

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES, AND ELECTIONS

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B E F O R E:

BRAD S. LANDER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

DANIEL R. GARODNICK
DEBORAH L. ROSE
INEZ E. DICKENS
JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
MARGARET S. CHIN
MARK LEVINE
MELISSA MARK-VIVERITO
RAFAEL L. ESPINAL, JR.
VINCENT IGNIZIO
YDANIS A. RODRIGUEZ

2 [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: My name is Brad

4 Lander and I'm pleased to be the Chair of the
5 Committee on Rules, Privileges, and Elections.
6 Welcome to everyone who's here. We're joined this
7 morning by other members of the committee including
8 Council Members Margaret Chin from Manhattan and
9 Debbie Rose from Staten Island. I'm pleased to be
10 joined this morning by Council Member Peter Koo
11 who's not a member of the Rules Committee but
12 chairs the City Council's Land Use Subcommittee on
13 Landmarks Public Siting and Maritime Uses and so
14 he's here this morning as we talk about the
15 Landmarks Preservation Commission. And of course
16 we're very pleased to be joined Meenakshi Srinivan
17 who's the mayor's nominee to lead the Landmarks
18 Preservation Commission who I'll introduce in a
19 minute. And we'll be joined by other members of the
20 Rules Committee as well. Let me know, let people
21 know in... Well let me give some introductory remarks
22 and I'll kind of let you know what we're going to
23 do. Today I'd like to acknowledge the committee's
24 attorney today Jason Attonyo [sp?] who's standing
25 in for Amota Labouth [sp?] who did a lot of work in
preparation for the hearing and also Cathleen Ahn

2 [sp?] who leads the General Councils Office which
3 provides staffing to the Rules Committee. Give
4 special thanks to Chuck Davis, our Director of
5 Investigations who has always has done great work
6 in preparing doing a round of investigations and
7 making sure that we really give full and thorough
8 vetting to all candidates as well as Diandre
9 [phonetic], Diandra Johnson [sp?] and Diana Ariogo
10 [sp?]. As people know today we'll be considering
11 the mayor's nomination of Meenakshi Srinivan to the
12 council for our advice and consent regarding her
13 appointment of the Landmarks Preservation
14 Commission. The mayor sent us a letter dated May
15 19th, 2014 making the nomination. We'll meet her
16 today. Ms. Srinivan will make an opening statement.
17 The council members will ask some questions and
18 then after that is done we'll take testimony from
19 the public so please sign up if you haven't
20 already. As is our practice at these nomination
21 hearings this term we won't be voting today. We
22 like to be able to listen, hear the testimony as
23 well, and so we'll recess at the end of this
24 hearing and reconvene prior to the next stated
25 meeting so that we can take a vote. So just to let

2 everyone know that. Meenakshi Srinivan is a
3 resident of Manhattan. And if the council gives its
4 advice and consent she'll be appointed to the
5 Landmark Preservation Commission and then
6 subsequently designated by the mayor as chair of
7 the commission to serve the remainder of a three
8 year term which will expire on June 28th, 2016. And
9 let me just tell you a little bit about the
10 Landmarks Preservation Commission. And pursuant to
11 the New York City Charter the New York City
12 Landmarks Preservation Commission also known as the
13 LPC is responsible for establishing and regulating
14 Landmarks, portions of Landmarks, landmark sites,
15 interior Landmarks, scenic Landmarks, and historic
16 districts, and also regulates alterations to
17 designated buildings or buildings in designated
18 districts. The LPC consists of 11 members who must
19 include at least three architects, one historian
20 qualified in the field, one city planner or
21 landscape architect, one realtor, and must include
22 one resident from each of the five boroughs. The
23 mayor appoints the members of the LPC with the
24 advice and consent of the council and we consider
25 that range of factors as well then may or may

2 consult with the Fine Arts Federation of New York
3 or other similar organizations then of course
4 making the appointment. The terms are staggered and
5 the mayor designates the chair. The members of the
6 LPC with the exception of the chair serve without
7 compensation but are reimbursed for necessary
8 expenses. The chair who also leads the department
9 is, is of course a paid position and the current
10 chair's, the chair's current salary is 192,198
11 dollars. I'm not going to go into... So the, there's
12 sort of a full description of the Landmarks process
13 but I think a lot of people who are in the room
14 know it. First let me note we've been joined by
15 Council Member Garodnick from Manhattan as well. We
16 have a lot of people here who are quite familiar
17 with the Landmarks process and I'm thrilled to
18 welcome Peter Koo as the new chair of the Landmarks
19 Subcommittee but as many of you know in the prior
20 term chaired that subcommittee. So people in the
21 room I think have a general sense here and if not
22 we can talk further about it later about the
23 process through which the, the LPC both based on
24 its own staff expertise as well as based on request
25 for evaluation considers landmark applications,

2 applications for a historic district designation,
3 considers those, in some cases bring them forward
4 to calling [phonetic] for public review,
5 ultimately votes on them at the LPC. If they are
6 designated they move forward to the City Planning
7 Commission and ultimately through the Landmark
8 Subcommittee, the Land Use Committee, and the
9 Council. And then applications for alterations to
10 those buildings or hardship applications are
11 considered by the LPC. Before I just introduce Ms.
12 Srinivan Chair Koo would you like to make an
13 opening statement?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Sure, yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Great.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you Mr.

17 Chair. Good morning Chair Lander, members of the
18 committee, Commissioner... let me see... Swin
19 [phonetic], Swinwazen [phonetic]..

20 COMMISSIONER SRINIVAN: That's fine.

21 [crosstalk] That's good.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: And staff it's a
23 pleasure to be here with everyone this morning as
24 we examine Mayor de Blasio's nominee to lead the
25 Landmarks Preservation Commission. Commission

2 Swinwazen comes to us with extensive experience in
3 New York City government particularly in the fields
4 of architecture and urban planning. Having served
5 over 13 years at Department of City Planning and
6 the last 10 years as the chair of the Board of
7 Standards and Appeals you in my opinion have the
8 credentials and, and experience and expertise
9 actually necessary to lead the LPC. So the question
10 today for me really is not whether or not you are
11 qualified to lead this agency. More I am seeking to
12 know as in, as is many of my colleagues is what
13 your vision and the direction you, you, you wish,
14 you want to take the LPC. As chair of the council
15 Subcommittee on Landmarks Public Sighting and
16 Maritime Uses I'm privileged to have oversight of
17 this agency to lead. I believe that we are at a
18 unique time in our city's history. And the road
19 that the Commission will pave as the city moves
20 forward with some ambitious developmental plans
21 will be critical. This is why it's important that
22 we have competent leadership at the LPC. And this
23 is why I and Chair Lander and other members take
24 our rolls in this process very seriously. In order
25 to move this great city forward it's important to

2 meet the all stakeholders interests represented in
3 balance. We must protect and preserve our city's
4 rich culture and architectural history while making
5 sure that we have the ability to develop blocks in
6 necessary in order to address the affordable
7 housing crisis facing all New Yorkers, particularly
8 our overlooked middle class families. This and many
9 other challenges await the new chair of the LPC. So
10 I look forward to learn more about your thoughts on
11 these issues and on others today. I will conclude
12 by saying that I hope you grow to like this face
13 because if it all goes well during the confirmation
14 process I'm sure we'll be working with and seeing
15 more of each other. Thank you Mr. Chair. Thank you.

16 [laughter]

17 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you very much
18 Chair Koo. Let me welcome Speaker Mark Viverito
19 who's a member of the Rules Committee and who has
20 joined us. And we'll now turn it over for an
21 opening statement to Meenakshi Srinivan as I
22 believe people are familiar. She's served since
23 2004 as chair and commissioner of the New York City
24 Board of Standards and Appeals. Prior to that was
25 at New York City Planning as Deputy Director of the

2 Manhattan Office, team leader and supervisor
3 working on projects from you know the upper east
4 and west side to midtown east. And had a history
5 before that as an architect and urban designer. And
6 we're very pleased to welcome you here this
7 morning. Let me ask first that you raise your right
8 hand so that you can be sworn in and then we'll ask
9 for your opening statement.

10 UNKNOWN MALE: Do swear or affirm to
11 tell the truth, nothing but the truth... That's it.

12 COMMISSIONER SRINIVAN: I do.

13 [laughter, crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: This is a little
15 new for us...

16 COMMISSIONER SRINIVAN: I know.

17 [laughter] Okay. [crosstalk]

18 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...but you know we,
19 it's a good principal to tell the truth so we
20 appreciate your...

21 [laughter]

22 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...making this
23 statement. Thank you and thank you council. Okay,
24 Ms. Srinivan if you'll make your opening statement.

25

2 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Okay, good morning.

3 Thank you Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chair Lander,
4 Landmarks Chair Koo, and members of the committee
5 for this opportunity to speak before you today... Let
6 me take off my glasses. ...and answer any of your
7 questions. I'm extremely honored and excited to be
8 Mayor Bill de Blasio's nominee for chair of the
9 Landmark Preservation Commission and I ask you for
10 your support. If appointed I'm committed to ensure
11 that New York City's architectural, historical, and
12 cultural legacies are protected and preserved. New
13 York City's architecturally, historically, and
14 culturally significant buildings and districts
15 reflect the stories of our past and tell these
16 stories into the future. The preservation of these
17 buildings and neighborhoods are... essential part of
18 what defines New York to the world and establishes
19 its identity. I'm very enthusiastic to have the
20 opportunity to be the steward of this rich legacy.
21 I'm an urban planner, urban designer, an architect
22 by training, and I've dedicated close to 25 years
23 of my professional career to land use planning in
24 New York. As Chair Lander noted I spent 13 years
25 with the Department of City Planning and then the

2 past 10 years as Chair of the Board of Standards
3 and Appeals. I believe my experience has given me a
4 wealth of knowledge in land use and zoning,
5 preservation of neighborhoods, real estate finance,
6 property rights, administrative law, and
7 governance. I have also visited the many diverse
8 neighborhoods and districts throughout the five
9 boroughs. And I have a deep appreciation for the
10 character and scale of these places and an
11 understanding of the forces that have shaped their
12 identity. As chair of the Board of Standards
13 Appeals I have the opportunity to lead an agency
14 which receives several hundred applications a year.
15 During my tenor I have strived to ensure a fair and
16 open public review process. In guiding the
17 commission and conducting public hearings I work to
18 build consensus, resolve conflicts, and mediate
19 outcomes. I believe that under my leadership the
20 board has established professionalism and
21 integrity, efficiency, transparency, and fairness
22 in its procedures and process. If I am appointed I
23 look forward to bring this expertise and experience
24 to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Finally
25 as a planner I understand that New York is

2 confronted with complex challenges relating to
3 housing and economic development and that it needs
4 to evolve and grow to meet these challenges. I
5 commend the mayor on his ambitious affordable
6 housing plan and will secure, that will secure the
7 wellbeing of all its residents now and into the
8 future. I'm committed to ensuring that landmark
9 preservation goals will be integrated and achieved
10 within the larger planning goals of the city. If
11 appointed as Landmarks Chair I will welcome working
12 closely with the administration, the city council,
13 communities, and other stakeholders in striking the
14 right balance between the need to preserve the
15 cities and neighborhoods, beloved buildings in
16 districts, and the need to allow the city to grow
17 and evolve. Both are necessary in making New York a
18 world class place. My long standing career in
19 Government has been dedicated to making New York a
20 better place to live, work, and visit and I look
21 forward to continuing that dedication as the chair
22 of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Thank you
23 and I'm here to answer any questions.

