

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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September 16, 2008

Start: 10:02 am

Recess: 10:48 am

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E: HELEN DIANE FOSTER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Helen Diane Foster
Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.
Alan Jay Gerson
Helen Sears

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

LEE CHONG
Co-Chair
Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, Inc.

PAUL ROSENBLUM

DAVID KOTELCHUCK
Past president
West Side Manor Tenants Association

RINA GARST

ED YELLIN

PETER THYNE
Auxiliary Officer
6th Precinct

MORGAN VAN TONAY
Auxiliary Officer
6th Precinct

STEPHANIE PHELAN
Auxiliary Officer
6th Precinct

MAUREEN REMACLE
President
Sixth Precinct Community Council

JUDITH CALLET
Resident Chair
Bleecker Area Merchants and Residents Association

STEPHEN CORSON
Manhattan Borough President's office

RITA POPPER
President
Knickerbocker Plaza Tenants' Association

PAUL SCUBERT

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

JACOB MORRIS
Executive Director
Harlem Historical Society

LEONARD FLEISCHER

1
2 MALE VOICE: Testing, testing,
3 testing. Testing. Testing, 1-2-3; testing 1-2-3.
4 Today's committee is going to be on Parks and
5 Recreation. Today's date is September 16, 2008,
6 and it is been recorded by Aliberto Coriasco
7 [phonetic].

8 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Good morning,
9 I am councilmember Helen Diane Foster of the Bronx
10 chair of the Parks and Recreation Committee. We
11 will be doing--hearing testimony this morning on
12 the 83 proposed street name changes. As you know,
13 it has been quite some time since we've had a
14 hearing on the street name changes and the council
15 has since created a process by which all street
16 names come through the council, there is a
17 complete vetting process so we do not run into
18 what happened last time with street renaming and
19 going against the wishes of a community. That
20 having been said, I will reiterate that we have
21 83. So if you have written record, you can submit
22 that--written testimony, excuse me, you can submit
23 that for the record and then just talk. We're
24 going to give people two-minute limits and I've
25 been joined--and there are a number of committee

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2 meetings ongoing, so people will be coming in and
3 as they come in I will be introducing them. I've
4 been joined by Lyle Frank, who is the attorney for
5 the committee; Chima Obichere, who is the
6 financial analyst; and Patrick Mulvihill, who is
7 the policy analyst, just walked in the door. That
8 being said, our first panel will be Robert Woolis,
9 Jim Garst--oh, Lee Chong, Lee Chong, Carmen Fishel
10 [phonetic]. Please go have a seat, they'll--if
11 you sit down, they'll bring it to you, I mean, the
12 sergeant will get your testimony. Paul Rosenblum,
13 Paul? Please come have a seat. Sergeant, can you
14 bring one more chair up, so we have three? And,
15 Carmen, are you speaking?

16 CARMEN FISHEL: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Okay. Please
18 go have a seat and if you have written testimony,
19 submit it, and then just talk. Oh, and we've been
20 joined by Helen Sears from Queens who is running
21 back and forth, as I said, we have numerous
22 committee meetings. You can start by introducing
23 yourself and then going into your testimony.
24 Thank [Audio gap]

25 LEE CHONG: Good morning, Madame

1
2 Chair, and the members of the Parks and Recreation
3 Committee. My name is Lee Chong and I am a co-
4 chair of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition.
5 We are an organization more than 30 years old of
6 residents and community members advocating for the
7 maintenance of affordable, secure, and decent
8 housing for low, moderate, and middle income New
9 Yorkers. We are the only Mitchell-Lama group
10 representing both co-ops and rental buildings in
11 Albany, Buffalo, New York City, Rochester,
12 Syracuse, and Westchester County. We are
13 recognized by the federal department of HUD and
14 New York State Department of DHCR and New York
15 City's Department of Housing Preservation and
16 Development as one of the premier organizations
17 knowledgeable of the regulations, procedures, and
18 laws governing the Mitchell-Lama program. The
19 Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition would like to
20 request that the City Council support and approve
21 three streets within Manhattan Community Board 7
22 be renamed to honor three longtime advocates for
23 affordable housing, specifically the preservation
24 of Mitchell-Lama housing, not only in Community
25 Board 7 (which at one time had the largest

