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CITY OF NEW YORK
2012-2013 DISTRICTING COMMISSION

THIRD ROUND
PUBLIC MEETING

Hostos Community College
500 Grand Concourse
Bronx, New York 10451

January 9, 2013
6:03 P.M.
-----X

- IN ATTENDANCE:
- FRANK PADAVAN
 - GLORIA CARVAJAL WOLFE
 - LINDA LIN
 - BENITO ROMANO, Chair
 - ROXANNE J. PERSAUD
 - OSCAR ODOM, III
 - KAMILLAH M. HANKS
 - JAMILLA PONTON BRAGG
 - ROBERT W. HART
 - JOHN ROBERT

DISTRICTING COMMISSION

1 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: My name is Benito Romano
2 and I am the chair of the New York City
3 Districting Commission. On behalf of the
4 Commission, I want to thank Dr. Felix Matos
5 Rodriguez, the college president, and Dr. Ana
6 Garcia Reyes, the associate dean of community
7 relations, for hosting us here tonight.

8 We have the facility here for only a few
9 hours tonight, and I want to make sure that we
10 hear from everyone who is signed up. For those
11 who did not sign up and wish to speak, please see
12 the staff at the registration tables outside the
13 room to register.

14 Additionally, if you require interpretation
15 for your testimony, please let staff at the
16 registration desk know. They will make sure that
17 an interpreter is provided when it is your turn
18 to testify.

19 Before we take testimony, I want to make a
20 few preliminary remarks. In December, the
21 Commission advertised in community and ethnic
22 newspapers throughout the city announcing the
23 Commission's public hearing schedule for the
24 third round. An announcement was circulated to
25 the press and an e-mail blast was sent to over

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1 5,500 individuals and organizations.

2 Advocacy groups helped spread the world
3 through their separate networks. The hearings
4 were noticed in The City Record and the hearing
5 schedule was publicized on our website as well as
6 on our Facebook page and Twitter feed.

7 The hearing tonight is part of the third
8 round of public hearings that the Commission will
9 conduct throughout the City. Over 1,150 people
10 attended the first two rounds of hearings in late
11 August and October, and the Commission heard
12 testimony from over 230 of them.

13 On November 15, 2012, the Commission adopted
14 by unanimous vote a revised plan for the 51
15 councilmanic districts that reflected the
16 testimony that you see during the two rounds of
17 hearings. In addition to online testimony,
18 alternative maps creating through our free map
19 making software on with our website,
20 www.nyc.gov/districting.

21 Both prior to that meeting and immediately
22 thereafter, we heard from the public and numerous
23 advocacy groups including Common Cause, The
24 Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund,
25 Latino Justice, the Center for Law and Social

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1 Justice and the City Council's Black, Latino and
2 Asian Caucus calling for another round of
3 hearings to enable the public to provide
4 additional commentary on the revised plan before
5 the City Council took action.

6 Only by maximizing public input will we
7 create a district plan that accurately captures
8 the complexity and diversity of our city. In our
9 transmittal letter that accompanied the revised
10 plan submitted to the Council on November 19th,
11 the Commission noted that it would welcome
12 additional input from the public, but that the
13 Commission was constrained by the deadlines set
14 forth in the City charter, which directed the
15 Commission to submit the revised plan to the City
16 Council by early November.

17 That said, given the possibility that the
18 Council would not return the revised plan to the
19 Commission to allow for further public comment,
20 and that the Council might instead allow the plan
21 to be adopted simply by taking no action for the
22 three-week period specified in the charter, the
23 Commission considered mechanisms that would allow
24 for another round of public hearings.

25 After consulting with the New York City Law

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1 Department, our legal counsel, on these matters,
2 the Commission convened on December 4, 2012 to
3 consider continuing the public hearing process by
4 withdrawing the revised district plan from the
5 City Council. The Commission approved such a
6 measure by a vote of 12 to zero, with one
7 abstention.

8 Now that the Commission has withdrawn the
9 revised plan from the City Council, we are in a
10 position to conduct this third round of public
11 hearings. The Commission is eager to hear
12 tonight's testimony and comments on the revised
13 district plan.

14 As a result of tonight's hearing and the
15 third round of hearings in its entirety, the
16 Commission will consider all the comments it will
17 receive during the next scheduled public hearing
18 on January 23rd. At that meeting, the Commission
19 will charge the staff to make any amendments to
20 the revised district plan that the Commission
21 deems appropriate in light of the comments
22 received during this round.

23 Then, at the Commission's public meeting on
24 January 30th, an amended district plan reflecting
25 those instructions will be presented to the

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1 Commission and the Commission will decide whether
2 to adopt the plan. If the Commission adopts the
3 plan, it will then be submitted to the City
4 Council, which will have three weeks to either
5 adopt or reject plan.

6 If the Council takes neither action, it will
7 be deemed adopted. If the Council objects to the
8 plan, the Commission will then have another
9 opportunity to revise the plan. This will then
10 trigger a new set of public hearings to receive
11 comment and feedback on such a plan.

12 It is again worth noting that there are
13 certain factors that the law obligates the
14 Commission to consider during the districting
15 process. These include that the difference in
16 population between the least populous and the
17 most populous districts shall not exceed 10
18 percent of the average population for all
19 districts.

20 The plan must ensure fair and effective
21 representation of the racial and language
22 minority groups in New York City. The plan must
23 keep neighborhoods and communities with
24 established ties of common interest and
25 association intact.

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1 The plan must result in districts that are
2 compact and contiguous. The plan must keep
3 districts westbound a single borough wherever
4 possible. And the plan must avoid diminishing
5 the effective political representation of voters.

6 I also want to bring to your attention our
7 website, www.nyc.gov/districting. The site is
8 the central repository of all documents and
9 videos related to the Districting Commission.

