

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

LAND USE SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING
& MARITIME USES

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March 30, 2009
Start: 12:50 pm
Recess: 04:09 pm

HELD AT: Hearing Room
 250 Broadway, 16th Floor

B E F O R E: LEROY G. COMRIE, JR.
 Acting Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Charles Barron
John C. Liu
Miguel Martinez
Annabel Palma
Maria del Carmen Arroyo
Rosie Mendez
Elizabeth Crowley
Helen Sears
Daniel R. Garodnick
Robert Jackson
Tony Avella

A P P E A R A N C E S

Gregory Shaw
Principal Attorney for Real Estate
NYC School Construction Authority

Kenrick Ou
Director of Real Estate Services
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Grey Mayers
Senior Policy Advisor
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Micah Lasher
Executive Director of Public Affairs
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Robert Holden
President
Juniper Park Civic Association

Gary Giordano
District Manager
Community Board 5

Anthony Nunziato
Member
Maspeth Chamber of Commerce

Eddie Nubel
Member
Juniper Park Civic Association

Marge Kolb
President
District 24 President's Council

Rosemary DiRao
Resident

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

Joyce Beaudoin
Member
Juniper Park Civic Association

Lorraine Sciulli
Vice President
Juniper Park Civic Association

Christina Wilkinson
Secretary
Juniper Park Civic Association

Angelo Ranari
Member
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Robert Doocey
Member
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John Killcommons
Executive Board
Juniper Park Civic Association

Matt Connelly
Business Owner
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James O'Kane
President
Maspeth Chamber of Commerce

Carol Anastacian
Resident
Middle Village

Manuel Caruana
Executive Board
Community Board 5

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

Linda DiQuaro
Resident
Maspeth

Rosalie Greer
Resident
Maspeth

Theresa Riley
Member
Juniper Park Civic Association

Dieter Keppler
Member
Juniper Park Civic Association

2 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Good

3 afternoon, everyone. I'm Leroy Comrie. I'm the
4 temporary Chair today for the Subcommittee on
5 Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses. We
6 are joined today by Council Member Miguel Martinez
7 from Manhattan, and Council Member Charles Barron
8 from Brooklyn. We have a whole Queens side to my
9 left with Council Member Liz Crowley, Council
10 Member John Liu and Council Member Helen Sears.
11 Today we have a few items before the committee:
12 LU 1031, an 1,100 seat high school in Queens; LU
13 1032, which is a landmark building at 275 Madison
14 Avenue; LU 1033, which is the New York Public
15 Library, George Bruce Branch; and also LU 1034 New
16 York Public Library, 125th Street branch; LU 1035,
17 which is the Elsworth House on Staten Island; and
18 LU 1036, which is the Hubbard House in Brooklyn
19 Community Board 11. We are going to start with
20 the Maspeth High School since we have people that
21 are waiting and I know you have to get back to
22 your children and families and we've been delayed
23 here. With that, we'll have the speakers from the
24 Board of Ed come up and speak first. Members, we
25 will be voting on the landmark items. Just

2 introduce the people at the table. We don't have
3 everybody's name. Greg Shaw is here. You want to
4 introduce yourself, Mr. Shaw, and then everybody
5 at the table can introduce themselves and their
6 titles. You can begin your presentation.

7 GREGORY SHAW: My name is Gregory
8 Shaw. I'm Principal Attorney for Real Estate for
9 the New York City School Construction Authority.

10 KENRICK OU: I'm Kenrick Ou,
11 Director of Real Estate Services for the School
12 Construction Authority.

13 GREG MAYERS: Greg Mayers
14 [phonetic], Senior Policy Adviser, Office of the
15 Deputy Mayor Walcott.

16 MICAH LASHER: Micah Lasher,
17 Executive Director of Public Affairs to the
18 Department of Education.

19 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Who would like
20 to speak first? Just go right ahead. We'll turn
21 it over to you.

22 GREG MAYERS: Thank you,
23 Councilman. Good morning, Chairperson Lappin and
24 members of the City Council Land Use Subcommittee
25 on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses. My

1 name is Greg Mayers and I'm a Senior Policy
2 Advisor, serving as intergovernmental liaison for
3 Deputy Mayor Walcott. Joining me here today are
4 Kenrick Ou, Real Estate Director of the School
5 Construction Authority, Greg Shaw, who you
6 previously met, the SCA General Counsel and to my
7 right is Micah Lasher, Executive Director of
8 Public Affairs of the Department of Education. We
9 are pleased to be here today to discuss the
10 proposed Maspeth High School currently under
11 consideration by this subcommittee. Before
12 speaking more specifically about this proposal,
13 however, I'd like to take a moment to put this
14 proposal in context and say just a few words about
15 the capital plan which it is part of. As you may
16 remember, the Board of Education previous 2000-
17 2004 capital plan had incurred significant cost
18 overruns within its first few years. As a result,
19 nearly 20,000 of the 60,000 seats it set out to
20 create were never built, and many school buildings
21 were overcrowded, reflecting decades of neglect in
22 keeping up with demographic changes. By contrast,
23 this \$13.1 billion 2004-2009 capital plan, the
24 largest ever in the history of the school system,
25

1 has been widely successful. The vast majority of
2 the 63,000 seats called for in this plan have been
3 sited or already built. A remarkable feat that
4 speaks to the successful partnership that we have
5 developed with you and communities across the
6 city. In Queens, which was slated for 10,000
7 seats, virtually all of the seats have been sited.
8 I say virtually, of course, because we do have one
9 project to go, which is Maspeth High School. As
10 you know, we are asking for suggestions of
11 possible locations. We are asking for possible
12 locations for new schools, especially in areas
13 like Queens that suffer from severe pockets of
14 overcrowding. So we were thrilled in March of
15 2007 when the Maspeth community recommended to the
16 DOE that this site be considered for a new school
17 building. A year later, on March 14, 2008, we
18 proposed an \$85 million project, a 1,650-seat high
19 school for the site and SCA began its formal
20 public review. In the intervening year and in the
21 year since, members of the SCA, DOE, as well as
22 the Deputy Mayor himself, have engaged extensively
23 with all stakeholders in the community, including
24 parents, educators, community-based organizations
25

1 and elected officials whose constituents will be
2 affected. We have attended community board
3 meetings, CEC meetings, town hall meetings,
4 private meetings, and have hosted a number of
5 individuals at city hall as well in all efforts to
6 reach consensus. As a result of those
7 consultations, there have been a number of
8 substantive changes to the SCA original proposal,
9 including a downward revision of the school size
10 from 1,650 to 1,100 students, enrollment priority
11 for residents of District 24, followed by
12 secondary priority for Districts 27, and 28 and a
13 tertiary priority for the borough more broadly. I
14 would like to stress that this method of
15 prioritization is narrower than for any other high
16 school we have initiated in this administration.
17 This is important because it goes to the heart of
18 the debate. Our administration does not believe
19 in zoning high schools, because zoned high schools
20 have historically contributed to a stratified
21 school system and in turn an unequal distribution
22 of resources. Moreover, particularly in the scare
23 economic times, there's a compelling fiscal
24 imperative to use resources even more wisely. We
25

1
2 must ensure that the public funds with which we
3 are entrusted be used in a fashion the elicit the
4 greatest maximum good. To narrowly limit access
5 to \$80 million plus capital investment and much
6 needed high school seats based on whether or not a
7 family lives in the right side of the street
8 within one school district is neither fair nor
9 fiscally responsible in light of the district-wide
10 and borough-wide overcrowding problem we are
11 trying to address. Simply put, we have to get the
12 biggest bang for our buck. As with this proposal,
13 we have confronted a number of thorny questions in
14 previous projects throughout the city that had to
15 be addressed. For example, we've dealt with
16 traffic issues with Gateway High School in Queens,
17 environmental remediation concerns with Mount
18 Haven in the Bronx. We, by working in good faith
19 with you and the local communities have always
20 resolved these challenges. We believe that the
21 revised Maspeth High School proposal is very much
22 in keeping with the tradition and appropriately
23 balance local input with citywide priorities.
24 More importantly, we trust that you will work with
25 us to provide the students and residents of Queens

2 with a desperately needed new school and in the
3 process, ensure full implementation of the capital
4 plan. We hope that you will vote to approve this
5 school. Thank you. Now to my colleague Kenrick
6 Ou from the School Construction Authority.

7 KENRICK OU: Thank you, Greg. Good
8 morning, Council Members, Council Member Crowley,
9 Chair Comrie. As I mentioned before, I'm Kenrick.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: Mr. Chairman,
11 a point of information. Did you guys bring any
12 written testimony?

13 KENRICK OU: No. We have
14 distributed to the Committee a letter from Deputy
15 Mayor Walcott which summarizes these points.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER: Thank you.

17 KENRICK OU: As I previously
18 explained, I'm Kenrick Ou, Director of Real Estate
19 Services for the School Construction Authority.
20 I'd like to provide for the record an overview of
21 the development and the history of this project.
22 As Greg Mayers just explained, the site that we're
23 discussing today was identified and recommended to
24 the chancellor two years ago, in March 2007. At
25 that point, the SCA undertook an extensive

2 feasibility investigation of the site and believed
3 that a 1,650-seat facility serving grades 6
4 through 12, in other words an intermediate and
5 high school facility was feasible. The SCA
6 formally began the public review process for that
7 proposal on March 14, 2008 with publication of the
8 Notice of Filing of the proposed site plan in *The*
9 *New York Post* and *The City Record*. The City
10 Planning Commission was notified on March 14, 2008
11 and it recommended in favor of the proposed site
12 plan. Queens Community Board #5 was also notified
13 on March 14, 2008 and was asked to hold a public
14 hearing on the proposed site plan. The community
15 board held its public hearing on April 9, 2008 and
16 we attended a subsequent meeting with the
17 community board's Land Use Committee on May 4,
18 2008 to answer addition questions and to listen to
19 concerns related to the proposal. Queens
20 Community Board #5 subsequently sent written
21 comments, dated May 14, 2008, in opposition to the
22 proposal. Concerns identified by the community
23 board included the proximity of this site to two
24 other existing schools, the size of the proposed
25 building, the lack of onsite parking and that an

intermediate school component at this site was not necessary because the nearby intermediate school was not over utilized. The community board's comments did acknowledge the need for a local high school in the area. The SCA undertook efforts to revise the proposal to the extent feasible in response to concerns raised by the community board. The revised proposal, as Greg Mayers mentioned, includes a reduction in the size of the proposed school to 1,100 seats instead of 1,650 seats, elimination of the intermediate school component and also extensive design efforts to minimize the impacts to adjoining residences. The revised design proposal includes setback of the proposed building further from the nearby residence, placement of the school's entrance on 74th Street, extensive plan to perimeter and onsite plantings at the site, placement of the schoolyard behind the building, and development of a lane to reduce concerns about traffic obstructing through traffic on 74th Street. As we had promised to the community board and in the context of previous meetings, we returned to present this revised proposal to Queens Community

2 Board #5 on January 14, 2009. The SCA has
3 considered all comments received on the proposed
4 project and has modified the proposed site plan
5 pursuant to Section 1731.4 of the Public
6 Authorities Law. In accordance with Section 1732
7 of the Public Authorities Law, the SCA submitted
8 the modified site plan reflecting the
9 approximately 1,100-seat high school proposal to
10 the mayor and the City Council for consideration
11 on February 18, 2009. At the Council's request,
12 this application was subsequently withdrawn on
13 February 23, 2009 to provide addition opportunity
14 for discussion between the Council Members and the
15 SCA and Department of Education. In accordance
16 with Section 1732 of the Public Authorities Law,
17 the SCA has resubmitted the modified site plan on
18 March 13, 2009 for consideration by the mayor and
19 the City Council and we are here before you today
20 to testify on this proposal and answer any
21 questions that you may have.

22 MICAH LASHER: Council Member

23 Comrie and to the Committee, I would just like to
24 echo the testimony of my colleagues with two key
25 points.

2 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I just want to
3 point out that we've been joined by Council Member
4 Annabel Palma from the Bronx and Council Member
5 Rosie Mendez from Manhattan. We're looking for
6 that letter that was submitted. Go ahead.

7 MICAH LASHER: Just two key points
8 about the hearing today and this site. To the
9 extent that this is a hearing about the
10 desirability of this site as a location for a new
11 high school, I would respectfully point out that
12 the site was initially recommended to us by the
13 Community Education Council and a school at that
14 site has been something that has been supported by
15 every elected official in the neighborhood and the
16 community board. In each case, contingent on
17 various enrollment policies at the school, but
18 there has been universal agreement, with the
19 exception of some community residents who are here
20 today. But by the stakeholders, the elected
21 officials and the community board, everyone has
22 developed a consensus that this would be a good
23 location for a school. That is not what this is
24 about. This is not about a land use question of
25 whether or not this is a desirable site for a

1 school. What this is about is a question of our
2 enrollment policy. We have, over the last months,
3 and particularly in the last month since we
4 withdrew it from the committee's calendar, engaged
5 in extensive conversations with the Council Member
6 about the enrollment policy of this school. We
7 have, in an effort to accommodate the balance of
8 local demand with our broader borough-wide and
9 citywide obligations, agreed to give a preference
10 to students from District 24. That apparently is
11 not a sufficient level of local preference to make
12 this school acceptable. I would again submit
13 that's not a land use consideration. Nonetheless,
14 it is our position that to simply say to a family
15 because you are not on the right side of the
16 street within this community district you can't go
17 to this school is something we're not comfortable
18 doing. Moreover, I would just also like to make
19 clear that if you are a student from Maspeth, from
20 the local community, you very much have a right to
21 go to this school. In fact, if you're a resident
22 of District 24, as all residents in Maspeth are,
23 you have an increased capability to go to this
24 school. You just don't have the local preference,
25

2 the level of narrow local preference that some
3 have sought, which we, in an effort to alleviate a
4 borough-wide overcrowding problem simply can't
5 justify spending \$80 million to do so. Thank you
6 very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Mr. Shaw, do
8 you have anything to add? The first question will
9 be from Council Member Crowley, then Council
10 Member Barron.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you,
12 Chairman. Good morning. I'd first like to make a
13 statement and then I have a few questions. I'd
14 like to start by thanking Speaker Quinn for her
15 understanding and support that she's given over
16 the past couple of weeks, even as late as last
17 night on the phone with Chancellor Klein. I'd
18 like to also recognize the commitment and the
19 service that Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott has given
20 over the past couple of weeks, especially while
21 we've been working together trying to find a
22 solution to build the right type of school.
23 Chairman, fellow Council Members, I'd like to take
24 a few minutes to discuss the DOE's current plan.
25 I do not agree with the proposal. I'm still

1
2 hopeful that you'll make a compromise on the plan
3 and address the needs of my community, the needs
4 of the students of Maspeth and Middle Village.
5 The DOE has proposed to build this site with a
6 preference for District 24 and then opening up to
7 District 27 and 28, and then to all of Queens.
8 This means that a child that lives across the
9 street, directly across the street from the school
10 has about a 1 in 20 chance of getting into the
11 school. The district is huge. It graduates over
12 4,500 students each year exiting the eighth grade.
13 There's only 250 seats available in the freshman
14 year to that school. I just want to make sure
15 that this school can work for the community.
16 There's no preference for local zones. You've
17 mentioned that. But nobody in this community
18 wants the school as it is now. The community
19 board does not agree with your proposal. The
20 civics are 100% against it. I've received
21 conflicting views from parents. I am asking the
22 DOE to protect seats so that the institution works
23 for the families across the street and for the
24 families that pass the school every day on their
25 way to work. I am asking for the same enrollment

1 acceptance, that type of structure that is
2 currently available at Bayside High School in
3 Queens, Madison High School in Brooklyn, Lehman
4 High School in the Bronx, and Tottenville High
5 School in Staten Island. All of these schools are
6 both open to the city and have a protective
7 program for local students. Despite many of the
8 appeals made by community members, parents and
9 myself, the DOE intends to move forward with their
10 plan. I believe we must ensure that any addition
11 for our community is done responsibly and with the
12 consideration for the best interests of the local
13 community and then the city as a whole. I believe
14 we have an opportunity to build a school that
15 could be an anchor for education and help
16 alleviate the overcrowding in our community
17 schools and then Queens. But it's important that
18 we build this right. As leaders we cannot allow
19 ourselves to be bullied by a blind policy that
20 does not support the needs of the people we are
21 elected to represent. Fellow Council Members know
22 that as the current proposal stands, I cannot vote
23 in favor of it. I thank you for your attention
24 and I appreciate your consideration. I'd like

2 just make everybody in this room aware that there
3 was an article in the *Daily News* today on Page 6
4 that said there were approximately 7,500 students
5 in the Borough of Manhattan which has no zoned
6 schools and in Queens approximately two-thirds of
7 our schools are zoned. There were over 7,500
8 students, many of whom had straight A's that did
9 not get accepted to any of the five high schools
10 they put on the list. You have to realize that
11 this program does not work and that Maspeth has
12 never had a high school. That doesn't make it
13 right that just because they're going to get a
14 high school that Ridgewood, which has Grover
15 Cleveland and Forest Hills that has Forest Hills
16 and Elmhurst that has Newtown, those kids have a
17 right to go to the school that's in their
18 neighborhood. So if it's proven that it doesn't
19 work, why I ask are you continuing this process
20 and introducing this high school that is not a
21 preference for the kids that live across the
22 street and around the block.

23 MICAH LASHER: Thank you, Council
24 Member. I want to thank you. I know that you and
25 your staff have been unbelievably focused on this

1
2 and vigorous advocates for your community. It's
3 been a really constructive discussion. I know
4 we're not where we'd all like to be, but I want to
5 thank you for taking the time over the last months
6 on this. Let me just respond to a couple of
7 points. By your own calculations, to guarantee
8 every student in Maspeth a seat in this school
9 would require something on the order of a 6,000-
10 seat high school. I don't think anybody here
11 would support that. We would support a 1,600-seat
12 high school, but I know you would not. I would
13 once again make the offer to you today in order to
14 increase the likelihood that Maspeth kids get a
15 seat in a high school, we'd be open to revisiting
16 a 1,600-seat high school. That having been said,
17 let's not kid ourselves. With a 250-kid per class
18 size of this high school, there's no scenario in
19 which every kid in Maspeth gets to go to this
20 high school. All a carve out would do, yes, it
21 would incrementally increase the chance that a
22 local kid gets to this school. But what it would
23 more prevalently do is basically tell every kid
24 outside of the area that if there are 250 kids
25 from Maspeth who wanted to go to this school that

2 you can't come here. And when we're spending \$80
3 million to build a school, we can't responsibly
4 defend that. In response to your second point, I
5 would argue that what doesn't work and what hasn't
6 worked historically had been neighborhood zoned
7 high schools. While I understand that that works
8 for the kids who are in high schools that work, it
9 has historically led to a system of haves and have
10 nots where you've got some high schools that work
11 and some high schools that don't. And if you
12 happen to be unfortunate enough to live within the
13 zone that sends you to a high school that doesn't
14 work, you're out of luck. Under this
15 administration, we have not been spending dollars
16 to perpetuate that policy and we don't want to
17 start now.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: In your
19 environmental impact statement you site that this
20 area is severely congested and needs relief in
21 terms of transportation as it is currently.
22 Through previous meetings you've admitted that the
23 local intermediate school, 73, does not
24 necessarily take from the feeder schools as much
25 as it takes from schools that are further away,

2 thereby congesting Grand Avenue and in and around
3 73 with buses that wouldn't ordinarily be there
4 had these children been coming from more of a
5 local site, possibly walking to school. If we
6 were to put this high school in place, we could
7 guarantee that those kids that are coming from
8 Maspeth will not be taking public transportation.
9 Many of those kids will be walking.