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2 concentration of Mitchell-Lama developments) but
3 for the entire State of New York. They are Robert
4 Woolis, co-founder along with Congressman Charles
5 Rangel of MLRC, who lived for many years at
6 Columbus House, a rental located at 95 West 95th
7 Street and passed away on December 15, 2006; Doris
8 Rosenblum, a co-chair of the Mitchell-Lama
9 Residents Coalition and former District Manager of
10 Community Board 7 who lived at Strycker's Bay
11 Apartments--a co-op located at 66 West 94th
12 Street--and passed away on August 1996; and James
13 Garst, a founding member of the Mitchell-Lama
14 Council who lived for many years at Columbus Park--
15 a co-op located at 100 West 94th Street--and
16 passed away on December 2006. On March 4th, 2008,
17 the full board of Community Board 7 passed the
18 Resolution of the Transportation Committee
19 approving the secondary street namings. At the
20 Transportation-Committee, Manhattan Borough
21 President Scott Stringer spoke passionately in
22 support of the street namings, as did many local
23 residents. At the full board meeting, staff of
24 local officials representing Congressman Jerry
25 Nadler and State Senator Eric Schneiderman, as

1
2 well as Councilwoman Gale Brewer spoke in support
3 of the street namings. The exact locations for
4 the renamed streets are as follows: Robert Woolis
5 Way on the northeast side of West 95th Street,
6 between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West;
7 Doris Rosenblum Way on the southeast side of West
8 94th Street, between Columbus Avenue and Central
9 Park West; and James Garst Way on the southwest
10 side of West 94th Street, between Columbus and
11 Amsterdam Avenues. I'm not going to read their
12 bios because both the wife of James Garst is here
13 and the husband of Doris Rosenblum is here. Bob
14 Woolis who--

15 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: [Interposing]
16 Attach for the record, that's why I said--

17 LEE CHONG: [Interposing] And
18 they're attached for the record.

19 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: --you can talk
20 and, and we don't have to read--

21 LEE CHONG: [Interposing] Right, so
22 I didn't want to--

23 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: --thank you.

24 LEE CHONG: --read that and Bob is
25 a - - who--his family is not here because they

1
2 live out of the city and they couldn't come, but
3 there are residents here who live at Columbus
4 House and there are many residents who have
5 benefited from his help as a pro bono accountant
6 to help fight illegal rent increases in Mitchell-
7 Lamas and we want them to be recognized. Thank
8 you.

9 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you very
10 much. The residents who are here, can you just
11 stand up?

12 UNKNOWN VOICE: - -

13 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Stand. Very
14 good.

15 FEMALE VOICE: Stand.

16 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you very
17 much. Well, I figured you two. Okay.

18 FEMALE VOICE: I was a neighbor of-

19 -

20 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Oh.

21 FEMALE VOICE: --Doris Rosenblum.

22 I lived in the same co-op and if I wanted to know
23 who to vote for, I'd go to Doris because I knew
24 she knew everything. And she had a servant's
25 heart, she was the type of person who was really

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2 for the people. I knew that if she was going to
3 vote for someone, she knew what they were about
4 and it was going to be good for me, and good for
5 New York. If she were running for president
6 today, I would be saying "Doris, Doris, Doris,"
7 because I would know that I wouldn't have to worry
8 about the government, because she was there.
9 That's the kind of person she was. I love her and
10 I'll be proud to live at Doris Rosenblum Way.

11 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you very
12 much. And thank you for your energy. Press the
13 button, if the light--oh, the light should be on.

14 PAUL ROSENBLUM: Is the light on?

15 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Okay.

16 PAUL ROSENBLUM: I'm Paul
17 Rosenblum, and I was fortunate--

18 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: [Interposing]
19 Pull it to you a little. The mike, so we can hear
20 you.

21 PAUL ROSENBLUM: Okay. I'm Paul
22 Rosenblum, I was fortunate to be married to Doris
23 Rosenblum, who spent all of her life as a
24 community organizer and she worked--it's not in
25 her bio, but when I first met her she was a

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2 volunteer at the Educational Alliance down in the
3 Lower East Side and when we moved into the West
4 Side, she immediately became active in the Parents
5 Association of P.S. 75 which she transformed into
6 a real Parents Association. She also worked on
7 the side for Advocates for Children. She had
8 various jobs, she was one of the founders the West
9 Side High School, she served there as a school
10 secretary and actually ran it when it first began.
11 And the numerous activities in which she was
12 active, including working with Father Harry Browne
13 at St. Gregory's church. She was a founding
14 member of the Strycker's Bay Neighborhood Council
15 and she was known as the Queen of the Upper West
16 Side Urban Renewal Area for a long time, she
17 served on the community board for over 25 years
18 and having been appointed by Congressman Ted Weiss
19 and she also was appointed by Ruth Messinger as
20 borough historian--that was her last semi-official
21 job, which again she was volunteering at because
22 the previous borough historian, Paul O'Dwyer, had
23 told her don't take this job 'cause they don't pay
24 you anything and she said that's the least of my
25 worries, she was always an advocate for the

1
2 population of the West Side and of New York City.
3 And I'm very proud that Mitchell-Lama Residents
4 Coalition took the initiative in having the street
5 renamed for her. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you very
7 much and thank you for sharing her with the rest
8 of the community. Thank you. Just to let you
9 know, we are--it won't be voted out today, we'll
10 hear the testimony and then it will be voted out
11 before the full council meeting and then go before
12 the Council. Thank you very much. Our next panel
13 is David Kotelchuck, did I say that right?