10 It also contains a complete schedule of our
11 public hearings, all documents and plans created
12 by and submitted to the Commission, our online
13 mapping tool and a portal where you can
14 preregister for all hearings and be added to our
15 mailing list. I hope you all visit the site and
16 let us know how it can be more informative and
17 interactive.

18 A final word about the obvious limitations
19 and constraints in drawing up any map. We are
20 required by the City Council to draw lines.
21 Lines inherently divide. Depending upon your
22 perspective, you may see the line as inclusive or
23 exclusive. To many, lines will almost always
24 appear arbitrary. Communities of interest do not
25 organize themselves in districts of ideal

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1 population size.

2 So, the lines are never perfect. Neither is
3 ensuring that the districts capture only
4 communities that actually share common interests,
5 nor in districts of ideal population size. We as
6 a group have worked very hard on this revised
7 map. We believe we are getting very close to a
8 map that, as a whole, reasonably accommodates all
9 the factors set out in the City charter. We are,
10 however, prepared to listen to any suggestions
11 that are made and are looking forward to your
12 testimony tonight.

13 Now, that concludes my preliminary remarks.
14 At this point, we will have the commissioners
15 introduce themselves beginning on my right and
16 moving down the table.

17 MR. HART: Rob Hart from Staten Island.

18 MS. HANKS: Kamillah Hanks, Staten Island.

19 MR. ODOM: Oscar Odom, III, Brooklyn.

20 MS. BRAGG: Jamilla Ponton Bragg, Manhattan.

21 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Benito Romano, Manhattan.

22 MR. HUM: Carl Hum (phonetic), executive
23 director of the Commission.

24 MR. ROBERT: John Robert, the Bronx.

25 MS. WOLFE: Gloria Carvajal Wolfe,

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1 Manhattan.

2 MS. PERSAUD: Roxanne Persaud, Brooklyn.

3 MR. PADAVAN: Frank Padavan, Queens.

4 MS. LIN: Linda Lin, from Queens.

5 MR. HACKWORTH: Thaddeus Hackworth, general
6 counsel to the Commission.

7 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Mr. Hackworth will go over
8 the ground rules that cover the testimony, and
9 then he will begin by calling our first witness.

10 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Each speaker
11 will have three minutes to testify. And when
12 your three minutes have expired, you will hear a
13 chime. At that point, please finish your
14 sentence and yield the microphone to the next
15 speaker.

16 Because the Commission only has the use of
17 these facilities until 9:00, taking more than
18 your three minutes of time may result in your
19 neighbor or fellow community member not being
20 able to speak at all. Please keep that in mind
21 and be respectful of others wishing to testify.

22 If you would like to provide more detailed
23 testimony to the Commission, you are encouraged
24 to submit your written testimony by provision a
25 copy at the registration desk or by e-mailing it

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1 to hearings@districting.nyc.gov or by making it
2 to the Commission's office.

3 I will first call those who have
4 preregistered to speak, followed by those who are
5 registered today at the desk. I will announce
6 the next speaker as well as the following
7 speaker. When you hear your name called, please
8 approach the nearest microphone so that you can
9 be ready to give your testimony when your name is
10 called. There are two microphones in the middle
11 of either aisle. If you have any questions,
12 please ask our staff members at the registration
13 desk.

14 I will now call our first speaker, the
15 Honorable Councilwoman Annabel Palma, to be
16 followed by Taina Traverso.

17 MS. PALMA: Thank you to the Commission for
18 allowing us to again reconvene. I will restate
19 the position of the Bronx delegation and those
20 elected officials in the Bronx as I did in the
21 last hearing. I am Annabel Palma and I represent
22 the 18th District in the Bronx. I am here today
23 in the capacity of chairwoman of the Bronx
24 delegation to testify on behalf I my colleagues.

25 During the City's last redistricting effort,

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1 two of the largest New York City council
2 districts were established in the Bronx. All
3 except one of the eight current Bronx council
4 districts are over the average size of the
5 districts around the City. As a matter of fact,
6 two of our eight council districts have over
7 175,000 residents. Bronx residents deserve to
8 have better than to have overdrawn and
9 overpopulated districts.

10 Quite plainly, our residents have served
11 their fair share. Considering that the average
12 size of the New York City district is
13 approximately 160,000 residents, it is important
14 to underscore that seven of our current eight
15 Bronx council districts contain more than 160
16 people.

17 The Bronx County has 1.3 million residents
18 and if you divide that by 160,000, which again is
19 the standard council district size, the borough
20 should have 8.7 council districts, conceivably if
21 the Bronx districts were drawn at the lower range
22 of the deviation, namely at 153,000 residents,
23 the borough will have 9.15 districts.

24 Every day in each of the current eight Bronx
25 council districts, constituents contact our

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1 officers for assistance with a variety of
2 critical issues including housing, child care,
3 education, employment and health care. We work
4 tirelessly to save funding and support programs
5 that help meet the needs of our borough's
6 constituency, despite the economy.

7 However, considering the growing number of
8 residents in our already bloated council
9 districts, our ability to advocate for our
10 constituents can easily become compromised if
11 appropriate action is not taken in the districts
12 being processed. And I applaud this Commission
13 for, again, taking steps to correct that.

14 By adding a new council seat, the borough
15 will achieve more equitable district sizes which
16 would, in turn, lead to more manageable case load
17 as far as that. Most important, the additional
18 of a ninth district would translate into better
19 services for the borough and our constituents.
20 And I urge the Commission to consider and a ninth
21 seat for the Bronx. I believe that we have the
22 population to reflect that role. Thank you.

23 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Taina
24 Traverso, to be followed by Theresa Doherty.

25 MS. TRAVERSO: Good afternoon, no, good

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1 evening. My name is Taina Traverso and I am a
2 resident of El Barrio, East Harlem community.
3 And I missed Monday's meeting, but I have been in
4 previously. So, I wanted to make sure that I was
5 here to briefly say what I have to say.

