commerce, I am here to
14 support USTA's plan to improve and expand the
15 National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows Park.
16 The proposed project holds special significance to
17 numerous businesses in Queens, and is especially
18 vital when you consider that the U.S. Open
19 generates nearly 750 million dollars a year in
20 economic activity for the city much of this money
21 spent on hotels, restaurants, entertainment and
22 other purchases by more than 700,000 spectators
23 who descend upon Queens during the tournament. In
24 Queens alone, the tournament is responsible for
25 nearly 2,600 hotel room nights. The USTA also

2 generates over 6,000 seasonal jobs, many of which
3 last as long as six months and employ Queens
4 residents. It is also a great financial impact
5 during the rest of the year. That is because the
6 National Tennis Center hosts numerous tournaments
7 that brings competing teams from all over the tri-
8 state area and country to Queens to patronize our
9 local businesses. Additionally, 100,000 tennis
10 participants from more than 70 schools train and
11 play at matches at the center. Again, a boon to
12 our local economy. The USTA has been a great
13 community partner. This past year the USTA
14 allowed Queens Tourism Council and the Queens
15 Chamber of Commerce to operate a kiosk during the
16 U.S. Open. This was a wonderful opportunity to
17 offer guests information on places to eat, places
18 to stay and places to go to during their visit to
19 Queens. Dozens of local restaurants, hotels and
20 cultural venues benefitted through this effort,
21 and it was a really great experience just being
22 able to speak with people coming to Queens who
23 didn't know about the borough and just telling
24 them specifically what they can do, where to go,
25 and what to do. In addition, in the aftermath of

2 Hurricane Sandy they made donations of goods and
3 money to relief efforts in Queens totaling more
4 than 400,000 dollars. The USTA worked with us to
5 ensure these critical supplies reached those in
6 need. I urge you to support USTA's expansion for
7 the National Tennis Center because it will create
8 800 good paying construction jobs, increase
9 opportunities to local Queens businesses and
10 because they are a great economic engine for
11 Queens and the city of New York. Thank you very
12 much for your time.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Mr.
14 McKay? When Ann pushes the button, so... You have
15 got to turn it on though.

16 ROB MCKAY: First of all thank you
17 very much for giving me the opportunity to speak.
18 My name is Rob McKay, and I am director of public
19 relations, marketing and tourism for the Queens
20 Economic Development Corporation. In this
21 position, I also have the pleasure of running the
22 Queens Tourism Council, which currently has
23 roughly 50 members, mostly hotels, cultural
24 organizations, restaurants and other visitor
25 attractions, including the USTA. I am honored to

2 represent QEDC and QTC today and publically
3 support the USTA's plan to expand and improve the
4 National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows Corona
5 Park. Put simply, the USTA is a great neighbor.
6 The U.S. Open is open only a few weeks in late
7 summer, but it generates nearly 750 million
8 dollars in economic activity for the city. Much
9 of this money is spent on hotels, restaurants and
10 entertainment by more than 700,000 spectators,
11 many of whom are from out of state or even out of
12 country. According to our numbers in Queens
13 alone, this two week tournament is directly
14 responsible for nearly 2,600 hotel room nights and
15 to add to the general benefit, the USTA gave the
16 Queens Tourism Council and the queens Chamber of
17 Commerce an informational kiosk near Arthur Ashe's
18 stadium last summer. We have already discussed
19 this, but we provided around the clock volunteers
20 who informed tennis fans about the hotels,
21 restaurants, museums and other wonders. I
22 personally sent people to an Italian restaurant in
23 Flushing, the Queens Museum of Art, the New York
24 Hall of Science and I got people who weren't happy
25 with their Manhattan hotel rooms, Queens hotel

2 rooms for next year. But during the other 50
3 weeks of the year the National Tennis Center
4 quietly hosts numerous youth, college and other
5 level tournaments that bring competing teams from
6 all over the U.S. Again, these sports tourists and
7 their families stay at hotels in neighborhoods
8 such as Corona, Flushing, East Elmhurst and
9 Jamaica. They also dine at local restaurants and
10 shop at local businesses. I should also mention
11 that there are summer camps and other activities
12 such as the annual Easter egg hunt. Now through
13 my activity with the Queens Tourism Council I have
14 noticed that the USTA really cares about doing its
15 part to help the borough. In the aftermath of
16 Hurricane Sandy, the Queens Tourism Council put
17 out a call for donations and within minutes,
18 literally minutes, we received an e-mail from the
19 USTA wishing to help our efforts. Subsequently,
20 they donated about 300,000 dollars' worth of items
21 such as water, clothes, medicine and food to
22 Rockaway residents. Then they donated 100,000
23 dollars in cash to the mayor's fund. Finally, the
24 request is only for a small seldom used parcel.
25 Flushing Meadows Parks gets countless weekend

