

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND
FRANCHISES

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December 12, 2024
Start: 12:05 p.m.
Recess: 12:24 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - COMMITTEE ROOM,
14TH FLOOR

B E F O R E: Kevin C. Riley

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
David M. Carr
Kamillah M. Hanks
Francisco P. Moya
Lynn C. Schulman

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Pierina Ana Sanchez

A P P E A R A N C E S

Michelle Lamberti, Vice President of Legislative Affairs in the Government and Community Relations Department of the New York City Economic Development Corporation

Jana Pohorelsky, Vice President of Government and Community Relations Department of the New York City Economic Development Corporation

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mic check, mic check,
3 this is a mic check for the Committee on Zoning and
4 Franchise. Today's date is December 12, 2024, in the
5 250, 14th Floor Committee Room, recorded by Walter
6 Lewis.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon, and
8 welcome to the New York City Council hearing for
9 Zoning and Franchise.

10 At this time, we would like for everyone
11 to silence all cell phones and electronic devices to
12 avoid any interruptions.

13 Please do not approach the dais.

14 Chair, we are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: [GAVEL] Good
16 afternoon, and welcome to a meeting of the
17 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. I am Council
18 Member Kevin Riley, Chair of the Subcommittee, and I
19 am joined today by Council Member Abreu, Hanks,
20 Schulman, Carr, Sanchez, and remotely by Council
21 Member Moya.

22 Today, we are scheduled to hold one
23 public hearing regarding the Kingsbridge Armory ESDC
24 grant application by the New York City Economic
25

2 Development Corporation followed by a vote on this
3 application.

4 I will now go over the hearing
5 procedures. This meeting is being held in a hybrid
6 format. Members of the public who wish to testify may
7 testify in person or through Zoom. Members of the
8 public wishing to testify remotely may register by
9 visiting the New York City Council's website at
10 www.council.nyc.gov. To sign up, or for those of you
11 here in person, please see one of the Sergeant-at-
12 Arms to prepare and submit a speaker's card.

13 Members of the public may also view a
14 live streamed broadcast of this meeting at the
15 Council's website.

16 When you are called to testify before the
17 Subcommittee, if you are joining us remotely, you
18 will remain muted until recognized by myself to
19 speak. When you are recognized, your microphone will
20 be unmuted.

21 We will limit public testimony to two
22 minutes per witness. If you have additional testimony
23 you would like the Subcommittee to consider, or if
24 you have written testimony you would like the
25 Subcommittee to consider, instead of appearing in

2 person, please email it to
3 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Written testimony
4 may be submitted up to three days after the hearing
5 is closed. Please indicate the LU numbers or the
6 project name in the subject line of your email.

7 We request that the witness joining us
8 remotely remain in the meeting until excused by
9 myself as Council Members may have questions.

10 Lastly, for everyone attending today's
11 meeting, this is a government proceeding and decorum
12 must be observed at all times. Members of the public
13 are asked not to speak during the meeting unless you
14 are testifying.

15 The witness table is reserved for people
16 who are called to testify, and no video recording or
17 photography is allowed from the witness table.
18 Further, members of the public may not present audio
19 or video recording as testimony but may submit
20 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-
21 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

22 I will now open up the public hearing on
23 pre-considered LU related to the application by the
24 New York City Economic Development Corporation for a
25 grant to the New York State Empire State Development

2 Corporation through the Restore New York's
3 Communities Initiative and pursuant to the New York
4 State Urban Development Corporation Act. The
5 application concerns Kingsbridge Armory in the Bronx
6 and Council Member Sanchez's District. Through the
7 Restore New York grant program, municipalities can
8 seek financial assistance for the revitalization of
9 commercial and residential properties. The program
10 encourages community development and neighborhood
11 growth through the demolition, rehabilitation, and or
12 reconstruction of vacant, abandoned, condemned, or
13 surplus properties.

14 For anyone wishing to testify on these
15 items remotely, if you have not already done so, you
16 must register online. You may do that now by visiting
17 the council's website at council.nyc.gov/landuse and,
18 once again, for anyone with us in person, please see
19 one of the Sergeants to prepare and submit a
20 speaker's card. If you prefer to submit written
21 testimony, you can always do so by emailing it to
22 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

23 I would now like to give the floor to
24 Council Member Sanchez to give her statement. Council
25 Member Sanchez.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so
3 much, Chair Riley, and good morning, everyone. I'm
4 Council Member Sanchez, and I represent the
5 Kingsbridge Armory and just wanted to share these
6 points.