6 In the previous meetings, as you know, we
7 want to make sure that we keep the map as is
8 because as this district, which is a historical
9 district, and we are supposed to keep our
10 councilmanic together, we should not begin to
11 tear it apart and sacrifice those people who have
12 been there for so many years, including myself,
13 and have actually found and also nurtured these
14 various institutions and people.

15 And out of this community, as you know, we
16 have had so many people who are moved on and
17 helped the United States, New York City, to be
18 what it is. And who am I talking about? I am
19 talking about Al Pacino. I am talking Rita
20 Moreno. I am talking about Marc Anthony. I am
21 talking about so many that came out of this
22 community, and we want to make sure that
23 everything stays intact.

24 Just for demonstration's sake, I want you to
25 see something. Pretend this is El Barrio, event

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1 Harlem community. I want you to take a good look
2 at it, just out of demonstration. And follow me.
3 There goes Randall's Island. To continue, there
4 goes Mount Sinai Hospital. To continue, there
5 goes approximately 35 blocks. How do we come so
6 far, okay? And we haven't finished.

7 To continue, dividing some of the public
8 housing, Carver and other Lexington Houses, how
9 do we look now, El Barrio? To continue, I can go
10 on and on. How do we look now? La Puna, the
11 cradle of where all Puerto Ricans came. And from
12 here, we are distributed in other areas. We
13 nurtured everyone who came through. We were the
14 one who were the foot soldiers. Many left; we
15 stayed and found -- (timer dings) -- many an
16 institution, Museo del Barrio, and it goes on and
17 on.

18 So, I am here to say to you in addition to
19 all those people who have left, famous people who
20 we nurtured, let's not forget just a few blocks
21 away from the entrance of El Barrio, a couple of
22 blocks. There was a gentleman who walked in that
23 community to then go to City College and
24 organize, then from there, completed his
25 education in community college -- I'm sorry,

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1 Columbia University. And that person today is
2 called President Barack Obama that came into El
3 Barrio.

4 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you.

5 MS. TRAVERSO: Is that three minutes?

6 MR. HACKWORTH: You are out of time.

7 MS. TRAVERSO: So, take a look at this.

8 Look at if it was the Mona Lisa. The entire
9 State building, your house, your car.

10 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you.

11 MS. TRAVERSO: Would you want it to look
12 like this? Don't destroy our district and then
13 we lose the funding and also the representation
14 that we earned and we --

15 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker -- I am
16 sorry to cut you off there.

17 MS. TRAVERSO: Nevertheless, thank you very
18 much.

19 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is
20 Theresa --

21 MS. TRAVERSO: Don't let it die, ladies and
22 gentlemen.

23 MR. HACKWORTH: -- Theresa Doherty, followed
24 by the Honorable Councilwoman Maria del Carmen
25 Arroyo.

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1 MS. DOHERTY: Good evening, Chair Romano and
2 other members of the City Districting Commission.
3 My name is Theresa Doherty and I am volunteer
4 member of Citizens Union, a nonpartisan good
5 government group dedicated to making democracy
6 work for all New Yorkers.

7 In the letter to the Commission sent earlier
8 this week, Citizens Union provided
9 recommendations for increased transparency as
10 well as individual district action. I will focus
11 on recommendations for the Bronx and on behalf of
12 Citizens Union. I also speak as a resident of
13 the Bronx. I went to college here. I worked for
14 five years, 25 blocks forth of here, Mount Eden.

15 I do know that each individual neighborhood
16 and community has its own voice and has its own
17 needs, but also recognizes with pride it's part
18 of a larger fabric of New York City. As
19 discussed at the Manhattan hearing earlier in
20 week, Citizens Union has concerns regarding
21 Council District 8. By placing the majority in
22 the Bronx, an imbalancing has been created
23 resulting in Manhattan having districts that on
24 average 4 percent larger than the ideal district
25 size.

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1 Though the proposed District 8 would
2 increase Latino representation in the Bronx by
3 essentially adding a new seat, one has to
4 question whether it does so at too high a cost.
5 East Harlem continues to be divided in the
6 proposed maps, despite the overwhelming
7 opposition of its residents and good government
8 groups, including Citizens Union.

9 Additionally, the neighborhood of Woodstock
10 in the South Bronx, which is represented by the
11 current District 17, would be divided. We again
12 urge you to correct this district by restoring
13 all of East Harlem to District 8.

14 We would also like to reiterate Citizens
15 Union's recommendation that the Commission to
16 provide to the public, in advance of any vote on
17 a final map, a written rationale detailing the
18 decision-making of the Commission for each
19 district. For example, the rationale should show
20 the Commission addressed the requirements in the
21 City charter and specifically address how it
22 handled public requests regarding their
23 districts.

24 This information is essential to ensure that
25 the public has more information about the choices

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1 that were made and potentially to have more
2 confidence in the end result and the Commission
3 itself. Thank you for this opportunity.

4 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker
5 is the honorable Council Member Maria del Carmen
6 Arroyo, to be followed by Lennin Reyes.

7 MS. ARROYO: Thank you. Good evening.
8 Thank you all for coming out. It is so important
9 for voices to be heard in this democratic
10 process. I'm not sure that in any of the public
11 hearings, anyone has thanked the Commission
12 members for your service. So, I want to you
13 thank you for that.

14 I also want to, and very carefully say that
15 I am not sure the work you are doing is really
16 appreciated where there is a sentiment out there
17 that there has been a backroom deal with the
18 Bronx to have more representation in the Bronx.
19 And I have said to those who have that sentiment
20 personally, but I want to say it publically, that
21 the only thing that has happened here is that, to
22 begin with, the Commission has heard the Bronx's
23 request for more and equal representation.