2 visitors, and I doubt anyone will really actually
3 notice the loss of this parcel; however, with the
4 new land the USTA will be able to make incredible
5 improvements to the National Tennis Center. It
6 will allow 10,000 more daily spectators to enjoy
7 the U.S. Open and more spectators of course means
8 more money pumped into the Queens economy. Plus
9 it will greatly improve the pedestrian flow inside
10 the complex. It is very important that patrons
11 enjoy themselves especially if they traveled from
12 Spain to watch Rafael Nadal or from England to see
13 And Murray, and to finish with a sports analogy, I
14 thought about the different aspects of this, and
15 it is safe to say that this is a win, win, win,
16 win, win situation. Thank you for your time.
17 Congratulations, Julissa. I didn't know you were
18 pregnant.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
20 much.

21 SHRINAVAZ MAHANKALI: Good
22 afternoon. I am Shrinavaz Mahankali. I am here
23 as a parent. I always brag to my sister in
24 Chicago and relatives and friends elsewhere that
25 the U.S. Open is played literally in our

2 neighborhood, not far from our home. I brought my
3 kids to USTA as soon as they could hold a racket
4 without dropping it. USTA has so many different -
5 - programs for different levels and different
6 ages. It was also from USTA that we learned about
7 the free early morning program of New York Junior
8 Tennis and Learning NYJTL. Ever since then our
9 family has grown a lot closer to tennis and
10 through that to USTA. Growing up I was not into
11 sports but the presence of USTA in the community
12 inspired me and our family to pursue active
13 lifestyle, and - - tennis became our favorite
14 sport. My kids love tennis. Having USTA so close
15 is a blessing to them. Since when he was seven
16 years old, my youngest son eagerly used to wait
17 for the weekend mornings so he could train in the
18 NYJTL early morning tennis program at NTC,
19 National Tennis Center. In fact, it was him who
20 got up first and woke me up at 5:30 am in the
21 morning on Saturdays and Sundays. I am sure I
22 speak for so many grateful parents who lovingly
23 help out whether it is running around picking up
24 the balls so the kids can focus on hitting the
25 balls or helping to field the balls during the

2 drills. I myself volunteer during the early
3 morning program conducting footwork drills for the
4 players. I thank USTA for facilitating this NYJTL
5 program that benefits hundreds of children from
6 around the area to improve their tennis and to
7 productively use their weekends. My son is on the
8 NYJTL tournament team. USTA enables NYJTL program
9 this tournament team as well by generously helping
10 them with free off court and on court resources.

11 In addition to these, the USTA also provides
12 resources for many scholastic and athletic events
13 of NYJTL such as the mayor's cup and also provides
14 rooms for the SAT prep courses for some of the
15 NYJTL participants. My children and I have been
16 to the U.S. Open last year, which turned out to be
17 a great experience. We were able to watch tennis
18 stars such as Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic,
19 Serena Williams and Andy Roddick up close in
20 action. It was such an inspiring event to all of
21 us. In conclusion I would like to say that the
22 USTA is a jewel in the crown of the New York City
23 and as residents of this great city we should all
24 support the measures that will help enhance its
25 role and make the city an even better place.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
4 much. Mr. Daly?

