

Landmarks Preservation Commission

Commissioner Nominee – Anne Holford-Smith

Opening Remarks

Before the Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections

December 6, 2017

Good morning Chair Lander, and members of the Committee for Rules, Privileges, and Elections. Thank you for the opportunity to stand before you and answer your questions. I am extremely excited and honored to have been nominated by the Mayor for a seat on the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

I am a born and bred New Yorker – born in Brooklyn and raised in Queens – and for the past 30 years have lived in the nexus of Chelsea, the West Village, and the Meatpacking District. I spent much of my childhood in Forest Hills Gardens, a bucolic and charming environment that introduced me to urban planning and design at any early age. I was enamored of the Tudor style buildings and brick roadways that made the Gardens such a special place.

My parents also instilled in me a deep caring for meaning and place. Our summer vacations always included pilgrimages to historic places, from the battlefields of Gettysburg to Mount Vernon and Monticello. Our own Tudor-style townhouse was a constantly evolving project lead by my father, who as an interior designer, was always bringing home treasures to be somehow incorporated into our home.

I later attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn to study architecture, which introduced me to a larger world of the built environment, and further solidified my love of old buildings. I have been practicing architecture for 30 years, and have spent a considerable amount of that time dedicated to preserving historic buildings in New York City. Most of that time has been with Platt Byard Dovell White Architects, of which I am now proud to be a partner. My late mentor Paul Byard was a renowned preservationist in New York City, and served for many years as the Dean of Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture, Preservation, and Planning. Together we worked on the restoration of several important New York City Landmarks, including the Cooper Union Foundation Building, the Appellate Division Courthouse, the Gould Memorial Library auditorium, and Flushing Town Hall.

For the Cooper Union Foundation Building and the Appellate Division Courthouse, we were able to return those amazing masonry buildings, after 100 years and more of very hard wear, to a close semblance of their original appearance, and restore the meaning that their original design intended to convey. For the Cooper Union, that was the forward-thinking freshness and opportunity that a free education could provide, symbolized by its many large windows and use of the most up to date materials for 1859. For the Appellate Division, it was the bright white symbol of truth in law as embodied in the classical idiom.

Both of these projects benefitted from my technical expertise in the building envelope, including stone restoration, wood window restoration, and ornamental metalwork.

While these were pure restoration projects, the opportunity to transform old buildings back to community use has been even more rewarding. Flushing Town Hall was restored from an empty shell to a vibrant center for the arts. Our other work with institutions like the Lower East Side's Educational Alliance will provide new generations the chance to grow and learn in the same building in which their parents did. And the restoration of the auditorium of the Gould Memorial library, in the campus that was once the home of NYU in the Bronx, returned light and original details back to a space darkened to discourage bombing in World War II, and vandalized by student radicals in the 1960's.

These projects included both restoration and architectural intervention, merging my technical preservation expertise with my architectural practice. I have honed these skills on projects throughout the 5 boroughs, ranging from preservation master plans to full building restorations and adaptive reuse. It has been my privilege to work at one of the most preeminent preservation firms in New York, working alongside not only Paul Byard, but Charles Platt, who himself served as Commissioner in the 1970's.

I have spent the past 30 years committed to the restoration of New York City landmarks, sensitive additions to old buildings, and new buildings set in historic contexts, and am now committed to the public service of helping to oversee the stewardship of this incredible city that I call home. That stewardship includes not only the preservation of individual landmarks, but the creation of clear guidelines to inform the development of new construction in the context of historic districts. New York, while embodying a unique amalgam of its history from Dutch New Amsterdam to the brown decades of brownstone construction, is still a growing and changing metropolis that needs to be allowed to evolve. The combination of the new and old is what makes New York such an exciting environment in which to live, work, and visit. Allowing sensitive and invigorating new buildings and additions to co-exist with the fabric of our older buildings is crucial for the future of the City.

Again, thank you for the opportunity, and I welcome your questions.

Good Morning My name is Alameda Sky Chapman

I am a senior at Uncommon Charter High School

Last year, I ran a healthy living club where we talked about how class and race effects health in different communities as well as how we can live healthier lifestyles.

Outside of school I am the captain of a Row team with Row New York. I've been part of team since middle school so this will be my 5th year rowing.

I believe I am a good fit for York City Youth Board. I think it is extremely important to have youth voices be heard in government especially with the high tensions of our current political climate. I believe the youth board is a way to give the underrepresented a voice.

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