14 DAVID KOTELCHUCK: Kotelchuck.

15 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Kotelchuck,
16 sorry. Rina Garst and Ed Yellin. Thank you very
17 much. Mm-hmm. Good morning, you can get started.

18 DAVID KOTELCHUCK: Good morning.
19 Thank you. My name is David Kotelchuck, I'm past
20 president of the West Side Manor Tenants
21 Association. The West Side Manor Tenants
22 Association represents 246 apartments at 70 West
23 95th Street, between 94th and 95th. We wish to
24 express our wholehearted support for the proposal
25 to name three West Side Manhattan streets in our

1
2 immediate neighborhood after three recently
3 deceased community housing advocates: Jim Garst,
4 Doris Rosenblum, Bob Woolis. Each of these three
5 advocates played an important role in helping
6 preserve affordable housing in New York City.
7 You've heard about them, so I'm not going to go
8 into details other than to say, for example, Bob
9 Woolis, in the last year of his life, was voted by
10 our Tenants Association to be a lifetime member of
11 our group, even though he was a resident in
12 another building. Many of us went to Doris's
13 funeral. Jim Garst worked with us, we went with
14 him to Albany. Jim also--Jim helped us and other
15 Mitchell-Lama tenant associations by researching
16 city and state housing laws and thereby making
17 sure that all laws affecting us and protecting
18 Mitchell-Lama tenants were known to us and
19 enforced by the relevant government agencies. We
20 will miss--we miss their community contributions
21 of all three. We feel proud that our building,
22 which straddles 94th and 95th Street on Columbus,
23 would be situated between two of the three streets
24 named after these community stalwarts if this
25 proposal is passed. We strongly urge this

1
2 committee, and later, the New York City Council,
3 to approve these three street namings. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.

5 DAVID KOTELCHUCK: Rina.

6 RINA GARST: Good morning.

7 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Good morning.

8 RINA GARST: I'm Rina Garst. I
9 don't have any prepared statement because I found
10 it impossible to say in two minutes something
11 about a 53-year marriage--

12 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: God bless.

13 RINA GARST: --and partnership.
14 I'm just very proud that this--I am speaking on
15 behalf of myself and the Mitchell-Lama Council, of
16 which Jim was a member and a member of the board
17 for many, many years, because I thought someone
18 would be here, they're not, so they've authorized
19 me to speak for them. And I also have for the
20 record, if you have not received it, a letter from
21 Ed Yaker from the Coordinating Council of
22 Cooperatives also endorsing the plan.

23 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: We'll

24 [crosstalk] thank you.

25 RINA GARST: Jim was a founding

1
2 member of Tenants & Neighbors, I was on this board
3 for many years, as was Doris on the board of
4 Tenants & Neighbors, and he got involved--we got
5 involved in the Mitchell-Lama stuff when we moved
6 into West Side Urban Renewal and among the first
7 people we met who were interested and involved was
8 Doris Rosenblum and so I claimed Doris as a friend
9 for over 30 years. And then Bob Woolis came into
10 our lives about 20 years ago, so a colleague--and
11 Bob Woolis, also a great fighter for the cause.
12 Jim was hired by the Tenants & Neighbors to be the
13 Albany representative, the lobbyist--and I use
14 that term proudly--for Mitchell-Lama and for
15 tenant protections and he was there for many, many
16 years. And as everybody has testified, he knew
17 more about Mitchell-Lama than even Mitchell and
18 Lama by the end. I just want to say one thing,
19 the reason that Jim and I were able to live a full
20 life, taking jobs that didn't pay a hell of a lot,
21 was because we had the security of living in a
22 Mitchell-Lama co-op on the Upper West Side. Thank
23 you.

