

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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December 20, 2023
Start: 11:19 a.m.
Recess: 11:36 a.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Shekar Krishnan, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

David M. Carr
Eric Dinowitz
Robert F. Holden
Linda Lee
Christopher Marte
Julie Menin
Mercedes Narcisse
Lincoln Restler
Marjorie Velázquez

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Rita C. Joseph
Gale A. Brewer
Erik D. Bottcher

A P P E A R A N C E S

Caroline Davis Joseph

Claxton Joseph

Michelle Deal Winfield

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on Parks and Recreation,
4 recorded in the Committee Room on December 20, 2023,
5 by Layla Lynch.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
7 welcome to the Committee on Parks and Recreation.

8 At this time, we ask that you please
9 place phones on vibrate or silent mode. Thank you.

10 Chair, we are ready to begin.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,
12 Sergeant. Good morning, everyone. I am Shekar
13 Krishnan, Chair of the Committee on Parks and
14 Recreation. It's so nice to see you all today.

15 Today the Parks Committee will vote on a
16 pre-considered bill that would ceremonially name 117
17 thoroughfares and public places throughout the City
18 of New York.

19 As I always say, the street namings that
20 we don't simply co-name a street, but they
21 permanently change the landscape of New York City to
22 reflect people who have left a lasting imprint and
23 legacy in our lives, in our communities, and in our
24 city. I'm also proud to be joined today by my
25 Colleagues on the Committee for this vote, and they

2 are Council Member Holden, Council Member Dinowitz,
3 Council Member Lee, Council Member Marte, Council
4 Member Velázquez, Council Member Menin, Council
5 Member Joseph is here too, and I think there are more
6 on the way as well.

7 Of the many honorees proposed by this
8 piece of legislation, I'd like to call attention to a
9 couple of co-names that I'm proud to have sponsored.
10 My first nomination is to co-name 26 blocks in
11 Jackson Heights in my District on 34th Avenue Open
12 Street, known as Paseo Park. As I've noted many
13 times, my District ranks second to last, and after
14 redistricting, possibly last, in the amount of park
15 space or green open space per person in New York
16 City. This was unfortunately highlighted to our
17 community during the height of COVID pandemic where
18 my District with Elmhurst Hospital was the epicenter
19 of the epicenter of the pandemic across the country.
20 This drove our community, in conjunction with the
21 Department of Transportation, to transform 34th
22 Avenue between 69th Street and 93rd Street as an open
23 street, and I know I'm biased, but I believe it is
24 the best open street in all of New York City,
25 certainly the longest. It brings our communities

2 together, where children walk every single day, my
3 own included, to school, thousands of children, at
4 drop off time, at pick up in the afternoon, where
5 seniors come together to sip coffee and talk, where
6 we have dance performances, and so many cultural
7 celebrations. Our 34th Avenue Open Street, now also
8 known as Paseo Park, has been a lifeline for our
9 community, a vibrant network of safe, open spaces,
10 and now, with six schools, six car-free pedestrian
11 plazas in front of each school where our students go
12 to play for recess or during their morning drop off
13 time. Its name, 34th Avenue Open Street Paseo Park is
14 meant to acknowledge the diverse immigrant
15 communities that line the open street while also
16 evoking the new purpose of the street space. Paseo in
17 Spanish means stroll. The result has been that the
18 establishment of Paseo Park has drastically increased
19 neighborhood wide access to public green space where
20 it is sorely needed. It is beloved in our community
21 and has brought us together in a way that we never
22 could have imagined. Today, renaming its 26 blocks as
23 Paseo Park provides a crucial opportunity to honor
24 and celebrate the work that we are doing in Jackson
25 Heights with our 34th Avenue Open Street Coalition

2 with the Alliance for Paseo Park to transform and
3 create a linear park in our neighborhood.

4 My other nomination is for Lawrence
5 Murphy, who advocated for more green space in Jackson
6 Heights. Lawrence played a crucial role in
7 establishing the Jackson Heights Green Alliance,
8 which focused on creating and maintaining public open
9 spaces and green areas. Some of his efforts resulted
10 in Traverse Park being expanded, the only park that
11 we have in Jackson Heights, the Grow a Park campaign
12 successfully turning private school land originally
13 into public parkland and dramatically increasing our
14 park space in our community. Lawrence Murphy's work,
15 both with Traverse Park, also helped to pave the way
16 for the effort now to create Paseo Park 34th Avenue
17 Open Street.