24 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you very much
25 for that opening statement. Let me call members'

2 attention to the materials you have in your
3 briefing books as well; our summary report of the
4 investigation that Charles Davis and his team did,
5 as well as some press articles, and then the
6 prehearing responses that Ms. Srinivan submitted to
7 us. I have some questions but I suspect the overlap
8 substantially with those of my colleagues. So let
9 me ask my colleagues to do their questions first
10 and I'll save mine for the end.

11 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: We'll go first to
13 Chair Koo followed by Council Member Rose and then
14 Council Member Garodnick, and then Council Member
15 Chin.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Commissioner what
17 do you believe is the single most important issue
18 facing the LPC in this year? Or the next five
19 years?

20 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I think I may have
21 noted that here. I think one of the most important
22 and critical challenges is the issue of how does
23 this move, the city move forward to achieve an
24 affordable housing program that is very ambitious
25 and again I commend the mayor for that and also

2 able to balance the growth and development of the
3 city with the preservation of neighborhoods and the
4 continuing ability to protect our Landmarks. I
5 believe that it's, it's, it's, I, I'm just
6 fascinated by the challenge of taking that on but I
7 think it takes a lot of careful consideration and
8 discernment in terms of how we look at future
9 designations and how they interact with rezoning
10 efforts or other planning efforts that may be going
11 on by other agencies. I believe if I'm appointed as
12 the chair of the Landmarks Commission I would work
13 closely my sister agencies, particularly the
14 Department of City Planning as well as the Housing
15 and Preservation Development in order to further
16 both the goals of preservation as well as ensure
17 that the city's affordable plan, housing plan can
18 continue. It's, it's about tracking the right
19 balance and I believe that some of my skills that I
20 have including in city planning, land use, and
21 zoning will in fact help me continue and start,
22 start and continue a dialogue with agencies to
23 ensure that both goals can be achieved.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Years ago the idea
25 was discussed to possibly elevate the LPC to an

2 agency status with the thought to being
3 professionalize the staff and make the LPC less
4 dependent on volunteer part time staff. Do you have
5 any thoughts on this suggestion? Do you believe the
6 size of the Landmark staff is sufficient? Why or
7 why not?

8 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Okay. My

9 understanding is that currently they have fulltime
10 staff of about maybe 70 people and I believe that
11 does not include the commission. They have three or
12 four areas of departments within that agency which
13 includes their research wing which moves forward
14 with designations. They have a preservation
15 division which looks at buildings that are, or
16 structures within historic districts or Landmarks
17 that need to go through a regulatory process. They
18 have an enforcement wing and then they have a wing
19 that looks at environmental issues. So my
20 understanding is actually it doesn't function that
21 much as a voluntary agency anymore and in fact is
22 very much a part of government and its full form. I
23 think in terms of whether that's enough or whether
24 they need more resources is really something that
25 I'd like to, if I'm appointed go there and be able

2 to assess the resources of the agency. It, they
3 have a large workload but I think one can be
4 creative and strategic in terms of ensuring that
5 the resources that are there are appropriately
6 deployed.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Are you familiar
8 with the various plans to allow Landmarks to
9 transfer the development rights more broadly than
10 they are currently able to including creating a
11 sort of land ban to facilitate those transfers?
12 What are your thoughts and, on such proposals?

13 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Okay. Well I've, I
14 don't know the proposals yet. I believe there's
15 definitely talk about it and I know that other
16 agencies; City Planning, HPD, they've expressed
17 that. I think it's an opportunity if where one can
18 find, Landmarks could be an asset in terms of
19 having these rights available. I've had some
20 experience with that when I was at Department of
21 City Planning. I was the project manager and
22 director for the theater district zoning that took
23 place in the mid-90s which allowed for a wider
24 transfer of air rights from Broadway theaters. And
25 as a part of that it was to ensure both that these

2 Broadway theaters and their landmark interiors
3 could remain and be rehabilitated but at the same
4 time it was used to preserve the industry as well.
5 And it was I would say controversial but I believe
6 that it's been very successful. So I think that I
7 would like to and welcome working with the agencies
8 who are thinking about creative ways to both have
9 preservation and continue those goals but at the
10 same time allow for opportunities for affordable
11 housing.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you. So I
13 have one more question. It's just do you, do you
14 believe that the current process of current
15 landmarking decisions are made is adequate? And if
16 not what would you like to improve upon?

17 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I think that with
18 any change of leadership which may happen if I get
19 supports it's a real opportunity to relook at the
20 processes that are there currently. And I think
21 there's always room for improvement. I would at
22 this point reserve judgment as to what one should
23 do there but just in terms of my own experience I
24 think when I went to the Board of Standards and
25 Appeals we really did try to professionalize the

2 agency, make it much more transparent, and worked
3 in fact with my staff worked a lot towards trying
4 to streamline the process making it much more
5 predictable finding ways where people could have
6 access to the information that they needed to
7 provide. And I would like to take that experience
8 with me at Landmarks. I think there's always ways
9 to make the process more effective and efficient.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So thank you. Thank
11 you Ms.... Thank you for your devoting many years of
12 your time in public service in the helping out New,
13 New York City. Thank you.

14 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Thank you Landmarks
15 Chair Koo.

16 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you Chair
17 Koo. We've been joined by Council Member Mark
18 Levine from Manhattan. Before I pass it on to
19 Council Member Rose I want to... I'll save most of my
20 questions for the end but I do want to ask one
21 with, with most of the council members still here.
22 And that's about how you view the relationship with
23 the council you know which has a charter given role
24 in the process but the relationship is important
25 throughout. So how, how do you see the, the

2 relationship of LPC and in particularly the chair
3 to the council and council members... [crosstalk]

4 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I think it's
5 extremely important and I welcome the chance to
6 work with the council. I think there are a lot of
7 issues where their, where, where council members
8 and Landmarks need to work together. So I think it,
9 the area that where we really see that is in the,
10 is in the field of designations and neighborhoods.
11 And as you know the process comes from many sides.
12 There may be some that Landmarks instills itself
13 instigates there may others that are requested. And
14 I see that that's a really important area that we
15 work with the communities and our council members
16 who know them and in fact represent them in making
17 some of the decisions as we move forward in
18 designations.

19 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: So that's good to
20 hear and I guess I just, I, you know I shared this
21 with you ahead of time. But I, I felt in the prior
22 administration, in the prior leadership at LPC
23 there was not the level of desire for conversation
24 and collaboration with council members and the
25 council before it got to the time to be bringing us

2 something at the very end of the process and that
3 the requests of council members to have something
4 looked at or be consulted on with our communities
5 early in the process was, was not always there. And
6 that led to a lot of unnecessary frustration on
7 the, in the subcommittee so it's great to hear you
8 say that and I think we want to, you know we're
9 seeing this a lot in the administration now, more
10 of a willingness to engage in partnership with the
11 council and council members. And with all these
12 council members here and with the speaker here I
13 just want to say I appreciate that and we look
14 forward to that relationship going forward and
15 having a sort of a reset opportunity on some of
16 those things. So...

17 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Me too.

18 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Okay Council Member
19 Rose.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you Chair
21 Lander. He actually wanted to put you in the hot
22 seat.

23 [laughter]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Good morning. And
25 I was going to try to pronounce your name but

2 rather than... I, I hope I can call you commissioner
3 because you are a commissioner...

4 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: That...

5 [crosstalk, laughter]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...at this point
7 right?

8 [crosstalk, laughter]

9 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: ...fine. Right. No, I
10 am.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay. Thank you so
12 much for sparing me the embarrassment. And I just
13 want to kind of follow up on, on what the Chair
14 said. But sort of from a different context I was
15 probably one of the craziest people because I was
16 on community board for 28 years. And so there was a
17 lot of interaction with BSA. And, and historically
18 it was my experience that whatever the community or
19 the community board recommended BSA overlooked and
20 did whatever. And I know that you are limited to
21 you know five particular points that you, by law
22 that you have to look at. However you're now going
23 to another agency where the community board and the
24 community's input is very important. And I'm just a
25 bit concerned about how are you going to strike a

2 balance so that, that that doesn't sort of become
3 again, sort of the, the history, the historical
4 context for an agency that input from both of those
5 entities, the community, and the community board as
6 well as the council of course...

7 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...being most
9 important, Chair Lander is, is important.

10 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I recognize that
11 the jurisdiction at Landmarks is very different
12 from the jurisdiction at, at the BSA. And the BSA
13 actually has a very broad authority and it comes
14 from different statutes and it, to some degree
15 that's why there's sometimes confusion. We have
16 variances which rely on five findings. We have
17 authority through the general city... which has to do
18 with building within mapped streets which have a
19 different set of findings...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Mm-hmm. Sure.