24 ED YELLIN: Good morning. My name
25 is Ed Yellin, I reside on the Upper West Side, I

1 really represent today only myself and my wife,
2 Jean Fagan, who is here. We want you to know how
3 proud and pleased we are to walk the streets of
4 New York City and find that there are streets
5 named for community people who have made a
6 contribution to the lives of the city. And we
7 were friends of Bernie Wohl and we joined with the
8 community when he was recognized when 88th Street
9 was named 88th & Columbus, the Bernie Wohl Way.
10 Now Rudy Giuliani may not like community
11 organizers, but we think that the residents of the
12 Upper West Side and the New York City Council
13 certainly has respect for them and so we look
14 forward to the day when we can join the community
15 in honoring Doris Rosenblum by renaming 94th
16 Street the Doris Rosenblum Way. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you all
19 very much and especially in this type of
20 environment with what's happening to Mitchell-
21 Lamas and it's important that we honor those. And
22 thank you for sharing your husband of 53 years
23 with the rest of the community and exactly in
24 terms of the community organizers, we know how
25 important that is. The Upper West Side is kind of

1
2 the model for community organization in New York
3 City. So thank you very much for taking the time
4 out and coming.

5 RINA GARST: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Our next panel
7 is going to be Peter, Peter--it's T-H--

8 PETER THYNE: Thyne.

9 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Time? Oh,
10 okay, I can do that Peter Thyne, Van--

11 MORGAN VAN TONAY: Van Tonay
12 [phonetic].

13 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Say it again.

14 MORGAN VAN TONAY: Van Tonay.

15 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Van Tonay
16 Morgan and Stephanie Phelan. Thank you. You may
17 start.

18 PETER THYNE: Thank you. Good
19 morning, my name is Auxiliary Officer Peter Thyne,
20 I am with the Sixth Precinct in Greenwich Village.
21 I would like to thank the Parks Department,
22 community board, and BAMRA for supporting this
23 petition to name a street after Auxiliary Officer
24 Eugene Marshalik and also Nicholas Pekearo. I
25 think that today this is a very important move on

1
2 the part of the city. We have a whole generation
3 of what I will call 'me' people--they think about
4 themselves and themselves only. Here, we have two
5 young officers, one at the start of his life at
6 NYU, the other one a budding author. They were
7 prepared and were both very committed to their
8 community and they gave their time to serve the
9 community. Tragically, what happened, happened,
10 we can't put the clock back, but I think that
11 renaming a street after them will be an
12 inspiration for, I hope, other young people,
13 particularly in the location where it is going to
14 be, which is close to Bleecker Street and
15 McDougal, which is where a lot of these young
16 folks hang out. So I just hope that this move
17 will be an inspiration to others to be committed
18 to our city and to our community. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.

20 MORGAN VAN TONAY: My name is
21 Auxiliary Officer Morgan Van Tonay. I am the
22 senior officer in the Sixth Precinct for 35 years
23 and ever since my first graduation from the
24 academy on a Friday evening I patrolled Bleecker
25 Street and Sullivan and McDougal street, so I'm

1
2 aware of this neighborhood almost as though I live
3 there, although I do live on 11th Street. Many of
4 you maybe have seen the news and remember on March
5 14th of '07 at 9:30 in the evening the incident of
6 the two officers that were shot to death on the
7 street. Nicholas happened to be a very nice young
8 man. I remember him the year before, when we had
9 the ceremony for 9-1-1 out in front of the Sixth
10 Precinct and we were in uniform and Nick asked
11 where are you people going and I said we're going
12 down to the World Trade Center because we also had
13 two officers from the Sixth Precinct that had did
14 in 9-1-1 and he said, can I come along, I said,
15 yes, Nick, why don't you come along. Another
16 incident was at the Christmas party from the Sixth
17 Precinct where we serve a roast beef dinner for
18 the senior citizens and Nick was in the precinct
19 and he said where are you people going and I said
20 we're going to be waiters for the senior citizens,
21 why don't you come along and he said well, I
22 don't--I'm not a waiter. I said, well you'll come
23 and you'll learn to be a waiter. And these are
24 memories of these two young officers that died in
25 the street. Eugene was 19 years old and one of

1
2 the nicest things I can remember him is that he
3 had a beautiful smile and in New York City where
4 we live over here and everybody has problems
5 paying their rents and living in the city with all
6 the problems, Eugene had a million dollar smile.
7 I'm here today on behalf of these two young men
8 for the street naming in memory of them for the
9 parents, number one, so--and for the village and
10 also for our unit, that we can think they did not
11 die in vain and we're still patrolling the same
12 neighborhood. And I am asking you if you could
13 please approve the street naming. I also would
14 like to submit, I have a picture here for the
15 committee if they would like to accept it.