10 MICAH LASHER: I know that the
11 purported influx of buses has long been a concern
12 as it relates to this high school. But I would
13 observe that in fact, as a point of policy, we
14 don't bus in high school students.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I think
16 that you have to realize that from what I
17 understand we're saying 250 kids per year.
18 There's 10% that's left for District 75, those
19 students who have special needs. Often these
20 students come on buses, many of which come alone
21 on buses. So you're talking about 50 or 100 more
22 buses. If you add that to what is already going
23 on, you're going to have buses. Also, those
24 students who are going to be coming from Corona
25 and Ridgewood and parts of Long Island City,

2 they're going to be taking more public
3 transportation to the school. There are valid
4 concerns from community members that there's no
5 room on the current buses that are taking
6 passengers down Grand Avenue because there are so
7 many kids that are traveling to the intermediate
8 school that have overburdened Bus 58 which goes
9 down Grand Avenue. Could you explain to me how
10 you don't anticipate more congestion from those
11 children that will be traveling? Those are just
12 within District 24, not to mention District 27 and
13 28 and the rest of Queens.

14 MICAH LASHER: Council Member I
15 just want to be clear, we're not unsympathetic to
16 the transportation concerns of the neighborhood.
17 I don't think we would argue that this will result
18 in zero increase in either pedestrian or vehicular
19 congestion. I think what we would say is that the
20 imperative to alleviate massive overcrowding
21 throughout the Borough of Queens and in your
22 neighborhood when balanced against the traffic
23 concerns is a worthwhile endeavor. I think we
24 would further say that we would be eager to work
25 with you to alleviate the transportation issues at

1 hand working with DOT. We do now view, however,
2 an enrollment policy as a transportation solution,
3 and I think that's what you're suggesting. Again,
4 I don't want to minimize the imperative we're
5 dealing with here. Newtown High School is at 129%
6 of capacity. Grover Cleveland is at 128% of
7 capacity. Aviation High School is at 120% of
8 capacity. Cardoza is at 141%. Francis Lewis is
9 at 175%. Bayside is at 152%. Richmond Hills is
10 at 160%. Forest Hills is at 157%. Thomas Edison
11 is at 150%. Long Island City is at 147%. Now, we
12 have come before this Council time and again and
13 we have gotten hammered on school overcrowding.
14 And I understand that because that's a concern for
15 folks all across this city. But I don't
16 understand how this Council can come to us time
17 and again and beat us up on school overcrowding
18 and say to us here we are about to plunk down \$80
19 million on a site that was recommended to us by
20 the Community Education Council and tell us that
21 we can't build a school here because your
22 enrollment policy does not meet our needs, even
23 though the land use question is not at issue.

24
25 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: The

2 Community Education Council does not agree with
3 your enrollment plan. They brought that
4 particular site to your attention to help focus on
5 Middle Village and Maspeth area that has gone
6 without a local high school for far too long.
7 They see their neighborhoods, Glendale and Forest
8 Hills, getting a new locally zoned high school to
9 open next September, which will alleviate many of
10 the overcrowding classrooms that are currently in
11 Grover Cleveland High School and Forest Hills High
12 School. You cannot underestimate the value of a
13 community high school. It's been proven time and
14 time again that it increases attendance rate and
15 parent participation, thereby increasing the
16 performance of the student. I would like to leave
17 you with an example. I recently visited Grover
18 Cleveland High School where you had a freshman
19 student that passed an opportunity to go to
20 Brooklyn Tech High School because he wanted to go
21 to his neighborhood high school where the friends
22 he went to elementary school and junior high
23 school with were going. They were going to Grover
24 Cleveland. It is that type of school that we need
25 for Middle Village and Maspeth.

2 MICAH LASHER: Let me just
3 reiterate, again, short of a 6,000-seat high
4 school, we cannot give you a guarantee that your
5 kids are going to be able to go to this school.
6 Furthermore, I have to say, as it relates to the
7 Community Education Council, obviously they have
8 made their objection to our enrollment policy
9 clear. We have a philosophical disagreement there
10 and I understand the benefits that you articulate
11 for locally zoned high schools. We believe that
12 the benefits for giving broader communities access
13 to more high schools is a public policy goal that
14 this administration has pursued and that we
15 believe is worth pursuing. I would point out that
16 the Community Education Council, as it relates to
17 their position and the community board's position
18 and respectfully to your position is that the
19 desirability of this site from a land use
20 perspective is not at issue. We are not talking
21 about that. We are talking about an enrollment
22 policy, which is a perfectly fine conversation to
23 have. We have a philosophical disagreement. The
24 question before the committee is whether this site
25 is a desirable site for a school and everybody is

2 in agreement on that. In fact, it wasn't even our
3 idea.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I disagree
5 with who attends this school and how people get to
6 the school with that not being a land use
7 situation. Furthermore, there are not 6,000
8 students at ninth grade level in Maspeth.

9 Thirdly, you have not answered why on Page 6 of
10 the *Daily News* today is there a situation in
11 Manhattan with 7,500 students, many of which are
12 high achievers, why they don't have one of their
13 top five schools.

14 MICAH LASHER: I'm sorry I said
15 6,000. The number you had cited in our meeting
16 with the borough president last week I guess was
17 1,200 per class. So I'm sorry, a 4,800-seat high
18 school. Is that right?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: No. If
20 there's about 4,500 kids in District 24, how do
21 you figure one out of four of them are from
22 Maspeth?

23 MICAH LASHER: I really didn't
24 know, but I believe that you had said you had
25 1,200 kids coming out of those five schools per

2 class.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: If you
4 look at the three zip codes and the five schools
5 that were recommended by Community Board #5, then
6 yes, or even the CDC, then yes. But for those
7 that live in Maspeth and go to school in Maspeth,
8 many of them will choose to go to parochial
9 schools and not attend this high school. But how
10 can we not give that opportunity to the person
11 across the street and down the block that this
12 school can work for you and your family and your
13 community?

14 MICAH LASHER: I guess what I mean
15 to say is I think the question of providing a
16 local guarantee is a bit of a red herring in that
17 to do so would require a school bigger than
18 anything you or your constituents would support,
19 bigger than the 1,600-seat high school that we
20 proposed and certainly bigger than the 1,100-seat
21 high school that we have reduced in an attempt to
22 accommodate. I would furthermore note that that
23 reduction, obviously, I think we all seek to build
24 more high school seats in general in Queens and
25 citywide. To reduce it from 1,600 to 1,100 that

2 in and of itself was effectively a compromise
3 against the broader objective to create more high
4 school seats in an effort to be responsive to
5 local input. In response to you question about
6 high school choice, we have an enrollment policy
7 that provides students with high school choice.
8 The 7,500 number I believe is a citywide number.
9 We matched 85% of kids citywide with their top
10 five high schools. I'm not going to sit here and
11 tell you our enrollment policy is perfect. But I
12 will tell you that an enrollment policy that
13 doesn't say if you are on the wrong side of the
14 line you don't get to come here is an enrollment
15 policy that we do not want to pursue with this
16 high school and we haven't pursued in this
17 administration.

18 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Quiet please.

19 The room will stay quiet or the room will be
20 emptied. This is not a debate. This is not a
21 discussion back and forth between the room and
22 anybody at the podium. I'm not going to say it
23 again.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Never in
25 the history of the proposed Maspeth High School

2 has there ever been a 1,600 high school proposed.

3 There was at one time an intermediate school

4 attached to the 1,100-seat high school. However,

5 through your own research and the opposition of

6 the community board based on what is currently

7 happening at IS 73, you realized there was no need

8 for an intermediate school. However, you have not

9 gone into addressing the needs and the concerns of

10 the community as it relates to education and also

11 what the situation is currently happening at 73.

12 MICAH LASHER: I think I would say

13 two things about that. The reduction from 1,650

14 to 1,100 I want to be honest and clear about that.

15 That was an accommodation made in order to respond

16 to community concerns. I would want to be very

17 clear. If you think that a 1,600-seat high school

18 would be something that is preferable for that

19 site, we would certainly be open to discussing it.

20 Secondly, as it relates to the Community Education

21 Council and this enrollment policy, I believe that

22 what you're asking us to do is restore a policy

23 that is very exclusionary and I don't think we're

24 prepared to do that.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: What I am

2 asking and what I have expressed to you in a
3 series of meetings is to compromise and look at
4 the situations that work. When you look at
5 locally zoned schools or priority zoned, which
6 includes kids who are across the street and down
7 the block, you have better performance. Now we
8 both agree that we want to give our kids the best
9 possible education we can afford them. To me I
10 don't understand how you could not agree with the
11 idea of a local school giving the ability to the
12 student to have better attendance and family
13 involvement; how that would not be the case if you
14 did not have that school.

15 MICAH LASHER: Council Member, I
16 think that's an extremely broad brush. I'm not
17 sitting with survey information or statistical
18 research to rebut that, but it immediately comes
19 to mind that some of our city's best high schools,
20 Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech, are
21 not locally zoned high schools. Not that they're
22 necessary analogous to this. Those are special
23 enrollment schools. But I think to simply say
24 broadly speaking that neighborhood zoned schools
25 work better than choice schools, I'd be surprised

1
2 if that were a blanket statement that could be
3 supported. Moreover, again, I think that there is
4 a value to having students from nearby in the
5 school. Let me be clear, you asked about
6 compromise, the compromise we have proposed here,
7 which would give your school district, the school
8 district in which your constituents live, the
9 school district in which the schools you would
10 like to give preference for are a part of, that
11 district has priority over the entire city. If
12 there are 250 kids from your school district who
13 want to go to this school, they're going and
14 they're taking every seat. This is a narrower
15 prioritization than has ever been created under
16 this administration. I could make an argument
17 that that in and of itself was perhaps more of a
18 compromise than we should have made given the
19 historic problems with neighborhood zoned public
20 high schools. But we have done it in an effort to
21 accommodate your demands. We've also reduced the
22 size of the school by one-third in an effort to
23 respond to these demands. At a certain point you
24 have to say we can spend \$80 million somewhere
25 else for a high school that will serve a broader

2 array of students in the school. If a compromise
3 that gives your school district preference but
4 does not narrow down block by block that creates a
5 carve out for local kids at the exclusion of other
6 kids in the same school district, if that is the
7 only way this high school is acceptable to you,
8 then it may be that those \$80 million can be
9 better spent serving a broader range of students
10 elsewhere in the city. But that is, I guess, the
11 decision in your hands, although I would once
12 again note that really this is a land use question
13 and I don't think frankly it is candid to say the
14 enrollment policy is about land use. It is a
15 political conversation that we are having, but it
16 is not a land use conversation.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: One last
18 statement?

19 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I just want to
20 let you know that you do have other members that
21 want to ask questions. Go ahead.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I think at
23 the same time you've said District 24, which
24 includes my whole district, which is not true. I
25 do have District 27 within the school district,

2 within the council district. Also within School
3 District 24, you have approximately five other
4 Council Members. Within the compromises that I
5 have brought to your attention, to the DOE, I have
6 asked for a priority which would include kids from
7 Elmhurst which is not in my district, Maspeth and
8 Middle Village first. I gave schools also that
9 included students that wouldn't necessarily be in
10 the district I represent. That was a small
11 priority, thereby giving you the ability to draw
12 from a greater area, the district thereafter. So
13 let me just be clear with that. Then also I think
14 that fellow Council Members you have to keep in
15 mind that this is an area that is not like the
16 rest of the city. There is no subway system. It
17 does not have the transportation infrastructure.
18 Many of the kids in Maspeth that go to high
19 schools currently take two buses before they get
20 to a train, or two to three buses before they get
21 to their high school. Ultimately we have to
22 understand that that is a land use issue.

23 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
24 Barron, then Council Member Liu, then Council
25 Member Sears and then Council Member Martinez.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: You know, I
3 have to be very honest with you, I was checking my
4 calendar to see what year we were in and whether
5 we went back to segregation looking at the
6 audience and those who are concerned about that
7 particular issue. I'm saying it anyway because
8 you all don't want to talk about race but race is
9 an issue. It always is an issue whether you like
10 it or not. Race is always an issue in this city
11 whether you like it or not. You're sitting here
12 wanting some privileges that no other high school
13 in the city is locally zoned.

14 MICAH LASHER: No other high school
15 that we have created under this administration.
16 We don't do it anymore.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: There's no
18 more locally zoning high schools nowhere in the
19 city. The reason for that is because they went to
20 theme high schools and some high schools had
21 better resources than others. It gave an
22 opportunity for us to desegregate high schools and
23 move away from segregation so that diversity can
24 come to high schools, opportunities for people who
25 are in high school areas where you don't get the

1 same resources as other high schools. These
2 students now get a chance to come to another
3 school. You're going to come here and try to turn
4 back the hands of time. I'm talking to you
5 rhetorically. I'm not talking to you. But you
6 want to come here with our Council Member and try
7 to justify segregation because that's exactly what
8 you're doing. To the Department of Education, I
9 don't see why you gave them 250 because that
10 didn't happen anywhere else in the city. I don't
11 think they should get any special privileges
12 because they want to keep their high school for
13 their white children and they don't want any
14 children of color coming in there and coming into
15 the neighborhood to desegregate the neighborhood
16 and the high school. I think that's a disgrace to
17 this city. I think if we're going to have any
18 policy changes, then we're going to have to change
19 it across the board. I think we did the right
20 thing by opening up high schools to everybody.
21 Every community has a high school in it that's
22 coming from this administration that's opened up
23 for every child in the city, not just my children
24 in East New York or someone else's children in
25

2 Harlem, but it's opened up for the entire city.
3 Segregation is over and I think we should stick to
4 the land use issues on this one. I'm urging my
5 colleagues not to let them turn back the hands of
6 time with some policy talk when you look at the
7 land use questions there's no reason why. We
8 should be more responsible and vote for a school.
9 The Department of Education is putting \$80 million
10 into a school to alleviate overcrowding in Queens
11 which is sorely needed. Then we got to sit here
12 and discuss how we can keep this one high school
13 segregated because that's what this is about.

14 MICAH LASHER: Council Member, I
15 would just say as it relates to your point about
16 giving District 24 priority, that was a difficult
17 compromise for us. I would certainly say to the
18 Council that if it were to be the directive of
19 this Council that it should be a borough-wide or
20 citywide high school, that is something we would
21 be open to.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So you're
23 putting it back on us, but I think you should have
24 been strong and kept it. No other high school in
25 the city gets that kind of preference.

2 MICAH LASHER: There is a high
3 school that has that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: To your
5 administration?

6 MICAH LASHER: Yes, two districts.
7 So, yes, I agree with you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: If we start
9 doing that, when do we stop? Where do we stop?
10 What happens to the policy when you start
11 incrementally taking it apart?

12 MICAH LASHER: I don't think you
13 and I are in disagreement on that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I just want
15 to encourage my Council Members that we should
16 vote for this school because it alleviates
17 overcrowding in Queens and we shouldn't let race
18 play a role in it.

19 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: We've been
20 joined by Council Member Dan Garodnick from
21 Manhattan, Councilman Tony Avella from Queens and
22 now we'll hear from Council Member John Liu. I'm
23 sorry, Robert Jackson, the Chair of the Education
24 Committee, has been here a while.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: I'm a mere

2 member of the Education Committee as well as a
3 member of this Siting Subcommittee. I think we
4 all understand that school overcrowding is a big
5 problem in this city. It's especially a bigger
6 problem in the Borough of Queens. Even within the
7 Borough of Queens it's not even school crowding
8 everywhere at all grades, it's particularly
9 difficult in the northern part of the borough and
10 in the high school years. So we desperately need
11 a new high school in Northern Queens. In fact,
12 this is a problem that the Department of Education
13 and the School Construction Authority has been
14 well aware of for well over a decade. In the last
15 several years they have identified a number of
16 sites, not just this site, but a number of sites
17 that would be very suitable for a high school, a
18 high school that is desperately needed in Northern
19 Queens. How did you arrive at this particular
20 site among all of the other sites that were
21 evaluated for siting?

22 KENRICK OU: I would suggest that
23 part of how we identify sites, as Micah pointed
24 out, is really to listen to our Community
25 Education Council members and other stakeholders.

2 In this instance, party of what we had been
3 hearing historically from CEC 24, and I think even
4 before that School Board 24, relates not just to
5 Maspeth but in other parts of the city,
6 neighborhoods that do not geographically have high
7 schools. We listen to those recommendations, we
8 evaluate those sites and in this instance we found
9 and believe that this site was a viable site.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: Before I go
11 any further, I just want to say that these four
12 gentleman are committed to their jobs. Don't take
13 anything personally here today. But in Northern
14 Queens we're talking about School District 24, 25,
15 26, 28, 29, 30. Have you gone to all of these
16 Community Education Councils and they all agree
17 that this particular site is the best place to put
18 a high school in Northern Queens? Obviously you
19 talked to CEC 24. In many cases these CECs are
20 rubber stamp for the chancellor. The point of
21 this is that if you're talking about how the
22 community wants it, the fact is we need a high
23 school in Northern Queens and there are six school
24 districts that are encompassed. Do you have input
25 from CEC District 25, CEC District 30? These are

2 all areas where kids don't have enough space to go
3 to high school.

4 MICAH LASHER: Council Member I
5 would say two things. One, I want to be clear. I
6 am not saying that CEC 24 supports this high
7 school.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: Well let me
9 ask that gentleman.

10 MICAH LASHER: Can I finish this?
11 Can I respond to your questions?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: No, no. But
13 that wasn't my question.

14 MICAH LASHER: But you raised a
15 couple of points I'd like to respond to. I don't
16 want to be misunderstood. I'm not saying CEC 24
17 supports this school. And clearly, by the way,
18 the fact that they do not support this school
19 would indicate they are not so much a rubber stamp
20 for us. I would love it if they supported this
21 school and every aspect of our proposal as it
22 relates to this school. What I am saying is CEC
23 24 was the one who suggested this site and that
24 therefore I would argue that they do not have a
25 land use issue with this site. As it relates to

2 the other sites, the other districts, the other
3 schools you talked about, we do not view this high
4 school as a zero sum game. It is not his high
5 school versus every other possible high school.
6 We have a good site. We have a good high school.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: What other
8 sites are under consideration then?

9 MICAH LASHER: We believe it will
10 alleviate--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: [interposing]
12 Is there a single other site under consideration
13 right now?

14 MICAH LASHER: I just want to
15 finish my sentence and I'm going to turn it over
16 to Kenrick who is going to answer that question.
17 We believe that this school will alleviate 1,100
18 seats of high school need in Queens, which is
19 badly taxed in this regard, as I've said. You and
20 your colleagues take us to task appropriately for
21 a burgeoning need for high school seats in Queens
22 and elsewhere. This is us with a site that works,
23 that we believe can work, that has gone to the
24 alternative site analysis and the environmental
25 studies. We believe it works and we are asking

2 for your approval. If the question is are there
3 other sites that could work, the approval of this
4 site is no statement on the validity,
5 acceptability or desirability of other sites.