21 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: And similarly we
22 have appeals on buildings departments
23 determinations. I actually think that during,
24 especially for variance cases it wasn't as black
25 and white as the board did not take into

2 consideration the community board's concerns. I
3 think the majority of the time the community board
4 and the board, and the Board of Standards and
5 Appeals, BSA have actually been in line. Very often
6 during the process these projects that initially
7 may be I think objectionable to communities have
8 also been problematic for the board. And during the
9 process which as, included several hearings the
10 projects have been modified and I think as chair
11 I've tried to in fact broker something which is
12 much more palatable to the community board as well
13 as still meets the findings. And you know I agree
14 that the board was required by law to look at those
15 findings as a guiding principal. However I think
16 the input of the communities has never been
17 ignored, at least not in my tenor.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And, and not to
19 imply that that was but I just wanted to you know
20 get from you a sense of the importance that
21 community will play in, in the relationship with..

22 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Landmarks?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...with Landmarks.

24 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I understand. It,
25 it, currently it plays a role and is important. And

2 I think just in terms of the, the processes that
3 Landmarks has, constantly interacts with
4 communities and I would like to make that even more
5 effective. So definitely on the regulatory side
6 which is projects that are related to buildings or
7 on sites that are within historic districts require
8 a public review process and is always sent to the
9 community board prior to actually being, I'm not
10 sure calendared before...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Mm-hmm.

12 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: ...they actually,
13 Landmarks hold its hearing. I recognize that maybe
14 they're some areas that currently could be opaque
15 but I think I'd strive to make sure that they
16 become much more transparent. So the, I think
17 Landmarks is challenged because at one side you
18 want to make the processes streamlined and you want
19 them to be predictable and you want to lessen
20 sometimes the timeline on how things take place.
21 But on the other hand you also want to make sure
22 that, that there's input. And so while I'm there
23 I'm really hoping to just assess what would really
24 make sense in terms of making the more routine
25 projects more as of right so to speak and the

2 projects that really deserve and require the input
3 of the communities to continue to take place.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And I thank you
5 for that. I, you know we had Mount Manresa and the
6 community really had expected a little more
7 responsiveness from Landmarks Preservation. And,
8 and so I'm now in the, the middle of a historic
9 district battle on Harrison, Harrison Street and
10 one of the major concerns for that district are
11 that there are members of that community that feel
12 that they cannot afford to maintain their
13 properties once they're landmarked as well as some
14 not-for-profits in that district and that they just
15 don't have the disposable income even with the
16 grants that are, are now currently provided. So how
17 do you look at making it more affordable for those
18 homes that are you know landmarked to maintain
19 those properties?

20 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Okay. I think there
21 are a couple of things. One is that there are,
22 there are grants and I understand they may, they're
23 limited...

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Yeah.

2 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: ...but I'd like to
3 explore that if I become chair.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Would you look at
5 expanding that pot of monies that's available?

6 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I think that
7 different, the money comes from different sources.
8 And I would say that I'd, I think I'd really need
9 to look at what these different sources are. So
10 some are from the Community Development grant, some
11 are tax credits. I know that HPD is looking at this
12 as well. And I think I would like to work with them
13 and see how we could actually fulfil or really
14 achieve both goals which is goals to allow for
15 affordability in historic districts and at the same
16 time allow them to be maintained so...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

18 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And what do you
20 think we would need to allow people who own
21 landmarked houses to write off maybe their
22 improvement cost on their taxes so that it doesn't
23 remain an unfunded mandate?

24 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I, again I would
25 say that this is an area I'm not familiar with.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Mm-hmm.

3 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: But I think if
4 this, this is a critical issue and if I become
5 chair I think I'd like to get sort of really the,
6 the, the opinions and the feedback from people
7 who've, who are, have that happening in their
8 communities and then we can try and chart out of
9 course a plan to, to make any kind of funding or
10 financing more effective.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And my last
12 question is just you know how do you propose to
13 address the, maybe it's perceived difference that
14 you know Manhattan gets all the resources and that
15 the, you know the other boroughs are not you know
16 given the same level of resources to locate and
17 designate historic resources? Or do you feel that
18 that's a fair comment.

19 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I think... is it a
20 fair comment? I think that there's, there is a
21 perception and maybe even true that a lot of
22 Landmarks and designations are in Manhattan and I
23 think this is an opportunity to look at all the
24 boroughs. And if you look at the history of New
25 York it's made up of I don't know five cities that

2 came together. Each one has its own identity, each
3 one has its own history. And it's, I think it's
4 imperative that, that as an agency that looks at
5 all five boroughs that we devote resources for all
6 of them.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you so much.
8 Thank you Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you Council
10 Member Rose. We've been joined by Council Member
11 Ydanis Rodriguez from Manhattan. Next up Council
12 Member Garodnick followed by Council Member Chin.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Thank you
14 very much and I, I just want to express my, how
15 impressed I am with your, your background and your
16 tenor and I think that you, you clearly have the
17 right qualifications for this position. And so I
18 want to recognize that right off the bat. I only
19 have two, actually really only one philosophical
20 question that I wanted to throw at you because it's
21 one that I have encountered before and one that
22 frankly I have struggled with and struggled with
23 understanding what truly should be the, the
24 balance. And that is the, the interest of economic
25 development versus historic preservation. I'll cite

2 for you just conversations we've had just over the
3 past year. In east midtown in the context of
4 rezoning which was not effectuated but we also had
5 you know some question as to whether or not there
6 was a need for more urgency of landmark review in
7 that context, concern expressed that perhaps
8 landmarking could stop economic development in a
9 place where it was you know really important. How
10 do you view the role of Landmarks commission in
11 that context. Do you view it as a purely we must
12 evaluate the historic context and worthiness of a
13 building and will leave the economic considerations
14 to the city council or do you think that the
15 Landmarks commission should be including that
16 calculation at the outset?

17 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: With my planners
18 hat I would say the second which is one should look
19 at all sorts of considerations. I think that the
20 Landmarks Law is, has certain criteria that has to
21 be looked at and how do you melt the two together.
22 I would say that because you're talking about plans
23 that include economic development in east midtown,
24 other places, or maybe for affordable housing. To
25 me it seems that the best way to integrate these

2 issues is really to have the agencies work together
3 and try and come up with a comprehensive plan. So
4 it's not necessary that Landmarks is going to look
5 at all these considerations that may not perhaps be
6 in its jurisdiction but it's a partner in looking
7 at, at neighborhood planning and district planning
8 for the city.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Okay thank
10 you. And I recognize that that's a very difficult
11 question. I don't know the answer to it but I was
12 interested in your, in your insights. And lastly I
13 would just say just as a follow-up to Council
14 Member Rose certainly somebody who represents
15 Manhattan I, I...

16 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: ...I want to
18 acknowledge... [crosstalk] I want to acknowledge that
19 there, there obviously is a perceived imbalance
20 that people have been asking Landmarks to correct
21 and I appreciate that and recognize that. I just
22 also wanted to not that there continue to be
23 districts, individual Landmarks to be designated in
24 Manhattan and we just don't want to lose sight of
25 that...

2 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Oh we won't.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: ...either.

4 Thank you.

5 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Okay.

6 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you. And I
7 just want to underline something from Council
8 Member Garodnick's testimony. You and I also spoke
9 about this...

10 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...in advance. I, you
12 know there are the designation that you, you
13 receive request for evaluation, we'll talk a little
14 bit more about those from members of communities
15 all over the city who want properties evaluated
16 and, and districts considered. You have a staff of
17 professionals who are looking and thinking about
18 what properties should be designated and preserved
19 and what districts there are. And then there's this
20 third category of parts of the city where either,
21 you know there's a plan for growth and development
22 taking place and my experience in the prior term
23 was that there was a little bit of, there was a
24 defensiveness or embarrassment but a, a lack of a
25 full throttled we should be doing this planning

2 together. And was almost like there's a growth plan
3 on the table, city planning is doing a plan and at
4 the last stages maybe a few buildings will get
5 considered because people are upset about the
6 development plans. That always struck me as odd.
7 The, the law doesn't prohibit more robust
8 collaboration so that at earlier stages in the
9 process as the mayor has talked about in the
10 housing plan, as Council Member Garodnick was
11 talking about in east midtown part of the dialogue
12 about a neighborhood's future is not only you know
13 where growth might occur and how, and how much
14 affordable housing there may be but what
15 infrastructure is needed and what plans for
16 preservation can be part of strengthening and
17 improving those communities. So I welcome this
18 dialogue and I think it'll be fruitful. It doesn't
19 have a precise legal form but knowing that you want
20 to have that collaboration with the sister
21 agencies... [crosstalk]

22 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Absolutely.

23 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...just encouraging
24 so thank you. Next up is Council Member followed by
25 Council Member... [static]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. Good
3 morning and welcome. And I am really impressed you
4 know with your background and your résumé and I'm
5 pretty confident you'll do a great job...

6 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Thank you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...at LPC and also
8 it's always good to have more woman leadership.

9 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: That's something
11 we're looking forward to. I wanted to ask you a
12 couple of question. The Landmark Commission, one of
13 the, the issue I think within you know my district
14 and I think Chair Lander talked about is really
15 working with the Landmark Commission, the
16 accessibility to the agency, and, and having that
17 openness working with owners of landmark buildings
18 and also with advocates who are working to try to
19 get building landmark or, or historic district. And
20 so how do you see going forward that the agency
21 could be a better resource for owners and also for
22 community advocates. So there are more interaction
23 and more of a working together.

24 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Let's see. First of
25 all I think that goal is very important. So I just...

2 I, I want you to know that I'm aligned with you on
3 that issue about trying to bring different
4 stakeholders together early in the process and from
5 all sides. So as moving forward one can chart a
6 course that I, has incorporated this, any kind of
7 robust dialogue. What it would actually mean in
8 terms of structurally if you go there do you have
9 meetings, do you have regular forums. I'd like to
10 explore that really if I go there, to find a way to
11 work with council members and communities and
12 advocates at the table at the same time.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah I mean I, it
14 from our experience is that a lot of time it would
15 take the council member kept pushing and pushing...

16 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...just to get a
18 meeting with the advocates. So, it'll be great is
19 that they could get a meeting on their own or...

20 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right, right.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...they were to have
22 the access to work with the commission. We're
23 always happy to advocate but...