24 That I do not believe you took it far
25 enough, it goes without saying. My colleague

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1 Council Member Palma stated the obvious. The
2 population in the Bronx is enough to justify. If
3 you do the math, and we are going to be equal
4 about how we are going to draw these lines, 8.7
5 districts in the Bronx. I say go back to the
6 table and give us that. I think we deserve that
7 and there is no reason that anyone is sitting to
8 debate that.

9 And we are not going to pit communities
10 against communities, because that's not what this
11 is about. But if we are going to talk about
12 splitting up communities of interest, Mott Haven
13 in the South Bronx has been split and represented
14 by two different council members for at least
15 over 15 years. That the maps that are drawn
16 makes that community more contiguous, I commend
17 you for that.

18 That we are happy about how the end result,
19 not all of us are. Some of us have to go make
20 friends in other areas of the borough. And I am
21 counting on our representation as elected
22 officials and incumbents to be able to convince
23 communities that we then represent that we are up
24 for the challenge and should be elected to office.

25 Without that commitment to our communities,

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1 regardless of our communities, we end up
2 representing any message can be heard that we
3 don't want to be here. So, while I look forward
4 to representing sections of what is now Council
5 Member Rivera's district, it breaks my heart to
6 have to give up areas that I have been
7 representing for almost eight years.

8 We can't have our cake and eat it, too. So,
9 8.7 districts for the Bronx -- (timer
10 dings) -- at a minimum, at a minimum. We are not
11 asking for anything more than that.

12 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Lennin
13 Reyes, to be followed by Lilithe Lozano.

14 MR. REYES: Good evening. My name is Lennin
15 Reyes. I am assistant press director for Carlos
16 Sierra and I am speaking on his behalf. As many
17 of you know, Carlos Sierra is a community
18 activist and is running for the 16th Council
19 District in the Bronx. My comments reflect those
20 of myself, Carlos Sierra and the rest of the
21 Sierra 2013 political committee.

22 We congratulate the Districting Commission
23 for placing the Concourse Village housing
24 development back in the 16th, after originally
25 placing it in the adjacent 17th District. This

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1 housing complex has a close affinity to the 16th,
2 as it has been a historically strong
3 African-American voting block, and therefore a
4 strong voice of the community.

5 We are also thankful for the placement of
6 Highbridge north of 166th Street into the 16th
7 after it was initially being moved to the
8 8th District. It would have been very hurtful to
9 the spirit of the community to move Highbridge
10 out of the Bronx and into Manhattan. We are
11 happy to see it in the 16th.

12 However, there is a major landmark that is
13 near our district and it seems to be part of it,
14 yet it's drawn into the sprawling District 8, and
15 that landmark is Yankee Stadium. If any
16 district's residents are affected the most by
17 anything associated with the stadium, it's those
18 in District 16.

19 Whenever an event takes place, District 16
20 residents benefit and suffer. While they may
21 bring revenue and attention to the area,
22 residents in Morrisania/Highbridge deal with
23 noise, littering and long commutes thanks to bus
24 reroutes resulting from closures to streets near
25 the stadium. We ask you strongly consider

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1 placing Yankee Stadium in District 16.

2 Lastly, there is an issue in the northern
3 part of the district. While the Districting
4 Commission placed Highbridge into District 16,
5 Morris Heights is now being split between
6 Districts 14 and 16. We would like for you to
7 place more of the West Tremont/Morris Heights
8 area back into the 16th.

9 The maps show that District 14 is
10 overpopulated by 7,592 residents, and District 16
11 is underpopulated by 5,429 residents. Morris
12 Heights has strong socioeconomic ties with
13 Highbridge and Morrisania. As these three
14 high-density, low-income communities feature
15 growing influxes of the Dominicans and West
16 Africans, joining the longstanding Puerto Ricans
17 and African-Americans there.

18 In conclusion, on behalf of Carlos Sierra
19 and Sierra 2013, we thank you the Districting
20 Commission for hearing our testimony and ask that
21 it be taken into consideration. We also ask that
22 the Districting Commission pass the new maps as
23 soon as reasonably possible. Thank you.

24 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Lilithe
25 Lozano, to be followed by the Honorable Council

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1 Member Joel Rivera.

2 MS. LOZANO: Good evening. My name is
3 Lilithe Lozano. I am president of Parkside
4 Houses, also affiliated with Bronx North Council
5 of presidents. We are currently between four
6 different council districts, 11, 12, 13 and 15.
7 And while I understand the 12th District,
8 represented by Andy King, and the 13th District
9 represented by James Vacca and the district by
10 Rivera, makes the most sense to stay on Central
11 and East Bronx districts.

12 The 11th, which is based on the northwest
13 Bronx out of Riverdale, doesn't make sense
14 covering parts of Parkway North and the area
15 around Parkside Houses. Currently Parkside,
16 while we are in the tail end of the district, the
17 11th District is separated by both Bronx River
18 Parkway from the district and the rest of the
19 11th is based out of the Northwest Bronx and its
20 major leaders come from Riverdale.

21 But the Parkside has had to face the
22 disparities regarding council funding,
23 infrastructure, capital projects funding for the
24 NYCHA residents as far as the residents of the
25 community. The Parkside executive board are

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1 requesting immediate attention and stand firm
2 that the area nearby Pelham Parkway North should
3 be consolidated mostly into the 15th Council
4 District because it's really the Central Bronx
5 district.

6 For years, we have complained and we have
7 addressed several commissions. Overall, we lack
8 council funding. We don't have adequate -- no
9 type of funding whatsoever. We are tired of
10 being disregarded. We are tired of being
11 ignored. We are at the tail end. We don't even
12 have a congressman that we can go to. It's
13 gotten so bad that, because of the lack of
14 funding from the Housing Authority and our
15 horrible infrastructure and lack of funding, we
16 only have one senator to be able to carry the
17 weight.

