

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES

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June 19, 2014
Start: 10:53 a.m.
Recess: 11:20 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room
City Hall

B E F O R E:
MARK WEPRIN
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Jumaane D. Williams
Donovan Richards
Antonio Reynoso
Ritchie Torres
Vincent Ignizio
Inez E. Dickens
Daniel R. Garodnick
Vincent Gentile

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES

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2 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay.

3 [Pause, background voices]

4 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay, I think
5 we're going to get started. Is that alright?
6 Alright, good morning, everyone. This is a very
7 busy day here at City Hall. We're very close to
8 finalizing budget agreements, so everyone's running
9 around, so we apologize for any inconvenience that
10 has been caused. I am Mark Weprin, the chair of
11 the Zoning and Franchises Subcommittee and I want
12 to acknowledge the following members who are
13 present: Council Member Jumaane Williams; Council
14 Member Donovan Richards; Council Member Antonio
15 Reynoso; Council Member Ritchie Torres and Council
16 Member Vincent Ignizio. We have a quorum. We are
17 joined by Inez Dickens, who has an item on the
18 agenda that is in her district and she has a
19 statement she wants to make on that item, so we
20 will do that now. Miss Dickens.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you so
22 much, Chair Weprin and the distinguished members of
23 the Subcommittee for allowing me to provide my
24 supportive statement on this development, the 117th
25 Street rezoning, ULURP number 140070 ZMM. On

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES 3

2 Tuesday, June 17th, the Subcommittee on Zoning held
3 a hearing on this rezoning project, which is
4 located in my district, and seeks to rezone from an
5 R7A to an R8A district for the eastern portion of
6 the block bounded by 117th Street and West 118th
7 Street between Frederick Douglass Boulevard and St.
8 Nicholas Avenue. I was unable to attend due to a
9 pressing event in my district, but I realize that
10 there has been concerns raised by some of my
11 colleagues about this rezoning project.

12 For the record, let us be clear.

13 Artemis Construction has been consistent in
14 providing affordable housing opportunities in my
15 district. Many developers, both private and non-
16 profit, as well as representatives from HPD can
17 attest to the fact that I am unyielding when it
18 comes to addressing the issue of affordable
19 housing, which is critical and important to my
20 constituency. They have always worked with me to
21 find the best solutions to addressing the lack of
22 available affordable housing. Artemis has built
23 close to 2,500 units to date, with 70 percent
24 having affordable components ranging from 40
25 percent to 165 percent AMI. Some of Artemis's

2 current active projects in my district are the
3 Harlem River Point South, which boasts 139 units of
4 100 percent affordability with incomes of 40 to 60
5 percent of AMI. Another project is the Harlem
6 Cluster, which is 100 units of 100 percent
7 affordability with incomes of 40 to 130 percent
8 AMI. In regards to the immediate vicinity of St.
9 Thomas the Apostle, Artemis has site control over
10 211 West 117th Street, which is a vacant 17 unit
11 100 percent affordable building program. I have
12 always been able to work with them and they have
13 been extremely receptive to the concerns of my
14 constituency. This is why, after several meetings
15 with the project's developer, I have become a
16 supporter of this development. This is a
17 tremendous need for affordable housing in my
18 district and through negotiations with the
19 developer, I was able to increase the amount of
20 affordable housing from 20 to 30 percent of the
21 dwelling units to be constructed. Artemis has
22 agreed to provide 20 percent of affordable units to
23 low income housing, making no more than 40 to 60
24 percent of AMI. An additional 10 percent of units
25 will be affordable to middle income households,

2 making no more than 165 percent of AMI. In
3 addition, they are working to secure financing from
4 new initiatives and programs from HPD yet to be
5 created.

6 I learned way before I was elected if
7 you want your community to improve, you'll need the
8 help of those who bring something to it. This new
9 commitment by Artemis will allow for recent
10 graduates and professionals to return to our
11 community to have the ability to start and raise
12 their families and to be assistant to many of which
13 have aging families and parents. As such, we need
14 to be mindful and considerate of families who have
15 no place to live due to the lack of housing options
16 and yet do not qualify for the low-income housing.
17 I know this plan isn't perfect, but it is better
18 than the alternative, where Artemis was within
19 their right to demolish the church and build
20 another luxury housing development that no one in
21 my district would be able to afford.

22 For my Harlem community, it is
23 imperatively critical that St. Thomas Apostle's
24 Roman Catholic ornate Church be restored and remain
25 within the neighborhood and Artemis is also

2 building it so that the indigenous cultural
3 institutions that frequently have no place to
4 showcase what they do and to have free programs
5 available to the youth and to families they will be
6 able to do so at a low to no cost to them by being
7 housed at St. Thomas.

8 Artemis has also agreed to preserve and
9 restore the historic religious institution and
10 local community groups will be able to use the
11 space at a significantly reduced cost. The
12 developer has assured me that the restored church
13 building will be used as a community facility
14 space, dedicated to serving local art and cultural
15 groups.

16 Artemis had the option of turning down
17 my proposal to increase affordability because they
18 were able to receive... they were unable to receive
19 any tax credits or loans. Artemis also paid the
20 full market price to the Archdiocese to acquire the
21 property and still decided to renovate and restore
22 the church at a considerable cost to themselves.
23 This is not a designated landmark and they have the
24 option of demolishing the entire area to create

2 luxury housing, which would not have been
3 acceptable.