24 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right.
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...you know, but
3 it's really good to build that relationship. See
4 other question I have is that this whole idea of
5 cultural landmark and especially in areas where we
6 have both, you know historic and, and cultural
7 coming together how do you see, you know going
8 forward in terms of like historic district to
9 really include some of those characteristic in
10 terms of culture, history of the culture. Just for
11 example I remember my discussion with the
12 commission in and about Chinatown. The history is
13 there, the culture is there but individual building
14 might not merit landmark...

15 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But like even
17 going forward with the discussion and seeing how to
18 preserve the culture and the historic character of
19 an area. Another example is on the bowery we have
20 some historic building but there is also a whole
21 cultural history there that needs to be recognize
22 and preserve. And the advocates are pushing well
23 could we have you know a landmark district. But oh
24 you don't have enough building to qualify but then
25 they neglect the cultural aspect.

2 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm. I think
3 that if the goal is to preserve character or
4 cultural character and... There are different ways of
5 doing it. You can do it through Landmarks, you can
6 do it through special districts and zonings. So I
7 think one has to really think about what are the
8 implications of these various mechanisms. I'm
9 thinking about Time Square for example...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Mm-hmm.

11 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: That has a very
12 strong character, got all these signs and there was
13 a period where big buildings were going to come in
14 and probably take off all the signs. But the zoning
15 actually addressed that to ensure in what you see
16 right now is a lot of, you'll, you'll see those
17 Broadway signs and everybody recognizes...
18 established a character which may not normally come
19 and appropriately come within the purview of
20 Landmarks. So I think that it's a very interesting
21 question about how one deals with the character of
22 neighborhoods. What is, what should be landmarked,
23 what should go through other mechanisms to
24 preserve, because I think whichever mechanism you
25 choose whether it's Landmarks or something else has

2 other implications as well. So I think one would
3 want to be very, really evaluate and be careful
4 about how we look at this and not to dismiss at all
5 the importance that one needs to recognize these,
6 the character and somehow allow it... [crosstalk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So with the
8 Landmark Preservation Commission...

9 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...under your
11 leadership will you play a leading role in terms of
12 bringing other agencies together to really help a
13 community analyze which is the best way to meet
14 their goals?

15 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Whether I as
16 Landmarks Chair? It's something that I, I would
17 think about. But I would think that even elected
18 officials could take that, that opportunity to
19 bring us to the table. But yes I think if there was
20 a request made of me to look at an area and in
21 terms of that then I'd take that into consideration
22 and see if you know working with the agencies and
23 the administration so see if there is a way to do
24 it.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Okay. Thank you.

3 One last question. Because we talk about the, the
4 mayor's you know housing plan and one of the
5 important part of that is preserving affordable
6 housing. So can you see that designation as a tool
7 to protect the rent regulated and rent control
8 housing stock, the buildings that we have in the
9 city, like a lot of the, the Tiananmen building is
10 still an important housing stock within the city.
11 And so do you see using landmark to, as a way to
12 preserve these affordable housing?

13 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I think that the
14 basis for landmarking is very different from what
15 you're requesting which is about preserving
16 affordable housing. I think there're different
17 mechanisms that the city has that can do it and
18 maybe Landmarks is not necessarily the most
19 appropriate one. So you may have districts where
20 you have building that have, have affordable
21 housing in it. And I think in those situations it's
22 absolutely incumbent on the agency to work with HPD
23 to help for the, the rehabilitation of those units
24 and, and allow for affordable housing. But I would
25 say the same thing that Landmarks should be the

2 basis to do contextual zonings. If you have
3 districts that have a particular form but do not
4 necessarily meet the criteria of Landmarks than
5 there may, may be other mechanisms.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But there might be
7 opportunities where... [crosstalk]

8 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I, absolutely there
9 are... [crosstalk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Right? Where a
11 building... [crosstalk]

12 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...or can be
14 landmarked and at the same time that is a building
15 with affordable housing unit in there.

16 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I agree. I think
17 that... But I think the criteria ultimately is, that
18 one would look at is the landmark criteria. But I
19 agree they're definitely is overlap. There could be
20 situations where you designations that are
21 incredibly important but there's affordable housing
22 issues that are, are necessary and how do you not
23 work with HPD to see how, how both goals could be
24 achieved.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Okay thank you.
3 Thank you Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Just to, to build
5 on that Council Member Chin two thoughts. One is in
6 some cases designation can, there are tax benefits
7 that are available to designated benefits or the
8 opportunity to apply for some of the funds that
9 will tier from the conservancy later and where
10 those are affordable housing there may be sort of
11 an opportunity to, you know where they are, hit
12 both historic and in need of investment to sort of
13 make sure we're coordinating that strategy. So yes
14 it only gets designated if it meets the criteria
15 but we're mindful in advance about what economic
16 opportunities there are. And then I will also point
17 out I, Council Member Koo spoke of and I've had a
18 chance to speak a little with Commissioner Been
19 about the possibility of a, a TDR, transfer
20 development rights program that might be able to
21 enable designated properties to sell their air
22 rights over a wider...

23 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm.

24 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...range and
25 affordable, affordable housing is certainly one of

2 the things being considered in that mix and that
3 could be for the new construction of affordable
4 housing but it might be especially appropriate to
5 allow those resources to be used as part of the
6 administration's affordable housing preservation
7 plan. And one thing, it took me a long time to get
8 converted on this. I thought of myself in my early
9 years as an affordable housing person. But I would
10 submit to you that the folks who have been involved
11 on the ground in New York City's neighborhoods
12 doing affordable housing have preserved an enormous
13 amount of the character of New York City's
14 neighborhoods, maybe not designation worthy
15 buildings but the character of neighborhoods by
16 saving buildings that have become abandoned from
17 being demolished and there is a, an important
18 preservation role and some good opportunities to
19 explore this collaboration I think Council Member
20 Chin speaks to. So thanks for your openness to
21 that. The last two council members with questions
22 are Council Member Levine followed by Council
23 Member Rodriguez and then we'll move, well then I
24 have a few and then we'll move to public testimony.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you Mr.
3 Chair and thank you Ms. Srinivan. A very impressive
4 resume and, and also I'm impressed by your clear
5 understanding that successful landmarking is about
6 balance. It's been a theme that you've hit upon in,
7 in many of the topics we've addressed today. One
8 area where this might come up is the increasing
9 challenge of houses of worship which are often
10 historic structures and actually some of the oldest
11 and most significant structures in the city are,
12 are churches and other faith, faith based
13 institutions. Some of them now are struggling
14 financially as congregations dwindle and
15 neighborhoods change and are, are sitting on top of
16 land which has tremendous development value but the
17 development would mean lossing [phonetic], losing
18 or in some way diminishing the historic structure.
19 There's one project in my district, Cathedral of
20 Saint John the Divine which you may be familiar
21 with, it's pretty prominent where a few years ago
22 they developed a piece of luxury housing on their
23 grounds and are now about to embark on another
24 project that actually would, would front all along
25 the, the north façade of the cathedral which has

2 been deeply disturbing to the community. They make
3 the case that they have financial needs, that they
4 have no other way of, of resolving. What are your
5 thoughts on how to, to balance in such situations
6 between the financial needs of a congregation and
7 the, the communities legitimate interest in
8 preserving historic structures?

9 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I don't think
10 there's any easy answer to that. And I am somewhat
11 familiar but not to the full extent. So if this is
12 something that as Landmarks we will be looking at
13 then I think you know I'd like to assess and
14 evaluate at that time. I think there's, it's a case
15 by case basis really. And so I reserve judgment at
16 this time in terms of how I would look at this. But
17 I think the different stakeholders, one should
18 consult with both sides, both the church as well as
19 neighbors and, and council members so..

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: I may, I may
21 just be out of form on this but are there, are
22 there a significant number of cases in which houses
23 of worship have been landmarked over the objection
24 of the institution or is it an unwritten rule that
25 the institution itself would need to consent?

2 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I'm, don't know the
3 answer to that. I don't know whether it's, in all
4 cases that the institution has supported the
5 designation. I'm, I can't answer that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Can, can you
7 imagine cases where it might be appropriate to
8 designate a house of worship over the objections of
9 the congregation?

10 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: There may be...
11 [laughs] but I, I think I'd have to assess it
12 really to see what, what the conditions are. Maybe
13 there's a way that one can broker a compromise. But
14 I, I can't really say.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you very
16 much.

17 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: And Council Member
19 Levine you know probably the, we had a couple of
20 quite contentious designation considerations in the
21 last term. You know one the more typical economic
22 development version, the downtown Brooklyn
23 skyscraper district which was sort of you know
24 owner, developer interest, you know... preservation
25 landmark interest. But probably the most was the

2 West Park Presbyterian Church in Council Member,
3 then Council Member Brewer's district which she
4 supported which we upheld the designation of in
5 which the congregation vociferously opposed and
6 there was some, I don't know that you would call it
7 compromise... Council Member Brewer worked hard to
8 organize support to assist them in addressing the
9 financial challenges that they faced. But you know
10 they opposed it right up 'till the end and we
11 designated it anyway. So a fair, good questions for
12 you know a new applicant but just a little history
13 in terms of what we've done so...

14 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I was just going to
15 add that I think that when you also create more
16 creative mechanisms for transfers then it sometimes
17 levitates or, or reduces any concerns about being
18 designated. So...

19 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: And certainly...

20 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: The city overall
21 can do something at that...

22 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: The, the, the TDR
23 model, I think the primary, certainly one of the
24 top level thoughts of candidates for beneficiaries
25 of transfer development rights are religious

2 institutions in neighborhoods where the real estate
3 values have risen dramatically and they're quite
4 old and perhaps that could provide the resources in
5 a more significant way. So thank you. Council
6 Member Rodriguez, the last...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you
8 Chair. It was not doubt that with your resume and,
9 and experience that you bring like you will be like
10 a great chair of the Landmark. And, and I think
11 that as the mayor has selected or made important
12 nomination with people that, with a large important
13 background and you're so, are one of those. Have a
14 few question. One is about like in your role if you
15 become the chair of the Landmark and Preservation
16 Commission do you think that the criterias to
17 landmark in New York City should be wider or
18 narrower?

19 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I think I'd like to
20 assess that. So I, I think if I... you know I think
21 one of the things to look at is the criteria for
22 several reasons. But I think one, one... I don't have
23 a point of view right now whether it should be
24 lessened or, or expanded but one should definitely
25 review it.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: And I, and I
3 just bring that to your attention because I know
4 that, in that process of community input to
5 landmark in particular project or building I think
6 it's important you know to, in my believe it to get
7 a community input. Like say I, northern Manhattan
8 we have 181st and Broadway have one of the oldest
9 movies theater.