7 The Kingsbridge Armory has been
8 functionally vacant for over 25 years. We have over
9 500,000 square feet of pure potential in this space
10 built in 1917. It's been used over the years as a
11 military hub, imagine 10,000 soldiers there at the
12 height of World War II, it's been used as a concert
13 venue, it was used as a food distribution hub during
14 COVID-19, and the list goes on. It is said to be the
15 largest armory in the world. The Kingsbridge Armory
16 represents the vast potential of our community. With
17 EDC and the community working group when I took
18 office, we led a nine-month community engagement
19 process that reached over 4,000 Bronx sites and
20 culminated in a community vision plan in December of
21 2023. Throughout this year, 2024, EDC has been
22 reviewing responses to its RFP and is still in the
23 process of selecting a development team. Today's
24 Resolution is about setting up any future effort for
25 financial success. I want to be clear that today's

1 vote is not a determination on any land use action
2 for the Armory's future development. It is simply a
3 vote on a Resolution that will allow EDC to pursue a
4 2-million-dollar grant from New York State. I fully
5 support this effort to make any future project
6 financially sound and hope that my Colleagues will
7 join me in supporting following us hearing from EDC.
8 While we do not yet know what the project will be, we
9 do know that past development attempts at the Armory,
10 of which there have been two, have failed because
11 they did not have adequate financing. I remain
12 committed to and welcome any and all of my Colleagues
13 to support so that we can do everything possible to
14 promote the redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory
15 that comports with the community's vision plan. The
16 community said we need to prioritize youth, welcome
17 older adults, foster intergenerational relationships,
18 create jobs and wealth for existing workers in the
19 community, grow a regenerative local economy, put the
20 Bronx on the map, and maximize community ownership.
21 There you have it. I look forward to hearing from EDC
22 on the status of the project today and hope for all
23 of my Colleagues' support. Thank you so much, Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
3 Member Sanchez.

4 I will now call the applicant panel for
5 this proposal, which consists of Michelle Lamberti
6 and Jana Pohorelsky.

7 JANA POHORELSKY: Pohorelski.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I tried.
9 Counsel, please administer the
10 affirmation, please.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Could you please
12 raise your right hand?

13 Would you swear to tell the truth and
14 nothing but the truth in your testimony today and in
15 response to Council Member questions?

16 MICHELLE LAMBERTI: I do.

17 JANA POHORELSKY: I do.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. For
19 the view in public, if you need the accessible
20 version of this presentation, please send an email
21 request to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

22 Now, the applicant team may begin. I'll
23 just ask that you please reinstate your name and
24 organization for the record. You may begin.

2 MICHELLE LAMBERTI: Sure. My name is
3 Michelle Lamberti. I'm with the New York City
4 Economic Development Corporation.

5 JANA POHORELSKY: I'm Jana Pohorelsky with
6 the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

7 MICHELLE LAMBERTI: Thank you. Good
8 morning, Chair Riley and Members of the Subcommittee
9 on Zoning and Franchises. My name is Michelle
10 Lamberti, and I serve as Vice President of
11 Legislative Affairs in the Government and Community
12 Relations Department of the New York City Economic
13 Development Corporation, and I'm joined by my
14 colleague, Vice President Jana Pohorelsky.

15 The New York City Economic Development
16 Corporation works to create a vibrant, inclusive, and
17 globally competitive economy for all New Yorkers. Our
18 work is guided by four strategic priorities,
19 strengthening business confidence, growing innovation
20 industries with a focus on equity, building
21 neighborhoods as places to live, learn, work, and
22 play, and delivering sustainable infrastructure.

23 Pursuant to the New York State Urban
24 Development Act, the City intends to file an
25 application for the Empire State Development

Corporation's Restore New York Communities Initiative Grant. This grant provides municipalities with financial assistance for the revitalization of commercial and residential properties. The program encourages community development and neighborhood growth through the elimination and redevelopment of blighted structures. The City intends to apply for Round 9 of the Restore New York Grant to support the redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory. The grant funding would address critical infrastructure needs at the Armory and support the realization of goals included in the Together for Kingsbridge Vision Plan. The Together for Kingsbridge Vision Plan, as referenced by Council Member Sanchez, was the result of an extensive engagement process with community residents, students, workers, and business owners about their vision for the Armory. This plan captures all the feedback gathered during the process from conversations with over 4,000 people, which included over 1,000 participants attending four public workshops, over 900 survey responses, over 500 community members touring the Armory, 9 Community Board meetings, 16 small group discussions, 3 public information sessions, and feedback from over 75