5 SCOTT DALY: Good afternoon. Thank
6 you for allowing me to testify before you. My
7 name is Scott Daly and I am from the New York
8 Junior Tennis and Learning. I'd like the record
9 to reflect that at the beginning here that I have
10 also submitted testimony of our president and CEO
11 Deborah Antoine [phonetic], who was unable to be
12 here today, so I would like that to become part of
13 the record also. In addition to my written
14 testimony, I would like you to understand that in
15 my capacity, and I am a tennis coordinator,
16 program coordinator for the programs of the NYJTL,
17 but more importantly than that I am a site
18 director at locations for these free programs,
19 which we offer. And the one I am here to talk to
20 you about is the one that is offered at the USTA
21 National Tennis Center in Queens. It is what we
22 call the winter early morning program, and it runs
23 for 20 weeks from the beginning of November all
24 through the dead of winter up until late March
25 beginning of April. This past year I want you to

2 know that this programs runs from 5:30 in the
3 morning until 8 o'clock. It is on court time that
4 is donated to us by the USTA. This program caters
5 to kids in the local communities--we are available
6 to everybody throughout the city, but most
7 importantly we cater to the kids in Queens in the
8 Corona, in the Flushing area. Over 450 kids--I
9 want to repeat that--450 kids made the effort to
10 get up at 5 o'clock in the morning on Saturdays
11 and Sundays when they could very well have stayed
12 at home and just relaxed and stayed in bed. In
13 addition to this program that we get the court
14 time from the USTA, they also provide us with
15 rooms for education. We ran a free SAT prep
16 course following that morning program on Saturday,
17 which again, it was through the contributions of
18 the USTA that we were able to do this with the
19 space provided. We have just concluded two weeks
20 ago, the mayor's cup competition out at the USTA.
21 It is over 600, 700 kids throughout the city of
22 New York who come there and participated. It is
23 the largest interscholastic event for high school
24 kids in the country. Again, the USTA makes this
25 all possible. The equipment that the USTA gives

2 us, NYJTL, to provide to these kids is immense--
3 specialized balls, specialized nets, specialized
4 equipment, so that we can each and every one of
5 these kids succeed is invaluable. The USTA is a
6 great neighbor. They have participated through
7 offering tennis and the availability of this to
8 every kid in the city of New York. We are open to
9 all. It is free. The USTA support cannot be
10 undervalued. In conclusion, I just want to say
11 that NYJTL thoroughly supports this application by
12 the USTA. I want to thank you for the opportunity
13 to testify, and I will gladly answer any questions
14 you may have.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. I
16 think Council Member Ferreras has a couple of
17 questions.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Thank you
19 all for coming to testify. Mr. Mahankali, I just
20 on behalf of my colleagues and myself want to
21 congratulate you again for you--you must be a
22 very, very proud parent, and I am congratulating
23 because he is the national spelling bee champion.

24 SHRINAVAZ MAHANKALI: Thank you so
25 much.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: I think
3 that is amazing.

4 [applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'll allow
6 applause for that just this one time.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: We should
8 probably send all of our children to your house.
9 So thank you for your testimony. I just want to
10 ask two questions. One of the Chamber, in your
11 engagement, and I know we have gotten some
12 feedback that the kiosk placement has become
13 somewhat of an informational tool so how do you
14 translate for someone trying to find a stadium
15 into actually getting them to go visit a
16 restaurant or a facility in Corona or Flushing?

17 ERIC ABRAMS: A lot of people at
18 the tennis center we found knew nothing of Queens.
19 We had a big ol' map right on the kiosk, and it
20 was as simple as some people just saying, hey,
21 where are we on this map, and we show them there,
22 and we say, oh, if you want some great Asian food,
23 you can go over here to Flushing or if you want
24 some great Greek food you can go over here to
25 Astoria, just letting them know really what Queens

2 has to offer. I mean I can't tell you how many
3 dollars that really translated to, but I think we
4 built up some very positive equity for the borough
5 through just telling people who really had no idea
6 what Queens was or what the borough had to offer,
7 what was there, and Rob was there several days
8 when I was there as well.

9 ROB MCKAY: I can tell you in my
10 own personal experience a lot of people came up
11 just because they wanted to know where court 11
12 was or court 12 was. they were lost inside, and
13 we helped them with that, but in a couple of cases
14 where as I mentioned before for example, in one
15 case some very well dressed woman came up to me
16 and she said I have a car driver for the night,
17 and I want to go to the best Italian restaurant in
18 Queens. Where should I go? And so I sent her to
19 Magna Restaurant, which is my favorite restaurant
20 in Flushing.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Why
22 didn't you send her to Parkside Corona?