10 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: The Coliseum
12 theater and I know that they, when, when the
13 theater was closed there was a lot of effort by
14 resident for Washington and the whole area to
15 landmark. And I know that they answer that we got
16 back was that they, that even though it's one of
17 the oldest theater but there were not enough
18 criteria to landmark. So I, I hope that if you
19 become the chair that no, not necessarily look at
20 that particular building but citywide to see if we
21 should continue having the same criteria or is
22 those, should those criteria be narrows or be
23 wider. My second is, question is about as you say
24 in your opening statement how you are sure that
25 furnasing [phonetic] in public participation and

2 based on your previous experience as a, as a, a, a
3 BSA I have also another local question which is
4 also in my district. There have been a, a developer
5 who is interested on getting a variable to, to
6 build a, a fitness gym at 176 and Broadway in a
7 location where with a renovation with the bus
8 terminal at 178 and Broadway they, there's going to
9 be new gym also fitness to be established in that
10 area. And two block from there there's another one.
11 So for me my concern's untying that's particular
12 application is because when you look at that, at
13 that property, that property is in the market for
14 sale. So in another, and, and we the elected
15 official for northern Manhattan we send a letter of
16 rejection to that very application that it has. So
17 can you elaborate about the furnace [phonetic] or
18 when it come to also getting the improve on the
19 community, let's say based on those particular
20 projects, so just the one that I mentioned to you.

21 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: That, that case is
22 actually before the board right now so I don't
23 think I can comment on that. But in general I would
24 say that the board reviews different, the Board of
25 Standards and Appeals reviews different

2 applications and there is different criteria on the
3 basis in which we grant or approve or disapprove a
4 project. We have seen situations where we've
5 received testimony from the community boards and
6 elected officials would speak directly to what the
7 board has to consider and that's taken to
8 consideration. In other situations the board really
9 doesn't have, may or may not have control over the
10 particular concern that's raised. So it'll be, we
11 follow what, what the statutes tell us and how to
12 evaluate those projects and, and...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: ...hope that if
14 you become the chair and you know let's just say
15 the variance and opening of the process is very
16 important because there's some places, especially
17 Manhattan where now Harlem is already developed.
18 And now there's a, a forces of, expanding the
19 expansioning all the area. And I know that northern
20 Manhattan is one of those and, and I think that we
21 have to create a balance between opportunity for
22 developer that has a, the resources and we welcome
23 for them to invest but also knowing that we also
24 want to preserve the landmark of our communities so
25 thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you Council
3 Member Rodriguez. A few questions of, of my own to
4 close out. And I'll, the first I'll follow up on
5 this BSA question kind of coming out of your
6 experience there. It's my experience having dealt
7 with the BSA a bit before your leadership and a bit
8 after that you really did and I know for the, some
9 other stakeholders as well achieved substantial
10 reforms there from an agency that people felt like
11 didn't always follow the five findings or act
12 according to rule and to one that really took its
13 rule seriously and, and that matters a lot. But I
14 think you know that you also heard, and we all have
15 heard frustration that people felt like folks you
16 know, not just developers, individual homeowners
17 were able to get variances for things that
18 undermined the quality, the character of their
19 neighborhoods and that the BSA in, in many cases
20 went ahead and granted those variances. And, and
21 therefore as people of course are considering the
22 LPC nomination you have people in Southern
23 Brooklyn. I heard a lot of this. We feel like well
24 variance hasn't been used consistently to undermine
25 the character of our neighborhoods. And so how is

2 it that the person who chaired the BSA that granted
3 those variances is the best choice to lead the
4 preservation agency. And I, I guess I wonder if you
5 could just, what have you learned from what you've
6 heard from New Yorkers in considering this balance.
7 And I think your answer has been the BSA has to
8 consider the rules it has and make the decisions in
9 each case. But let me ask you to step back given
10 now, having this 10 years' experience watching this
11 play out in neighborhoods all around the city what
12 have you learned from that process that you would
13 bring to the LPC in, in carrying forward a
14 preservation vision?

15 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I've... I have
16 learned, learned a lot.

17 [laughter]

18 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: And... But just on
19 the issue of, of neighborhood character and some of
20 the applications that we've had at the BSA requires
21 you to make the finding, others do not. So
22 sometimes we, just to let you know we are, our
23 hands are tied sometimes. And I may not like that
24 building but the issue before me is not that
25 whether this building's appropriate or not. And

2 that's happened in, in, you know in southern
3 Brooklyn. And so I, I understand where some of the
4 animosity may be coming from. But at Landmarks you
5 know my feeling is you had one hat over there and
6 now one has another hat. And this hat...

7 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: And I'm not asking...
8 [crosstalk]

9 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: I, I think I agree
11 with you that...

12 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Okay.

13 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...in many cases
14 where people express frustration that...

15 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...a variance was
17 granted you acted according to the law...

18 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right, right.

19 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...and people may
20 have had frustration with the law. So I, this
21 isn't...

22 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: I think my question
24 is I think you now have a, a lot of data from that,
25 those experiences...

2 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm.

3 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...about peoples'
4 frustrations with some of the issues that Council
5 Member Rodriguez and others expressed about what,
6 how development can undermine the character of a
7 neighborhood and I just wonder if you've, from that
8 totality of that experience you know what you
9 bring, you know does that inform, or how do you
10 think that informs what you'll bring to the new job
11 in terms of what people want in the preservation of
12 their neighborhoods. And maybe let me add that, ask
13 this question in a slightly different way. Look I,
14 the Landmarks Law was written in 1965 with a very
15 particular idea...

16 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm.

17 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...of what's historic
18 and preservation worthy that did at that time
19 emphasize you know Manhattan historic structures.
20 And you know those folks would never have thought
21 you know the kind of outer borough row houses were
22 what they were writing the law for. And we now find
23 ourselves at a moment when many New Yorkers and
24 many places are thinking about. The character of
25

2 their neighborhoods and want to in their minds
3 preserve its character and sense of place..

4 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right. Right.

5 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...even if those
6 buildings don't you know meet some, some sense of
7 what the standards are. So I just, I'm curious
8 whether there's anything from the BSA experience
9 that will inform what you come to LPC with.

10 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I think, I think
11 one does learn about what, how people define
12 neighborhood character. And it's, it's typology,
13 it's sometimes the color of buildings, it's the
14 height. Very often you have existing buildings in
15 context which sometimes, I'm not going to blame
16 city planning for this but sometimes there's a
17 mismatch with the zoning itself. The only thing I
18 would say is that I, that this is, it's a very
19 nuanced issue and, and a complicated one because
20 the city overall has different tools and different
21 agencies have different tools to try to get to the
22 same product but they're limited in different ways
23 because of what their mandate is. So I will, I
24 don't want to be repetitive but I think I
25 understand your concern. I think that looking at

2 planning of neighborhoods or districts should be
3 comprehensive and then one can try and find out
4 what's the right mechanism to, to really preserve
5 what the people want to preserve. And so Landmarks
6 has its limitations, zoning may have its
7 limitations. Some people like BSA, some do. Only
8 because it's a very individualized. So what happens
9 is that if you rezone something then it's all as of
10 right but if you allow people to come before the
11 board then they get an opportunity. But that's one,
12 you know that's one set of people. But, but I just
13 want to go back to your earlier thought about just
14 you know comprehensive planning. I think it's very
15 important and I think this administration's really
16 interested in doing that.

17 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: One other
18 similarity between the BSA and the LPC is being the
19 leader of a commission or a board which is an
20 unusual model relative to the other kinds of
21 agencies where a commissioner who works for the
22 mayor...

23 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right.
24
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...comes to decisions
3 and then implements those decisions. So this job
4 like your current one...

5 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right.

6 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...involves a
7 slightly different challenge. You're appointed by
8 the mayor. You've got a point of view that comes
9 from the administration and yet there's these
10 individuals who are appointed for their own
11 individual expertise. And I wonder how, more
12 looking forward than looking back...

13 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm.

14 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...but bringing your
15 experience from BSA you know how do you think about
16 balancing between wanting the professional
17 individual input of these smart people who will
18 make up the LPC with we have an, the
19 administration's got an agenda and a set of goals
20 that we're trying to implement and how you would.
21 That's been a tension at the past in many of these
22 agencies including...

23 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right.

24 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...the LPC. And I
25 just wonder how you think about approaching it.

2 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Well I think I've
3 had, not ten years of experience with a commission
4 and a commission of experts who are considered
5 independent. And when I joined it was, it was an
6 earlier commission and then later on there were a
7 different set of commissioners. And I think in, in
8 both instances I really strive to create a, a, a
9 collegiate and collaborative process. I think
10 sometimes there's disagreements. I think it's the
11 rule of the chair to guide the discussion not
12 necessarily well do this but to guide the
13 discussion in a way that people can understand what
14 the issues are. So I think at, you know I'd love to
15 be the chair of LPC and really look at what the
16 operations of the commission are but I think it
17 does take leadership to ensure that there's clarity
18 in the process. And I think that's clarity is
19 important not only to applicants in terms of
20 getting some direction but also to all the, the
21 members of the community who are looking to see
22 what Landmarks is thinking about. It also allows
23 the commission to incorporate comments from the
24 public and, because you may have applicants who can
25 hear that but may not do anything about it. So

2 it's, it's, the commissioner can actually can
3 sometimes function as a conduit to, to applicant to
4 try and address the concerns that are important to
5 the community and elected officials as well as, as
6 well as the board. And I think, or sorry the
7 commission at L, Landmarks. I think at the BSA I
8 believe that that's, I did a lot of that. At least,
9 even if we came out on the wrong side or at a
10 different side I think we were always very mindful
11 of the comments of both the community board and
12 people who came to, to testify as well as council,
13 and council members.

14 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Great, thank you.