1 industry stakeholders. The Together for Kingsbridge
2 Vision Plan reflects the community's values, ideas,
3 and perspectives, all of which we heard clearly
4 during the engagement process. The City released the
5 plan in August 2023, and together with the release of
6 the subsequent Request for Proposals on September 22,
7 2023, sought proposals from qualified parties for the
8 unique opportunity to redevelop and operate the
9 Armory and accomplish the City's goals of creating a
10 financially feasible, thriving mixed-use development
11 that would reflect the guiding principles set forth
12 in the Vision Plan. We're excited about the robust
13 engagement process done in partnership with the
14 community, which has generated many great proposals
15 for this amazing asset, an asset which will need all
16 the investment it can get. We look forward to the
17 public announcement of a developer and working with
18 Council to bring a project through the ULURP process.

20 The Kingsbridge Armory is a historic
21 military facility located in the heart of the
22 Kingsbridge Heights neighborhood of the Bronx and is
23 one of the few remaining armories in the city. The
24 Armory was constructed in 1917, and much of the
25 building is in its original condition. The Armory

2 lacks essential building systems, including plumbing,
3 HVAC, life and fire safety, and does not have
4 adequate electrical service and lighting. Based on
5 previous studies, it is known there are hazardous
6 materials located throughout the Armory. The building
7 envelope is not watertight, the roof is past its
8 useful life, and the windows are damaged and do not
9 adhere to current New York City energy standards. I
10 say this all to point out that there is extensive
11 work that's needed just to bring this building into
12 good standing, and we need every available dollar to
13 do so. Restore New York funding, if granted, would be
14 used to address these critical infrastructure needs
15 at the Armory. As you know, the City and State have
16 committed 216 million dollars to benefit the
17 redevelopment of the Armory by funding critical
18 infrastructure needs that will leverage the maximum
19 private investment while also supporting the
20 community's goals identified through the ongoing
21 engagement process. Any public investments in the
22 building will help to support the realization of the
23 goals included in the Vision Plan.

24 As you know, redevelopment of the Armory
25 is a massive undertaking with significant financial

1 needs. We're leaving no stone unturned as we look to
2 secure as many grants and funding opportunities as
3 possible to advance this project. Under the proposed
4 application, the City will apply for 2 million
5 dollars to facilitate the renovation and adaptive
6 reuse of the Kingsbridge Armory, an existing landmark
7 building of approximately 588,000 gross square feet
8 that is currently vacant. Redevelopment of the
9 Kingsbridge Armory is a special opportunity to
10 transform an awe-inspiring landmark into a place that
11 is catalytic for economic development for the
12 community, the Borough, the City, and the Region.

14 Consistent with guidelines issued by the
15 Empire State Development Corporation, the City
16 respectfully requests that the Council make the
17 following findings related to New York City's
18 application for funding this project under the
19 Restore New York Grant.

20 1. The proposed project is consistent
21 with the Municipality's Local Revitalization or Urban
22 Development Plan.

23 2. The proposed financing is appropriate
24 for this specific project.

2 3. The project facilitates effective and
3 efficient use of existing and future public resources
4 so as to promote both economic development and
5 preservation of community resources.

6 4. The project develops and enhances
7 infrastructure and or other facilities in a manner
8 that will attract, create, and sustain employment
9 opportunities where applicable.

10 Thank you, Chair Riley and Members of the
11 Subcommittee, for your time and consideration.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. I
13 just have three questions real quick and I'm going to
14 see if Council Member Sanchez has any questions.

15 I understand that you're talking about a
16 future project that hasn't yet been announced. What
17 can you tell us today about how this funding might be
18 used on this project?

19 MICHELLE LAMBERTI: Sure. Thank you for
20 the question, Council Member. So, I think, as I
21 mentioned, we are looking forward to making a public
22 announcement about the project soon. I would point
23 to, as I mentioned in my testimony, the Armory has a
24 lot of existing really critical infrastructure needs
25 that will need to be addressed irrespective of what

2 project comes before you and we move forward with.
3 Some of those are like the plumbing in the HVAC
4 system, adequate electrical. Some of you might know
5 about the persistent flooding problem at the Armory.
6 So, there is a lot that needs to be done. The 2
7 million dollars can be used towards renovation and
8 redevelopment, and these funds would be employed for
9 those purposes.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: If the State were to
11 deny this application for whatever reason, how would
12 that impact the plans for this significant project?