18 That's unacceptable and it's a disservice to
19 the community. So, just because we separated by
20 Bronx River Parkway and the river, the Riverdale
21 community does not represent overall the tail end
22 of the district. So no more, no less, we would
23 like you to consider to revise and put us part of
24 the pack so we can get our fair share of funding,
25 thank you.

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1 MS. BRAGG: What is your proposal for the
2 border? Where would you like the border to be
3 drawn?

4 MS. LOZANO: We would like to be
5 consolidated within the 15th Council District,
6 because we have been overall in the tail end. So
7 per se, we have Congressman Crowley. He takes
8 representation a portion of Queens.

9 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: If you could give us the
10 street?

11 MS. LOZANO: Bronx Park East, Bronx Park
12 East between 80th Avenue between Adee Avenue and
13 Arnow. We are not too far from the Bronx Zoo.

14 MS. BRAGG: And do you want that to be your
15 border and everything down to be --

16 MS. LOZANO: Right, we want to be
17 consolidated because our council member, I'm
18 sorry, I have vote worked for a senator and two
19 State assembly, and I have served in the
20 community as a housing specialist. And I tell
21 you, I know the needs of the community overall.
22 And everyone is entitled, no matter whether you
23 are in the South Bronx or the North Bronx. We
24 are entitled to our fair share of funding.

25 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Are you in the 11th now?

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1 MS. LOZANO: Yes, I am in the 11th Council
2 District which is the tail end. Listen, I
3 wouldn't go to any council member. We just want
4 our fair share.

5 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker
6 is the Honorable Joel Rivera, to be followed by
7 Angel Molina.

8 MR. RIVERA: Thank you very much. First I
9 want to thank everybody for joining us here
10 today. I really do wish we could have an even
11 larger crowd because this is a very important
12 issue that we are facing in the City of New York.

13 Like my colleague said, I want to thank the
14 board members of the Commission because this is
15 not an easy task in how we shape up the political
16 map within New York City, because it is a
17 distribution of power within communities. It's
18 important for a number of reasons. And the
19 reason why the Bronx members are here asking for
20 a ninth district, or as much as a ninth district
21 is possible, is because when we go to City Hall
22 as elected officials, we go there to represent
23 our communities.

24 We have in some of our districts 165,000
25 residents, 163,000 residents, more than what is

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1 required for a council district, which means the
2 capacity for the council members to represent its
3 constituents is much higher than in other council
4 districts that may be around 153,000. So, the
5 capacity to develop another council district is
6 to give a larger district within the Bronx is
7 there.

8 And the benefit to the Bronx would be
9 greater representation within City Hall and the
10 dialog where we can support our fine institutions
11 like Hostos Community College. We want to thank
12 them for housing this hearing today, and for the
13 greater institutions within the borough of the
14 Bronx. They do benefit the entire City of New
15 York.

16 As a council member who has represented the
17 15th Council District for 12 years now, I have
18 seen the needs within the district and I know the
19 needs within the Bronx. And I know that the
20 needs are -- we need a ninth council district to
21 be able to service the needs of the 1.4 million
22 residents that live here and 100 to 200,000
23 undocumented immigrants who also call the Bronx
24 home, who do utilize the resources of City
25 hospitals, the police department, fire department

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1 and the subsequent City services that benefit the
2 City of New York and the Bronx.

3 I want to thank everybody for joining us
4 here. I know there is many dialogues and
5 conversations taking place. But the primary
6 discussion that needs to happen is how can we
7 empower communities that have not been empowered
8 for a very long time? That would be by
9 understanding the capacity for a ninth district
10 in the Bronx. It's doable, feasible, possible
11 and it should happen. Thank you very much.

12 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker
13 is Angel Molina, to be followed by Joseph Bombace.

14 MR. MOLINA: Good evening. Once again, my
15 name is Angel Molina. I am a resident of Mott
16 Haven and I am also a candidate for City Council
17 in the 8th district. Before I begin, I would
18 like to thank the Commission for allowing me to
19 address you this evening. And I have prepared a
20 short statement I am going to read now.

21 For the record, I am in favoring of the
22 expansion of the Bronx portion of District 8,
23 with the exception of the exclusion of Randall's
24 Island from the proposed district map. I ask
25 this Commission that Randall's Island be

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1 reinstalled within the bounds of District 8, if
2 not in its entirety, at least in part.

3 I propose as a compromised plan that we
4 include the northern portion of Randall's Island
5 Park, which does not contain a residential
6 population and would not affect the population
7 man within District 8 to remain within the
8 District 8 boundary. And the slower half, which
9 is Wards Island Park, be reassigned in accordance
10 to your plan.

11 The manner by which this can be accomplished
12 is by adjusting the northeastern edges of
13 Longwood, which were previously in District 17,
14 and shift those lines westward or inward.
15 Similarly, adjustments can also be made along the
16 northwestern edge of Highbridge, where those
17 boundaries should be shifted down or southward.

18 These two sections in the proposed
19 District 8 map can be moved either independently
20 or in conjunction to achieve the integration of
21 Randall's Island. Additionally, District 16 and
22 17 have population deviations below the mean of
23 minus 3.3 percent and minus 4.95 percent
24 respectively, which would provide ample room to
25 move those boundaries slightly decreasing their

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1 district sizes without adversely impending future
2 population growth, while serving the purpose of
3 keeping these communities of interest also intact.

4 You are now aware that Randall's Island is
5 of vital importance to Mott Haven. Both our
6 communities are in desperate need of green space
7 to serve as an offset to the disproportionate
8 rate of asthma and obesity that plague our
9 children and family members. There's an urgent
10 need for space, especially in Mott Haven, since
11 we are completely cut off from our waterfront.

12 In closing, our greatest fear of losing
13 Randall's Island would be that our collective
14 efforts to help shape policies to preserve this
15 vital asset for the lowest of our communities
16 would be lost and our concerns would be no longer
17 be prioritized.