15 Just two more questions. One I think follows up on
16 this nicely. You know you talk about clarity and
17 needing clarity in the process. And you know one of
18 my experiences with the LPC is that the lack of
19 time frames, deadlines, and transparency
20 requirements in the law or in rule you know are,
21 wind up being a detriment. So people submit
22 requests for evaluation and there's no rules on how
23 long it'll take or whether they'll hear anything
24 back. Even if something is calendared there's no
25 deadlines for how long that takes or whether there

2 even ever needs to be a vote. And none of that, not
3 none of that, but some of that is now on the web
4 and made somewhat transparent...

5 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Mm-hmm.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...but, but
7 relative to other agencies that have more rules for
8 application, deadlines, and transparency there's
9 less of that at LPC and obviously the law is the
10 law as it currently stands and if we make proposals
11 to change it you would, you would evaluate them.
12 But you know what's your, what's your general
13 thought on the, on the appropriate role of
14 transparency and deadlines and in, you know in
15 clarity as you, as you say.

16 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I think it's... the
17 issue of transparency I would say somewhat
18 different from deadlines. And, but they're, they go
19 hand in hand. You know I've chair a board that
20 doesn't have deadlines and I think that doesn't
21 necessarily mean you can't have an efficient
22 process. You have city planning that has very
23 strong deadlines and sometimes to the detriment of
24 a process too as, as we know because things have
25 to, then are taken off, have to be restarted

2 because it wasn't enough time. But I think with
3 good leadership I, I think one can strive to make
4 that process efficient. And so on the idea of
5 transparency because I think that's, I, I do
6 believe that's absolutely important for any, for
7 good government, just is. And the many ways to do
8 that... different forms you can, you can make sure
9 that people understand how Landmarks works through
10 website information. You can have trainings. You
11 can have training. You can have instructional
12 manuals. You can be clear and articulate in the
13 process of public review. And you can be very clear
14 in your decision making in terms of what your
15 reports that you write. So afterwards if somebody
16 reads it'll be understand the basis for our
17 decision. So I think that there ways one can be
18 transparent on that end. In terms of the deadlines
19 is it appropriate to have absolute deadlines? I
20 think for more routine work it's good to do that
21 but I think the commission process I would say
22 there's some pros and cons to it and I'd like to
23 obviously evaluate.

24 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: So we'll come,
25 we'll come back to that another time. And I just

2 will end with a question which I think you've just
3 opened up as well. We've spent most of our time
4 talking about the designation issues which makes
5 sense because those are what come to the council
6 and are sort of community wide...

7 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right.

8 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...but obviously a
9 very big part of what LPC does is considers
10 individual applications by applicants, sometimes
11 developers but I, in, in aggregate typically
12 homeowners. And for you know certificate of no
13 affect or a, an approval or hardship application...
14 Obviously we also hear when people are frustrated
15 with that though my general sense is that there's
16 been on the pretty good timeliness of response but
17 a strong desire to keep doing better. And I just, I
18 wonder what your thoughts are on...

19 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I, I'm completely
20 on board on that. I'm trying to make things better.
21 I know that Landmarks has done a lot of work on
22 that already. I think that one should continue to
23 work on that. It's really, it's to rule making but
24 it really is to look at things that are more
25 routine that can be taken care of at a staff level.

2 And really allow the, the more important and
3 critical projects to go through commission review.
4 And I think it, it just, it lessened some of the
5 responsibilities that homeowners may have. And on
6 very mundane and routine things and also just
7 provides much more predictability and I think that
8 helps in reducing delays and costs.

9 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: And I'll note I, I
10 welcome that in your written response you spoke to
11 expanding fast track, the, you know the system that
12 the department, the commission now has in place.
13 And maybe this goes to council Member Rose's
14 question. Obviously people want that building in
15 their neighborhood, on their street not to be able
16 to be materially altered in negative ways..

17 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right, right.

18 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...and want to know
19 that you can't sneak things through. But we just
20 then consistently got a story. This is in the
21 backyard, no one can see it..

22 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Right.

23 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...it was actually
24 interior, things that are, you know could be you
25 know fast and simple and approved by staff. So I

2 welcomed your written response to look at that and
3 see where it could appropriately be expanded which
4 I think... of all the issues but might go a long way
5 to addressing some of the concerns that, that
6 homeowners have expressed to us over the, over the
7 years. Great. Well thank you very much for
8 answering all of our questions so thoroughly and
9 patiently. We really welcome and appreciate your,
10 your presence here. I, I hope you'll stick around
11 to hear what...

12 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: I will...

13 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: ...what members of
14 the public have to say. We have 10 or, 10 or so
15 signed up. And but so first thank you very much for
16 your testimony and your time.

17 MEENAKSHI SRINIVAN: Thank you Chair
18 Lander and members of the committee. I really
19 enjoyed it. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Alright so we're,
21 I'm first going to invite the two citywide
22 organizations that are here. Then in the spirit of
23 emphasizing the outer boroughs I have a few people
24 from outer borough neighborhood preservation
25 organizations. Then we'll do the Manhattan

2 neighborhood preservation organizations and I...
3 Thanks to everyone for, for that. So we'll first
4 ask Andrea Goldwyn from the Landmarks Conservancy
5 and Nadeshda Williams from the Historic Districts
6 Council. And we are going to do three minute... Thank
7 you Chair Koo. We'll do three minutes limits on
8 testimony for this period of time. We'll take
9 written testimony if people have it and, and it's
10 longer.

11 ANDREA GOLDWYN: Okay, okay good day
12 Chair Lander, members of the Council and Chair
13 Srinivan. I'm Andrea Goldwyn speaking on behalf of
14 the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The conservancy
15 is a private, not-for-profit organization founded
16 in 1973. Our mission is to preserve and protect
17 historic resources throughout New York via
18 advocacy, technical assistance, and as Chair Lander
19 alluded to financial assistance in the form of
20 loans and grants. The Landmarks Preservation
21 Commission has thrived under all of its chairs
22 including Robert Tierney and others who did not
23 come from the preservation world but have
24 demonstrated their commitment to New York's
25 architectural heritage and its important role in

2 the city's economy and livability. From what we
3 understand of Chair Srinivan's tenor at BSA she
4 listens to all sides, makes informed intelligent
5 decisions, and has created an open process all of
6 which can only serve her and the LPC well as she
7 takes the helm. The commission and the very concept
8 of landmarking have faced a steady barrage of
9 criticism from some quirthers [phonetic] especially
10 in the last several years. We'd like to say that
11 landmarking has proven to be an indispensable
12 factor in the city's growth and development. While
13 any agency can be improved the new chair is
14 definitely inheriting a broken process. This is a
15 small agency with a substantial mission. We call
16 for an increase in budget and staff to better
17 enable it to perform its job. We hope that the
18 chair will stand against misguided attempts to
19 weaken the Landmarks Law and subordinate
20 preservation. The conservancy has always worked
21 well with the LPC and we anticipate continuing this
22 strong relationship. There's much to look forward
23 to next year in the 50th anniversary of the
24 Landmarks Law and we hope that the new chair will

2 help lead that celebration. Thank you for the
3 opportunity to present the conservancy's views.

4 Good morning or good afternoon now. My
5 name is Nadeshda Williams. I'm with the Historic
6 Districts Council. HDC is the citywide advocate
7 for New York City's historic neighborhoods. And as
8 the only organization that attends every LPC public
9 hearing and public meeting, you'll be seeing a lot
10 of us we appreciate this opportunity to welcome Ms.
11 Srinivan and to discuss the agency's future. It is
12 the HDC's firm believe backed up by decades of
13 observation that the New York City Landmarks Law
14 and the commission have enhanced and improved our
15 city. Landmark designation stabilizes neighborhoods
16 which do include affordable housing, creates jobs,
17 empowers communities, and attracts private
18 investment into the city. More importantly
19 landmarks and historic districts provide a physical
20 continuity to our city's past enabling residents
21 and visitors alike to experience New York's
22 history. First and foremost we feel the new
23 Landmarks Chair must believe in and show devotion
24 to the goals of historic preservation. The New York
25 City Landmarks Law places the preservation of our

2 city's heritage as a public necessity and empowers
3 the LPC to act to protect our shared history. In
4 doing so the LPC regulates some of the most
5 expensive real estate in the country and there are
6 profoundly powerful vested interests that have been
7 working for years to compromise and hobble the
8 agency's effectiveness. Although these forces often
9 paint landmarking as a luxury social good and an
10 elitist concern used to resolve nimbi issues in
11 truth historic preservation efforts are inclusive
12 and community based. The Landmarks Chair needs to
13 communicate and articulate the long term value of
14 preservation to the city as a whole and to be the
15 first line of defense for the agency's mission. The
16 chair must also forcefully maintain the
17 independence of the agencies against internal and
18 external pressures. As part of a city government
19 there will always be necess... [phonetic], excuse me,
20 necessary negotiations between competing goals. But
21 the LPC must be unafraid to take strong stands for
22 its mission, preservation. It's wonderful to hear
23 that there will be more collaboration but we want
24 to make sure that LPC doesn't just have a seat but
25 a real seat, not just some small stool in the

2 corner. There is a solid diverse civic community
3 who is dedicated to the preservation of New York's
4 historic neighborhoods and their livability. And we
5 are ready and willing to support the LPC against
6 adversity of all kinds but we need the agency and
7 its chair to be fearless in the pursuit of
8 preservation. To do so though the agency must be
9 properly funded. And I'm running out of time. So we
10 back up the call for more funding for staff who can
11 do all the work. So that it, it serves everyone
12 best. And finally we notice on the B, BSA website
13 in your greeting that you commented that sound
14 growth and development, and preservation of
15 neighborhoods are paramount to the wellbeing of the
16 city and its future. And we hope that we really get
17 to focus on the preservation piece of that
18 equation. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you very
20 much. Well timed to both of you. Thanks for all the
21 work that you do and Andrea for reminding us of the
22 50th anniversary that's coming up. So thank you
23 very much for your testimony. Next up we'll have
24 the two outer borough groups, preservation groups
25 that signed in; Claudette Brady from the Bed-Stuy

2 Society for Historic Preservation and Linda Es-pe-
3 nus, Es-peen-as, Espina right oh, hello, from the
4 Four Borough Preservation League and the West
5 Brighton Restoration Society on Staten Island. They
6 call it the Four Borough Neighborhood Alliance so..

