



Landmarks Preservation
Commission

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES
REGARDING THE DESIGNATION OF OLD SAINT JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
NOVEMBER 14, 2017**

Good morning Chairs Koo, Greenfield and Committee Members. My name is Kate Lemos McHale, Director of Research at the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and I am joined today by Ali Rasoulinejad, our Director of Community and Intergovernmental Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Commission's individual landmark designation of the Old Saint James Episcopal Church, located at 86-02 Broadway, Queens, Block 1549, Lot 1 in part.

On September 19, 2017 the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission unanimously voted to designate the Old St. James Episcopal Church as a New York City Individual Landmark. During a public hearing on August 8, 2017, the Commission heard from two representatives of the owner, the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island and CWB Architects, in addition to the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Historic Districts Council, and the Society for the Architecture of the City, all who testified in support of this designation. The Commission also received letters in support of the designation from the Queens Preservation Council, the Juniper Park Civic Association, the Newtown Historical Society, Communities of Maspeth and Elmhurst Together, along with letters from two individuals. A letter of support from area Council Member Daniel Dromm was also received prior to the Commission's vote to designate.

This 280-year-old former church, which retains both 18th and 19th century character and historic fabric, is New York City's second-oldest religious building. Pre dating St. Paul's Chapel in Manhattan, it is also the oldest Church of England building still standing in the City.

Originally built in 1735-36, the Colonial style church that included a tower facing the churchyard was known as "The Church of England in America, mission church at Newtowne," one of the first towns in Queens County, founded in 1652. The building sits on its original site in the heart of Newtown Village and was built according to the prevailing style and methods of meetinghouses and small rural churches that were common during Colonial times.

Following the Revolutionary War, the parish became one of the earliest members of the New York Protestant Episcopal Diocese. Prominent citizens associated with the parish included the reverend Mr.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair



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Benjamin Moore, the first president of Kings College (later Columbia College), and the Reverend Dr. Samuel Seabury, Jr., the first America Episcopal Bishop.

In 1848 the parish constructed a new St. James Church and the original structure became a chapel and parish hall at this time. The hall was later remodeled in 1883 with Stick style and Gothic details that also included a shed-roof porch at the entry and a small rear addition to replace tower that had since been damaged.

The building continued to serve the parish and the community as a meeting hall in the 20th century, yet by 1965 cement-asbestos shingles covered the historic wood shingles and some decorative trim had been removed. In 2004, the exterior was restored to its 1883 appearance with the help of grants from the Landmarks Conservancy, along with city and state sources. Other work included the installation of replicated wood doors, windows and clapboards.

The main 1735 section of the building measures 58 feet by 30 feet, with the 1883 rear addition measuring a narrower 25 feet by 15 feet. Both sections are one story and similar in form and ornamental details with eave brackets, round-arched window opens and lancet windows along the longer sides. The Colonial-era features of the 1735 main building include a rectangular box-like form with a front-facing gable roof, wood-shingle siding, round-arched window openings and heavy timber framing. Ninetieth-century details can be seen in the gable-end truss-like trim, flared eaves, stained glass and round windows.

Today, the structure today retains both 18th and 19th century historic design, workmanship, and materials, and is an architecturally significant example of the Colonial Meetinghouse form, combined with 19th century Gothic Revival and Stick style decorative details. The church is historically significant for its association with the early colonial settlement of Queens and with the beginnings of the Protestant Episcopal church in New York, and also architecturally significant as an early 18th-century timber-framed building originally built like a New England meetinghouse and updated in 1883 with Stick Style and Gothic Revival features.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

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November 13, 2017

Peter Koo, Chair
Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting, and Maritime Uses
New York City Council
250 Broadway, Room 1768
New York, NY 10007

Re: Old Saint James Episcopal Church
86-02 Broadway (Block: 1549, Lot 1 in part)
20185067 HKQ

Dear Chair Koo:

I am writing to express my support for the designation of the Old Saint James Episcopal Church for landmark status. This building is not only architecturally notable for its meetinghouse design but is significant for its place as New York City's second oldest religious building and the Episcopal Church's oldest.

I am fortunate to represent Elmhurst, which is steeped in hundreds of years of history. Adding the Old Saint James Episcopal Church to the list of landmarks is a fitting way to recognize my district's rich cultural heritage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Dromm", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Daniel Dromm
New York City Council Member, 25th District

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 11/14/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kate Lemos McHale

Address: LPC

I represent: _____

Address: 1 Centre St,

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Appearance Card

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Date: 11/14/17

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Name: Ali Rasoulnejad

Address: LPC

I represent: _____

Address: 1 Centre St

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