6 KENRICK OU: To speak to the
7 question about alternate sites, in your package
8 there is a list of the alternate sites that were
9 considered and evaluated, most of which were
10 rejected at the time that we initiated the public
11 review process in March 2008. I do want to point
12 out that in the context of our meetings with the
13 community board, another alternative site was
14 identified by the community board. And I think
15 the gentlemen who identified it are here. It's a
16 site that is located I think off of 57th Road and
17 Rust Avenue, which is the former Saint Xavier's
18 site. We did look at that site the moment that
19 was identified and do not believe it to be as
20 attractive a site as the one that we are
21 proposing.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: The other
23 sites that you talked about are within the same
24 general area. But the fact of the matter is the
25 need exists all throughout Northern Queens. You

1
2 cited, in fact Mr. Lasher cited, eight or nine
3 other schools that are severely over crowded and
4 tat is the case. What we need is a site that
5 actually is accessible to students all over
6 Northern Queens. In fact, for the last five years
7 I have given you a jewel of a site, a site that
8 the school Construction Authority should in fact
9 consider, a site that is in my area, in Flushing,
10 that is central to all of Northern Queens. It is
11 an eight-minute walk from a subway terminal that
12 is accessible by 21 bus lines that is one block
13 off a major bus line. Yet, the School
14 Construction Authority has refused to even
15 entertain that site. That site that can easily
16 accommodate a 1,600-seat high school. That site
17 that can easily accommodate a 4,000-seat high
18 school. But no, the School Construction Authority
19 intends to put in this school. Actually I'm
20 familiar with this area. It's a very low density
21 residential area. I'm not even going to get into
22 the traffic or quality of life issues because that
23 is not the issue at hand here. The issue at hand
24 here is not whether we need a high school in
25 Northern Queens, we desperately need one. The

1
2 issue is how is the School Construction Authority
3 going around finding these sites and deciding
4 which ones to pursue. This is a less than optimal
5 site for Northern Queens. I've given you a far
6 more preferable site that would work far better.
7 But instead you choose to go about this in a half-
8 baked action that will only serve the students and
9 the families of Northern Queens in a far more
10 limited capacity than you could otherwise have
11 engaged in. I don't understand the School
12 Construction Authority's actions in this. I think
13 the credibility of the School Construction
14 Authority and the Department of Education in their
15 commitment to create the badly needed high school
16 seats in Northern Queens is severely undermined.

17 MICAH LASHER: Council Member, I
18 think that you and I would not disagree about the
19 need for high school seats in Queens. I think
20 we're in agreement. One thing that I am confused
21 about, and like Council Member Barron, I'm perhaps
22 speaking rhetorically. This is a confusion that
23 doesn't necessarily require a response. One of
24 the things I'm confused about is how on the one
25 hand you can say we have a desperate need for high

1 school seats in Queens but no go on this site. We
2 don't view this, again, as a zero sum game. We
3 don't view this as you put a high school here and
4 you don't put a high school there. Obviously if
5 we lived in a world of limitless resources, for
6 example, we'd put a high school at ever proposed
7 site that could work and get class size down to
8 ten students per class. We don't live in that
9 world. As it relates to your site and the site in
10 Flushing, I think that there are a specific set of
11 considerations to that site. We're looking into
12 it. I would not take that site off the table.
13 Certainly by the way, if this site gets voted
14 down, we are going to be back at the drawing board
15 1,000 seats short. But again, this is not a zero
16 sum game. We have a site. It is ready to go. It
17 is not half-baked. It is a conversation that
18 we've been having with the community for a year.
19 To be honest, again, let's be candid, the
20 opposition to this site is over the enrollment
21 plan. Frankly, what the advocates for a different
22 enrollment plan would like would be to narrowly
23 limit the enrollment which would run against what
24 are you are--
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: [interposing]

3 If that were the issue then this would be more in
4 the Education Committee. The fact of the matter--

5 MICAH LASHER: [interposing] If you
6 look at the reporting on the community board you
7 will find that the community board referred to
8 this as a dumping ground.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: Mr. Chairman,
10 I think we need some decorum.

11 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: John, you
12 finish.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: The witness
14 can answer the questions when he's asked of a
15 Council Member.

16 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Do you want to
17 finish your question and then Mr. Lasher will
18 finish his statement?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: This is in the
20 Landmarks/Public Siting Subcommittee of the Land
21 Use Committee because it is in fact a land use
22 decision. It is a question of public siting.
23 There has been a lot of rhetoric today that has
24 been put forth by the School Construction
25 Authority and the Department of Education

1
2 representatives. They have gone so far as to
3 imply that there is some kind of a stratification.
4 They have not used the "R" word. I don't accept
5 any of that. I think this goes to the site
6 selection process that the School Construction
7 Authority has utilized. As much as you can say
8 until you're blue in the face that this doesn't
9 preclude any other site, the fact of the matter
10 is, there is no other site that's on the immediate
11 horizon in Northern Queens. Once this site is
12 done, it will in the School Construction Authority
13 and the Department of Education's minds alleviate
14 the immediate pressure to find a location in
15 Northern Queens. It is clear that this is not a
16 comprehensive effort to truly create the seats
17 that we need in high schools in Northern Queens.
18 In fact, you go so far as to say that maybe the
19 site in Flushing would be considered as well. The
20 site in Flushing has been out there for five years
21 and the School Construction Authority and the
22 Department of Education has simply refused to even
23 look at the site. Do you know why? Because it is
24 currently owned by Home Depot, a big entity that
25 this administration doesn't like to deal with.

1
2 Meanwhile, this particular site in Maspeth
3 actually is owned by a much smaller property
4 owner. This is being taken with the threat of
5 eminent domain. The administration has no qualms
6 about doing it whenever the property owner is a
7 small entity. But when it's a big corporate
8 entity like Home Depot, hands off, we can't touch
9 them. It's always about the little guy and the
10 big guy here. You can talk about all the rhetoric
11 you want. I think the School Construction
12 Authority and the Department of Education has
13 severely damaged its own credibility. It claims
14 to be looking for this high school that's badly
15 needed in Northern Queens and yet it overlooks
16 other far better, far preferable, far more
17 accessible locations for a real high school that
18 we need in Northern Queens. I don't think race
19 should be brought up here. That's a very serious
20 issue to be bringing up or to be implying. I
21 think that the School Construction Authority and
22 the Department of Education has put forth that
23 argument, whether behind the scenes or upfront in
24 the most disingenuous of ways. In fact, Council
25 Member Crowley, if she had enough time, would

1
2 certainly have pointed out that just down the
3 street there's an elementary school, a primary
4 school where kids are all from the area. The
5 enrollment of that primary school is one-third
6 white, one-third Asian and one-third Latino,
7 reflecting the makeup of that area. So let's not
8 inject race into this concern and this discussion
9 that we have totally unnecessarily. It is the
10 Department of Education and the School
11 Construction Authority that has raised that
12 specter. I find that totally despicable.

13 MICAH LASHER: Just to clarify on
14 those two points. We don't want to get bogged
15 down into a discussion of the eminent domain
16 considerations. But just to be clear, again,
17 we're in agreement there's a need for high school
18 seats in Queens. I could and will and would
19 defend our site selection process and the
20 questions of eminent domain. But the reality is
21 there is a site before you that would create 1,100
22 high school seats in Queens. If it is your view
23 that the wise policy move is to put it back on us,
24 vote down this site and force us to go somewhere
25 else, then that is before you. But the reality is

2 that will set us back some number of years on
3 creating 1,100 high school seats. As it relates
4 to the question of the exclusionary preference
5 policy that has been proposed, I've been pretty
6 careful to speak about what the practicalities of
7 that proposal would be, which is a geographic
8 preference related to the five elementary schools.
9 What it would do would be to say if you are not in
10 that geographic area, you do not get first crack
11 at this school. I have not looked at the racial
12 and demographic questions of that school. But if
13 that's something that would be of interest to you,
14 we could certainly provide it to you.

15 GREG MAYERS: Mr. Chairman, if I
16 may, I'd like to add to what Micah said about the
17 site selection process. I don't think any Council
18 Members here will argue against the fact that we
19 have engaged in terms of having several
20 consultations with each elected official in terms
21 of our whole site selection process. We are
22 always open in terms of listening to ideas or
23 other sites that we could take a look at. Some
24 work and some do not.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: Please don't

2 say that to me.

3 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: John, you're
4 out of order now. Are you finished, Mr. Mayers?
5 Council Member Sears then Council Member Martinez
6 and then I'm going to ask a few questions if you
7 don't mind.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I'm going to
9 be very brief because a lot has been said. I'm
10 just going to make two points. Then I really
11 think, Mr. Chairman, with everything that has been
12 discussed that we should lay this over and discuss
13 this further. I gather that we cannot lay this
14 over unless it was worked over in the 24-hour
15 period, is that correct? It's not being voted on
16 today. So when do we vote on this? We haven't
17 decided when to vote on this. Is Thursday the
18 deadline? When is the deadline?

19 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: We're here to
20 listen to the people before we make any decisions
21 on a deadline.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: It says here
23 in the land use that it's April 2nd.

24 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: The actual
25 deadline is scheduled for Thursday, but as it is a

2 school project and a school siting project, I
3 think deadlines are malleable.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Thank you.

5 That's what I wanted to know. One of the things
6 that concerns me about the site is that when
7 you're talking about a borough-wide school is the
8 transportation. I understand what you're saying
9 and I understand pretty much everything I've
10 heard. I was trying to look at it a little bit in
11 here for your numbers. There isn't one express
12 train. They're all local. They're not accessible
13 to everybody borough-wide. I know that. The
14 buses are not express buses. They are not
15 accessible to everybody else. If you know our
16 system with buses, it can take two hours for a
17 student coming from east in Queens to get to that
18 school and that's an enormous hardship in itself.
19 I recognize the ages of it. I think I have to
20 agree with John Liu in terms that there have been
21 sites to look at. I can tell you in Jackson
22 Heights we have looked and we have put forth some
23 sites that are far more accessible borough-wide
24 than the location of this school. But I think
25 that's an issue that we need to discuss. The

2 location of this school is a hardship for most
3 kids to get to. It truly is. I know that when
4 you get into Western Queens and Eastern Queens,
5 but it's difficult for me to understand why there
6 would be no express trains, why there wouldn't be
7 enough buses to get to that. I have to tell you
8 that for some of the zones that are being asked to
9 be included in this school, in itself are very,
10 very diverse. I probably have the most diverse
11 district anywhere in this country. Any kids
12 coming from my district are going to make any
13 school diverse because you will see every
14 nationality and every color. I just wonder why
15 you're not including, and I realize what you've
16 said and I understand that. But if you're really
17 looking to serve and be most diverse, you would
18 look at those zip codes that absolutely have that
19 issue. You would look to include those zip codes
20 in this.

21 MICAH LASHER: You raise a number
22 of really good points. As it relates to
23 transportation, schools are more or less
24 transportation accessible. Some schools are more
25 accessible, some schools are less accessible.

2 This is certainly not going to be the most
3 transportation accessible high school in the city.
4 I think what we've said to Council Member Crowley
5 and what I would say to you is that within the
6 existing transportation infrastructure that would
7 be something that the city would be eager to work
8 with you on to figure out how to make this site
9 more transportation accessible. That having been
10 said, we do believe it is a very good site.

11 Again, in response to Council Member Liu, that is
12 not a relative statement. That is not a statement
13 that this site is better than all the rest. We
14 think this is a good site. We believe we can
15 build an effective school there.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Some of the
17 other sites that you said were available or you
18 reviewed, what was wrong about them that they were
19 excluded?

20 MICAH LASHER: I'll turn it over to
21 Kenrick. I just want to hit your second point,
22 which is that there's other zip codes that are
23 more diverse. Again, I think in our plan that
24 would give District 24 a district-wide preference
25 that I believe would be far more inclusive of the

2 students coming from your district than would the
3 proposal by the community board to give preference
4 to a specific feeder school or the proposal by
5 Council Member Crowley to give preference to five
6 feeder schools. I think our proposal would give
7 your students a crack at this school whereas the
8 more the much more exclusionary prioritization may
9 not. Again, for us this is about geography. I
10 think the geography that is included in the
11 district-wide preference is far more inclusionary
12 than the more exclusionary narrower
13 prioritization.

14 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Everybody
15 stop. We're going to lose a quorum on the items
16 that we have to vote today. So I'm going to ask
17 the DOE team to stop and everybody to stop.
18 Council Member Mendez, we're going to vote on the
19 items we can vote on before we lose you and lose
20 the quorum. We have items that we have to vote
21 out today, which is LU 1032, which is 275 Madison
22 Avenue build, Manhattan Community Board #6. I
23 won't read the code number. LU 1033 and 1034,
24 Manhattan Community Board #9, the New York Public
25 Library, George Bruce branch. LU 1034, New York

2 Public Library, 125th Street branch in Manhattan
3 Community Board #11. LU 1035, Elsworth House in
4 Staten Island Community Board #3. LU 1036,
5 Hubbard House, Brooklyn Community Board #11.

6 There's no one that signed up to speak against or
7 for any of the items. The items have all been
8 approved and designated by the Landmarks
9 Preservation Committee and have full hearings. So
10 since there is no one to speak in opposition, we
11 would like to call a vote on those items at this
12 time.

13 MALE VOICE: Chair Comrie?

14 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Aye on all.

15 MALE VOICE: Council Member Liu?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: Yes.

17 MALE VOICE: Council Member

18 Martinez?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Yes.

20 MALE VOICE: Council Member Palma?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Yes.

22 MALE VOICE: Council Member Arroyo?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Yes.

24 MALE VOICE: Council Member

25 Crowley?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Aye on
3 all.

4 MALE VOICE: Council Member Mendez?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: I vote aye
6 on all.

7 MALE VOICE: Council Member Barron?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Aye.

9 MALE VOICE: By a vote of eight in
10 the affirmative, none in the negative, no
11 abstentions, LU 1032, 1033, 1034, 1035 and 1036
12 are approved and referred to the full Land Use
13 Committee.

14 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I want to
15 thank everyone for their indulgence. I am told
16 that today is just a hearing on the Maspeth High
17 School, but we will be moving to a vote at 9:30
18 a.m. on Thursday morning. So, Councilwoman Sears,
19 I'll turn it back over to you. I'd like to remind
20 people not to crosstalk over each between the
21 speakers because then it gets the audience
22 confused and involved.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Micah
24 Lasher, I think you were speaking.

25 MICAH LASHER: What I would just

2 say is two things. One, on the question of
3 transportation, there are transportation
4 challenges with this site and we recognize that.
5 It is not a perfect world.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I would
7 think big ones.

8 MICAH LASHER: So I think that we
9 would be eager to work with you to try to figure
10 out within the existing transportation
11 infrastructure how to address those. We've said
12 that from the beginning.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: But I'm
14 looking at the entire school. Incidentally, I
15 understand that the zip codes that Councilwoman
16 Crowley was included 11373. That is very key. I
17 have one high school in my district and that is
18 Newtown High. I have to tell you that because of
19 its overcrowding it went on the failing list. One
20 high school in a district. How do you tell your
21 kids and the parents that they have to be sent to
22 a failing high school? That's out of the
23 question. So the fact is that school needed to
24 have some other schools. The fact that 11373 and
25 what Councilwoman Crowley is asking for seems to

1
2 me is not going to break what it is that you're
3 trying to accomplish which it is in borough-wide,
4 because the diversity in that school is huge just
5 coming from those zip codes. I want to know what
6 was objectionable about other sites that were
7 submitted.

8 MICAH LASHER: I'll respond to both
9 of those and then for more details I'll ask
10 Kenrick to get into it. Again, in our proposal,
11 11373 has prioritization with the other zip codes
12 within District 24. I think there are five or
13 six. I should point out there have been a number
14 of various proposals. There was one that said
15 give five specific feeder schools prioritization.
16 There was another one that said give one feeder
17 school followed by secondary priority. I mean
18 there's been a lot of machinations related to how
19 you create a preference. The net of it for us is
20 we do not believe in creating and have not under
21 this administration in creating a preference that
22 says within a school district if you're in the
23 wrong zip code you're out of luck. Those kids in
24 373, not only would they have access to this high
25 school, they would in fact have access to this

2 high school before any other kid except for their
3 compatriots in District 24. As it relates to the
4 undesirable sites, I know the Saint Saviour site
5 is in an industrial area which we felt was just
6 not an appropriate place for kids to be coming.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Excuse me.

8 I've got IS 161 in an industrial area and that
9 school is thriving. So I can't buy that argument.

10 MICAH LASHER: We don't view this
11 as a zero sum game, which is this school versus
12 all the rest. This is a school that we believe is
13 a good school for this site. We believe it can
14 work at this site. To vote it down right now
15 would fundamentally be to set us back on 1,100
16 seats by several school years.

17 KENRICK OU: If I could just speak
18 to the issue of alternate sites. Let me just
19 speak first about the size of this site. I'm not
20 sure if we were clear at the very beginning. The
21 site we are talking about today is 1.9 acres in
22 size. That translates into 88,000 square feet of
23 land. That is very uncommon throughout the city
24 and especially in Queens in terms of the size of
25 parcels that are identified as being available and

2 without displacement. It is possible to assemble
3 sites that are that large, but very often it will
4 require extensive displacement either of
5 residential occupants or other users. Some of the
6 sites that we looked at and is included in your
7 package as alternatives to help meet the needs in
8 Queens, especially with respect to Newtown include
9 a site that we just opened up this past September,
10 the Elmhurst Educational Complex.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I know it's
12 open and I'm interrupting you. This is very key
13 because it's supposed to take the overcrowding
14 from our high school. To this day I still don't
15 know what kids are going to that school when I
16 have asked several times. I don't know who is
17 getting into that new school that was supposed to
18 be the feeder school to relieve the overcrowding.
19 I have to say I cannot fault Councilwoman Crowley
20 because the fact is the Department of Education is
21 not forthcoming with just about anything that may
22 make and shed some light on an issue.

23 MICAH LASHER: I'd be happy to get
24 you that information.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I know, but

2 that's been asked for a very long time. So to say
3 what's going to come to that school or isn't
4 because of the transportation, because of some
5 other issue, I think that, first of all, an
6 industrial is an opportunity for a school. I know
7 where 61 is and that school is thriving. He's
8 looking to increase and he has the space and
9 hopefully we'll work together to see that happen.
10 Would you have to use eminent domain at the
11 industrial site?

12 KENRICK OU: It depends. It will
13 ultimately depend on whether or not the owner is
14 willing to--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS:
16 [interposing] How much is the square footage of
17 the industrial site? I'm very pro-industrial
18 site. They don't hurt the kids.

19 KENRICK OU: We're not saying--

20 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: [interposing]
21 You got to respect each other.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: No, we're
23 good.

24 KENRICK OU: We're not saying it
25 hurts kids.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: This is a
3 love-in over here.

4 KENRICK OU: I agree. By the way,
5 Councilwoman, my sister is a constituent of yours.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: She's not in
7 high school is she?

8 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: All right.
9 Focus on the issue.

10 KENRICK OU: I would just say that,
11 again, ever site is a complex site of things that
12 make it work and things that don't make it work.
13 As I said earlier, in a world of limitless
14 resources, we'd build a school on every block.
15 This is a school that we believe works. It can
16 alleviate 1,100 kids worth of overcrowding in
17 Queens and we'd like to go forward with it.

18 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council
19 Member, final question only because we have a lot
20 of witnesses. We have two other speakers.
21 Council Member, last question.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: That's the
23 last question. I want to hear more about the
24 industrial site.