7 [background comments]

8 CLAUDETTE BRADY: Good afternoon. My
9 name is Claudette Brady. I am one of the founders
10 of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Society for Historic
11 Preservation. And I'm here on behalf of the folks
12 in central Brooklyn to talk about our experience
13 with preservation. Firstly I'd like to say that the
14 Bedford district is calendared and we would like to
15 see it designated by the end of the year since I've
16 been working on this since 2007 and I'm really
17 tired.

18 [laughter]

19 CLAUDETTE BRADY: Preservation
20 particularly in Bedford-Stuyvesant has served that
21 community very well. Historic preservation and
22 landmark designation has always been a community
23 driven, grassroots, ground up request. The first
24 came in the 70s when at that time you know post
25 Kennedy coming to visit and we were doing urban

2 revitalization and all of that. But there was the
3 wholesale teardown of brownstone neighborhoods. And
4 that was what, or in, in Bedford-Stuyvesant and
5 that was what started the, the first preservation
6 movement. And what you see in Bedford-Stuyvesant is
7 in areas where you have a historic district or the
8 current proposed historic district you see a
9 neighborhood that maintained a strong African
10 America, African American middle class homeowner
11 base. Something that you did not see in Harlem or
12 other historically black communities in this city
13 that were ravaged by urbanely renewal programs or
14 plan shrinkage or, and all those wonderful things
15 we went through in the 70s and through the 90s.
16 Bedford-Stuyvesant managed to maintain that strong
17 African American middle class homeowner base. And
18 in turn affordable housing for renters. Our plight
19 for affordable housing is not preservation in
20 Bedford-Stuyvesant but on, on the contrary new
21 construction. Because what is affordable housing,
22 it's a relative term and it's relative to what is
23 affordable housing on the upper east side is
24 certainly not affordable housing in Bedford-
25 Stuyvesant. So we are looking to continue with

2 presevating [phonetic], with preserving other
3 historic districts. And I want to say I'm, I'm, I'm
4 so sorry some of the council people have left
5 through the help of HDC and, and Andrea, Landmarks
6 Conservancy we have been at, we've had historic
7 buildings and churches that have been restored and
8 renovated from funding though those agencies which
9 would not have been standing if they were not,
10 either state, state registry designated or
11 Landmarks Commission designated. One of the
12 grandest buildings in Bed-Stuy the... one of the
13 first apartment buildings which also, always
14 compared to the Dakota in New York City it's
15 standing today and is an affordable housing
16 building because it was designated on both
17 Landmarks and the National Historic Registry and
18 the funding was there for them to restore that
19 building and to have people, I mean literally
20 people came out of shelters into those buildings
21 when they were done. So historic preservation has
22 served that community for both the lower income
23 residents and the middle class and, residents in
24 that community. So I am here to advocate when we
25 have that conversation about balancing affordable

2 housing and, and, and historic preservation you
3 need to see it in the context of the neighborhood
4 in which you're doing it. Thank you.

5 LINDA ESPINA: Hello, thank you.

6 Actually it's four groups I'm, I'm here for; Four
7 Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance which is
8 all the boroughs except Manhattan, and Preservation
9 League of Staten Island, West Brighton Restoration
10 Society which is very specific and historic area,
11 the North Shore Waterfront Greenway as well.

12 Historic Preservation is preserving New York and
13 all its people. It is where the past, the few, the
14 present and the future meet. It teaches us to
15 respect our heritage, those who came before us, and
16 ultimately each other so that we can have a great
17 future. We are looking forward to working together
18 with our new commissioner to achieve this future
19 for us and for future generations. It is most
20 important that our American heritage in all of New
21 York City and its boroughs be restored as this is
22 the greatest culmination of people's hopes and
23 dreams the world has ever known in New York City.

24 On the north shore of Staten Island on Richmond
25 Terrace where the Indians once stood on the high

2 ground overlooking the Kill Van Kull past the
3 Staten Island ferry and Snug Harbor and Broadway.
4 They are the sacred sights of west Brighton. One of
5 the most historic places in New York. This is where
6 the Lenape Indians once lived in American
7 revolutionary war sight and abolitionist and
8 literary enclave where Annalita Owens [sp?], the
9 king, and I wrote her memoires. Trinity Church 1801
10 historic cemeteries and early village, the John
11 Degroot House a New York City landmark and much
12 much more. Richmond Terrace tells the story of our
13 country. There is a new park here on these historic
14 shores. The restoration of this place will bring an
15 economic and cultural rebirth and a magnificent
16 future. And I just like to add that in the 60s, the
17 bad old days when the preservation movement took
18 place it was when people themselves went out to all
19 these bad neighborhoods because just about
20 everything was a bad neighborhood and restored with
21 their own hands all of these buildings which are
22 now the most you know coveted neighborhoods. And we
23 have to think about the fact that preservation is
24 economic development. It is not you know a lot of
25 buildings with over built and, and overpriced. It

2 is what people must have, to want to live here. And
3 it's that this produces as we can see small
4 businesses and success for everybody. Sometimes
5 I've, I've heard it's, it's an economy but whose
6 economy? It must be everyone to succeed at last or
7 else it will fail. So that's what preservation is
8 and communication is most important as we know
9 through agencies so that we're doing something.

10 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thanks so very much
11 to both of you for coming out and making the time
12 today. And I hope that, you know the remainder of
13 folks from Manhattan will appreciate that you know
14 we have such strong and diverse geographic support
15 for the preservation work. So thank you. Next up
16 Amanda Davis from the Greenwich Society for
17 Historic Preservation and Bruce Airman [sp?] from
18 Community Board 1. And then just so folks know
19 after that I guess we'll put the last, the final
20 three on one panel which will be Pete Davies from
21 Broadway Residents Coalition, Tara Kelly from
22 Friends of the Upper East Side, and Charles Mora.

23 AMANDA DAVIS: Okay. Good afternoon
24 Council. My name is Amanda Davis and I represent
25 the Greenwich Village Society for Historic

2 Preservation, the largest membership organization
3 in Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo.
4 The next chair of the Landmarks Commission will
5 have an enormous job with great consequences for
6 our city. The work of the LPC is vital in ensuring
7 that many of our city's most distinctive sites and
8 neighborhoods are protected and maintained adding
9 immeasurably to New York's livability, its economic
10 vitality, its appeal as a place of investment, and
11 its popularity as a destination for, from visitors
12 from across the world. Toward that end we believe
13 there are improvements which could be made to the
14 policies and practices of the commission which we
15 hope a new chair will implement and which we hope
16 the council will join us in advocating for. These
17 include one, opening up the process of considering
18 proposed landmark and historic district
19 designations, currently request to consider sites
20 for designation are reviewed solely by the LPC and,
21 chair and staff who then determine whether or not
22 such requests will receive a public hearing in
23 consideration by the full commission. Many worthy
24 requests are rejected through this closed process
25 and never receive their day in court, but the

2 public hearing in spite of strong support from the
3 affected communities, local elected officials,
4 community boards, property owners, and experts in
5 the field. Two, speeding up the process of
6 considering proposed landmarks and historic
7 district designations. Currently the LPC typically
8 waits several months or years between calendaring a
9 site or district and voting on designation. As a
10 result in many cases buildings are altered or
11 destroyed during this period thus circumventing the
12 appropriate process for considering designation.
13 Three, allowing the public greater access and
14 participation. Currently when, from proposals for
15 new construction or alterations are heard by the
16 LPC if the proposal is substantially altered
17 through the process the public is not given a new
18 opportunity to provide feedback or testimony to the
19 commission regarding the revisions. This should be
20 changed to allow the public input. Similarly the
21 LPC currently does not make information about
22 proposed designation, changes to designated
23 properties, the status of landmarks violations and
24 inspections or the progress of its agenda on the
25 day of public hearings accessible to the public

2 using electronic and online tools. We feel there
3 are changes that could be made here to make the,
4 the LPC more accessible to the public. Four, ending
5 the practice of publically announcing review of
6 sites or areas for potential landmark designation
7 before basic calendaring protections are put in
8 place. In recent years the commission has
9 frequently announced its intention to look at an
10 area for designation before moving to calendar
11 which has then resulted in property owners rushing
12 to demolish or alter buildings to avoid
13 designation. The law rightfully requires the
14 commission to notify owners in advance of a vote to
15 calendar a site and we feel this extra step of
16 notifying owners before calendaring has even begun
17 is not necessary. We urge the council to consider
18 the, these issues in reviewing any new chair of the
19 commission and to urge that such common sense
20 reforms be adopted. Whoever is the new chair of the
21 commission we look forward to working with them and
22 the council to ensure that New York City's special
23 history is recognized and protected. Thank you.

24 BRUCE AIRMAN: Bruce Airman, co-chair of
25 the Landmarks Committee of Community Board 1

2 Manhattan. I've been that or the chair for the
3 last, since actually 9/11. Manhattan Community
4 Board 1 is delighted that Mayor de Blasio has
5 appointed the professional and fair Meenakshi
6 Srinivan, a skilled architect and city planner with
7 many years of city service to be the new chairwoman
8 of the New York City Landmarks Preservation
9 Commission. Because the Landmarks Preservation
10 Commission designates historic districts and gives
11 landmark status to individual buildings and has the
12 authority to approve new development in historic
13 districts and significant alterations to landmark
14 buildings and buildings in historic districts its
15 decisions are a primary concern of Manhattan
16 Community Board 1 which is the oldest part of New
17 York City and has many many historic districts and
18 individual landmarks. Because of this wealth of
19 historic buildings in our district we are concerned
20 when any individual building is threatened by lack
21 of designation. We are particularly concerned with
22 the failure of the commission to add 67 Vestry
23 Street which is an enormous and titanic clash
24 between developers and historic preservation on one
25 poor little building in our district and also the

2 new market building to the South Street Seaport
3 Historic District despite numerous requests by our
4 community board. We urge the incoming chair to give
5 serious and immediate consideration to these
6 requests. We welcome the opportunity to meet with
7 the new chair to discuss the wealth of historic
8 fabric in our area and the problems we face in
9 preserving it. Our concerns include zoning
10 provisions that allow giant high rise buildings
11 adjacent to our historic districts. Also we would
12 like to see requirements for the provision of
13 sufficient city infrastructure to support new and
14 appropriate development as part of the landmark
15 application process. And finally we want to know
16 what opportunities there are as we've discussed
17 here all morning for affordable housing to be built
18 into the approval process. And now speaking as a,
19 as a 40 year resident of New York and a, and a
20 consulting party to the section 106 process to the
21 world trade center I just have a few personal
22 remarks. I am a member of real estate board of New
23 York which an aggressive and antediluvian position
24 on Landmarks. I have been a member of Historic
25 Districts Council which is a, is an advocacy group.