18 Lastly, Gerard Neufeld was a beloved
19 member of our community in Elmhurst who ran funeral
20 services in the 1940s and provided his services to
21 help the families of the young servicemen and women
22 who died in World War II to give them proper burials.
23 His community work also extended to founding the
24 Newtown Civic Association, the Elmhurst Chamber of
25 Commerce, and the Elmhurst Lions Club. It's an honor

2 to today pass, in addition to the above two street
3 namings, his as well.

4 I'd like to welcome all who have come to
5 participate in this hearing, and I urge all of my
6 Colleagues to vote in favor of the legislation before
7 us. Thank you all so much.

8 I'd like to also acknowledge that we've
9 been joined by Council Member Lincoln Ressler, late
10 but still here, and Council Member Carr as well, who
11 is on time. This is coming from me who is late to
12 everything, made the admission, but I was on time
13 today, so I'll take it.

14 Now it's an honor, we are joined today by
15 two individuals in particular who will testify in a
16 bit, provide meaningful testimony about one of our
17 street namings happening in Brooklyn. Before we
18 welcome them, I'd like to turn it over to our
19 Colleague, our dear Colleague, Council Member Rita
20 Joseph, to talk about the street naming in particular
21 in her District.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair,
23 and good morning, all.

24 I'm going to talk a little bit about
25 Duane Joseph. The street co-naming will serve as a

2 lasting testimony to his legacy and reminders of the
3 values he held dear so Parkside Plaza will be co
4 named Duane Joseph Plaza in honor of Duane Joseph.
5 It will stand as a beacon of unity, compassion, and
6 community service. It will be a place where we can
7 come together just as Duane would have wanted to
8 celebrate our shared history and build a brighter
9 future. Rest in peace, my dear friend. You will
10 forever be cherished, part of our community, and your
11 legacy will continue to shine brightly here at
12 Parkside Plaza will be co-named in honor of Duane.

13 I have his widow here and his dad. Thank
14 you for being here and thank you for sharing Duane
15 with us, and it'll be an honor to co-name Parkside
16 Plaza after he fought so many years to get that plaza
17 into the District. Thank you for sharing. Thank you
18 for him being my brother, my friend, my counselor
19 when I needed him, and his favorite language was
20 always saying, Council Member, don't let them punk
21 you so I know not to be a punk, and it is because of
22 him I have the strength and courage to lead my
23 District as well. So thank you, Chair.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,
25 Council Member Joseph.

2 With that, I'd like to call up for
3 testimony Caroline Davis Joseph and Claxton Joseph.

4 CAROLINE DAVIS JOSEPH: Good morning, all.
5 It is a pleasure. Thank you for having myself and my
6 bonus dad, Mr. Claxton Joseph. My name is proudly
7 with great honor, Caroline Davis Joseph, and if I
8 could share anything of why this is so important. As
9 a Bronx girl, my husband was definitely a king from
10 Kings County, and I don't say that just because he
11 was my husband, but the idea of equity and making
12 sure that the Park Plaza represented every individual
13 of Brooklyn and he not only participated in the
14 community for the sake of titles or recognition, it
15 was actually who my husband was. In fact, he'd
16 probably be a little annoyed that we're actually here
17 wanting to have his legacy as a street name because
18 he liked being in the background. Because we were
19 married only for a short six months, we didn't have
20 the opportunity to have children yet, this is so
21 powerful because it allows his legacy to live on, but
22 it also allows the Joseph family name to live on.
23 With that definitely, I hope that you would
24 definitely understand how meaningful this is and what
25 this means to not just us as a family, but as the

2 Brooklyn community, see I'm used to saying the Bronx,
3 as a Brooklyn community but even overall in New York
4 City, because he was a big black man that not only
5 represented the positive that's not shown in our
6 society, but he walked it. That was who he was as an
7 individual, and he never looked for any recognition.
8 That's just who he was. So with that, I'll set aside
9 to my dear dad.

10 CLAXTON JOSEPH: Good morning. My name is
11 Claxton Joseph, Duane's dad. It's an honor for me to
12 be here today in the midst of you all. 45 years ago,
13 I never thought that a situation like this would come
14 up. That's 45 years that Duane has been around. Duane
15 came to the United States when he was 13 years old,
16 just about 13 years old, and I never knew at that
17 time that situations like this would develop. Fast
18 forward, Duane has grown to be a gentle giant. In
19 stature, he was a giant. Attitude, gentle, and
20 painstaking. He has done so much in the community
21 that I, even I, was unaware of until the celebration
22 of his life service. I must say how pleased I am
23 today to be here to accept the honor of whatever is
24 given to him on behalf of the Joseph family, I thank
25 you and I appreciate every one of you for what

2 efforts you will put in bringing this to fruition.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,
5 Mr. Joseph and Ms. Joseph. Ms. Joseph, you're
6 husband, Mr. Joseph, your son, I'm so sorry for your
7 loss, that he's no longer with us, but I do hope that
8 today's street naming gives you all a measure of
9 relief, of solace, of hope to know that his name from
10 Brooklyn to the Bronx now lives on, as I said before,
11 is now part permanently of the landscape of New York
12 City, a testament to his good work, to his life, and
13 to his legacy so on behalf of all of us on the parks
14 committee, and I know I speak for Council Member
15 Joseph when I say it too, we are very honored to have
16 the street naming happen today to pass as a City
17 Council.