23 ROB MCKAY: Because Magna was in my
24 mind for its tiramisu.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: We have

2 got to give you a list of referrals.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: In
4 another case a woman came up who had two kids,
5 young kids, and she said, we are done with tennis,
6 my kids can't take this any longer. What can I do
7 for the rest of the day? And I said, go to the
8 Hall of Science. They have got a rocket park and
9 other stuff. Go to the Queens Museum of Art or
10 just stay here in Flushing Meadows Park. There is
11 a lot of stuff you can do. In another case, I had
12 some people who were staying in a hotel in
13 Manhattan and they were really upset about it, and
14 they wanted to know about hotels along the seven
15 line, and so I gave them a couple of suggestions.
16 We weren't allowed to give out paper because that
17 was the rule I guess for garbage sake, but we did
18 have through modern technology an iPad I was able
19 to show them everything they needed and text them
20 later on or e-mail them later on all the
21 information that they asked for, and we on a
22 volunteer basis we had someone there from the
23 beginning to the end on every single day.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Okay. I
25 just want to perhaps engage with you a little bit

2 better on helping you get some more diversity and
3 identify more restaurants and other venues that
4 are closer to the site because I know that this is
5 based on the knowledge that you have, so how we
6 can engage a better process. And just because of
7 time, they actually need this room. They are
8 going to be kicking us out shortly. I just wanted
9 to briefly speak to you, Mr. Daly from New York
10 Junior Tennis League. I know that you said the
11 5:30 to 8 am program focuses in on the local
12 communities. I don't know if you have numbers,
13 but if you can get us the numbers of from what
14 communities those are 'cause your local might not
15 mean my local, and I'd like to have those numbers
16 and how do you promote those programs, and is
17 their multi-language promotional tools that you
18 use for families?

19 SCOTT DALY: I know that our fliers
20 go out, it is bilingual in both Spanish and in
21 English also. I don't know. I will check with
22 the office to find out when we send out the blast
23 e-mails to everyone who is on our database, on our
24 registrations what they will do in that regard.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: If you

2 could circle back with me on that... One of the
3 programs that is most promoted by the U.S. Open or
4 the National Tennis Center is NYJTL, so then I
5 want to better understand the program that is ran
6 out of there, but also we are very supportive here
7 in the Council to NYJTL, so--

8 SCOTT DALY: [interposing] We are
9 most grateful and hope it continues.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Right,
11 but I just want to make sure that we understand
12 the full impact of what that is in the community
13 because when I get expense requests I want to
14 ensure what does that mean and why is that not
15 translated or supported by the National Tennis
16 Center. We will follow up on those questions, but
17 I would like to get more details as we move
18 forward.

19 SCOTT DALY: And as you just
20 stated, you know that you do support the NYJTL and
21 we have many other programs in addition to that
22 early morning program, which does service all
23 these communities.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Okay.
25 Fair enough. Thank you.

2 SCOTT DALY: Thank you very kindly.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
4 much. Thank you to this panel. Council Member
5 Comrie, chair of Land Use.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: They don't
7 have to stay. I just wanted to echo what Council
8 Member Ferreras was saying about the NYJTL and
9 making sure that we get the numbers from the
10 entire borough of Queens that you are doing for
11 these programs and all of the programs as the
12 chair of the delegation and supporting Council
13 Member Ferreras' intent to make sure that we have
14 those statistics from you as well. Also, from the
15 Chamber, there are many restaurants in the
16 borough, so I want to make sure that you get a
17 list of all our favorite restaurants, even if you
18 just ask every member what their favorite
19 restaurant is in the borough, that way you could
20 have some diversity as well because I am sure--
21 when I used to have the opportunity to attend,
22 which is something that we will talk about at
23 another time, people were looking for diversity.
24 They weren't looking for just the standard fare
25 restaurant. They want something off the beaten

2 path. Most of the people that I had engaged when
3 I went to the tennis center, they didn't want the
4 Applebee's or--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS:

6 [interposing] Or the 15 dollar crepe.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: They wanted
8 something more unique, and we have many
9 restaurants in the borough that are great
10 restaurants from every ethnicity, so we would want
11 to make sure that that is reflected as well.

12 ERIC ABRAMS: Don't forget about
13 our mobile phone app that the Chamber is releasing
14 next week, and that is going to help out.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: I looked at
16 the mobile phone app, and there are a lot of
17 restaurants that need to be added to that. We
18 will work on that.