2 The public's regard of the Landmarks movement as
3 inherently progressive has changed since the days
4 of Jacklyn Kennedy and Tom Wolfe. Issues regarding
5 the designation process calendaring and LPC
6 criteria and opacity have become somewhat
7 controversial in the last five or six years. One
8 great example is the loss of the Frank Lloyd Right
9 Showroom on Park Avenue. The day it was calendared,
10 the morning it was calendared, the morning it was
11 scheduled for calendaring the owners came in and
12 ripped it apart. So we've, it's like losing Dante's
13 Inferno, every copy of it. 56 Lenard Street which
14 is something I won't go into and now is a, is
15 another issue of things gone wrong. We hope you'll
16 work with us to evaluate these matters regarding
17 procedure and also enforcement. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thanks very much
19 to, to both of you. And, and I'll just, feel like I
20 think the council is mindful in those of advocating
21 for some additional transparency and timelines of
22 the need to build in protection so that those don't
23 become invitations to demolition in advance of
24 consideration. So thank you. Okay, our three final
25 panelists and thank you very much for your

2 patience. As I said before our... Tara Kelly from
3 Friends of the Upper East Side, Pete Davies from
4 Broadway Residents Coalition, and Charles Mora.

5 TARA KELLY: Good morning members of the
6 council and Ms. Srinivan. Friends of the Upper East
7 Side Historic Districts founded in 1982 is an
8 independent, not-for-profit membership organization
9 dedicated to preserving the architectural legacy,
10 livability, and sense of place of the upper east
11 side. Our neighborhood lays claim to institutions
12 of global renown spanning decades of cultural
13 investment from the Met to the Googenheim on Museum
14 Isle, the most visited scenic landmark in the
15 world, Central Park is our backyard. We're also
16 proud of livable, lovable streetscapes like
17 Lexington Avenue which boasts its own institutions,
18 the generations old moms and pop, mom and pop
19 shops. From white brick to brownstone we cherish
20 the upper east side's distinctive sense of place.
21 It is what makes this neighborhood and our city
22 great. While we protect over 2,000 historic
23 buildings the upper east side is by no means
24 preserved in amber as claimed by some opponents to
25 preservation. Our districts include new buildings

2 such as the synagogue on East 63rd Street and a
3 residential building at 91st and Madison Avenue in
4 Carnegie Hill. We have honored new construction
5 with our excellence in new design award recently
6 bestowed on 135 East 79th Street this year. As
7 demonstrated by our 2001 exhibit we welcome
8 landmarks of the future. Some would have you think
9 that preservation is at odds with our mayor's aim
10 to preserve and increase affordable housing. The
11 city and suburban first avenue state designated not
12 only for its architectural merit but its
13 significance in the history of affordable housing
14 is a great example of how these two goals are
15 happily met. We applaud the landmarks preservation
16 commission's recent vote on Tuesday to deny the
17 owner's hardship application to demolish these
18 century old model tenements and we hope the
19 administration will defend that crucial decision in
20 any future litigation. While we fight strenuously
21 to save these two landmark buildings rent regulated
22 tenants fight to save their homes. We are in this
23 together. Our concerns are not limited by the
24 boundaries of the upper east side. We need a
25 comprehensive land use plan for the entire city

2 neighborhood by neighborhood, one that incorporates
3 zoning, transportation, infrastructure, affordable
4 housing, and historic preservation in equal
5 measure. While you'll hear a variety of
6 recommendations for ways to improve the landmarks
7 commission the most important in our point of view
8 is that the commission have the freedom and means
9 to carry out its mission as set forth in the
10 Landmarks Law. Quote, to stabilize and improve
11 property values, foster civic pride, protect and
12 enhance the city's attractions to tourists,
13 strengthen the economy of our city, and promote the
14 use of historic districts, landmarks, interior
15 landmarks, and scenic landmarks for the education,
16 pleasure, and welfare of the city. We welcome the
17 opportunity to work together toward these important
18 goals. Thank you.

19 PETE DAVIES: Okay, good afternoon. My
20 name is Pete Davies. I'm a 34 year resident of
21 SoHo, member, resident of Council Member Chin's
22 district. Good afternoon. I just want to say
23 welcome. This is a wonderful moment for change, a
24 moment of great possibility having attended a
25 number of Landmarks Preservation Commission

2 meetings over the last number of years and recently
3 hearing comments from Commissioner such as oh, I
4 feel we're just being worn down and we have to vote
5 for this, comments such as glass is the new cast
6 iron. It seems that a time for change is needed and
7 I, I hope you breathe some new fresh air into the
8 commission. You do have some great support at the
9 commission, Katie Rice who leads the enforcement
10 division is a terrific, she's been very helpful to
11 our community. I don't know that you. I think the
12 commission needs more funds for more enforcement.
13 One thing we're seeing in our neighborhood. And I
14 know our issues in our neighborhood are somewhat
15 different than issues around the other part of the
16 city. But partly because we've been overwhelmed
17 with retail which was made possible by the city
18 planning commission and that became the new mark of
19 in fact one of the commissioners of the Landmarks
20 Commission said well it's a retail district now.
21 No, it's a mixed use district and the balance of
22 mixed use really is important for landmarks to
23 consider. One thing we're being overwhelmed is
24 illuminated signage that is somewhat regulated by
25 Landmarks but the, it's the cost of business. It's

2 okay, they don't mind getting violations because
3 they're being paid a lot more to put advertising
4 and the customers it brings in. So I would suggest,
5 I know some people are suggesting tweaks to the
6 Landmark Law that violations for retail signage
7 inside a store be upped to the point that it makes
8 it no longer viable as a cost of business. These
9 are really detrimental to the historic nature of
10 the district, especially in mixed use districts
11 where people live there. We experience this light
12 all the time, flashing, video screens, it's really
13 gotten out of control. Another thing I'd like to
14 raise is the public meeting versus the public
15 hearing. Right now the public is allowed to chime
16 in on a public hearing but when it, if it's sent
17 back for review they, it comes to a public meeting
18 and the public cannot talk about it. I think that
19 should be changed. One thing else is I really urge
20 you to be an advocate for preservation and
21 comprehensive view of the city with Landmarks and
22 City Planning. I do notice just to finish that my
23 neighbor in Community Board 1 is mentioned the real
24 estate industry but they are absent today which
25 makes the public wonder where is that discussion

2 with you going on. Maybe it's not happening at all
3 but when they're absent from the hearing and absent
4 from the public discussion it does somewhat
5 solidify the impression that Landmarks recently has
6 had too many private discussions with the real
7 estate industry that the public has not been
8 involved in. Thank you very much.

9 CHARLES MORRA: Hell, so I was a little
10 shocked that... I've been to a lot of these hearings
11 and I never see any, it's always small groups that
12 are representing, you know I never see any
13 individuals coming to talk about their issues. So
14 that's you back at home if you're watching I don't
15 know. So...

16 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Sorry Sir can you
17 go ahead and state your name for the record?

18 CHARLES MORRA: Oh, Charles Mora.

19 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you.

20 CHARLES MORRA: I'm from community,
21 community board 7. Well it seems like it's, it's a
22 continuation of Michal Bloomberg's appointments
23 starting with the police commissioner. It looks
24 like another Ray Kelley Shorres [sp?]. I mean he
25 took, Ray Lotta [sp?] took his job, it could have

2 been the other way around. He could have appointed
3 Lotta and Shorres could have taken his job I guess.
4 And the Taxi Commissioner, you know she is part of
5 the Bloomberg... you know and taxi situation is
6 horrible. I mean it, you know, there's, there's so
7 many taxis on the street that you can't even... You
8 know the people it's benefiting is the taxi owners
9 unless they live in Midtown and they're trying to
10 cross you know to the other side. Who's the other
11 one? So anyway going back to my neighborhood under
12 city planning and what's the other one, oh this one
13 right, is we lost Shakespeare and Company, we lost
14 Red Cross, we lost New York Public Library, we lost
15 Clermont Riding Sales, We lost Tavern Green [sp?],
16 we lost Medical Building on East 73rd Street, we
17 lost Big Nits [sp?], we lost the old Penn Stations,
18 but that was lost a long time ago, and we lost
19 Saint Vincent's. So you know I have no reason to
20 believe that... And you guys never appoint anybody
21 who's not, who's not in the interest of the public.
22 There'll be some signers, there'll, they're never
23 you know a socialist or Mike, Randy Critico [sp?],
24 Green Party, nobody from there. Nobody from the
25 Working Peoples Party. I don't understand this

2 whole process... You, first of all the public,
3 there's nobody here, they all left, all the council
4 members left, it's just they don't want to listen
5 to us so... I don't understand this process. You
6 didn't bring up any facts... listening there for two
7 hours not one fact about what, what, why she should
8 be... maybe she's great or whatever but why, why
9 would you want to appoint her? I mean nobody... you
10 know is... it's just vague feelings and ideas. It
11 just didn't make any sense to me. So... I guess
12 that's about the end of it. Yep, all those other
13 polite people you know, you should be here. I mean
14 you're too busy to show up to your governments you
15 know... Oh the drones and, and Bill... so now he wants
16 to bring in Drones... what, you know what's the next
17 commissioner going to want to bring in?

18 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Thank you very much
19 to all of you for your testimony. We appreciate
20 your taking the time to come out and express your
21 opinions and really value it. Ms. Srinivan thank
22 you for sticking around to listen to the members of
23 the public and their testimony, many of whom you'll
24 be seeing again. Thanks to everyone else who
25 testified and to Council Member Chin for staying

2 till the end of the, of the hearing as well. Thanks
3 again to the staff for the thorough research here.
4 Alright so with that we'll close the public hearing
5 on this matter...

6 [gavel]

7 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: But we'll recess
8 the meeting itself. We expect to reopen the meeting
9 likely on the morning on June 11th, 2014. For now
10 the Committee on Rules, Privileges, and Elections
11 stands in recess. Thank you.

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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 June 02, 2014