25 KENRICK OU: This is reference to

2 the Saint Saviour's site, the one that I had
3 mentioned earlier that emerged from our
4 discussions with the community board. I think
5 it's closer in size to approximately 1.5 acres. I
6 don't have the specifics of boundaries in front of
7 us. But when we did go and compare the sizes of
8 the parcels, the site that is currently being
9 proposed is larger.

10 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you,
11 next question.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Thank you
13 very much. We have more to do with this I think
14 in negotiations. Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you.
16 Council Member Miguel Martinez then Council Member
17 Arroyo.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Just a
19 point of clarity. The current site that's being
20 proposed is not an industrial site.

21 KENRICK OU: No, it is not.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: I just
23 want to be clear on that.

24 MICAH LASHER: Relative to the
25 Saint Saviour's site, it is not an industrially

2 zoned area. It is a restaurant wholesaler's
3 warehouse.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Let me go
5 back. The discussion that Council Member Sears
6 was having about an industrial site and being pro-
7 industrial, does it relate to this site?

8 MICAH LASHER: No. This is another
9 site that we had looked at and for a variety of
10 reasons determined it was not as attractive as the
11 site we've proposed.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: And is
13 this site an industrial site?

14 MICAH LASHER: It is not an
15 industrial area. That is the distinction.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: In the
17 discussion earlier I thought I heard you say that
18 there are two other schools that are exclusively
19 zoned. Is that right?

20 MICAH LASHER: The policy of this
21 administration has been to create no high schools
22 that are locally zoned. There was a high school
23 that was built, I believe in Brooklyn, that has an
24 enrollment priority for two full school districts.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Under

2 this administration?

3 MICAH LASHER: Under this
4 administration. Councilman Barron highlighted
5 that we're already making compromises and we are.
6 This site would give preference to the local
7 school district. That is what we're offering
8 here. As Council Member Barron said, at a certain
9 point where do you stop. So this would be the
10 narrowest preference that has ever been proposed
11 for a new high school. It's the most exclusionary
12 preference that has ever been proposed under this
13 administration. But at the very least it's a
14 preference that conforms to school district lines,
15 which are drawn by the state legislature's
16 appointed commission and has some sense to it. To
17 start going within that and saying if you're in
18 this zip code, you get to go and if you're in that
19 zip code, you don't, is just a precedent that we
20 think would be disastrous to set.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Is the
22 community board was opposed or in favor of this?

23 MICAH LASHER: The community board,
24 like the Community Education Council and like the
25 elected officials have supported a school at this

1 site depending on what the enrollment policy is.
2
3 So my argument would be that this as a site is
4 something that has not been said by anybody at the
5 elected official or community board level or
6 Community Education Council level that this site
7 is no-go on a school. What they've said is that
8 if you do the enrollment policy that we want, it's
9 okay with us. Again, the question before the
10 committee I would humbly suggest is whether the
11 site is a desirable site for a school. I believe
12 it is an extremely desirable site for a school.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: I agree
14 and disagree with you because the fact is at the
15 Council one of the biggest powers that we hold is
16 the land use process and then it's the budget.
17 You've said this over and over again and I know
18 this is the same language that we sometimes use in
19 land use. A ULURP is a ULURP, a land use is a
20 land use. However, it's not that simple for us.
21 Through the land use process is where we're able
22 to even hold this process up for further
23 discussion with the member in which district
24 whatever issue of land use holds and even to come
25 up with agreements and bargaining. So for us it's

2 not just a siting or a land use issue, it's what
3 do we do for our constituents. I would hope that
4 the discussion with the Council Member of the
5 district continue. As you know, we usually do
6 have a policy amongst members, not an
7 institutional policy, but among members that we
8 like to listen to the issues concerning that
9 member and follow the leadership of that member in
10 his or her district, particularly when it relates
11 to school sitings. Going back to the original
12 process, you mentioned you went to the local CEC,
13 you went to the district leadership council and so
14 forth. The main issue is we would like to see a
15 school but the issue before us and with them is
16 what the enrollment will be for that school.

17 MICAH LASHER: Yes. There's sort
18 of a complicated answer to that question. In
19 response to your first point, obviously, I
20 absolutely acknowledge that this is a discussion
21 about many things. We've had that conversation
22 with the Council Member and frankly that's how we
23 got to the District 24 priority. I'm not going to
24 say this is strictly a land use question. I think
25 my point would be that the land use question is

2 one that I think most people involved in that
3 process would agree that it's not really at issue.
4 As it relates to the enrollment policy question,
5 again, from our perspective we have not created a
6 preference that goes beyond this in this
7 administration. We believe that locally zoned
8 high schools are not schools that we should be
9 creating anymore. I understand if the Council has
10 a disagreement with that, but that is a
11 philosophical disagreement. We've been in
12 extensive conversations with the Council Member.
13 That's how we got to the District 24 preference.
14 If the position of the Council is that this school
15 is okay if it's locally zoned, I think we've gone
16 as far as we can go in that regard. In response
17 to your second question, and I know you're going
18 to hear from a lot of folks today who oppose the
19 site in its entirety, so I want to be clear.
20 There has been a vocal constituency in the
21 community who do not want a high school here under
22 any circumstances.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Don't
24 address the audience.

25 MICAH LASHER: I'm sure you'll hear

2 from those folks today. The Community Education
3 Council, the community board, the Council Member,
4 the Assembly Member have all said contingent on
5 the enrollment policies we'd see a high school
6 here. So I think that that's where we are.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: On the
8 issue of transportation, we're talking about what
9 age range of kids? I know you said high school.
10 Give me age range.

11 MICAH LASHER: At this point we're
12 talking effectively 15 to 18 or 14 to 18.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: And
14 you're looking to bus kids in?

15 MICAH LASHER: We don't provide
16 busing to high school students.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Thank
18 you.

19 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
20 Arroyo?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Thank you,
22 Mr. Chair. I'm sorry about the in and out, but
23 this hearing was moved and the hour changed in
24 life and my life didn't. So I apologize for that.
25 I'm going to take a stab at this from a different

1
2 perspective. The folks around that table and I
3 had a battle maybe two years ago now around a
4 school siting in my district. The issue of the
5 oversaturation of high school seats in my district
6 and how can we ensure that the children in my
7 community would be able to attend the Mount Haven
8 School campus that is already under construction
9 and a project that I think we're all very proud
10 of. At the end of the day, you were not willing
11 to make concessions. What's different in this
12 case on the enroll policy?

13 MICAH LASHER: I can't speak to the
14 specifics of the Mount Haven situation.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: But they
16 can. They were here. I want to know what's
17 different in this case than the one that was
18 present when I was talking to you guys about that
19 siting application that you withdrew. It happened
20 the same way it's happening in this case. And
21 then you brought back almost immediately, pretty
22 much like you're doing in this case. Part of the
23 discussion that I was having with the Department
24 of Education was enrollment policy. There was no
25 give in that situation. What makes this

2 different?

3 MICAH LASHER: I think if you ask
4 Council Member Crowley, she'll say we haven't
5 given enough here either.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: But you
7 have. Wait. But you have, and I want to know
8 what makes this different.

9 MICAH LASHER: I don't think there
10 is anything unique about this site as it relates
11 to enrollment policy.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: But you
13 have given concessions.

14 MICAH LASHER: I think in every
15 instance, as in the Mount Haven instance, you're
16 trying to balance a variety of factors to serve
17 the best interests of the city and gain political
18 support. I think we did it in Mount Haven and
19 that's the reality we're living with here. I
20 think that in this case we've reached a point
21 where we're not willing to make the concessions
22 that it sounds like would be necessary to get
23 approval for the school.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: I will ask
25 the question a different way. In the Mount Haven

2 School Campus siting situation there were no
3 concessions made on the enrollment policy. My
4 understanding is that you have in this case made
5 some concessions. Is that correct?

6 MICAH LASHER: We've created
7 district prioritization for enrollment.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: That has
9 happened because?

10 MICAH LASHER: Because that was an
11 attempt to gain the Council Member's support for
12 the school.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Because the
14 Council Member needs to deliver to her community.
15 I want the public here to be mindful of that.
16 Because I can sit here and say I don't care what's
17 going to happen in Queens. They didn't do it in
18 my district, they shouldn't be doing it in hers.
19 But that's not the position that we're taking here
20 and I think people need to be mindful of that. In
21 her work, to make sure that she delivers for her
22 community she has been able to accomplish
23 something that is not usually part of the
24 discussion when we deal with these kind of
25 situations in the Council. I think that that is a

2 bit of information that cannot be missed in her
3 attempt to deliver for her community. So I am not
4 attacking you. I'm not criticizing you. I think
5 that no-zoned high schools is a bad policy. I
6 agree with my colleagues on that. But in this
7 situation I think the issue for the Council Member
8 is how she can make lemonade out of lemons. At
9 the end of the day, that's what we need to be
10 mindful of. Often missed by those that we
11 represent because they're very quick to criticize
12 how much we didn't get, but don't appreciate how
13 much we do get in the process of dealing with
14 these land use situations. So I want to
15 congratulate my colleague in this process. She's
16 worked really, really hard to make sure that she
17 gets as much out of this process as possible for
18 her community. I won't remind you again that you
19 did not make concessions in my case.

20 MICAH LASHER: Point taken, Council
21 Member.

22 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Just to let
23 folks know that might have been sitting and
24 waiting for the Subcommittee on Planning, they are
25 moved to the 14th Floor. I have a couple of

2 questions and then I'm going to allow Council
3 Member Crowley and Liu one more question. What is
4 the plan for build-out for high schools in Queens?
5 Are there any other plans for high schools to be
6 sited in this capital plan?

7 MICAH LASHER: The current capital
8 plan is scheduled to expire on June 30th. We had
9 identified a need for nearly 10,000 Queens high
10 school seats.

11 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: 10,000
12 additional?

13 MICAH LASHER: At the very start of
14 the plan. Starting on July 1st, 2004 through June
15 30th, 2009 there was a need for 10,000 high school
16 seats.

17 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: How many will
18 be built as of December '09 of the 10,000
19 projected?

20 MICAH LASHER: I believe that all
21 of them will have been delivered or will be in
22 construction by that point, with the one question
23 being this proposed site. So the 1,100 seats that
24 we are talking about today represents the last bit
25 of that 10,000 seats of need.

2 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: And what is
3 the projection for high school seat need in Queens
4 now?

5 MICAH LASHER: For the next capital
6 plan what has been identified for starting July
7 1st, 2009 going through June 30th, 2014 is
8 approximately 1,400 seats of high school need in
9 Queens.

10 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: 1,400? That's
11 all?

12 MICAH LASHER: Yes, it's
13 approximately 1,400 seats of need.

14 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I'm having
15 difficulty understanding that statistic. How many
16 schools did you say were over capacity at this
17 particular time? So you're talking about not
18 dealing with reducing the over capacity at the
19 schools you cited? You want to give me that
20 citing again? I think it was every school in
21 Queens was dealing with over 100% capacity.

22 MICAH LASHER: There are many
23 Queens high schools that are over capacity.

24 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: In Page 2 of
25 the letter it lists them: Newtown is at 129%,

2 Grover Cleveland 128%, Aviation 120%, Cardoza
3 141%, Francis Lewis 175%, Bayside, Richmond Hill,
4 Forest Hills, Thomas Edison, and Long Island City.
5 It's a borough-wide issue. So 1,400 seats would
6 not reduce any of that overcrowding, correct?

7 MICAH LASHER: We should get back
8 to you with a precise study of how the next
9 capital plan would address the existing high
10 school need in tandem with the Maspeth High
11 School.

12 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I'm moving
13 beyond the Maspeth High School because you said
14 the Maspeth High School would deal with the 10,000
15 from the first plan. My understanding in the
16 census is that Queens is going to gain population
17 in the next census.

18 MICAH LASHER: You raise a very
19 good question and I don't have the information in
20 front of me to answer that, but I will get back to
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I'm moving
23 actually more towards Council Member Liu's siting
24 of a site that's transportation accessible in a
25 hub area that we already know as opposed to a

2 siting of a school that according to your
3 transportation plan no one outside of the zone
4 area would be able to get to without taking two
5 trains and a bus. That's according to Council
6 Member Sears' point. I was really moving to
7 Council Member Liu's question as to why a siting
8 that is as accessible to transportation as his and
9 is centrally located has not been dealt with for
10 five years. I wanted to know if there had been
11 anything done or a real effort to deal with that
12 site.

13 MICAH LASHER: I know this is a
14 very important issue to Council Member Liu. We
15 could do a hearing on this school I gather. By
16 the way, Council Member Comrie, in regards to your
17 earlier question, I think the crux of the answer
18 is that we have these 10,000 school seats and
19 5,000 of the school seats under the existing
20 capital plan are in the pipeline right now but
21 have not been opened up.

22 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Right, they're
23 not opened up.

24 MICAH LASHER: So, 5,000 currently
25 in the pipeline plus another what would have been

2 1,600 and now 1,100 here I think will
3 substantially address those schools that are
4 currently over crowded. It's not just the 1,400
5 seats in the next capital plan. We have 5,000
6 seats coming online.

7 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: You have 5,000
8 seats coming online by when?

9 MICAH LASHER: In the next 3.5
10 years. The short answer is that Home Depot is the
11 current occupant of the site that Council Member
12 Liu is talking about. It's not that we have any
13 great love for Home Depot, but they are an active
14 business. We do believe that they would commence
15 substantial litigation over any eminent proceeding
16 in that instance. But as I said to Council Member
17 Liu, in any site acquisition process eminent
18 domain is always at issue.

19 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: So in other
20 words that site is not really available. It's an
21 active operational site. Is that what you're
22 saying?

23 MICAH LASHER: That is what we
24 would say.

25 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Even with

2 5,000 seats in the pipeline and this school
3 creating another 1,100 seats, I still have issue
4 with the fact that it's only a projected 1,400
5 seat need in the next capital plan. I think
6 that's something that we're going to have to
7 readdress and look at. Everything that I've seen
8 as far as construction with Queens West, the
9 Rockaways, Long Island City, which is Queens West
10 Astoria, up and down Queens Boulevard, with the
11 addition of buildings in Woodside and in almost
12 every district in Queens there's more housing and
13 more opportunities coming. So I think that
14 projection is way under and we really need to take
15 a look at that.

16 GREG MAYERS: Mr. Chairman, may I
17 just add to that? You are correct and I just
18 wanted to remind you that also that the plan on a
19 yearly basis is evaluated. So we have to come
20 back to you when we look at neighborhood by
21 neighborhood districts, which is something new
22 that we've been looking at. We look at the city
23 planning data and also the census. So every year,
24 once again, we'll be in front of this body with a
25 plan where you have the right to really challenge

2 and look at data and see whether or not the data
3 that we've put forth in terms of the school seats
4 is something that you would like to challenge or
5 even suggest based on demographic trends. So I
6 just wanted to just make a note of that.

7 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
8 Liu you had a question?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: I just wanted
10 to state for the record that in fact that Home
11 Depot is moving four blocks away eminently to a
12 new development that had been developed. In fact,
13 that site would be empty. Home Depot had already
14 stipulated a price to the Department of Education
15 which admittedly is exorbitant but exorbitant only
16 because this administration refuses to even
17 consider eminent domain for that particular
18 property.

19 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
20 Arroyo, you had a piece of information?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: I just
22 wanted to thank Greg for the comment about
23 revisiting the capital plan yearly. We have an
24 issue in my district with the Highbridge Middle
25 School. There is an opinion on the part of the

1
2 Department of Education that the seats that the
3 community feels are necessary in order to meet the
4 need of that isolated community are not necessary.
5 We disagree on the numbers and we need to keep
6 that conversation going. That community has been
7 under served by middle school seats forever. We
8 have a great opportunity with land available and I
9 get it that the dollars are not there, but we need
10 to have this conversation again because we
11 disagree about the seats necessary in that
12 community. We believe the need is greater than
13 what has been assigned in the capital plan. I
14 look forward to that conversation.

15 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I just want to
16 emphasize the fact that your capital plan for
17 Queens for your projected plan is off. You're not
18 even including Southern Queens which is the area I
19 represent, which is in need of more seats. We
20 have classes that are doubling up and we have four
21 schools actually that are multiple school
22 buildings. 192, as you know, is sharing schools.
23 Springfield is sharing schools. Andrew Jackson,
24 Campus Magnet now is sharing facilities. These
25 kids don't have enough science labs. They don't

1
2 have enough cafeteria space. They don't have
3 enough communal space. They don't have an
4 opportunity to really have their own identity.
5 There's a major problem with the capital plan. I
6 know that that's not Maspeth related. Today's
7 article in the news is really an example of the
8 problem. Most of my kids contact me because they
9 can't get into the school they want to get into.
10 Nine times out of ten it's not any of those
11 schools that I just named in my area. The ability
12 of a child to get into a school and to fairly
13 compete for a school is something that we really
14 have to look at. While I understand the need to
15 have an identity brand, I'm concerned about making
16 sure that children from all over the borough have
17 an opportunity to get into school. I think that
18 I'm going back to the overall capital plan, not
19 just specific siting. We don't have enough
20 schools. If we can't create more seats, then we
21 can't create more opportunities for children to
22 really flex their intellectual spirits by not
23 being in overcrowded facilities. With that, I'm
24 going to ask Council Member Liu and Council Member
25 Crowley to ask one more question each because my

2 day and my schedule has been totally blown up.

3 I'm not even supposed to be Chairman. This is the
4 second time Council Member Lappin has stuck me
5 with this Committee on a long issue. She's not
6 here so she truly owes me.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: Council Member
8 Comrie, thank you so much for your wonderful
9 stewardship of this Subcommittee hearing.

10 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I don't know
11 how good I've been. I've got a cold.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: You have been
13 wonderful. Unfortunately, I have also had to miss
14 about five meetings by now, because as are all the
15 good people here, everybody has a very busy
16 schedule. My question has to do with the timing
17 of this. This had been identified, had been
18 initiated since March 14th of 2008. It's more
19 than a year later now. Could you just briefly
20 walk us through the steps of the approval process?

21 KENRICK OU: The public review
22 process officially started in March. That started
23 a 45-day public comment period during which we met
24 with the community board. They had the hearing.
25 They requested a follow-up meeting. We attended a

2 follow-up meeting. They subsequently shared
3 comments related to our original proposal, which
4 was this 1,650-seat facility that would serve
5 grades 6 through 12. We heard a lot of concerns
6 and feedback. The community board put their key
7 concerns in writing. We took that back. We
8 reassessed the site and tried to identify ways to
9 respond to those concerns, which included what we
10 have before us now, this proposed reduction in the
11 size of the school, specific design measures if
12 this project were to move forward that could
13 respond to the concerns related to traffic
14 obstructions, proximity of the building to the
15 neighbors, the size of the building, the treatment
16 of the area.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: I mean bottom
18 line is the community board disapproved it on May
19 21st, 2008. So what happened after May 21st?

20 KENRICK OU: We were reviewing
21 their concerns and we were talking with our
22 designers to try and figure out a way that it
23 would be possible. We promised the community
24 board that we would go back and share our ideas as
25 we try to identify and balance their concerns.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: So there were
3 no key milestone dates between May 21, 2008 and
4 February 23rd?

5 MICAH LASHER: Just to be clear,
6 the revision resulted in a reduction of the
7 enrollment capacity of the school by a third, the
8 elimination of a middle school. Those were
9 substantial changes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: That was after
11 May 21st?