13 MICHELLE LAMBERTI: I mean, I think we are
14 committed to seeing this project as a success for the
15 City, and so we would be thoroughly disappointed
16 because we think it's a really great project for the
17 state to be putting money towards, but we would
18 continue to look for additional funding efforts to
19 make sure that this project comes to fruition.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: In the context of the
21 Kingsbridge Vision Plan, is there anything you can
22 share with us regarding future steps in terms of
23 community outreach?

24 JANA POHORELSKY: Sure, I can take that.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Just need you to press
3 the mic.

4 JANA POHORELSKY: Great. Better?

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes.

6 JANA POHORELSKY: Okay. So, we are very
7 excited to be announcing a developer shortly. In
8 terms of the next steps on community outreach, the
9 process that we would go through is the public
10 approvals process so environmental review and ULURP,
11 and so, of course, we'll be back in front of the
12 Committee to discuss those steps but, as the Council
13 Member mentioned, we spoke with over 4,000 residents
14 in the process that led to the development of that
15 Vision Plan. The Vision Plan has been a key guiding
16 document in our review of proposals for the future
17 developer, and so we're excited to continue outreach
18 and seek additional engagement from the community as
19 we move through the public approvals process.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. That's the
21 end of my questioning.

22 Council Member Sanchez, do you have any
23 questions?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah, thank you,
25 Chair Riley. I just did want to highlight for

2 Colleagues that this is a very expensive
3 redevelopment, as EDC has mentioned, but we do have
4 200 million dollars secured, 100 million committed
5 from the State and 100 million committed from the
6 City, and the City Council, we have put in nearly 15
7 million dollars at this point together with the
8 Borough President, so we have the strongest
9 foundation that we've ever had for an attempt to
10 redevelop the Kingsbridge Armory, but it's very
11 expensive and we need more so it's very important to
12 be able to secure these funds.

13 I guess my question for EDC would be, do
14 you have an estimate that you could share at this
15 stage of, you know, what total development costs
16 could look like at this stage, at this time around
17 and, if you don't have an estimate because projects
18 that have been proposed have been so different, could
19 you tell us what the total development cost was
20 estimated to be in the last redevelopment proposal
21 for the ice skating rinks?

22 MICHELLE LAMBERTI: Sure, of course,
23 Council Member, and I'd say on a separate analysis
24 that we completed, that was completed on behalf of
25 EDC in June of 2023, projected an estimated budget of

2 up to 500 million, and that was for a generic
3 redevelopment of the armory building. So, as you
4 point out, Council Member, it is a very expensive
5 project. We are really grateful for City, State, City
6 Council funds that have been committed, but are
7 looking for every dollar we can get.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Great, thank you
9 so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
11 Member Sanchez. Are there any questions from my
12 Colleagues for this panel?

13 All right, there being no questions for
14 this panel, this panel is excused.

15 MICHELLE LAMBERTI: Thank you.

16 JANA POHORELSKY: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Counsel, are there any
18 members of the public who wish to testify regarding
19 this grant application remotely or in person?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: No, Chair, there
21 is no one signed up online or in person who wish to
22 testify.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: There being no other
24 members of the public who wish to testify on pre-
25 considered LU relating to the application by the New

2 York City Economic Development Corporation for a
3 grant by the New York State Empire State Development
4 Corporation regarding Kingsbridge Armory in the
5 Bronx, the public hearing is now closed and will
6 proceed to a vote on this application, which Council
7 Member Sanchez supports.

8 I now call for a vote to approve pre-
9 considered LU relating to the application by the New
10 York City Economic Development Corporation for a
11 grant to New York State Empire State Development
12 Corporation regarding Kingsbridge Armory in the
13 Bronx.

14 Counsel, can you please call the roll?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Chair Riley.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Aye.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Council Member
18 Moya.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: I vote aye.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Council Member
21 Abreu.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Aye.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Council Member
24 Hanks.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Aye.

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES 21

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Council Member
3 Schulman.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Aye.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Council Member
6 Carr.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Aye.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: By a vote of six
9 in the affirmative, zero opposing, and zero
10 abstentions, the item is approved and referred to the
11 Full Land Use Committee.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Counsel.
13 That concludes today's business.

14 I would like to thank the members of the
15 public, my Colleagues, Subcommittee Counsel, Land Use
16 and other Council Staff, and the Sergeant-at-Arms for
17 participating in today's meeting.

18 This meeting is hereby adjourned. Thank
19 you. [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 18, 2024