19 ERIC ABRAMS: Next Wednesday. We
20 are doing it at the tennis center actually.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member
22 Karen Koslowitz?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWITZ: I also
24 want to put a plug in for my area. Don't forget
25 Forest Hills was where the USTA started, so we

2 have great restaurants in Forest Hills. Send them
3 back.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
5 much to this panel. In the interest of time and
6 because we have a hearing going on next door in
7 the hearing room, the committee room that I think
8 they want to have access to this space because it
9 is regarding Sandy legislation, Sandy-related
10 legislation, I am going to actually call on one
11 more panel, but before that I am going to ask the
12 employees of USTA who are here, if it is okay with
13 you, if you could just stand and I can acknowledge
14 you in lieu of testimony if that is okay. I would
15 call on Vishnu Mahadeo [phonetic], Marty Weinsetin
16 [phonetic], Mike Littman [phonetic], Harry
17 Chatterpaul Duncram [phonetic], Louis Marceal
18 [phonetic] and Wilfred Mahadeo [phonetic]. I just
19 want to thank you all for you being here. If you
20 really wish to testify you can, but in light of
21 the fact that they need this space, I think that
22 this would suffice, and if you have written
23 testimony, we would be glad to take it thank you.
24 I'd like to call up Ed Stanishevski [phonetic],
25 Eric Rebhuhn [phonetic], Jonathan Gamberg

2 [phonetic] and Tommy Cassino [phonetic]. If you
3 could identify yourselves for the record, and keep
4 your testimony brief because this is the last
5 panel, and again, they need the room. Go ahead.

6 ED STANISHEVSKI: Good afternoon,
7 ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for giving me
8 a few moments of your time to express my-- I am Ed
9 Stanishevski. I am the general manager of the
10 Sheraton LaGuardia East Hotel in Flushing, and in
11 my testimony I do explain that the economic impact
12 and the positive impact the USTA has. I am in
13 support of them, and I can tell you firsthand
14 every single year my hotel does sell out, and I
15 engage with all of the people that come and they
16 thoroughly enjoy the venue, but more importantly
17 they thoroughly enjoy Queens. They do go out and
18 they spend money and they patronize the
19 restaurants and all the different cultural events.
20 They come year after year. The minute the event
21 is over they are already booking the following
22 year. There is not enough hotels - - more hotels
23 online coming up over the next couple years that
24 will certainly be filled. Although it is a great
25 economic impact on me, it is also a great impact

2 for my employees and my associates. It is a fun
3 and exciting time. More importantly for me and
4 the big picture, being in the hotel business over
5 20 years, all eyes have been on Manhattan as a
6 destination spot. I congratulate Brooklyn. You
7 are now second. I am going to fight for second
8 place. As a member of the Queens Tourism Council,
9 it is a young council, but we want to bring the
10 focus onto Queens. Queens as a general is a
11 destination place that I firmly believe is a
12 destination place in and of itself. We want
13 people to come to Queens to visit the Hall of
14 Science, to visit the restaurants, to visit all of
15 the opportunities, take that number seven train
16 ride, see Citi Field, see that venue. What better
17 vehicle to put a focus on Queens and all of New
18 York City than an international focus, not a
19 national focus, an international focus on a
20 positive venue that is focusing and showcasing on
21 Queens? All the visitors to Queens bring tax
22 revenue, jobs plain and simple. Although I love
23 the city of New York, I love Manhattan, I love
24 Brooklyn, no disrespect, but I want the focus to
25 be on Queens, and I urge you to help support

2 improving this product. I do respect everyone's
3 opinions and I hope you can vet out all of the
4 challenges and issues because I believe it can be
5 a win, win for everybody and I am fully in support
6 of it. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
8 much. I appreciate that.