12 MICAH LASHER: Yes.

13 KENRICK OU: Yes and there were
14 subsequent discussions with the Community
15 Education Council.

16 MICAH LASHER: That was subsequent
17 to the community board's opposition. I can give
18 you the chronology.

19 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: The
20 chronology?

21 MICAH LASHER: The chronology was
22 that the vote was on May 14th. And then on
23 January 14th we went back to the community board
24 with a revised plan.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: The community

2 board was on May 14th?

3 MICAH LASHER: May 14th, 2008.

4 They voted 33 to zero to oppose the plan. And I
5 would note that at their recent meeting with the
6 enrollment based contingencies they voted to
7 approve the plan. I think the critical
8 differences between those two things, while we do
9 still have disagreements on enrollment policy, I
10 think the changes that we made that were
11 responsive to the community board that changed
12 their perspective on it was the reduction of the
13 enrollment capacity of the school by a third.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: I'm just
15 trying to understand what happened in all of those
16 intervening months from May 21st until it really
17 came back to the community board in January. Why
18 did it not get there in like October or November?

19 MICAH LASHER: On November 20th we
20 met with Council Member Como, who proceeded to
21 discuss the revisions of the plan. On November
22 24th we attended the Community Education Council.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I'm sorry,
24 November 20th?

25 MICAH LASHER: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: After he
3 was already voted out?

4 MICAH LASHER: He was still the
5 Council Member at that time. We could have said
6 the community does not have a representative for
7 those two months, but yes, we did meet with him as
8 we met with you immediately after your taking
9 office. On November 25th, we attended Community
10 Education Council 24. On December 11th, we met
11 with Council Member Crowley before she was sworn
12 in. So I think we've made a good faith effort to
13 have these conversations. Again, those
14 conversations have resulted in an enrollment
15 reduction by a third, elimination of a middle
16 school and District 24 preference.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
19 Crowley, one follow-up?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you,
21 Council Member Leroy and all of my colleagues who
22 raised some serious concerns today about this high
23 school. I'm going to reiterate what I said
24 earlier. I do not support the high school the way
25 the School Construction Authority and the

2 Department of Education have it proposed
3 currently. I hope that you would go back to the
4 drawing board and bring back a proposal that is
5 aligned to what the community board has requested.
6 I think that what Council Member John Liu recently
7 raised and the series of meetings that you had
8 over the past year and a half, two years, you have
9 to realize that this community went through a lot
10 in just not having continuity in terms of
11 representation. So in a lot of ways they were
12 under represented. Now, when I come into office
13 and the first few weeks of office repeatedly
14 requesting meetings for the DOE and not getting a
15 meeting until the end of February, two days before
16 you would have wanted to bring it to this
17 particular Land Use Committee hearing. Then you
18 withdrew it because you knew that it wouldn't have
19 been voted favorably. So I think that you have to
20 go back to the drawing board one more time. I
21 think that we have to understand that there were
22 other sites that were suggested and even in
23 answering the questions about the sites I don't
24 think your answers were accurate. I don't think
25 they were clear. St. Saviour's site that was

2 suggested earlier that is a larger site and there
3 is no current construction site and the DOE
4 purchasing that site would be a tremendous cost
5 savings. That site would also allow for more
6 students whereby alleviating the overcrowding. I
7 think that Council Member Sears also raised some
8 pretty important concerns when she mentioned where
9 her kids were going to high school. We like to
10 keep track as Council Members and our parents even
11 more so. And they like to get involved in their
12 student's education. Whereby building a high
13 school that allows a certain number of seats for
14 community residents only makes sense. Thank you.

15 MICAH LASHER: If I may, in answer
16 to that. I am sympathetic both to the fact that
17 the community has undergone leadership change
18 successively in the last number of months. That
19 has obviously presented a challenge. As I said,
20 however, we did meet with you on December 11th
21 before you formally took office. We met again
22 before the school was proposed. We did withdraw
23 it. I think there has been no shortage of
24 communication on this issue. It may just be that
25 we have a philosophical difference here about

2 enrollment policy. It may be that the Council
3 can't support this high school unless it is
4 locally zoned. We believe that that we may have a
5 policy disagreement in that regard. But I would
6 implore you that you have a good 1,100-seat high
7 school here right now ready to go. There may be
8 other sites that are good. There may be
9 transportation problems. This may not be the
10 enrollment policy you would like. We have made
11 some efforts to compromise and they may not have
12 gone far enough. But I would implore you not to
13 make history by having the Council vote down this
14 high school. Thank you very much.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: I would hate
16 for that comment to be the last final word, Mr.
17 Chairman.

18 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Well I was
19 going to make a comment.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: Please. I'd
21 rather have the Chairman make a comment.

22 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Go right
23 ahead.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LIU: If this
25 Council decides to disapprove this particular

2 site, it is our job to do so representing our
3 constituents. If the School Construction
4 Authority and the Department of Education has not
5 done their homework properly and has in fact come
6 up with a half-baked plan, then that is the
7 interests of the people that are being served.
8 Don't lay it on us if you didn't do your job.

9 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I want to
10 thank DOE and the mayor's office for being here.
11 Greg, it's your first hearing. You did pretty
12 well. You got a little nervous in the beginning.

13 GREG MAYERS: Thank you. I wanted
14 to borrow your tissue. I have a cold.

15 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: You can still
16 come and get some. I think that a lot of issues
17 have been brought out today. I think we're going
18 to have to have a real serious discussion between
19 members between now and Thursday. We're going to
20 listen to the community and hear what they have to
21 say now. Clearly, whatever decision we make, we
22 have to make on behalf of the borough and also the
23 need for siting. We have to think about the needs
24 of the community, but at the end of the day, we
25 are definitely going to meet our obligation as

2 Council Members and follow the rule of law. I
3 will tell you that one of the things I want to do
4 as head of the delegation is send a letter to DOE
5 because this issue of 1,400 seats in the next plan
6 doesn't make sense. I don't think even with the
7 5,000 or 6,100 seats coming online will not
8 relieve the overcrowding in those schools that we
9 cited and will not create a better quality of an
10 educational environment for our kids to catch up
11 to the rest of the world. With that, I want to
12 move forward. Thank you for being here. Let's
13 bring up the next panel, which will be: Robert
14 Holden, Juniper Park Civic Association and Gary
15 Giordano, Community Board 5. Due to the
16 exigencies of time, we're going to keep it to
17 three minutes each. Due to time constraints,
18 gentleman, keep your comments salient and keep
19 them to three minutes. Anthony Nunziato and Eddie
20 Nubel can come up now and be prepared to speak.
21 Is Eddie here? I don't know Eddie as well as I
22 know the other three. Mr. Holden, you're at bat
23 first.

24 ROBERT HOLDEN: Hi, my name is Bob
25 Holden. I'm President of the Juniper Park Civic

2 Association, representing 1,650 families in
3 Maspeth and Middle Village, and most of all a
4 member of Community Board 5. If the Council
5 Members look at the photograph that I have on the
6 front of the packet, you can see the siting of
7 this school. The School Construction Authority
8 was asleep at the wheel when they sited this
9 location. If you look, there's two other schools
10 a few blocks away. So within four blocks we have
11 a proposal for three schools. Now, another thing
12 to consider, and they keep saying Mayor Bloomberg
13 wants people to travel all throughout the five
14 boroughs to go to a high school. Now I kind of
15 agree with that. There's no subway nearby, it's
16 over a mile away. So that means the kids would
17 have to get on the bus. The buses now are
18 seniors, people wanting to take public
19 transportation, you can't get on the bus there.
20 Take a look at the photographs and look at what's
21 happening now to the community. So there are
22 locations and we have to start thinking about
23 this. There are locations where a school won't
24 work. This is one. Again, we disagree with
25 Council Member Crowley. We're not talking about

1 the zoning issue of locally zoned. We don't think
2 this site works for a school. Right now it's
3 congested because of the two other schools. So if
4 it's congested now and there's no subway, then you
5 can't site a school there. That's basic siting.
6 There are locations that were given. By the way,
7 this little secret document, this is the way
8 they've done this. The eminent domain hearing was
9 secret. They put it in *The New York Post*, a very
10 small ad. The Council Member didn't know about
11 the eminent domain hearing. The community board
12 did not know about the eminent domain hearing.
13 One of the members came to me and handed me an ad
14 from *The New York Post* from a few days earlier.
15 That's how we found out about the eminent domain
16 hearing. It was in the *City Record* of course,
17 which nobody gets, at least none of us get in the
18 community and it was in *The New York Post*. And if
19 you happen to see *The New York Post* then you'd
20 know about the hearing. Then I asked for a copy
21 of this from Mr. Shaw from the School Construction
22 Authority. He said I had to go down to the City
23 Clerk and pay to get it. Luckily I photographed
24 it. These are the alternate sites, which were
25

2 kept from us. Alternate sites that work. By the
3 way, Saint Saviour's is not on this list. Why?
4 Because they really never seriously considered it.
5 Not that St. Saviour's would be the ideal site,
6 but there's so many others that would be ideal
7 that are near public transportation. So if Mayor
8 Bloomberg wants people to travel and have a choice
9 of over 500 high schools from throughout the city,
10 then a subway stop should be there. That should
11 be a requirement. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: We'd like to
13 get a copy of that because I've never heard of an
14 eminent domain hearing being done before a siting
15 was done. Thank you. Gary?

16 GARY GIORDANO: Thank you for the
17 opportunity to speak here today. Just a little
18 history. The community board originally opposed
19 the construction of a 1,650-seat school facility
20 at this site because it included an intermediate
21 school. Intermediate School 73 is located a few
22 blocks from this site and is a bit under capacity.

23 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I'm sorry.
24 You didn't state your whole name.

25 GARY GIORDANO: I'm sorry. My name

1
2 is Gary Giordano. I'm District Manager at
3 Community Board 5 in Queens. Originally we
4 opposed a 1,650-seat school that was supposed to
5 include a 550-seat intermediate school. We
6 thought it was duplication. There was an
7 intermediate school over there. But there are
8 severe problems in this area with two existing
9 schools, one an elementary school being down the
10 block and the intermediate school being a few
11 blocks away. So what you have is 2,700 children
12 and pre-teens going to school in that immediate
13 area. I think the community board softened a
14 little bit and said well look, we know that know
15 that we need high school seats in Queens County.
16 We know that Grover Cleveland is overcrowded where
17 the kids locally are zoned. Forest Hills where my
18 son goes to school, he starts school at 10:37 I
19 believe because of split session. That school's
20 at 150% of capacity. Newtown High School, as you
21 well know, has been over capacity for a long time.
22 I wish that Councilman Barron were here. But I
23 think the idea of local enrollment is not by any
24 means a racial issue because if you see
25 Intermediate School 73, if anything is a mosaic of

1
2 people coming from all different communities to go
3 to school and traveling there that complicated
4 everything. In a lot of cases those who are going
5 to IS 73 are taking either school buses to school
6 or there are so many kids being bused from the
7 school that they have their own stop on 71st
8 Street off of Grand Avenue for numerous buses. So
9 you have congestion conditions here that I don't
10 think you can match. I think what Mr. Holden said
11 is very true. If you had a subway stop there it
12 would be much easier to have everybody from
13 whatever portions of the city going to this
14 school. The reason that we believe that this
15 school should be much more locally zoned than the
16 administration believes it should be is simply
17 because of the crowded conditions there now and
18 that the kids that live in our communities are
19 zoned for high schools that are already very
20 overcrowded. You will have a situation where a
21 teenager from three blocks away will not be able
22 to go to this school under this program. You
23 know, I think if it were a president we'd have a
24 much better chance of being democratic here. I
25 would ask the chancellor to revise this policy in

2 some instances.

3 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Just a point
4 of information from Mr. Holden. This doesn't say
5 anything on here about eminent domain or that it
6 was put in the paper. In fact I have a copy of
7 the same thing that was in the letter that was
8 sent to us by the Department of Education. It
9 says the same thing as your Exhibit 1, Alternative
10 Site Analysis. I'd like to see something from the
11 paper.

12 ROBERT HOLDEN: I believe I could
13 get you that.

14 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: There's
15 nothing on what you handed me that said there was
16 an eminent domain hearing.

17 ROBERT HOLDEN: The date on there
18 was the Exhibit 1 that was presented at that
19 hearing. So it was 2/26/09. That's when the
20 eminent domain hearing took place.

21 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: 2/26/09? The
22 have this in our package. I'd like to know if a
23 hearing actually took place.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I know a
25 hearing did take place.

2 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: A hearing did
3 take place that day?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: A hearing
5 did take place on February 26th. We had a stated
6 meeting that day.

7 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Who held the
8 hearing?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: The School
10 Construction Authority. They did not give a
11 notice to my office prior to them advertising it
12 in the newspaper.

13 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you.
14 The next speaker? Please say your name for the
15 record.

16 ANTHONY NUNZIATO: Anthony Nunziato
17 with the Maspeth Chamber of Commerce, also a
18 Maspeth Civic Leader. I belong to all the
19 organizations, such as Juniper Park Civic
20 Association. I just want to say I was also at
21 that meeting on February 26th for the eminent
22 domain, like Mr. Holden has stated. There was a
23 small article in *The Post*. If it wasn't for one
24 of our people that came up to us and showed it to
25 us, we would have known nothing about it. No

1
2 other information was forthcoming. We had to take
3 pictures to see where the other paper was being
4 printed for other sites for the school. It was at
5 4 o'clock on a Thursday. No one that we reached
6 out to could come to it. Everyone works until 6
7 o'clock. Even the people from the schools had a
8 hard time getting there. So we had a very bad
9 turnout than we would have had if it would have
10 been scheduled for something that was more
11 amenable for everybody in the neighborhood. I
12 just want to state that I have a business in
13 Maspeth on Grand Avenue. I also live in Maspeth.
14 I've been there for over 25 years. I'm a third
15 generation resident of Woodside. I've been
16 working very hard for the city planning of Maspeth
17 for the last 25 years civically. So far we have
18 done everything to make sure everything is slowly
19 getting to the right way. We had pollution plans,
20 we had the Betts Incinerator, we had fat rendering
21 plants, we had pollution, we had the Phelps Dodge.
22 We slowly saw the development of our town so it
23 could be clean environmentally and work for our
24 neighborhood. We have two schools in that
25 location and we had a business there that

1 conducted business. It's called oversaturation.
2 We have the largest Stop & Shop of Queens that's
3 located at that location. We have the largest
4 Stop and Store at that location. It's being
5 shoehorned into our neighborhood and it doesn't
6 make any sense. We want everyone to go to all the
7 schools. I went to Pelham Memorial. I had to
8 travel into Manhattan. Part of New York life is
9 traveling to our different schools. It's a
10 wonderful tribute to go and see the different
11 neighborhoods and be part of it and to expand your
12 mind. I think it's a great thing. This is not
13 the location for it. It's a small area. You have
14 two large schools there. You have over 3,000
15 students getting out now. Our commerce is taking
16 a hit. You know, our small businesses, and I
17 really want everybody to hear this, we're not
18 getting any bailout from any presidential or from
19 any city official for our small businesses. We
20 already make up two-thirds of what taxes are
21 coming to the city and we're getting killed
22 because people will not travel the avenue to do
23 shopping because of the overcrowding, the traffic
24 and the school buses. The school buses stay
25

1
2 overnight where our businesses can't have their
3 restaurants. They can't have anybody come and use
4 their parking spots. It's oversaturation. It's
5 not the area. Chairman of the Transportation
6 Committee, Councilman Liu, he sees the problems
7 that we have with transportation. He sees
8 Maspeth. He has a spot for it where trains that
9 could empty into this and help kids from all
10 boroughs come to this location. This is not the
11 location. We only have buses coming in here.
12 They're taking away our parking spots. So two
13 buses could come into a bus stop at once because
14 it's overcrowded with the bus lines. Also, I know
15 the time is up, but I want to say I traveled here.
16 I have a small business. I am a third generation
17 New York. My family helped make New York what it
18 is today. I am offended by Councilman Barron's
19 remark meaning the people of my town, by calling
20 us racist. I'd like to lodge a complaint because
21 that's a disgrace that a man of that character
22 would say something like that. Thank you for
23 listening.

24 EDDIE NUBEL: My name is Eddie
25 Nubel. I belong to the Juniper Park Civic

1 Association. I've been living in the community
2 over 50 years. I am opposed to the school being
3 built there. I think it's wrong. I think it's
4 oversaturated with big supermarkets. Stores along
5 the avenue are losing business because there's too
6 many kids. There's 3,000 plus kids, like Tony
7 said. You can't walk safely along there. When
8 kids come out of the school there, they knock you
9 over and they're running around. They're trying
10 to intimidate each other into fighting and stuff.
11 You know, you go in the library where it's
12 supposed to be quiet. They go in there and they
13 start rousing things up a little. I live on 74th
14 Street. In the morning and at night, the cars
15 zoom through there like crazy. There's heavy
16 traffic there. That's like a shortcut to
17 Woodhaven or the other big boulevards and stuff.
18 I just feel it's wrong to put that school there.
19 I think they have better sites. I think the Rust
20 Street site would upgrade the community in that
21 area if they would put a school there and try and
22 build up that area or put some more money in that
23 area and see if you could help the local people
24 there. Also, Flushing I think has a good site
25

2 because of the buses and the subway system there.
3 It's a great site. So I think the people that
4 were here before, they just overlooked a lot of
5 things and a lot of good points. Thank you very
6 much.

7 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
8 Sears has a question.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I have a
10 question for Gary Giordano. Just for
11 clarification because I'm a little confused. If
12 the zip codes were included in this plan, would
13 that mean that Community Board 5 would support
14 this school at this location?

15 GARY GIORDANO: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Mr. Holden?
17 You have to use the microphone. I'm confused as
18 to the position of Community Board 5.

19 GARY GIORDANO: The Community Board
20 5 would be in favor of locating an 1,100-seat high
21 school at this site if it were zoned by something
22 close to those zip codes 11378, 11379, and 11373.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: That's what
24 I've asked. That's what I wanted to know. I was
25 not clear about that.

2 GARY GIORDANO: Within Community
3 School District 24 and then the Community School
4 District itself.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Thank you.

6 ROBERT HOLDEN: There were many
7 more stipulations by the way. That we didn't want
8 a theme school. That some parking be provided and
9 cutouts for the buses and so forth. There was a
10 lot of stipulations other than the zoning. By the
11 way, the executive committee voted against it.
12 Then a friendly amendment came on because people
13 felt that they didn't want to be against a school.
14 So they came up with stipulations, I believe,
15 knowing that this would not be accepted by the
16 Bloomberg administration. So they didn't want to
17 have a negative vote, they wanted to be more
18 positive, but knowing that it wouldn't happen.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Well, what
20 were the stipulations? Could we find that out?

21 GARY GIORDANO: Absolutely. Again,
22 Gary Giordano, District Manager of Community Board
23 5 in Queens. I'll read it verbatim. Therefore be
24 it resolved that Community Board 5 Queens is in
25 favor of building an 1,100-seat high school

2 facility at the proposed site based on the
3 following stipulations only. That the school be
4 priority zoned in the following order of priority.
5 For students and residents of PS 58 zoned area,
6 which is the elementary school near there. For
7 students from those schools in Community School
8 District 24 who live in zip codes 11378, 11379,
9 11373 and 11385. For students in Community School
10 District 24 and for students residing in Queens
11 County. That a pattern of staggered arrival and
12 dismissal times be established to prevent
13 congestion of the high school student population
14 with students from nearby PS 58 and intermediate
15 school 73. That the above referenced high school
16 offer a comprehensive academic program for all
17 students, not a theme-based core curriculum. That
18 the proposed high school facility has a curb
19 cutout for buses that will likely be transporting
20 some students each day to and from the school.
21 That resolution passed 33 in favor, 7 opposed, no
22 abstentions.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Do high
24 school students get transported by bus?