4 In a related matter, I would like to
5 commend this administration's efforts to increase
6 housing affordability. We all win when there is an
7 increase in affordable housing, but the biggest
8 question is how do we get there? This
9 administration wants to push for more affordable
10 housing that has yet to write the programs that
11 will actually back the initiatives. We cannot
12 continue to push for affordable housing when we do
13 not have an insurgency of programs in place to
14 actually make it a reality. I was able to
15 negotiate with the prior administration certain
16 proposals for the 125th Street rezoning, which
17 created more than 1,800 units of affordable housing
18 and started the city's first model for affordable
19 homeownership programs, programs many of my
20 colleagues were all too eager to take advantage of
21 for developments in their communities.

22 I want to work together with this
23 administration in order to continue to create more
24 affordable housing and affordable homeownership
25 initiatives. Programs like Mitchell-Lama, for

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES 8

2 example, provides affordable rental and cooperative
3 housing to moderate and middle income families.

4 Incentives like this allow for the middle-class to
5 be able to afford housing, while giving them the
6 opportunity to remain vested and invested in their
7 communities, yet they have not been included in any
8 program to date. If this administration is truly
9 committed to addressing the issue of affordable
10 housing in this city, then I welcome them to the
11 fight. I ask that we join together in rolling up
12 our sleeves, bringing in the developers from the
13 private and non-profit sector, as well as the
14 members for the city and state agencies and local
15 financial institutions that are truly committed to
16 helping families invest in their communities,
17 institutions like Carver or City National.

18 Affordable housing is endangered and thousands of
19 families are being displace every day. Placing the
20 frustrations of the constituents we represent on
21 the backs of the developer that comes before us
22 doesn't help us to solve the issues that have come
23 to face us. Thinking, planning, coordinating,
24 negotiating is the only way we can get what we need
25 and we want. Thank you, Chair and thank you to the

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES

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2 committee members for allowing me this testimony,
3 and I ask for an aye.

4 [Pause]

5 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you, Miss
6 Dickens. My mic, how is that? So we have a number
7 of items that we closed the hearing on last week
8 that we are going to couple together and I'm going
9 to announce those now. Each of the members is now
10 supportive of this item and the member who
11 represents the district. Land Use Numbers 62 to 65
12 was the Clinton Site 7 in Council Member Johnson's
13 district. Land Use Number 86, the Empire Boulevard
14 rezoning, which was in Council Member Cumbo's
15 district. She had concerns, which have been
16 resolved. I have a letter here from Fox Rothschild
17 to Council Member combo, which she is in agreement
18 with, and she wanted you to know that she supports
19 it. I have a copy of the letter if any of the
20 members want to see it. Land Use Number 87, which
21 is the West 106th Street rezoning and Land Use
22 Number 88, which is the West 117th Street rezoning,
23 which we heard last week as well in Council Members
24 Dickens' and Levine's area. So with that in mind,
25 we're going to couple all those. I'm going to call

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES 10

2 on the counsel, Anne McCoy, to please call the
3 roll.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Weprin.

5 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: I vote aye.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
7 Williams.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I vote aye on
9 all with the exception of LU Number 88, which I
10 abstain.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
12 Richards.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Aye on all.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
15 Reynoso. I'm sorry.

16 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: So...

17 [crosstalk]

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Mem...

19 [crosstalk]

20 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: So Reynoso passes.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: So Reynoso passes.
22 Council Member Torres.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I vote aye in
24 deference to all the local council members.

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1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member

3 Ignizio.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Yes.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member

6 Reynoso.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Permission to
8 explain my vote.

9 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Mr. Reynoso to
10 explain his vote.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Alright, so
12 I'm going to vote aye on all except I'm going to
13 abstain from Land Use Number 86 and I just got into
14 this Council expecting that we're going to raise
15 the bar as to what we're going to be doing,
16 especially in the affordable housing fund on all
17 projects and what I see in this specific
18 application is more of the same. It's affordable
19 housing at a modest at best range and I just want
20 to send a message that moving forward I hope that
21 we continue to fight for more affordable housing
22 past the 25, so I'm going to vote aye on all except
23 Land Use 86, in which I will abstain. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you, Mr.
25 Reynoso.

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES 12

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: By a vote of six in
3 the affirmative, zero abstentions and no negatives,
4 all items are adopted with the exception of Land
5 Use Number 86, which is adopted by a vote of five
6 in the affirmative, zero negatives and one
7 abstention and Land Use 88, which is adopted by a
8 vote of five in the affirmative, no negatives and
9 one abstention. All items are referred to the Full
10 Land Use Committee.

11 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you very
12 much, Miss McCoy and that Land Use Committee that
13 she refers to will be meeting as soon as we get
14 people into this room. So we are going to leave
15 the vote open on this until Land Use starts. I
16 want to just make mention, those from the audience
17 who have been coming to Land Use for many years,
18 you may want to stick around for Land Use if you
19 were planning on leaving 'cause you deserve a piece
20 of cake, and [laughter] with that in mind, I am
21 going to adjourn the Zoning and Franchises
22 Subcommittee and Land Use will start as soon as we
23 can and the rolls will stay open until then. The
24 meeting is adjourned.

25 [gavel]

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES 13

2 [Pause]

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
4 Garodnick.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Thank you.
6 I vote aye.

7 [Pause]

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
9 Gentile.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: I vote aye.

11 [Pause]

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Final vote on
13 Zoning Subcommittee: all items are adopted by a
14 vote of eight in the affirmative, zero abstentions
15 and no negatives with the exception of Land Use
16 Number 86, which is adopted by a vote of seven in
17 the affirmative, no negatives, one abstention and
18 Land Use Number 88, which is adopted by a vote of
19 seven in the affirmative, no negatives and one
20 abstention. All items are referred to the Full
21 Land Use Committee.

22 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: The Zoning
23 Subcommittee is now adjourned. [gavel] Full Land
24 Use Committee will start momentarily.

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. 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.



Date: 06/24/2014