18 I sincerely hope you take this matter into
19 serious consideration and restore Randall's
20 Island back to where it belongs, in District 8 at
21 a manner of sound judgment, fairness and
22 environmental justice for our communities. Thank
23 you.

24 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker
25 is Joseph Bombace, to be followed by Sharene Donner.

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1 MR. BOMBACE: Good evening. Thank you to
2 the commissioners and Council for having us here.
3 My name is Joseph Bombace and I have lived in the
4 Bayonnes community of Morris Park for all my
5 life, almost 62 years. And I have been active in
6 the community and civic routes for years. The
7 neighborhoods of Bayonnes have been traditionally
8 at all level of government districting, the
9 Council, the Assembly, the Senate and Congress.

10 This has led to fractured representation
11 because we are literally at the end of almost
12 everyone's district. With every elected having
13 just a little piece of our neighborhood it has
14 been hard to get funding and attention Bayonnes
15 deserves. It's hard to get government to
16 coordinate services when the park my neighbor's
17 children play in across the street is in someone
18 else's district.

19 At the Council, we have been traditionally
20 split between two districts, the 13th and the
21 15th. Just as Bayonnes and its leaders have
22 learned how to make this in recent years, we get
23 a new map that splits our district not two ways,
24 but three. In the current map we are now split
25 between the 13th, the 15th and the 18th District.

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1 While we have worked well with the council member
2 from 18th on some issues, it nevertheless means
3 we now have to engage three council members on
4 every issue for our community, while many
5 communities have just one.

6 The border between Bayonnes and the 18th
7 Council District is a clear line down East
8 Tremont Avenue and the Amtrak train line which
9 separates Parkchester and Soundview from
10 Bayonnes. These lines cross the natural
11 community boundary to just add a handful of
12 blocks to the 18th. Please consider having split
13 the community of Bayonnes, I think it is better
14 to be in two districts, not three.

15 Also, I heard some folks from Pelham Parkway
16 North and Parkside Houses complain of a similar
17 problem of being split between four council
18 districts. I share their concern because it is
19 similar to mine about my own neighborhood of
20 Bayonnes. They have been at the edge of every
21 district for years and the majority of the
22 11th District by the Bronx River and the Bronx
23 River Parkway.

24 I ask the Commission to do their best to
25 unite these communities or at least limit how

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1 chopped up they are among districts. Thank you.

2 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Sharene
3 Donner, to be followed by Assembly Member Jeffrey
4 Dinowitz. All right, it appearing that Sharene
5 Donner is not here, our next speaker will be
6 Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz, followed by
7 Dennis Terry.

8 MR. DINOWITZ: Good evening. Slowly drove
9 from Albany to get here. I wanted to talk about
10 two issues. One concerns the 11th Council
11 District. And I should start by saying that I
12 want to compliment the Committee -- Commission
13 for the original draft that you drew with respect
14 to the 11th District.

15 But for some reason I haven't figured out
16 from the first draft to the second draft, you
17 added a huge number of people into the 11th
18 District. The first draft I think the 11th
19 District was underpopulated. But in the second
20 draft, it's very much overpopulated. I think you
21 probably added around 10,000 people from the
22 Bronx Park East area near where Parkside Houses
23 are and some of the other developments over there.

24 Now, I am not a councilman, so I don't
25 represent the district itself. My assembly

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1 district covers much the council district. And
2 while we certainly would welcome anybody who is
3 in the district to be in the district -- we are
4 not trying to get rid of anybody -- I think it's
5 fair to say that because of the configuration of
6 the district, the people who you added, I think
7 are kind of going to get the short end of the
8 stick by being attached to the district that is
9 dominant, part of Riverdale, Riverdale and the
10 surrounding neighborhoods.

11 Most of the 11th Council District is in the
12 Northwest Bronx. You got Riverdale, Kingsbridge,
13 Kingsbridge Heights, Van Cortlandt Village,
14 Norwood, Bedford Park. You also have Woodlawn
15 and Wakefield. And then there's a little piece
16 that's added to the district over on the east
17 side of the botanical gardens. And in the first
18 draft, what you did is you actually shrunk that
19 area, which made sense.

20 I think there was a gentleman here who
21 testified that he felt that because his area
22 where he lived, I think either in or near
23 Parkside Houses, he felt that his area, because
24 it was such a tiny piece of a district which is
25 on the other side of the botanical gardens on the

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1 other side of the Bronx, he felt that they were
2 being underrepresented or they didn't really fit
3 into the rest of that district and the
4 neighborhood where he lives is divided.

5 And what you have done is you really divided
6 that neighborhood right now into three separate
7 council districts, because some people are in the
8 11th under these lines, some people will be in
9 the 13th and some in the 15th. In addition, that
10 area is part of, I guess it's Community Board 11.
11 It's a very tiny piece of 11.

12 So, the people, the council district which
13 is mostly Community Board 8, a chunk of Community
14 Board 12 and some of the Community Board 7 as
15 well would have this little sliver of Community
16 Board 11. And I think the practice effect of all
17 that -- (timer dings) -- is that by that
18 community being divided the way it is, they are
19 going to lose out.

20 And I think it makes sense, if I was drawing
21 the lines, what I would do is take all those
22 areas that you added from Draft 1 to Draft 2 to
23 the 11th District and I would -- I don't want to
24 speak for any council members here -- it probably
25 makes sense for it to be in the 15th District,

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1 because it's kind of like a Central Bronx
2 district and the communities there are close by.
3 You wouldn't be dividing the community the way
4 you have now.

5 Now in addition, I wanted to quickly address
6 another issue. The Bronx should not, as a whole,
7 should not be underrepresented. And it always
8 seems, and I have seen this in redistricting on
9 various levels, when we went to congressional
10 redistricting, the Bronx was chopped into little
11 pieces so that there's only one congressional
12 district that's predominantly Bronx.