25 GARY GIORDANO: The special

2 education students to some extent may be. So it's
3 smaller buses and more of them usually.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: So the high
5 school also has special ed in it which would need
6 those school buses.

7 GARY GIORDANO: There would be 100
8 students of what they call District 75 students
9 projected to attend the school.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I see.
11 Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
13 Arroyo?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: I'm going
15 to make a statement and I hope that everyone that
16 comes after understands. What you've just
17 described in terms of oversaturation and
18 congestion can represent any district and any
19 community in this city. When I consider my
20 experience in my district, I have 11,000 high
21 school seats sited within a one-mile radius. I
22 have very little sympathy for what you're saying
23 here about oversaturation and congestion. So
24 please be mindful of that. We all represent
25 communities that have very similar issues and very

2 similar concerns and have to deal with those
3 challenges on a daily basis.

4 ROBERT HOLDEN: Do you have trains
5 going to your neighborhood?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: In some
7 cases the transportation situation is very
8 similar. So my point is that the subject of
9 oversaturation and congestion is a reality that we
10 all have to deal with in our individual districts.

11 ROBERT HOLDEN: This is within two
12 blocks though. I want you to understand that.
13 This is not within a mile. This is two blocks.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: And you're
15 talking about 3,000 and I'm talking 11,000.

16 ROBERT HOLDEN: We're talking about
17 4,500.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: I don't
19 want to debate the issue. I just want to bring
20 that up as a very important point that this is not
21 specific to the community that we're here
22 discussing today.

23 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
24 Crowley has a question.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: To address

2 the other concerns that Community Board 5 raised
3 in their resolution. Those were brought to the
4 Department of Education. They were amenable to
5 working with the Department of Transportation.
6 The Department of Education was amenable to
7 building a cutout to help for bus dropoffs. When
8 it came to the based education, the core
9 curriculum of every high school level education,
10 whether it be themed or non-themed, covers the
11 basic needs that every student in New York City
12 will have to get in less than four years with at
13 minimum a Regents diploma. That is good. That
14 meets our concerns. However, they still haven't
15 met the concerns of a locally based priority here.
16 I'd like to thank you all for coming and everybody
17 here in the audience, which I didn't have an
18 opportunity to do earlier. I understand that we
19 have a lot of commitments in our lives and I
20 appreciate you taking the time out to be here
21 today on such an important issue. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I made a
23 commitment to meet with the Commissioner for
24 Economic Development at 2:45 in my office. I'm
25 already late. Thank you panel for being here.

2 Joann Burga [phonetic], and Marge Kolb.

3 MARGE KOLB: Joann Burga had to
4 leave. You have her written statement. It was
5 handed out.

6 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Are you Ms.
7 Kolb?

8 MARGE KOLB: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: You can start
10 whenever you're ready.

11 MARGE KOLB: Can he hand those out
12 before my time starts?

13 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: No. We can
14 listen and read. Go ahead.

15 MARGE KOLB: I'm referring to the
16 document.

17 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Go ahead.

18 MARGE KOLB: I feel like I'm on
19 that game show 1 versus 100, so I'm sorry if I'm a
20 little nervous. I'm a parent. I support this
21 high school. We need high school seats in Queens.
22 My name is Marge Kolb. I'm the president of the
23 District 24 President's Council, which is the
24 association of all the PTAs in District 24. We
25 have about 36,000 students in grades k to 8 in our

34 primary middle schools. I think we're the third largest district in the city. So I do support the priority zoning for District 24. I think there's good reasons for it. As Councilwoman Crowley alluded to, she said there's about 4,500 eighth graders that graduate every year. So that would be 18,000 high school students. Our district has 13,000 high school seats right now. Three of those high schools are specialized high schools, like Aviation and Technical School and the New Elmhurst Complex which has a transfer school and some other specialized schools. So as far as large comprehensive high schools we really only have two. If you look at my handout, on the middle page, there's a map of the district that's surrounded in the black line. You can see number 1 that I labeled is Grover Cleveland. Number one is this proposed site. Number three is Newtown. So you can see that this proposed site is ideally situated. It's central in the district. It's central between the other two big large comprehensive high schools. I know the transportation is an issue, but if you do give

2 District 24 priority we can fill up this school
3 and the kids can either walk or take one or two
4 buses. I just say again that we need this high
5 school. This site was recommended to the SCA by
6 parents with children at PS 58 which is down the
7 block. It's been discussed at the Community
8 Education Council for several years. I've spoken
9 to hundreds of parents in the past few months and
10 all but two individuals were in support of this
11 school. So please realize that parents can't take
12 five or six hours out of their day to come wait at
13 a hearing like this. Parents are picking up kids
14 at 2:00. 2:30 from school. Parents have younger
15 kids. Families have two working parents. So
16 there's thousands of parents with me here in this
17 room. If you look on the last page, there's a
18 resolution that was approved by the President's
19 Council. It's signed by 12 PTA presidents
20 representing over 10,000 children and parents that
21 they support this site, they support the District
22 24 priority zone. I just want to go quickly to
23 the first page which shows the actual site is
24 marked in three. Two is the elementary school
25 down the block which has about 1,000 kids. Four

2 is the storage facility. Five is a new park
3 that's going in. The LIE is there to the south.
4 From the point of three going to your right, there
5 is no houses along 57th Avenue. There's plenty of
6 parking spaces near the park and on the other side
7 by the LIE. So I know everyone else is going to
8 tell you that's not the case, but it is the case.
9 And in fact, at number one is the Stop & Shop with
10 parking on the roof and there's hundreds of spots
11 available there that I'm sure the UFT chapter
12 leader could try to make a deal with the Stop &
13 Shop. I just have to tell you that we need to
14 think about the kids in all this. We need high
15 schools in Queens. We need a high school in
16 District 24. As I said, we have at least 18,000
17 high school age kids and only 13,000 seats. This
18 is a good site. The other two schools in the are
19 have a combined enrollment of 2,700. The middle
20 school is a quarter mile away. I Map Quested it.
21 It is. It's a quarter mile away. There's high
22 schools with 4,000 kids in one building in one
23 neighborhood. Forest Hills, surrounded by million
24 dollar homes, so a high school is not a detriment
25 to a community, it's an asset.

2 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you, Ms.
3 Kolb. The only reason I let her go long is she's
4 only person who is testifying in favor. Everyone
5 else testifying from here on is in opposition.
6 Thank you for being here today.

7 MARGE KOLB: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
9 Jackson?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I want to
11 thank you for coming in, even though you're not on
12 a game show. If in fact you're the only one
13 testifying in favor of it, it's appropriate then
14 to ask you questions I guess more so than those
15 that are opposed because those that are opposed
16 will bring everything out. You said that you're
17 the president of the President's Council. All of
18 the presidents of the various schools in District
19 24.

20 MARGE KOLB: Twelve signed it out
21 of 34.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: 12 out of
23 34?

24 MARGE KOLB: But some of them
25 aren't from the area. Like PS 49 is in Middle

2 Village and PS 12 is in Woodside.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: If only 12
4 in District 24 signed it, does that mean that the
5 others opposed it?

6 MARGE KOLB: No. This was at a
7 meeting that we had this week. There was 1
8 opposed and 12 in favor. That's all that was
9 there.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Of the 13
11 PA presidents, 12 out of 13 were in favor of this
12 high school.

13 MARGE KOLB: Yes. And 229 is on
14 the border of Maspeth in Woodside.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: But all of
16 these other schools that the individuals had
17 signed, they're within the confines of Community
18 Education Council 24.

19 MARGE KOLB: Yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: You
21 indicated that you and the CEC were in favor of
22 this school being sited here with the stipulations
23 that are trying to be obtained as far as
24 priorities.

25 MARGE KOLB: No, that's not what I

2 said. I said that the recommendation of this site
3 came from parents in the neighborhood that went to
4 the CEC. The CEC forwarded the site to SCA. This
5 is going back two years ago. Now this idea of
6 this local zone has only come up in the past six
7 or nine months. I'm not in favor of that. I
8 would be satisfied with the District 24 priority
9 and so would all of these presidents that signed
10 this.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So just
12 overall priority within District 24.

13 MARGE KOLB: Right. As I said, if
14 you look at the center page, you can see how
15 centrally located the site is within the district.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Compared
17 to the other high schools. You have number 2, 3,
18 and 4.

19 MARGE KOLB: Four is not even in
20 our district, but it's a new school under
21 construction. We're supposed to get 500 seats.
22 That would serve children down in the south part.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I see
24 where the line is. It's not too far from the
25 District 24.

2 MARGE KOLB: Right.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: That's a
4 clarification I wanted to have. Thank you for
5 coming in. I appreciate it very much. Thank you,
6 Mr. Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
8 Crowley, did you have a question?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you,
10 Mr. Chair. Marge, with all due respect, do you
11 live in the Council District that I represent?

12 MARGE KOLB: No, but I'm not lucky
13 enough to have my Council Member on the Land Use
14 Subcommittee either.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: If you
16 look at these numbers that you have on the map for
17 schools and you look at 2, 3, and 4, do they have
18 a locally zoned program?

19 MARGE KOLB: There was a time when
20 I understand that I was in the area for Grover
21 Cleveland and that if I had applied there my kids
22 would have been automatically admitted. I live
23 actually a block from Queens Boulevard and you can
24 see where Grover Cleveland is on the map. At some
25 point under this current mayor and chancellor they

2 changed the whole high school application process
3 and I don't even know if there's such a thing as a
4 locally zoned preference for a high school
5 anymore.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: There is.
7 Two, three and four. Four, which hasn't even
8 opened its doors is a locally zoned high school.

9 MARGE KOLB: Well they're both
10 overcrowded.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Four
12 hasn't opened.

13 MARGE KOLB: No, but two and three
14 are overcrowded by almost 1,000 students.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Wouldn't
16 it make sense then for the kids who live around
17 where you have the number one to have a preference
18 if they're already zoned for overcrowded schools?

19 MARGE KOLB: Here's my thing. I
20 have a 19-year-old, so I know lots of kids that
21 went to high school. For years kids from Maspeth
22 and Southern Woodside and Elmhurst have traveling
23 far to go to high schools in other communities.
24 My son's friend went to Long Island City which is
25 over capacity by 816. We knew a kid that went to

Francis Lewis from Maspeth, which is over by almost 1,900 students. People didn't stand in those neighborhoods and say we don't want your kids coming to our school. This is our neighborhood school. That's what I object to. I'll just give you an example. I'm not doing this for my kid. My kid's applying to high school in Astoria and I hope he gets in and I hope nobody stands in front of the school and says you can't come. But I live closer to this site than some of the people in the most northern part of Elmhurst that would get a secondary priority under some of the plans that have been mentioned. My zip code in Maspeth is getting the next to final priority. But as I said, I sent one of my kids to high school in Manhattan. Kids can travel to go to high school. Grand Avenue is a two-way street but it's very wide. There's buses that go up and down it. You can hear how rude the people are. That's how they've been at the meetings. Calling our children animals. It's been written in the paper. They don't want a high school under any circumstance. I've also heard them say we don't want kids coming in from other neighborhoods. To

1
2 me that means something and that has resonance.
3 It bugs me because I grew up in Brooklyn and when
4 I went to sixth grade I was the only white kid in
5 my class and it wasn't a problem for me. We
6 should be mixing up our kids more. Some of our
7 schools are so segregated that it horrifies me in
8 this day and age. There's schools in Corona that
9 are 98% Hispanic. That's not right. Our schools
10 should be integrated than they are. And at the
11 high school level when children can travel, they
12 should especially be open to as broad a range of
13 kids as possible.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I'd just
15 like to clarify what was said earlier in reference
16 to PS 58 and the school diversity. Approximately
17 one-third white, less than that of the
18 demographics of the city. Approximately one-third
19 Latino and one-third Asian American.

20 MARGE KOLB: Well, I've heard
21 people talk about immigrants. The fact is that
22 Corona has a lot more new immigrants than Maspeth.
23 The Hispanics in Maspeth are second or third
24 generation and they're more acceptable. Let's be
25 honest. I'm telling you.

2 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Quiet please.

3 MARGE KOLB: I live in this
4 community and I know how some people think. Now
5 I'm not going to paint it with a broad brush and
6 say that's the way everyone thinks. But the fact
7 is that I have heard people denigrate Corona and I
8 have visited the schools there and the parents are
9 involved and the kids are doing well considering
10 that in some schools 50% are English language
11 learners. Those were the kids that some of these
12 same people did not want to build PS 58 down the
13 block. I was here eight years ago fighting to get
14 PS 58 built. They talked about the kids being
15 bused in to elementary school and the kids from
16 Corona coming to their elementary school in
17 Maspeth. I'm sorry that I see that way, but
18 that's how some people think. You have to judge
19 for yourself when you see all these speakers. How
20 many of them do you think have school age children
21 and whether schooling is an issue to them. And I
22 pay taxes too.

23 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Quiet please.

24 MARGE KOLB: I know there's not
25 supposed to be backtalk. I've lived in Woodside

1
2 for 18 years and I pay taxes and so do my
3 neighbors who have children. We deserve a shot at
4 a local high school too. This site is closer to
5 me than any other school but I wouldn't get into
6 it if you just draw a little circle around it and
7 only have it for the children in Maspeth.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Just in
9 closing, I didn't mention this earlier, but I have
10 two sons that are rapidly approaching high school
11 age. I live right near where this number four and
12 they're likely going to go to that high school
13 once it opens its doors. So I'm more concerned
14 about the people I represent in and around the one
15 area. I've said to the School Construction
16 Authority and the Department of Education you can
17 make a priority zone which includes those that
18 live across the street and down the block and also
19 give opportunity to those that live throughout the
20 district.

21 MARGE KOLB: Well the CEC
22 originally wanted to give priority to the
23 neighborhoods of Maspeth, Middle Village and
24 Glendale. And I said to them, "Do you know that
25 Elmhurst is a half a block from this site and

2 Glendale is a couple of mile from this site." So
3 it really did make me wonder about what their
4 priorities were in zoning this high school.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Any
6 priority zone that I brought to the School
7 Construction Authority/DOE was a zone that
8 included 11373. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you, Ms.
10 Kolb for being here. I appreciate your time and
11 you sharing the information that you wanted to
12 share.

13 MARGE KOLB: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: The next panel
15 is Rosemary DiRao [phonetic], Joyce Beaudoin,
16 Lorraine Sciulli, and Christina Wilkinson.

17 ROSEMARY DIRAO: Shall I start?
18 Good afternoon members of the Council. I had a
19 speech prepared but obviously I'm going to have to
20 change that based on comments that I heard today,
21 both by the Board Education, the SCA and obviously
22 a representative of the parents. Number one, the
23 School Construction said that this site was
24 proposed by the residents of Maspeth. It was not
25 proposed by the residents of Maspeth. It was

1 proposed by the Community Education Council.

2 Whatever that is, I don't know. But it's based of

3 parents throughout the area, not just the

4 residents of Maspeth. Number two, and I have to

5 stress this, Community Board five is not easily

6 accessible to travel. When the Board of Education

7 had hearings about the school and the school site

8 they had hearings over in Ridgewood. They had

9 hearings in Middle Village. The people from

10 Maspeth by the proposed site could not get there.

11 You have seniors who don't drive at night. I

12 don't have a car. The hearings were totally

13 inaccessible for the people who live there. That

14 much sure that it was impossible for us to get

15 there. When they did the eminent domain hearing,

16 the hearing was held in our community but held at

17 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Most of the people in

18 my community work for a living. They couldn't go

19 to the hearing. So it was unfair for both sides.

20 That's another issue. The next issue is that we

21 were never in favor of prioritized zoning. That's

22 the parents from this Council. We never asked for

23 it. The issue is the siting. It's not who goes

24 to the school, it's where the school is located.

1 I have to make that very clear. The site of the
2 school, by the way Helen, is just like IS 5 and PS
3 7, the same kind of situation. It is an
4 industrial area but it's not a bad industrial
5 area, as is Saint Saviour's. It's the same kind
6 of siting. Also, the traffic from PS 58. The
7 School Construction Authority said they were going
8 to work with the community and make it safe
9 because Grand Avenue gets more than 5,000 trucks a
10 day. They never put a cutout there. Now Grand
11 Avenue is closed down to one lane of traffic when
12 school is let out. It's so congested they had to
13 stagger the hours of the dismissals from PS 58 and
14 IS 73 because the parents from 58 were
15 complaining. As a result, seniors who want to
16 shop on the avenue can't go shopping on the avenue
17 for half the afternoon because now we have
18 staggered hours of dismissal. Is that fair to the
19 merchants or the residents? I don't think so. I
20 don't think the location and the community doesn't
21 think the location is good because there's two
22 schools right there. For IS 73, they even have
23 after school programs. Kids are getting on that
24 bus, the Q58, and Helen I know you know it well,
25

1
2 at 7 o'clock at night. You could look at that bus
3 at 2 o'clock in the morning and there's standing
4 room only. I agree people should go to school
5 everywhere. We have a high school in Maspeth and
6 it's called Martin Luther High School. It's a
7 private school but kids from all over the city get
8 there. And I'm going to tell you, it's not an
9 easy trek to get there at all. I agree with the
10 fact that we're on a local stop on the subway.
11 We're at least a bus ride away. It's not
12 centrally located. I just feel that it's going to
13 be too congested putting that many children
14 together. I'm not going to say that they're
15 beasts or what everyone said. But when you put a
16 whole group of kids together that's when trouble
17 starts. Kids get run over by cars double parking.
18 It's happened in other cases and I really don't
19 want it happening here. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I just want to
21 tell the photographer. This meeting started late.
22 I was just apologizing to the Commissioner for the
23 Economic Development Corp. You decide to take a
24 picture of me when I'm apologizing for a meeting
25 that I missed because I'm chairing a hearing I'm

2 not supposed to chair. I'm going to ask you to
3 delete the picture. If you use the picture,
4 you're going to use it illegally. Because I'm
5 telling you I'm hear chairing this meeting. I'm
6 not the chair of this meeting. I came in today
7 and found out I had to chair the meeting. I had a
8 Commissioner for Economic Development upstairs
9 waiting for a meeting. I've been here all day. I
10 haven't left since this hearing. You take a
11 picture while I'm on the phone. The one time I
12 use the phone. That's not right. Delete the
13 picture. Delete the picture.

14 MALE VOICE: [off mic] With all
15 due respect you should leave the room if you have
16 to.

17 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Delete the
18 picture. I'm trying to chair the hearing and do
19 three things at once. I didn't want to step out
20 of the room. I could hear her, but I needed to
21 apologize to someone for a meeting that I'm
22 missing. If you use that picture, you're using it
23 incorrectly. The next person. What paper are you
24 with?

