

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME
USES

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May 12, 2010
Start: 10:51 am
Recess: 11:02 am

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
BRAD S. LANDER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Maria del Carmen Arroyo
Rosie Mendez
Annabel Palma
James Sanders, Jr.
Daniel J. Halloran III
Inez E. Dickens
Gale A. Brewer
Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.
Albert Vann
Vincent Ignizio

2 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: I'm Brad

3 Lander. We're joined today by committee members
4 Rosie Mendez of Manhattan, Dan Halloran of Queens,
5 Annabel Palma of the Bronx, Gale Brewer and
6 Chairman Comrie is with us as well, and Council
7 Member Inez Dickens, who is hiding in the low
8 chairs over there.

9 We are considering West Park
10 Presbyterian Church, Land Use #60, 20105349 HKM.
11 Before I introduce Council Member Brewer to say a
12 few words before we vote, I just want to pause a
13 minute to say a couple of thank yous to the staff
14 who helped us work with this project: Christian
15 Hylton, Amy Levitan, Gail Benjamin and Carol Shine
16 to the range of advocates who spoke with us.

17 This I think was a challenging
18 issue for us. It wasn't a simple situation of a
19 developer with a bulldozer and a treasured
20 building. It was a question of trying to wrestle
21 and grapple with competing values. The value of
22 preserving architecturally significant buildings
23 but also preserving the uses and indeed the spirit
24 that make this city what it is. Our committee
25 wrestled with it in a profound way.

2 I also want to give specific credit
3 to Council Member Brewer also for not only
4 presenting us with a situation that's about the
5 regulatory power of landmarks preservation but
6 about really thinking about stewardship and how we
7 take care of the treasures of the city. So thank
8 you for all of that, and with that I turn it over
9 to Council Member Brewer.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you
11 very much, Chair Lander. Certainly you and Chuck
12 Meara and most definitely the chair of the Land
13 Use Committee, Leroy Comrie, have been stalwart
14 supporters of thinking about a better process and
15 have been very patient. I am deeply appreciative,
16 I think as is the west side community.

17 So I am supporting the landmarking
18 of West Park Presbyterian Church at 165 West 86th
19 Street. I think that the Landmarks Preservation
20 Commission outlined the reasons for it and it's in
21 your material. It is a building that is certainly
22 worth of being landmarked.

23 Most importantly, it is a building
24 on Amsterdam and 86th Street that means a great
25 deal to the community. It means that we're home.

2 It means that we have a place to go that has lots
3 of importance to us. In terms of the mission of
4 that particular congregation, the history of that
5 congregation, there's a history of progressive
6 thought. It's a community that invited the LGB
7 community into the building long before others
8 did. It's a community that has always welcomed
9 many, many, many groups and families into that
10 building. It's a congregation with a mission.

11 I look forward to working with the
12 entire community of the west side and beyond.
13 It's a building now that does not have any
14 activity in it because it needs renovation. I
15 look forward to working with the community board
16 and all of the west side neighbors and friends to
17 figure out a way to work on the mission as well as
18 the preservation of this historic building so that
19 it will be something that we can all be proud of
20 well into the future.

21 So with that, I want to again thank
22 the chair, both chairs, thank the Speaker's office
23 and say how much I appreciate the work of the
24 congregation and the community for making
25 something very special that we can all remember

2 for many generations to come. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thanks very
4 much, Council Member Brewer. I want to recognize
5 Council Member Marie del Carmen Arroyo from the
6 Bronx who is a member of the committee and also
7 Council Member Al Vann and Council Member Vincent
8 Ignizio from Staten Island. I want to echo
9 Council Member Brewer's comments about Chair
10 Comrie who I thought did a very good job in
11 helping set the table for a good hard wrestling
12 with the challenging issues presented by this
13 situation.

14 With all of that and having gone
15 through that wrestling, I recommend a vote of aye
16 and ask the counsel to call the role.

17 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Christian
18 Hylton, Counsel to the committee. Chair Lander?

19 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Aye.

20 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council Member
21 Palma?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Aye.

23 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council Member
24 Arroyo?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Aye.

2 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council Member
3 Mendez?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Permission
5 to explain my vote?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Permission
7 granted.

8 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Of course.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Thank you.
10 I'm very proud to vote in favor of this
11 designation today. As I listened very
12 passionately to individuals on both sides of this
13 issue, what I remember growing up is my mother
14 always used to tell me to do certain things that
15 it was good for me, like go to school and drink my
16 milk.

17 I did it because I had to, but I've
18 learned how to get adjusted to milk. I still
19 don't like milk but I put chocolate in it or make
20 a smoothie out of it. It's become my daily
21 staple.

22 For the individuals in the
23 community who have not quite embraced this, I hope
24 that in time they will find that what we've done
25 today is a wonderful thing for the entire

2 community. I look forward to seeing the church
3 get some sacred sites money and doing the work
4 that is necessary there. I vote aye. Thank you
5 very much.

6 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council Member
7 Halloran?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HALLORAN:
9 Permission to explain my vote?

10 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Of course,
11 granted.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HALLORAN: Mr.
13 Chairman, as you know, I was probably the most
14 vociferous questioner when it came to these issues
15 because two of them strike very close to home for
16 me. One is going against the will of a religious
17 congregation and the second being the overall
18 issues of property rights. As an individual who
19 respects that seriously, this was initially a
20 difficult decision for me.

21 However, Council Member Brewer has
22 gone above and beyond the chairman of the Land Use
23 Committee, as always. I don't think there's a
24 better public servant in the city of New York. He
25 injects himself wherever he can to help Council

2 Members and I'm appreciative for Leroy Comrie in
3 general.

4 So I have changed my position. I
5 am going to vote aye to this with the
6 understanding that Council Member Brewer has made
7 tremendous outreach to this parish, has made a
8 commitment to them to assist them in finding
9 creative ways to plug shortfalls and to make
10 things happen. This is an example, of where the
11 government can do something right, on occasion,
12 and does it with an eye to the future.

13 This church clearly is a historic
14 landmark. There is no doubt about that. It needs
15 to be protected and preserved. It needs to be
16 protected and preserved in the context of the
17 people of that congregation continuing their
18 worship, their belief and as Council Member Brewer
19 rightly points out, there are a vanguard of
20 tolerance and forward thinking in their religious
21 community. They are ahead of the curve, as they
22 say, in many ways.

23 So with that being said, and with
24 all due respect to my principles as a libertarian
25 Republican, I will set those aside for the moment

2 and I will say that in this instance I vote aye to
3 the landmarking of the church.

4 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: By a vote of
5 five in the affirmative, none in the negative and
6 no abstentions, LU 60 is approved and referred to
7 the full Land Use Committee.

8 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thanks very
9 much. We're adjourned.

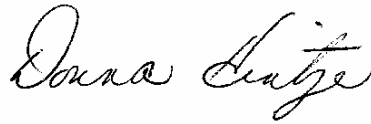
10 [Pause]

11 CHRISTIAN HYLTON: Council Member
12 Sanders?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: I vote aye
14 on all.

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 May 28, 2010