13 Now with the council districts, and I am not
14 addressing any of the other four boroughs, but
15 the Bronx represents a portion of the City's
16 population that is greater than the amount of
17 council districts that you have allocated for the
18 Bronx. The Bronx represents almost 17 percent of
19 the City's population. And if you multiply
20 17 percent time 51 seats, the Bronx should have
21 about approximately eight and two-thirds seats.

22 Now, if you want to have whole districts, I
23 would round that up to nine. But I certainly
24 would not round it down. Up until now, the Bronx
25 has had less than eight and a half seats. The

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1 Bronx's portion of the entire council should go
2 up. I think the appropriate thing to do is to
3 have nine seats, because most people think we
4 should not be dividing seats between boroughs.

5 I think one of the council members from
6 Manhattan, from what I heard from previous
7 testimony, that's how a lot of people feel. In
8 either case, the Bronx should certainly not have
9 less than eight and two-thirds seats. You know,
10 the Bronx is the poorest borough. It's the most
11 heavily minority borough. And to have this
12 borough under represented is not only wrong, but
13 frankly opens the whole process up to litigation.
14 So, I would hope you rethink that and give the
15 Bronx greater representation.

16 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker
17 is Dennis Terry, to be followed by Julio Muñoz.
18 Dennis Terry?

19 MR. TERRY: Yes, I am here. Good evening to
20 the members of the Commission. And I, too, would
21 like to thank you for the hard work that you have
22 been doing. It's a thankless task and I am not
23 here to thank you for the work you have just done
24 to my district.

25 I reside across from Yankee Stadium, home of

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1 the Bronx Bombers. And you placed me now in a
2 borough called Manhattan. I have resided in that
3 district or in a Bronx district for 40 years, and
4 so have the Yankees. And given the fact that it
5 is a Bronx landmark, home of the Bronx Bombers --
6 Bronx it's an integral part of that branding of
7 that stadium -- I just don't understand how you
8 would even fathom placing that district into
9 Manhattan, considering the exchange that the
10 Bronx had to give in order to give them what they
11 needed to stay with us in the Bronx.

12 I won't belabor that point, but I think it
13 does warrant a great deal of strong
14 consideration, reconsideration on your parts. We
15 have a bid, that's 161st Street bid that is now,
16 I guess, the part of Manhattan as well. We are
17 part of what they call the Bronx Civic Center,
18 but you have managed to bifurcate that and
19 balkanize the Bronx.

20 In the four efforts to redistrict in the
21 Bronx that I have been here since '68, each time
22 balkanization tends to continue. When I showed
23 up, we had about three full councilmanic -- I
24 mean congressional districts. We now have just
25 one. And I would think that on the councilmanic

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1 level, this is at least an opportunity to expand
2 representation, to introduce more co-terminality
3 [sic] within the districts, the lines and the
4 communities lines and historical landmarks.

5 So, I would hope that you don't do to the
6 Bronx Bombers what you have done or propose to do
7 to the El Barrio and just tear it apart
8 significantly, disturb a relationship to the
9 geography and the topography and the demographics
10 of the area. So, I hope that you continue to
11 work diligently and produce a better outcome than
12 that. Thank you.

13 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker
14 is Julio Muños, to be followed by Julien Terrell.

15 MR. MUÑOS: Hey, how are you doing? I was
16 at the hearings at Bronx Community College and I
17 believed in what you guys said. And I brought up
18 exactly the same point that the young lady
19 brought up before about Bronx Park East, about
20 all the way up to Allerton Avenue. At least, my
21 people being left out.

22 And I listened to you guys and I went home
23 and I stayed up to 2:00 in the morning working on
24 my laptop submitting a plan to include them into
25 the 15th District. Well, I am looking at this

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1 and that didn't happen. So, here I am again
2 asking you to please, as a former district leader
3 that knows the 8th District like I know my hand,
4 we need to have our people represented by one
5 councilman, and not by four.

6 And I got to tell you, that I am leaning
7 very strongly towards the Bronx needs a ninth
8 district. It would solve a lot of problems
9 because we wouldn't be having to run into the
10 8th District. We could have a solid district
11 that includes the folks that I spoke about before.

12 Okay, now I am very concerned because Vito
13 Lopez does not live in the Bronx and I would not
14 want him to represent us in the Bronx. But I
15 would not want to go through this process a third
16 time. I want somebody to listen. I want people
17 to have open minds and creative minds. So, I
18 know that your job is hard, but I am not going to
19 submit another plan. Don't wait for that. I
20 submitted one already; didn't go nowhere.

21 But I am concerned that the Bronx needs
22 proper representation and it needs a ninth
23 district. And the only way where I live where we
24 can get the proper representation is by having
25 the Bronx another district. Thank you very much.

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1 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker
2 is Julien Terrell, and I will then recall Sharene
3 Donner, and that will be all of our registered
4 speakers so far.

5 MR. TERRELL: So first off, with that being
6 said, I would like to thank my fellow residents
7 who came out today. I think it's a right for us
8 to be able to participate in this and give our
9 comments. My name is Julien Terrell. I am a
10 resident of the Mott Haven neighborhood.

11 I have been in this neighborhood for a month
12 and a half -- not a month and a half, a year and
13 a half. I do want to say that there are a lot of
14 issues that have been happening. When you talk
15 about representation, we also need to be talking
16 about elected officials who can actually handle
17 the issues that we were working on, right, so it
18 speaks to capacity, right.

19 We had Fresh Direct, right, which is a
20 project that a lot of us have been fighting,
21 right. We need our elected officials who have
22 been supportive and we need our elected officials
23 in general really to be on our side about that.
24 We also have Randall's Island which was cut out
25 of our district. What I am saying is that people

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1 have been about this neighborhood fighting for
2 these issues for years, right.