16 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Sure. Can you
17 bring the picture up to us, please? Thank you
18 very much.

19 MORGAN VAN TONAY: Okay.

20 STEPHANIE PHELAN: Good morning.

21 MORGAN VAN TONAY: There is also a
22 DVD--excuse me--

23 STEPHANIE PHELAN: Okay.

24 MORGAN VAN TONAY: --if you could
25 please look at it.

STEPHANIE PHELAN: Good morning.

My name is--I am Auxiliary Police Officer Stephanie Phelan of the Sixth Precinct and I feel that my two fellow officers have said very much what I wanted to say. Let me just say that it was a tragic night when these two fine young men, who had given so much to their community, met their fate and we should never forget. We in the Sixth Precinct will never forget and we ask that you remember them by renaming the street as they were our friends, our neighbors, and our fellow auxiliary police officers and we kept keep them in our hearts, we hope that you can too.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Absolutely.

And thank you for coming down. I'm sorry that we even have to be here, but it's important that we do keep the memory alive and remind people. Thank you very much. The next panel is Maureen, Maureen--

MAUREEN REMACLE: Remacle.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Remaco?

MAUREEN REMACLE: Remacle.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Remacle, I was going to say, I don't see an O. Remacle, and

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Judith Gallet, Kalat.

JUDITH CALLET: - -

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Judith--

JUDITH CALLET: Callet.

CHAIRPERSON: Callet.

MAUREEN REMACLE: Hello.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Press--

MAUREEN REMACLE: Hello, my--

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Yeah.

MAUREEN REMACLE: --name is Maureen

Remacle, and I'm the president of the Sixth
Precinct Community Council, and we are the ones
who put in the request for the street name
changing. I'm not going to go through my prepared
statements 'cause they're longer than two minutes.
You've already heard from the auxiliaries who
worked with Nick and Eugene but I do want to tell
my personal story. I live two blocks from where
the shooting was, I had just been at a Bleecker
Area Merchants and Residents Association meeting
and I was home for about two minutes when the
shooting took place. If Nick and Eugene had not
stopped that man on the corner--he was heading in
my direction, he might have walked past me without

1
2 a problem, he might not have--there's no way to
3 know that at this point. But I was out on the
4 street two minutes beforehand, along with many of
5 my fellow BAMRA members and friends and the people
6 in the neighborhood feel that--as I said, we can't
7 tell what would have happened, but these two men
8 sacrificed their lives and maybe many of us would
9 be dead instead of them. And we want something
10 permanently on the corner there so people walking
11 by know that this is a place that something very
12 important happened and where people sacrificed
13 their lives as volunteers--not as paid police
14 officers, but as volunteers--because they love the
15 village and those of us who love the village want
16 to make sure they're not forgotten. Thank you for
17 your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.

19 JUDITH CALLET: My name is Judith
20 Callet, I'm the resident chair of the Bleecker
21 Area Merchants and Residents Association, known as
22 BAMRA. Just want to let the committee know that
23 we are supporting this 100%. BAMRA organized a
24 silent vigil this past March to commemorate the
25 one-year anniversary and we were very honored to

1
2 have been attended by over 500 auxiliary officers
3 from the tri-state area, they gave their support
4 to remember their comrades and Commissioner Kelly
5 was also there. It really has affected our area
6 and we do want to commemorate these lives. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you very
9 much and thank you for taking the time to come
10 down and talk about the two officers. Thank you.

11 MAUREEN REMACLE: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: We've been
13 joined by Councilmember Addabbo from Queens. Next
14 we'll hear from Stephen Corson [phonetic] from
15 Scott Stringer's office.

16 STEPHEN CORSON: Thank you,
17 Chairman Foster, for the opportunity to submit
18 testimony at today's hearing. My name is Stephen
19 Corson I'm here to read a brief statement on
20 behalf of Borough President Stringer, and his
21 Mitchell-Lama Task Force. Manhattan Borough
22 President Scott Stringer and his Mitchell-Lama
23 Task Force endorse the proposal before the City
24 Council for the following secondary street
25 renamings: the northeast side of West 95th Street

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2 between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West to
3 Robert Woolis Way; the southwest side of West 94th
4 Street between Columbus Avenue and Amsterdam
5 Avenue to James Garst Way; and the southeast side
6 of West 94th Street between Columbus Avenue and
7 Central Park West to Doris Rosenblum Way. We note
8 that Community Board 7 unanimously approved these
9 proposed street changes on March 4th, 2008.