25 MALE VOICE: I'm with the Forum

2 West [phonetic].

3 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I'm going to
4 call your editor later because I think I'm trying
5 to do the right thing for everybody here and you
6 deliberately took that picture the one time I use
7 the phone. I want to make it clear to the
8 audience here. I'm not trying to be disrespectful
9 but I'm missing four meetings that I scheduled
10 today filling in as chair for somebody else. The
11 next person.

12 JOYCE BEAUDOIN: Good afternoon.
13 My name is Joyce Beaudoin and I'm a member of the
14 Juniper Park Civic Association and a resident of
15 Middle Village. I do oppose this school for many
16 reasons. One of them is something that hasn't
17 been brought up. This community is susceptible to
18 flooding. This school would certainly add to the
19 problems of the community. It would overburden
20 it. Transportation has already been noted. I am
21 a senior now and I do find that I cannot go down
22 to this community during school hours in the
23 morning or when the children are released. The
24 traffic is horrendous. I have missed a doctor's
25 appointment because of traffic being so bad. I

2 truly believe that we do need schools but we do
3 need them in a different portion of this District
4 24 where transportation is more accessible for the
5 children. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Please say
7 your name for the record.

8 LORRAINE SCIULLI: Good afternoon
9 ladies and gentleman. My name is Lorraine
10 Sciulli. I'm the Vice President of the Juniper
11 Park Civic Association. I'm also a member of
12 Community Board 5. I was one of the seven who
13 voted against the resolution on Community Board 5
14 when they passed the resolution with the six
15 caveats for permitting the school. I have some
16 prepared testimony and the clock is ticking.
17 First of all, let me state clearly, we know we
18 need to educate our children. It's the choice of
19 school sites that is wreaking havoc on local once
20 quiet neighborhoods like Maspeth. First and
21 foremost, this proposed high school would be the
22 third school built within a three to four block
23 area of Maspeth. That would put roughly 4,000
24 students and faculty on the local streets at
25 arrival and dismissal times. That will have a

1
2 total negative impact on the residents' quality of
3 life. The commercial strip of Grand Avenue would
4 also take a big hit because when there are 4,000
5 kids roaming the streets, nobody is shopping in
6 the stores. The Maspeth Chamber of Commerce is
7 also against the building of this school at this
8 site for that very reason. There is no parking
9 accommodation for faculty and older students. So
10 drivers will roam the streets looking for parking,
11 inevitably blocking homeowners' driveways and
12 creating traffic jams. We were told by the School
13 Construction Authority that they don't factor
14 parking into any school plans, yet we read
15 recently that Fresh Meadows Councilman James
16 Gennaro of Council District 24 managed to get
17 parking accommodations for a school being built in
18 his district. So much for honesty by the School
19 Construction Authority. They lie like rugs. That
20 was recently stated at Community Board 5 meeting
21 on March 11th. There is inadequate transportation
22 to and out of the area because of the LIE to the
23 south and a huge Stop & Shop parking lot to the
24 north. With no drop-off lane accommodations,
25 school buses will prowl the area reeking their own

1 havoc on residents and passersby. Again, making
2 maneuvering in Maspeth a nightmare. The School
3 would put an added burden on 104th Precinct which
4 you haven't heard anything about. It's already
5 overburdened with too little police to do the job
6 right now. Here's an interesting stat. In
7 Maspeth, 70% of the residents do not even have
8 kids in the public school. The surrounding areas
9 have the larger population in need of schools. So
10 commonsense would be why not build the schools in
11 the area where the need is greater rather than
12 overburdening Maspeth with more cars, buses and
13 students. The DOE leads parents in Maspeth to
14 believe that this school will be for their kids
15 when we know that's not the reality. There are no
16 locally zoned schools in District 24 and this
17 proposed school in Maspeth would be no different.
18 It will no doubt be a theme school, thus open to
19 all the kids in New York City and not locally
20 zoned for the children in Maspeth. That begs the
21 question why would the small town of Maspeth with
22 its own fragile infrastructure continue to pack in
23 more schools and students. Parents of school
24 children should do their own homework, get
25

2 themselves educated and get the facts as they
3 exist rather than just listening and being duped
4 by groups like the UFT and the PTA that have their
5 own agenda. I have more but my time is up.

6 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you.
7 The next person?

8 CHRISTINA WILKINSON: My name is
9 Christina Wilkinson. I'm the secretary of the
10 Juniper Park Civic Association. I have been a
11 lifelong Maspeth resident, which is going on 36
12 years now. I'm testifying also against the high
13 school, mainly because of the transportation
14 situation. As you've heard already, the
15 transportation is already overburdened with
16 students expected to commute from all over Queens
17 and perhaps the entire city to attend this school.
18 The Q58 bus line is really the only option they
19 have to get to this site from the subway which is
20 located about a mile away. The Q58 moves an
21 average of 6.9 miles per hour and that is a stat
22 from Transportation Alternatives who measure the
23 slowness of the buses. In fact, I believe for a
24 few years running now, the Q58 is the slowest bus
25 in Queens. The Q58 is actually already packed

1 before it even leaves its first stop at Main
2 Street in Flushing or in Ridgewood. So in either
3 direction it's packed. I've commuted via this bus
4 for my entire life. When you transfer from the
5 subway at Grand Avenue, Newtown, which is how
6 these students will get to the school, you're
7 forced to allow multiple buses to pass because of
8 the extreme overcrowding that occurs on this line
9 at a regular basis at all times of day and night.
10 The line can't handle the passengers that it has
11 now. Imagine adding 1,000 students to that
12 situation, all commuting mostly during rush hours.
13 Many times I have walked home from the subway and
14 beat the bus to my house. That's how slow it is.
15 I live more than a mile away from the subway. I
16 also wanted to go back to the list that you had
17 brought up about what was photographed at the
18 eminent domain hearing. There is a proposed
19 alternate site in Woodside at Northern Boulevard
20 which is right next to the subway. It has express
21 buses and local buses. It would be accessible to
22 kids from all over Queens and from all over the
23 city. Why they would prefer to put it in our
24 community which is not served by subways or
25

2 express buses and really only one viable option
3 for a local bus really boggles the mind. They
4 have it listed that they're still looking at it.
5 That it's a viable option. They listed two other
6 sites which already have schools built on them,
7 but they listed those as possible alternatives
8 which just shows how they do lie to you. They lie
9 to the community. First they didn't want to show
10 us the list. Then when we got the list, it showed
11 all these things that they never brought up. It's
12 really terrible that they would do this; that they
13 would like to us like this and keep these sites
14 from us. They didn't let us know that they exist
15 and then siting it here when there's so much
16 opposition. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you
18 panel. Council Member Sears would like to make a
19 comment.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I just want
21 to make a comment because I know them. I've
22 worked with them for a long time. I really want
23 to thank you for being here. I don't even serve
24 on this subcommittee and I've been here all day.
25 I serve on Land Use, but it's such an important

2 issue. I serve on Zoning and Franchise. I want
3 to thank everybody for really and truly coming
4 here. There are some differences and that's very
5 obvious. I think we're going to need the time to
6 work out those differences. Thank you for being
7 here.

8 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: The next panel
9 is Angelo. Is the name Rinecey or Binecey? I
10 can't read it. Renari? Robert Doocey. John
11 Killcommons. Matt Connelly [phonetic].

12 ANGELO RANARI: My name is Angelo
13 Ranari [phonetic]. I'm a member of the Juniper
14 Park Civic Association and also a resident of
15 Middle Village. We do need a high school. I
16 agree with that. But we need it in an area where
17 it's accessible for every student to get to a high
18 school. We have overcrowding. They're projecting
19 it will cost \$80 million to build this high
20 school. Let's build it where other students have
21 accessibility to get to the school. That's it.
22 Simple.

23 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: How do you
24 spell your name? You're handwriting challenged
25 like I am. The next person?

JOHN KILLCOMMONS: My name is John Killcommons. I'm on the executive board of the Juniper Park Civic Association. I don't want to go into length about what everybody already said, but this is a commonsense issue. I mean if you ever go over there and you see the traffic and what goes on in that area with two schools and with the closing of St. John's Hospital and now our only route to Elmhurst General is down Grand Avenue. Us people that are senior citizens are a little bit concerned about getting out of the area in the morning and at nighttime. The other thing that kind of bothered me, I'm a retired New York City fireman, 32 years. My wife was a retired teacher from IS 73. We've been in the city 75. Born and raised in that area. I got offended by somebody calling me a senior citizen because I feel personally that me and the generation before me are the backbone of that neighborhood. I thought after Barack Obama got elected we got past that racism business. That's the first bit of racism I heard from Councilman Barron since he got elected. And I feel he owes me an apology. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: You haven't
3 been to a lot of meetings.

4 JOHN KILLCOMMONS: I had to get it
5 off my chest.

6 MATT CONNELLY: Good afternoon. My
7 name is Matt Connelly and I represent a small
8 business on Grand Avenue at the epicenter of the
9 two schools that are already built and open to the
10 public. I have unfortunately lost a parking spot
11 or two directly in front of our place of business.
12 I would expect that if another school came to
13 Grand Avenue that more parking spots would also be
14 lost for myself, for the local pizzeria, for the
15 local bagel store, and for the local bakery, which
16 are all at the epicenter of the two existing
17 schools. Unfortunately I'm following some people
18 that have already said the obvious. We do think
19 that Queens certainly does need another school.
20 But the location at hand is certainly not the
21 appropriate location. I invite each and every one
22 of you to come along on Grand Avenue at 2:00,
23 2:15, 2:20, and 2:30 and it is pretty obvious to
24 the public, to the residents, to the business
25 owners and to the citizens of New York that it

1
2 certainly is not needed. Pretty simply put it's
3 trying to put 10 pounds into a 5 pound bag.
4 There's no room for another school. There is a
5 need for a school, however, that location is
6 certainly not the correct location. My last point
7 is the eminent domain. As a business owner, as a
8 property owner, I would hate to think that as hard
9 as we have to work in the businesses because of
10 the locations to be picked by the people of the
11 city that sometime down the road or in the future
12 that somebody might come along and ask me to get
13 out of the place that I worked so hard in and that
14 I'm proud of and that I provide for our family,
15 for our neighbors, and for our residents. If it
16 can happen to the people that own the property
17 down on 74th Street and 57th Avenue, I'm pretty
18 sure it can happen to me and my family as well.
19 I'd like for you to all consider that as another
20 reason to consider a different location than the
21 area that we are talking about today. Thank you
22 very much.

23 ROBERT DOOCEY: My name is Bob
24 Doocey. I live in Middle Village. I'm with the
25 Juniper Park Civic Association. I've lived on my

2 block for 30 some odd years. I lived a few blocks
3 down another five years. So I'm a 35-year
4 resident of Middle Village. I've never met a
5 racist in all my years. And then today I had to
6 take offense by someone calling me a racist who
7 doesn't know anything about my life. That man
8 owes me an apology as well as John. He knows
9 nothing when he makes that remark. But that's the
10 clever use, and it was used by some other person
11 in favor. Ms. Sears, you're from 11373, am I
12 correct?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: It's one of
14 the areas in my district.

15 ROBERT DOOCEY: Am I correct that
16 for years that was known as representative of the
17 world? That every nation and race is represented
18 in there?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: It still is.

20 ROBERT DOOCEY: And I'm proud of
21 that fact. When I chose the neighborhood I was
22 aware of it. I will not be called a racist. I'm
23 not going to read this because you have it. The
24 other thing is that the Department of Education
25 people came here and they took essentially 150%

1 capacity in existing Queens schools. What makes
2 them think that we're to believe that this school
3 won't become 150% capacity too? Probably from the
4 day it opens its doors. They don't know what
5 they're doing and they demonstrate it and they're
6 arrogant about it. Why didn't they come here with
7 a plan B? They knew there was opposition and yet
8 they had nothing. When each of you asked why that
9 site was chosen and other sites were ignored, they
10 had no answer because they don't want an answer.
11 They picked the site several years ago. That's
12 it. Hands on hips, stamp the floor, they're going
13 to have that site. We say no. Matt here invited
14 you all to come to Grand Avenue. That's
15 essentially what I'm doing here with this, is come
16 to this proposed location. Look at the traffic.
17 The kids are fine, but kids age 13, 14, 15 are not
18 really very bright when it comes to traffic. They
19 will run into traffic doing horseplay, throwing
20 snowballs, escaping whatever they escape from.
21 It's a dangerous location. One of the guys said
22 \$80 million, well do you want to pay \$80 to kill a
23 few kids. He said it's a zero sum game and kept
24 on repeating this management phrase. Zero sum is
25

2 when a kid gets run over by a truck because a
3 truck driver can't see them. The neighborhood is
4 filled with trucks.

5 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Robert?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I want to
7 thank you all for coming in and participating in
8 the democratic process because clearly as
9 residents of the community in Queens where you
10 live, you're coming out and speaking your opinions
11 and your thoughts based on your life experience
12 and how you feel about the proposed school siting.
13 That is democracy. So welcome to the City
14 Council. When I was listening to all of you
15 testify a question came to my mind. I truly
16 believe you when you say about the congestion of
17 the traffic there. I've been in that area on a
18 visit here or there when the former Council Member
19 Dennis Gallagher was a Council Member and also one
20 of my great nephews goes to school in District 24
21 and his mother was on the CEC. So I'm a little
22 bit familiar. I'm also familiar that overall in
23 the City of New York for years District 24 has
24 been the most overcrowded district in the City of
25 New York as far as school districts are concerned.

2 I'm aware of that because I was a chair of the
3 Education Committee and so forth and so on. But
4 the question that came to my mind overall is that
5 I don't know how this Subcommittee is going to
6 vote and I'm not on the subcommittee. I'm here
7 because this is a very important issue to Ms.
8 Crowley, my colleague and also it involves
9 education. I guess I ask the question out loud
10 and you can respond or not. It's okay with me. I
11 would love to know your opinion. If the choice
12 was to build this school with the heavy
13 concentration that I believe that it's going to be
14 in tying up traffic and everything or not build
15 the school, what would you prefer? I ask that
16 question to each one of you.

17 ROBERT DOOCEY: I would say don't
18 build a school in that location. There are
19 locations that are safe and could hold more kids.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I ask that
21 question of each one of you, if you don't mind
22 responding. It doesn't have to be a long
23 response.

24 MATT CONNELLY: I certainly agree
25 with Bob. It's not the location for a school,

2 however there is a need for the school just not in
3 that location. Just simply come by, take a look
4 at the bus lines that everybody's talking about.
5 You cannot get on them. If you add 1,500 or 1,100
6 more people to those bus lines, and that's twice a
7 day, it's quite evident that it's not the right
8 place for it.

9 JOHN KILLCOMMONS: It definitely
10 isn't the right place for a school. There are so
11 many other areas. They're going to rip down St.
12 John's Hospital. Let them put a school there.
13 Put a school by Elmwood. There's so many other
14 places to put a school. Commonsense, if you want
15 there, you'd say to yourself you've got to be
16 kidding. That's the way I feel.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Do you
18 have an opinion, sir?

19 ANGELO RANARI: I agree in building
20 a high school, but location is a factor. If we
21 want District 24 or District 27, all these
22 districts to be going to a school, we need to have
23 a high school in the proper location where all
24 children have accessibility to get to the high
25 school.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So in
3 essence what I'm hearing from all of you is that
4 yes, you want a high school but this is not the
5 location because of the concentration and the
6 traffic and everything it would do for the entire
7 community. Is that what I'm hearing?

8 There's no accessibility.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you
11 panel. Thank you for coming and staying. The
12 next panel would be James O'Kane, Carol Anastacian
13 [phonetic], Manuel Caruana, and Linda DiQuaro
14 [phonetic].

15 JAMES O'KANE: Good afternoon,
16 Council Members. My name is Jim O'Kane. I'm the
17 President of Maspeth Chamber of Commerce. In the
18 Maspeth Chamber we have 125 members, local
19 businesspeople and professional people. I grew up
20 in Maspeth. I've lived in Maspeth for 50 years.
21 I've had a business for over 20 years in Maspeth.
22 I went to school locally. I went to IS 73. At
23 that time it was Junior High School 73. And I
24 went to Grover Cleveland High School. With the
25 Maspeth Chamber, they feel that the site proposed

1
2 for the new high school would serve Maspeth
3 business community better if it was kept for
4 commercial use and business use. This
5 commercially zoned property could be developed
6 into a strip shopping center, a staple type store,
7 or middle income housing with retail stores on the
8 first floor. If developed in this manner, new
9 jobs will be created and affordable housing would
10 become available. The tax base would be preserved
11 and most likely increase. If a high school is
12 built, the tax revenue will be lost forever, along
13 with an opportunity to add businesses and jobs to
14 the Maspeth community. There are many areas of
15 concern to address with bringing another school
16 into Maspeth, especially a high school with over
17 1,000 teenagers. Some of these areas of concern
18 are: traffic, which on Grand Avenue is heavily
19 congested now; transportation, people going to
20 work are lucky to get on a bus during rush hour;
21 and parking in Maspeth is a disaster, an absolute
22 disaster. Where are the new 100 or so teachers or
23 support staff going to park their cars? The
24 Department of Education has called this Maspeth
25 site a gold site for a new high school. For them

1 this is mostly a true evaluation. But for the
2 stable middle income, blue collar, low crime
3 community of Maspeth, this bringing of this high
4 school to an already school saturated neighborhood
5 is a potential disaster. Everyone agrees both for
6 and against the school that additional classrooms
7 are needed for an increasing school age
8 population. However, Maspeth has done more than
9 its share in providing sites for schools. This
10 will make three major schools in a four-block
11 radius. It's just too much. The Maspeth Chamber
12 of Commerce would like to propose the now recently
13 closed St. John's Hospital site, which is only a
14 short distance away on Queens Boulevard as an
15 alternate placement for this high school. To us
16 this looks like a platinum site. We are asking
17 you to consider this property and its many
18 advantages. Thank you.

19
20 CAROL ANASTACIAN: My name is Carol
21 Anastacian. I've lived in Middle Village for 32
22 years. I find that building a high school next to
23 an elementary school is a dangerous situation
24 because remember that a lot of high school seniors
25 already are driving and they are inexperienced and

1
2 they're bullying and they try to outdo their
3 friends. They zoom down the streets. Right next
4 to an elementary school is very dangerous and I
5 don't think we should consider anything like that.
6 I also agree here with this gentleman that St.
7 John's is a very good place because the trains all
8 go right there. The buses are there and you have
9 the façade already up. You don't have to spend
10 money building a school. I think that would be
11 the ideal situation. Thank you.