9 TOMMY CASSINO: Good afternoon. I
10 will try to brief. My name is Tommy Cassino. I
11 am an electrician with local union number 3. I am
12 a third generation electrician. Grew right on
13 Ditmars Avenue and 48th Street, so familiar with
14 the area, familiar with the park, familiar with
15 all the restaurants. I had all these prepared
16 statements, but just to speak directly to you guys
17 and be brief speaking of the jobs that are going
18 to be created--the company I work for, which by
19 the way is owned by a woman, especially in
20 construction and quite a dominated men's field, I
21 am very proud of that fact, and we work very hard
22 at the tennis center, who by the way employs us
23 year round. So when you talk about local
24 restaurants, I am one of the persons you can look
25 at. For example, yesterday, which we call

2 empanada Wednesdays where all the electricians get
3 together, we put in a couple of bucks each, and
4 one drives out to grab a bunch of empanadas in the
5 Corona area. Talk about the Parkside, I can go on
6 and on on how we support just local business just
7 by being there, by being employed by the National
8 Tennis Center, so obviously I am in full support
9 of this expansion. It is great, and as just
10 previously said, it should be a win, win for
11 everybody. It is common sense for everybody to be
12 on board with this. It really is. So again, I
13 would like to thank the Chair and the Council for
14 your time. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Mr.
16 Cassino.

17 ERIC REBHUHN: My name is Eric
18 Rebhuhn. I am the head men's tennis coach at St.
19 John's University. We compete and practice at the
20 U.S. Open during the school year. We play against
21 many other universities. All the universities
22 that come and play us stay in the local hotels and
23 eat at the local restaurants. We support this
24 proposal. We have had a relationship with them
25 for five years, and next year we are hosting the

2 2014 Big East Championships. It is going to be a
3 four day event, and there is going to be a lot of
4 people there, 3 to 4,000 people, and this is not
5 during the U.S. Open, so it is another way of
6 utilizing the surrounding areas with hotels and
7 restaurants. Obviously, I have been around tennis
8 my whole life, and I think this is a great idea
9 and a great expansion. Thanks.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

11 JONATHAN GAMBERG: Hi. My name is
12 Jonathan Gamberg. I am here today on behalf of
13 the City Parks Foundation. We provide free
14 sports, arts and education to New Yorkers
15 throughout all five boroughs. Tennis is one of
16 our largest programs, one of the largest programs
17 in the United States, that provides free tennis
18 lessons to 7,000 kids citywide in 38 parks
19 including ten in Queens. I am here today to
20 pledge our support for the USTA's planned
21 expansion as they for the last 30 years have been
22 a valuable partner of ours donating both indoor
23 court time and classroom space for our most
24 dedicated juniors to practice year round. For the
25 last 15 years, they have also been a steady and

2 consistent fundraising partner, helping make
3 tennis accessible to kids throughout the city.
4 For kids and anybody who loves tennis to have the
5 opportunity to go see the U.S. Open in Queens, it
6 is both a thrilling and exhilarating experience,
7 and on behalf of City Parks Foundation, we pledge
8 our support and hope you will too.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very
10 much to this panel for your testimony. And I
11 believe--is there anyone else that wishes to
12 testify on this item? Going once, going twice,
13 closed. So we--oh, I am sorry. Council Member
14 Wills? Council Member Comrie?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: I wasn't
16 able to make the statement. I had to run down to
17 budget. I just wanted to say that I am working
18 closely with Council Member Ferreras on this
19 project. I think that there are a lot of issues
20 around this project, especially with the long term
21 construction that we need to look at, and making
22 sure that the Council stays involved in this
23 project beyond the disposition that is being
24 planned today. A lot of issues came up, and I
25 would hope that I get a copy of the strategic

2 vision e-mailed to me so that I can sit down and
3 work with Council Member Ferreras. I don't know
4 if the construction timeline was brought up and
5 all of those issues since I had to go down to
6 budget, but I would hope to hear from the USTA and
7 City Parks Department about a lot of the issues
8 that were brought up in today's hearings because I
9 am uncomfortable with where my Council Member is,
10 and I will be working closely with her as she
11 works to resolve those issues. Thank you.

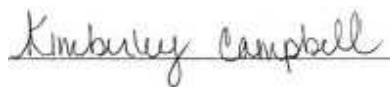
12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you,
13 Chair Comrie. Okay. Seeing no other testimony,
14 we are going to close the hearing on Land Use
15 number 852, USTA Expansion, and we are going to
16 lay over the three other items that were set for
17 the agenda. 816, 842, and 852 we are laying over--
18 --that is the USTA--to a future meeting of this
19 Subcommittee. With that, this hearing is closed.
20 And the meeting is adjourned.

21 [gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Campbell 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

Handwritten signature of Kimberley Campbell in cursive script, written over a horizontal line.Date 7-18-13