10 Robert Woolis helped the found Mitchell-Lama
11 Residents Coalition together with Congressman
12 Charlie Rangel. He had a wealth of housing
13 knowledge and was a sharp accountant. Robert was
14 generous with his time and always eager to help
15 fellow tenants work through the details of their
16 budgets and rent increases. In addition, Robert
17 was an active member of the Manhattan Borough
18 President's Mitchell-Lama Task Force. James Garst
19 was an active member of the Mitchell-Lama
20 Residents Coalition and at one time served as
21 their legislative coordinator. In addition, he
22 represented Tenants & Neighbors and helped them
23 pursue their legislative interests in Albany. He
24 had an encyclopedic mind for Mitchell-Lama issues
25 and was an accessible mentor and guide for tenants

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2 with Mitchell-Lama questions. Jim was also an
3 active member of the Manhattan Borough President's
4 Mitchell-Lama Task Force. Doris Rosenblum was a
5 Community Board 7 district leader and a former
6 Manhattan Borough Historian. She also served as a
7 co-chair of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition.
8 Doris would go anywhere to help a tenant in need
9 and she was well known for her energy and an
10 impressive knowledge of housing issues. She was
11 also an active member of the Manhattan Borough
12 President's Mitchell-Lama Task Force. A decision
13 by the City Council to rename these streets will
14 reaffirm the important roles that these concerned
15 citizens and activists have played in shaping New
16 York's neighborhoods. Renaming these streets also
17 sends a signal to tomorrow's community leaders
18 that positive change can be achieved through an
19 impassioned belief in one's cause. Thank you
20 again for this opportunity to testify.

21 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you and
22 please extend our thanks to the Borough President.
23 We actually started off the hearing with testimony
24 on these three great Mitchell-Lama champions.
25 Thank you. Our next panel is Rita Popper, Jacob

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Morris, and Paul Schwebert?

PAUL SCUBERT: Scubert.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Schubert?

PAUL SCUBERT: - - Schubert.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Schubert. So
that's a U.

PAUL SCUBERT: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Okay. Okay.

RITA POPPER: You want to go first?

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: You can get
started, thank you.

RITA POPPER: Thank you. Good day
and thank you for the opportunity to testify
before the City Council's committee responsible
for street naming. I'm Rita Popper, President of
the Knickerbocker Plaza Tenants' Association, a
soon-to-be non-Mitchell-Lama development located
on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Affordable
housing is not a gift --

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: [Interposing]
Can you pull the mike little closer to your mouth?

RITA POPPER: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.

RITA POPPER: Affordable housing is

1
2 not a gift, it is the right of every person who
3 lives in this great country. No one knew this
4 unbelievable, unalienable gift right better than
5 the three housing advocates we want to
6 immortalize: Bob Woolis, Jim Garst, and Doris
7 Rosenblum. They were staunch advocates for the
8 rights of people to live in decent and affordable
9 housing. Affordable housing has become a socially
10 relevant oxymoron. No one knew better about the
11 need to preserve the right to live in decent
12 housing more than the three people we honor today.
13 Excellence is never an accident, it takes
14 dedicated people doing a superior job to
15 effectuate great results. As a result of Bob,
16 Doris, and Jim's guidance and expertise, we have
17 been able to keep the need for affordable housing
18 in the spotlight. Bob, Jim, and Doris served
19 without compensation. When owners wanted rent
20 increase and tenants could not afford an
21 accountant, Bob did the accounting for them for
22 free. Jim knew the legislation and bylaws for co-
23 ops to ensure that shareholders got the correct
24 advice from their board of directors. Right
25 before Jim's death he was working on legislation

1
2 that would change the language of the governing
3 agencies of New York City--DHCR and HPD. The
4 legislation would change all the current "may"
5 terminology too "shall." This may seem like such
6 a small change. It is not small. It is
7 desperately needed. This word change forces the
8 governing affordable housing agencies to be
9 accountable for upholding their own laws. This is
10 an important piece of legislation for tenants. We
11 all know that elected board of directors don't
12 always hold the right of the shareholders in high
13 regard. Doris was a maverick, she organized and
14 helped others to organize. I never had the
15 pleasure of meeting Doris. I am honored to say
16 that I knew Bob and Jim. However, the stories I
17 hear about Doris's unflagging energy helped
18 preserve many of the still remaining Mitchell-Lama
19 developments on Manhattan's Upper West Side. The
20 three people we want to honor with the street
21 naming are not ordinary people. In their own way
22 they are just like other honored mavericks: Martin
23 Luther King, Raoul Wallenberg, and all the other
24 men and women who wanted to change the way people
25 were treated and how they lived. Bob Woolis, Jim

1
2 Garst, and Doris Rosenblum effectuated change.
3 Bob, Jim, and Doris were preservationists. They
4 worked for preserving a decent home for low and
5 middle-income families. They are true heroes.
6 Let's keep their memory alive and memorialize
7 their legacy so that the next generation will be
8 inspired to carry the torch for decent housing
9 into the 21st century. We --

10 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: [Interposing]
11 Ms. Popper, I need you to wrap up, I'm sorry.