12 MANUEL CARUANA: I'd like to begin
13 by inviting Council Barron to my neighborhood.
14 I'll take him around and introduce him to the
15 diversity that exists in Maspeth. Then maybe,
16 just maybe, he'll be able to get his head out of.
17 I was going to say something else, but I'll say
18 the 1950s. I have Latinos, I have African
19 Americans living on my block. This man has
20 obviously never been to Maspeth. I take great
21 offense at him making the statements that he made.
22 Playing the race card just doesn't go in 2009.
23 Shame on you, Councilman Barron. Now, I'll
24 continue. I have to apologize. I have to read
25 from these prepared notes. I'm sorry. My name is

1
2 Manuel Caruana. I am a member of the Executive
3 Board of Community Board 5. By the way, also the
4 proud grandfather of a Korean grandson. That's
5 for Councilman Barron to know also. The education
6 of our children shouldn't be muddled by special
7 interest groups such as the School Construction
8 Authority and the United Federation of Teachers.
9 We've been lied to by the School Construction
10 Authority in so many instances that it's become a
11 game. We're sensitive to it because they've
12 already messed us up with one school. They
13 promised us the world and delivered nothing. So
14 you'll have to forgive us. We're very upset. We
15 know what's going to happen here. First of all,
16 they started out with this 1,600 number. This
17 1,600 number was put out there to bargain down to
18 1,100 and we knew this all along. That number
19 will be in excess of 2,000 by the time this is
20 done in a community that is crisscrossed by
21 railroads, highways and trains. You just can't
22 get around. Response time by our local precinct
23 is horrendous. That's because they've got to go
24 around cemeteries. They've got to go around
25 railroads. There are going to be night programs

1
2 at the school. They've got to provide police
3 protection for the school. That's going to take
4 patrols off our streets. Now, this is absolutely
5 ridiculous that this is continuing. I'm jumping
6 ahead quite a bit. I'd just like to point out one
7 very important factor. They dumped a lot of money
8 into this proposed high school long before the
9 people who sit on the City Council said yes or no
10 to this place. Thousands and thousands of our
11 taxpayer dollars. What does that tell you about
12 what they think of you? What respect are they
13 giving this Council if they've done this before
14 you say yes or no? Thank you for listening.

15 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: The next
16 person?

17 LINDA DIQUARO: Hi. My name is
18 Linda DiQuaro. I am a homeowner plus a resident
19 of Maspeth. I'm not part of any civic groups.
20 I'm just a single mom trying to raise two boys.
21 Several years back I was a parent that opposed PS
22 58. I went around and got signatures opposing the
23 site and that woman that sat here, Marge, she was
24 for the school. She was with the Teacher's Union.
25 She had Claire Schulman walk in, demanding that

1 she was going to use eminent domain and take what
2 other site she wanted. I wasn't able to speak. I
3 was the last speak. Most of the Council had
4 already left. I was appalled. They got the
5 school. Everything the School Authority promised
6 our community was a lie. They said there'd be
7 cutouts that the buses could pull in and then pull
8 out and that it would not interfere with Grand
9 Avenue and 57th Avenue. On 57th Avenue we have
10 triple parking now with parents dropping off their
11 kids at 7:30 in the morning for the free
12 breakfast. Grand Avenue is a mess with all the
13 school buses plus the parents dropping the kids
14 off. They're not supposed to be in those spots.
15 They stop traffic on both sides because once that
16 little sign goes out to stop, you cannot move your
17 car. It's against the law. My son is going to
18 high school next year. He will get on a bus and
19 travel two busses to get to Molloy. That was his
20 choice and as a parent I'm going to pay for it.
21 That's my choice in life. He did go for public
22 schools. He was accepted at Aviation High School
23 but he chose that he'd rather go to Molloy. So
24 again, it's my responsibility to send him there.
25

1 This woman said that she pays taxes, she pays
2 towards the school tax. That's not true. She
3 lives in the Big Six. She does not own any
4 property and pay into school tax. She sat here
5 and lied saying that the community wants the
6 school. That's not true. We don't want this
7 school. The majority does not want this school.
8 I ask you please to come to Maspeth at 7:30 in the
9 morning. I'll put out coffee and I'll have
10 muffins for you. Walk up to the corner where I
11 live. I live right around the corner from 58.
12 You will see the teachers cutting through the
13 Laundromat illegally, almost hitting me and my son
14 when he attended 58. I asked the teacher what
15 they were doing. It's stated right there do not
16 make a left-hand turn and do not enter. She said
17 she was sorry. So if you would have ran me over
18 with my son, you'd be saying sorry to my husband.
19 I called up the school principal on it. The
20 teachers fly up the street because they want that
21 perfect spot because they do not want to walk.
22 Gary from Community Board 5 said there was plenty
23 of parking down on the other end of 74th Street.
24 Absolutely not. It is already flooded with the
25

2 teachers from 58 and 73. We do not have the
3 parking and it's laughable that they keep saying
4 Stop & Shop. Stop & Shop does not want the
5 teachers. They didn't want it when 58 was built.
6 They don't want it for the high school. So I
7 think everyone should stop lying. You're not a
8 taxpayer. You're for this school. It's laughable
9 because Marge's kid won't even be entitled to go
10 to the school. So why are you pushing something
11 in our community that we don't want? That's all I
12 have to say.

13 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you.

14 What's the Big Six?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: It's a
16 Mitchell-Lama housing complex on Queens Boulevard.

17 JAMES O'KANE: It's basically a
18 closed gated community.

19 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you.

20 Thank you panel for being here. The last panel is
21 Rosalie Greer [phonetic], Theresa Riley and Deiter
22 Keppler. Was there anyone else that wanted to
23 speak that didn't fill out a card?

24 ROSALIE GREER: I'm here to
25 represent my father, Larry Forgioni [phonetic].

1
2 I'm Rosalie Greer. I guess we've lived in Maspeth
3 the longest, 58 years. I was three when we moved
4 there. I went to 73, I went to 102 and I went to
5 Grover Cleveland. We live directly behind PS 58.
6 When PS 58 was built I was for it. What a
7 mistake. But I have to live with it because it's
8 my car locked in my driveway. My car on the
9 street where I can't get out. When I did work, I
10 couldn't get to work on time. My company was very
11 understanding about that. Let me see, Verizon
12 does not allow lateness. Teachers would block my
13 driveway. I had to go into the school several
14 times and get them to come out so I could get my
15 car out. But that's my problem. That's something
16 the City Council is not going to worry about.
17 Everybody else said basically what I would like to
18 say. So it's no sense going over it. My father
19 is a community leader. A lot of people here would
20 know Larry Forgioni. He's in every organization
21 fighting for the area and for America. He's
22 always been a firm American even though he came
23 from Italy. Our house has two front doors. One
24 is a one-family. The other side he rents to three
25 families. I was very offended by Councilman

1
2 Barron. Very offended. One couple live in our
3 house with their children, racially mixed, 14
4 years. My father does not go through a realty.
5 He only rents to people who he likes. Another
6 couple, 4 years, from Ecuador. They barely speak
7 English, but their daughter does all their
8 translating. He picked them to live there. So to
9 call my father a racist and my family racist, I'm
10 offended. Yes, we all have our differences of
11 opinion. But that was offensive. He gave me a
12 letter to read and I'm so upset I didn't read it.
13 I'm Larry Forgioni. He lives in Maspeth behind
14 58. He's 95-years-old and still active and dances
15 all night and comes home on the subway from
16 Manhattan, Lincoln Center at midnight by himself.

17 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: God bless him.
18 That was us, Nick. That was us.

19 ROSALIE GREER: He says three
20 schools within a four block area is imposing a
21 hardship on those of us who live within the area.
22 It's a lot of confusion with two schools and so
23 many attending schools and so many buses
24 transporting there and no parking spaces for
25 parking cars. He wants to know what's going to

1
2 happen when there's another school. It'll be more
3 dangerous. He would have been here today but
4 there was a problem in one of the apartments and
5 he had to be there so he wrote me a letter. But
6 that's basically what he says. I'm glad to see so
7 many of you listening the whole time. I thank you
8 for at least giving us this chance. Say hello to
9 your mother.

10 THERESA RILEY: Hi, I'm Theresa
11 Riley. I'm on the Juniper Civic Board. I'm not
12 opposed to a high school. I would love to see it,
13 but not in that area. There's too much
14 congestion. It wouldn't make it. I couldn't
15 drive in that area now and you can't walk in that
16 area. For the woman that said we were senior
17 citizens, we have grandchildren, so we do care
18 about our children. I am also offended by that
19 man that pulled the race card. That's it. Thank
20 you.

21 DEITER KEPPLER: Good afternoon.
22 Thank you very much for inviting us all here. My
23 name is Deiter Keppler. I'm also a member of the
24 Juniper Park Civic Association. I've lived in
25 Middle Village for 16 years on 76th Street. I

2 just want to mention very briefly that I'm not a
3 racist. Like I said, I've been here 16 years and
4 my son right now is fighting in Iraq for America.
5 I just wanted to mention that. I am very opposed
6 to this school here mainly because of the traffic
7 and the location where it is. I'm a senior, like
8 you can see. They mentioned that it was two acres
9 for the school. This is a very little place.
10 Where are kids going to play, I have no idea. The
11 subway is over a mile away. There is no express
12 train. Everybody knows the buses are really
13 overcrowded. As a senior, I've got to tell you,
14 between 1 and 3, I'm not going out in the street
15 anymore. That's all I have to say. Thank you
16 very much.

17 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Thank you.

18 That's the last panel. I want to thank everyone
19 that came today. Council Member Crowley, I know
20 someone you can honor during men's day, Mr.
21 Forgioni. I want to thank the panel for being
22 here today. Council Member Jackson wants to make
23 a statement.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chair. Let me thank you as the acting chair

1
2 of this Subcommittee on Landmarks, Siting and
3 Maritime Uses. Thank you for pitching in on
4 behalf of our colleague from Manhattan, Jessica
5 Lappin. Obviously you have stayed the course in
6 order to make sure that everyone had the
7 opportunity to be heard. I am so happy that
8 during part of this Subcommittee hearing that I
9 had the opportunity to listen to what people had
10 to say. Unfortunately I was here when our
11 colleague, Council Member Barron, spoke his
12 opinions which obviously offended many people in
13 the audience. As you have said, Mr. Chair, if
14 someone said this is the first time they've heard
15 him make disparaging remarks about race and other
16 people, this is not the first time. I say to all
17 of you that as a member of Land Use and as a
18 member of the City Council and as the Chair of the
19 Education Committee, as a Co-chair of the Black,
20 Latino and Asian Caucus, which 25 members of the
21 City Council out of 51 are members of the Black,
22 Latino and Asian Caucus, I respect your community.
23 I respect your opinions. I appreciate the fact
24 that all of you have taken time out of your personal
25 lives in order to come represent yourselves as

1 individuals, your civic and community
2 organizations and/or CEC whether or not there was
3 one individual favor or not. This is democracy in
4 action. So you are a witness and a part of that.
5 I don't know how this vote is going to go. But I
6 say though that is has been a spirited discussion.
7 Clearly what has come out and I truly believe
8 everything that you're saying because you live
9 there. That if in fact that school is built there
10 it will be a traffic nightmare. That is already a
11 nightmare during certain periods of the day but it
12 will be even worse. Fortunately you have a
13 Council Member here that's representing you. I
14 know that she's going to try to do her best to
15 represent you and the community overall. I am
16 hoping that somehow we could reach a compromise on
17 this particular matter. But if not, let the chips
18 fall where they may, knowing that everyone has had
19 the opportunity to be heard and to weigh in on
20 this subject. Let me thank you, all of the
21 members of the public, for coming in. Leroy
22 Comrie, as the acting Chair, let me thank you for
23 pitching in for our colleague Jessica Lappin.
24

25 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: We've got a

2 lot of members that want to make closing
3 statements. Council Member Crowley, then Council
4 Member Arroyo, then Council Member Sears and then
5 maybe you guys will let me say a word sometime
6 today.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Chair,
8 you've done a great job today and I thank you very
9 much. I appreciate, Robert, your remarks and my
10 fellow colleagues, Carmen Arroyo and Helen Sears
11 and those that were here earlier. Your concerns
12 are real concerns. I share your concerns. My
13 father was born in a house in Maspeth over 76
14 years ago. My family has been a part of the
15 community ever since. My parents bought me my
16 first bike on Grand Avenue. I know it is a
17 vibrant business district and it needs to stay
18 that way. Along with Tony Nunziato earlier today,
19 I'm working with the Department of Transportation
20 to try to eliminate the number of buses that come
21 down Grand Avenue in support of the Maspeth bypass
22 plan. I also have brought the concerns about
23 transportation to the Department of Education.
24 I'm hoping that they understand those concerns and
25 that they work with us to find solutions. Earlier

2 one of the speakers suggested the site at St.
3 John's, the former hospital on Queens Boulevard.
4 Unfortunately we saw that hospital close only a
5 few weeks ago and the state not step in like we
6 would have liked them to do. But it is our hope
7 as a body and those here that represent parts of
8 Queens that one day soon a new hospital will be at
9 that location. So that is what I'm going to
10 support for the future of that location. I really
11 appreciate everybody coming out today. I will
12 work with you to try to find the best solution
13 here. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: Council Member
15 Arroyo and then Council Member Sears.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chair. I'll be brief. I just want to echo my
18 earlier comments with regards to the concerns and
19 how hard Council Member Crowley has engaged us in
20 a discussion around her concerns which represent
21 the community. I think what's important that in
22 our positions we are often called upon to make
23 some tough choices and to balance out competing
24 values and that we do so very deliberately and
25 very carefully. Certainly from my perspective,

2 always trying to get a win/win where it is
3 possible. My commitment to work with my colleague
4 in her work for her community goes without
5 question. But you cannot walk out of here not
6 knowing how hard she has worked this issue with
7 us. She deserves a lot of credit to do that given
8 that you can count the number of weeks that she
9 has been in office. Liz, congratulations. My
10 commitment to work with you on trying to get us
11 through this process and be mindful as a community
12 with regards to how hard she has worked in trying
13 to get her community's issues addressed in a
14 manner that makes sense under the circumstances
15 that we're dealing with.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEWART: Council
17 Member Sears?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Thank you,
19 Mr. Chair. First I want to thank you because you
20 really have outdone yourself. You have the
21 patience of Job. I'm not so certain if you knew
22 that issue was rather stormy and the difference of
23 opinions.

24 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I knew it was
25 going to be stormy.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: First, I
3 want to say that I have known the community of
4 Maspeth for many years. I don't think I have ever
5 known them to discriminate and to be racist. So I
6 think that that has to be said. You know, we have
7 to be very careful because we can have differences
8 of opinions but we have to be careful that we
9 don't label people. I think that from here where
10 we sit as members of the Council we have to be
11 very certain that we don't. Some may have some of
12 their own opinions, but the fact of the matter is
13 I don't think there is any community in western
14 Queens that we can call as a segregated area.
15 It's the most diverse portion of the country. I
16 really want to thank each and every one of you for
17 being here because you've stayed a long time.
18 You've expressed how you feel. We also have to be
19 careful that when people care about their
20 communities and are prepared to sit here all
21 afternoon that we don't label it except that they
22 care about the growth of their community, how they
23 sustain it and that New York City is a city of
24 communities and that's very unique anywhere in the
25 world. It's a city of communities. We have to be

1 careful that we don't label people because they
2 are fighting for their communities. I think, as
3 our colleague Jackson said, we're 51 members in
4 this Council. We have 51 members of different
5 religions, different ethnic groups, different
6 colors of skin. We also have different opinions.
7 I shouldn't say opinions; we all interpret things
8 in a way that is reasonable and rationale to those
9 who are doing it. It's not easy. Councilwoman
10 Crowley needs to bridge that gap and she's been
11 doing it. That means that in bridging that gap
12 and bringing 51 members together is not an easy
13 task. We represent the entire City of New York.
14 When we sit in these seats we're representing our
15 districts but at the same time we represent the
16 city as a whole. So hopefully in the timeframe
17 that we have, we'll be able to work out some of
18 the differences and at least come to some
19 compatible agreement. It may not be to
20 everybody's choosing and I think you have to know
21 that. But it certainly will be something that I
22 hope that is acceptable to everybody. In a city
23 like New York City sometimes we have to just bend
24 a little bit into what is right. We consider
25

1
2 traffic, we consider the closeness,
3 overcrowdedness, and we have to take all that into
4 consideration. So thank you very much for being
5 here.

6 CHAIRPERSON COMRIE: I want to
7 thank all of you for coming to the hearing and
8 expressing your opinions. I want to thank the
9 staff for getting me up to speed on the nuances,
10 although I knew the general issue. Because
11 Councilwoman Crowley has been talking to me about
12 this project almost since the day after she got
13 elected. This is an issue that she has taken on
14 that she embraced right away. She knew it was a
15 critical issue for her community and it's
16 something I have to agree with Councilwoman
17 Arroyo, she has championed and has gotten some
18 unprecedented givebacks from the city and DOE
19 already. You've heard from the DOE about their
20 reluctance to do local zoning. I am a parent of
21 two children in public school. I have a 14-year-
22 old that just started high school. She doesn't
23 like her high school. She wants to transfer
24 because her high school is not focused on what she
25 thought it would be. I have an 11-year-old that's

1
2 in junior high school that's looking for a high
3 school. I have to tell you that representing
4 Southeast Queens where most of the kids that don't
5 like their zoned high schools that are stuck want
6 other options. It's difficult for me to deal with
7 the policy of zoned high schools and locally zoned
8 high schools. That's a difficult issue for me
9 because it's an unfair burden on my community.
10 It's an unfair burden on the children of Queens to
11 have to deal with choices that they don't want as
12 opposed to being able to have true choice. It's
13 an unfair burden on children that want to be able
14 to have an equal educational experience to be
15 forced to pick a school in an area that truly does
16 not have all the facilities or capabilities to
17 provide them with the education they want. I have
18 to say, I've heard the testimony from everyone
19 today. I think it was some very compelling
20 testimony regarding the issues of traffic,
21 regarding the issues of the buses, the fact that
22 there is no subway or express bus in that area.
23 There are issues of transportation and access.
24 There are issues of flooding. There are other
25 sites that would be even more acceptable for the

1 community, which we could put a larger school on,
2 which would be my preference. Because I don't
3 understand building an 1,100 seat school anyway
4 when we're under capacity in the borough. It
5 gives me a lot to think about. I think that we
6 have to sit back and take some good looks at this
7 situation. I think that Council Member Crowley
8 has been a real active voice and a real
9 participant in this process. I think it gives the
10 Committee a lot to talk about over the next day
11 and a half while we think about what we need to
12 do. Turning down a high school application you
13 are putting the Department of Education in
14 probably a two-year freefall to find another site,
15 according to them. But I don't believe that that
16 could happen in this case since we have other
17 sites. So I'm just trying to lay out the whole
18 opinion from everything that I've heard
19 articulated. I think that you should all be proud
20 of yourselves for coming down and articulating
21 your positions passionately. I think that you
22 should be proud of Council Member Crowley for
23 trying to do this in a compassionate and
24 articulate way and trying to solve all of the
25

1 needs of a very diverse and a very articulate
2 community. I'm kind of upset because I've never
3 been invited to Juniper Park Civic Association for
4 a meeting yet. I keep seeing these fancy
5 newsletters and everything else. I'm going to
6 have to come there one day. I have relatives
7 actually that live in Maspeth and live in
8 Glendale. I don't visit them enough. But that's
9 because I'm busy serving my community. They
10 fortunately tolerate that I don't visit them that
11 often. I have to tell you that I've been on Grand
12 Avenue many times. I understand the congestion
13 issues. I understand the issues of children
14 walking. I frankly try to pick up my son or my
15 wife tries to pick up my son. My daughter has
16 just started taking the bus and I'm still having
17 issues about that. So clearly there's a lot for
18 us to think about as we make these decisions. I
19 hope that you will work with your Council Member
20 as she tries to do as much as she can to create
21 the best deal for her community. With that, I'm
22 going to declare the hearing closed. I want to
23 thank the Land Use staff and remind people that
24 Jessica Lappin never paid me for the last time
25

2 that I chaired a hearing which lasted four hours.

3 This hearing is adjourned. We have Land Use at 10

4 and the Subcommittee at 9:30 on Thursday. Thank

5 you.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Donna Hintze 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_____

Date April 23, 2009