18 CAROLINE DAVIS JOSEPH: Thank you very
19 much.

20 CLAXTON JOSEPH: Thank you.

21 CAROLINE DAVIS JOSEPH: Appreciate it.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very
23 much.

24 Next, we have for public testimony from
25 Michelle Deal Winfield.

2 MICHELLE DEAL WINFIELD: Hello. Good
3 morning.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Good morning. I'm
5 Michelle Deal Winfield.

6 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Ms. Winfield, is
7 the mic on? Just make sure that it's on. Thanks.

8 MICHELLE DEAL WINFIELD: Oh, can you hear
9 me? Oh, thank you so much. I'm Michelle Deal
10 Winfield. I'm from the 74th Assembly District and an
11 elected New York State Democratic Committee person.
12 I have been working with the team to celebrate Lloyd
13 Richards, one of the greatest directors on Broadway.
14 He directed in 1959 A Raisin in the Sun, and Sidney
15 Poitier was one of the actors of the original
16 production. The street, West 47th Street and
17 Broadway, after you vote in favor of course, will be
18 there to remind us of his life and legacy. I thank
19 you. I thank the Committee and the Council for your
20 wonderful work and look forward to your vote. Thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,
23 Mr. Smith. Let's give her a round of applause.

24 I'm honored by today's street namings.
25 Ms. Winfield, thank you for your testimony too, and

2 no doubt now in Council Member Bottcher's district,
3 and I know he feels the same way, to have 47th Street
4 now be renamed as Lloyd Richards Way once we get the
5 vote over with is also yet another marker of his
6 life, his legacy, and his contribution to the arts
7 and culture here in our city that live on forever so
8 thank you so much.

9 Council Member Narcisse has also joined
10 us as well.

11 With that, I'd now ask the Clerk to take
12 the roll.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Good
14 morning. William Martin, Committee Clerk. Roll call
15 vote, Committee on Parks and Recreation on Proposed
16 Introduction. Chair Krishnan.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Aye.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Holden.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Aye.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Moya.

21 We'll come back to Council Member Moya. Dinowitz.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Aye.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Lee.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Aye.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Marte.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Aye.

3 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Menin.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Aye.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Narcisse.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Aye.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Restler.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Permission to

9 explain my vote?

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Granted.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Reluctantly.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I was going to

14 say something nice to the Chair, but I'll skip over

15 that.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: All right, I

18 will. Congratulations on Paseo Park. That's a big

19 deal, and I know it's been work. I know that you've

20 put an extraordinary amount of work into making that

21 one of the premier open streets in New York City, the

22 premier open street in Queens, and congrats on

23 officially renaming it.

24 I am thrilled that we're renaming nine

25 streets in what is at least currently the 33rd

2 Council District for a few more days including for
3 social justice warriors like Carl Stubbs who we
4 recently lost, Mary Anne Yancey who was really one of
5 the iconic leaders in the Brooklyn Heights community,
6 Richard Ocana who was a victim of a hate crime as a
7 gay Latino man in Greenpoint some 30 odd years ago,
8 Emmanuel St. Bernard, a leader in one of our NYCHA
9 developments who was incredibly kind to me as a young
10 upstart getting involved in the community and local
11 politics and Banker's Anchor, one of our new public
12 plazas and many others, including the father of one
13 of my oldest childhood friends, Bronson Binger, who
14 is a renowned architect who helped build Union Square
15 and many others. This is such a special way for us to
16 recognize unheralded heroes who make our City great,
17 and I just appreciative of the opportunity to suggest
18 a few folks who will always remember when we look up
19 at the street signs as we walk by so thank you very
20 much.

21 Vote aye on all.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
23 you. Ung. Velázquez.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: Aye on all.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Carr.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Aye.

3 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Council
4 Member Moya.

5 With a vote of 10 in the affirmative,
6 zero in the negative, and no abstentions, item has
7 been adopted by the committee.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very
9 much. This vote is now closed. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 26, 2023