12 RITA POPPER: Okay. This is it, my
13 last sentence. We are the beneficiaries of the
14 dedication of Bob Woolis, Jim Garst, and Doris
15 Rosenblum. I urge you to pass and sign into
16 legislation the right to change the street names
17 where this incredible trio lived and worked for
18 all of us. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.
20 We've been joined by councilmember Alan Gerson
21 from Manhattan. Next, just pull the--squeeze in
22 if you can.

23 PAUL SCUBERT: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: There you go.

25 PAUL SCUBERT: Warm greetings to

1
2 Joe, my councilman from the Rockaways, former
3 chairman of this committee, and also to you,
4 Helen. My name is Paul Scubert, card-carrying
5 community activist in Rockaways. I watch City
6 Council on a regular basis and I've seen some
7 other hearings and I know that you are concerned
8 about the public safety. Now, I also - - arms to
9 give you some color pictures of the--of what I
10 just showed you. Now about a month ago, I was
11 walking along the boardwalk to a festival, the
12 Rockaway Beach Neighbors Association Festival, and
13 I walked up to 20th [phonetic] Street and as I was
14 walking along, I noticed many holes in the
15 boardwalk. So being a concerned citizen for
16 safety of children, there are three schools by
17 28th Street: there is a preschool, there's a
18 Catholic school, St. Mary's, and there's a very
19 large public school. One of the picture shows the
20 entrance ramp has three big holes in it. I've
21 spoken with Ms. Jill Weber on three separate
22 occasions, I've also sent her an e-mail. I also
23 want to bring attention to a lack of 311 when I
24 call 311 to bring this to the attention of
25 department investigations, I was told, as a matter

1
2 of fact, that one cannot make direct complaints to
3 DOI using 311. They simply forward it to the
4 affected agency, giving them a chance to make
5 excuses, hide evidence, and pretty much make DOI's
6 job more difficult. I've also sent e-mails of
7 several photographs to Jesse Sligh, executive DA,
8 executive ADA at the Queens DA's office. Thank
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.

11 And when we need do hearings on the status of our
12 parks, this would be more appropriate and we'll
13 make sure to have you back. Thank you.

14 PAUL SCUBERT: Is this the Parks
15 meeting?

16 FEMALE VOICE: No.

17 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Yes, this is--
18 we're having a hearing on the 83 Street renames.

19 PAUL SCUBERT: Oh, well I just, I
20 just figured it was Parks and I'd...

21 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: No, no, and
22 I'm not--that's why I didn't stop you and I said
23 when we have actual park representatives here,
24 that's the type of testimony we need to hear. So
25 thank you very much.

1
2 PAUL SCUBERT: Yeah, and I want to
3 thank Joe for getting the boardwalks in our
4 neighborhood fixed ASAP and when he was chairman
5 and I was very concerned about the, about the play
6 sets and the Black River mats heating up and I
7 remember that meeting, and he had that changed.
8 So I know, I know Joe is on the job.

9 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.
10 Turn, turn the mike.

11 JACOB MORRIS: Oh, okay. Thank you
12 Madame Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Mm-hmm.

14 JACOB MORRIS: First, I like to
15 thank the outstanding staff, particularly Lyle and
16 Pat, for doing great, great work in making this
17 happen today. My name's Jacob Morris, I'm the
18 Executive Director of the Harlem Historical
19 Society and we've been very active up in Harlem,
20 getting streets co-named after great residents of
21 Harlem that actually have national and
22 international significance in their lives. Today
23 we're honoring three of them, W.E.B. DuBois, A.
24 Philip Randolph, and Matthew Henson. Matthew
25 Henson, of course, the greatest black explorer of

1
2 the 20th century, co-discoverer of the North Pole;
3 A. Philip Randolph, responsible, in my view, for
4 the economic foundation of the civil rights
5 revolution; and W.E.B. DuBois, indisputably the
6 greatest African-American thinker of the 20th
7 century and a continuing profound influence on our
8 society and our culture. What is a street name?
9 Why, why, why are we doing this? Well first, you
10 know, when we proposed these names, people were
11 shocked that they hadn't been honored previously.
12 - - basically, better late than never. But a
13 street name, when recognized by the governing
14 bodies of our, of our society and our city, is a
15 tangible manifestation of respect and our children
16 need to see that, our community needs to see it,
17 our citizens need to see it. And I'm looking for
18 this to grow, where historical significance of the
19 contributions of great individuals, men and women
20 and movements, are more valued and this is one way
21 to make that happen. I'm going to ask that the
22 committee at some convenient, as soon as possible
23 future date, hold public hearings on the
24 guidelines for street names. I'm also going to
25 ask that the committee and the City Council

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2 provide for the education of City Council staff
3 members who deal with the mechanics of getting
4 these names through and into legislation and also
5 the Community Boards. The Community Boards need
6 guidance and a lot of these street names come up
7 from the grassroots and not down from the top
8 leadership, but come up from the streets. This is
9 profoundly important so I would love to see the
10 City Council work with the borough presidents to
11 improve and develop workshops and public history
12 and street names for the Community Boards and --

13 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: [Interposing]

14 I need you to wrap up, please.

15 JACOB MORRIS: And last but not
16 least, There are people that are great people that
17 are still alive, and one of the names that we're
18 looking to have come up is Willie Mays and also
19 Harry Belafonte. Now both of these great human
20 beings are still alive, they're indisputably
21 giants in their field and what they've done for
22 America. And I would like to see a provision for
23 a waiver be built into the guidelines. I thank
24 you.

25 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you. I

1
2 would just add a caveat that both Dr. DuBois and
3 Matthew Henson were great--one was a great
4 explorer and one was a great scholar and they're
5 not limited to just African-American. Doctor
6 DuBois was one of the greatest minds this country
7 ever produced--white or black--and same with
8 Matthew Henson as an explorer. Our last panelist
9 is Leonard Fleischer. Thank you.

10 LEONARD FLEISCHER: I thank the--

11 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: [Interposing]
12 Press the button, there you go.

13 LEONARD FLEISCHER: I want to thank
14 the committee for giving me the opportunity to
15 talk about one of the most remarkable people I've
16 ever met--my late sister-in-law Frieda Zames.
17 Some of the Council members will remember Frieda
18 testifying at many hearings on behalf of the
19 disability community. She was born in 1932 of
20 working class self-educated immigrant parents, got
21 polio at age 2-1/2 and spent many years in either
22 hospitals or convalescent homes. When she finally
23 went to high school, Lafayette High School in
24 Brooklyn, she won the Math and Latin medals. She
25 had a New York State scholarship, went to NYU,

1
2 went to Brooklyn College got a B.A. and a Masters
3 and Ph.D. at NYU. She taught at New Jersey
4 Institute of Technology for 27 years. She was co-
5 author with my wife, Doris Fleischer, of the
6 leading textbook in the field of disability
7 rights, called "The Disability Rights Movement:
8 From Charity to Confrontation." The book is used
9 throughout the world. She was president of
10 Disabled in Action, an activist group in New York
11 City for three terms. She held other officer
12 positions with DIA. She initiated several DIA
13 class action lawsuits, in collaboration with
14 public-interest lawyers, to establish the rights
15 of people with disabilities to ride the city's
16 public transportation systems--buses, subways,
17 paratransit--to enable disabled people to gain
18 access to city polling sites, healthcare
19 facilities and, through her initiation of the
20 "One-Step" campaign, other places of public
21 accommodation. She played a role in every aspect
22 of change in the city from curb cuts (pedestrian
23 ramps) to the Ferries Law, mandating accessibility
24 of waterborne vessels for people with
25 disabilities, as well as the Disability Rent

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2 Increase Exemption law. Both laws were enacted in
3 2005 by the City Council in Frieda's honor after
4 her death. She was--she received posthumously the
5 first annual award given to a New York City
6 resident with a disability who has fostered the
7 civil rights of the disability population--an
8 honor now known as the Frieda Zames Award. I urge
9 the City Council and the city to rename East 4th
10 Street between 1st Avenue and Avenue A, Frieda
11 Zames Way. Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you very
13 much. I remember your sister-in-law very well. I
14 actually sat on the committee when Councilmember
15 Margarita Lopez--

16 LEONARD FLEISCHER: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: --chaired it,
18 so--

19 LEONARD FLEISCHER: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: --thank you
21 for taking the time to come down here. There
22 being no more testimony, the meeting--the
23 committee meeting for Parks and Recreation is
24 adjourned. Thank you.
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tammy Wittman, 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 Tammy Wittman

Date September 26, 2008