3 There are business plans that have been
4 worked on for decades, right. We are at a point
5 where we are finally at a place where we can
6 actually further these plans and then we have our
7 representation that is being changed. I also
8 don't think that you bring people into a public
9 process by having elected officials who are so
10 overworked that they can't actually represent us
11 in the right way, right.

12 These are not just issues that are happening
13 in the Bronx, right. I come from Harlem, right,
14 so I know the issues my fellow neighbors talking
15 about in Harlem. And right here tonight we have
16 people coming from another borough talking about
17 the impact that they are having in that.

18 I think as you are listening to our
19 comments, not just listening about the individual
20 neighborhood, but also the Bronx as a whole,
21 right, we need to be able to put our voices into
22 we actually have decisions over what is going on
23 in our neighborhood. And if we have elected
24 officials who are committed to that, which I
25 think we do, we also need to be making decisions

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1 that are honoring that fact, right.

2 You have thousands of people who are being
3 put into our elected-official districts. That is
4 going to weaken their capacity to work on some of
5 the issues that are really stringent, right. But
6 you also have the impact of culture. I want to
7 be able to walk down my block and understand that
8 the culture I grew up in is still being deserved,
9 right. Right?

10 We need to be a little bit louder to
11 represent us, right. What I want to be able to
12 say is this. There's a reason there's not more
13 people here. It's because a lot of people don't
14 understand what the hell you all are doing,
15 right. You go on these websites and talk this
16 language; let's talk relevancy, public process
17 and how do we involve people do that. Part of
18 that is having the representatives talk to us,
19 being in a place where they can actually do us,
20 right.

21 So, that's funding, right. These are
22 decisions, right, and these are public processes
23 that need to be transparent. To be open about
24 it, I don't think this process have been
25 transparent at all, and this is the nature of the

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1 work that I do. So, I can't imagine somebody who
2 may not have the opportunity to get to it as much
3 as I do to understand what are you all talking
4 about, right?

5 I also want to make sure that, before I
6 leave, that we talk about the importance of
7 people having access to their waterfront.
8 There's water there. There's beautiful -- I
9 don't want to be too basic about it. When people
10 are putting together plans to access it, we don't
11 need to be chopping that process right in the
12 middle. Thank you.

13 MR. HACKWORTH: All right. I am recalling
14 Sharene Donner. And it looks like we have an
15 additional registration, Ariel Guerrero.

16 MR. GUERRERO: Hi, my name is Ariel
17 Guerrero. I am actually an East Harlem resident,
18 so, I was at the Monday hearing. I am here again
19 because you keep hearing this redistricting
20 process has been extremely intrusive. When you
21 hear obviously on the Bronx side that a ninth
22 district is needed, you are talking away
23 something like the Bronx; again, an institution
24 that means so much to a community. You are
25 talking away Mount Sinai and NYCHA housing. You

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1 are splitting that up in East Harlem.

2 And so, it's a continuous process where we
3 look at, I think, part of what you are seeing is,
4 you are looking at communities and you are
5 breaking them up. And the communities, the
6 council folks, I mean, I think everyone is asking
7 you guys to sit there and look at the lines
8 again. Include Mount Sinai back into East Harlem
9 and the 8th District in Manhattan.

10 I think there is a serious conversation to
11 have we are looking at the ninth district in the
12 Bronx, including, obviously, major interests.
13 This is a place where folks raise families, you
14 know, establish roots and look at these different
15 pieces. And again, I go back to the
16 intrusiveness of the redistricting this time
17 around.

18 And again, I just want to reiterate, I think
19 we should take a look at those lines and
20 re-include again Mount Sinai back into the 8th
21 District, with the NYCHA houses, Lexington and
22 Carver Houses, instead of splitting those up.
23 And again, looking at something like Yankee
24 Stadium, making sure you leave that in the Bronx
25 because that is something that means so much and

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1 so dear to the Bronx community. That's it.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. HACKWORTH: Mr. Chairman, at this time,
4 we have no additional registered speakers.

5 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: I am not ending. I am
6 inviting people who want to speak.

7 MR. HACKWORTH: Let's him speak and you will
8 hear what he has to say.

9 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Anybody who would like to
10 speak, we have an opportunity to speak. We have
11 run out of registered speakers. Anybody else who
12 would like to speak operating under the same
13 ground rules? If we have no more speakers, we
14 will adjourn the meeting.

15 MR. HACKWORTH: It looks like we have one
16 additional speaker.

17 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: For 20 minutes, we will
18 take a recess and see if other people show up.

19 MR. HACKWORTH: So, just state your name and
20 the district you are referring to, please.

21 MR. KING: Okay. My name is Andy King and I
22 have been newly elected to the Council, 12th
23 District of the Bronx. And first, I want to say,
24 thank you for all the work that you guys put in
25 to allow us to have a conversation about the work

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1 that you have done in drawing these lines.

2 But my concern is that as much as I am
3 hearing and as much as I am listening, it appears
4 that everyone here is not saying great job on
5 these lines you just drew. So, what can we do to
6 make sense? And that's the question I want to
7 ask of you, because whether you live in these
8 districts where you drew these lines, if they
9 don't make sense to the people who are actually
10 here tonight, and I am pretty sure those who are
11 not here, what can we do so they make sense and
12 everyone can feel comfortable?

13 And that is my conversation to you, whatever
14 you do moving forward after listening to all this
15 testimony tonight, I just want you to say, the
16 people, we heard the people tonight and they are
17 not really happy with what we came up with.
18 Let's go back to the drawing board and make sense
19 to the people in the 11th who got moved over
20 because of where they actually, geographically
21 land in the Bronx, should be part of the 15th.

22 Where people complaining about what's
23 happening in the 11th District, how do we figure
24 out the numbers Bronx has as far as population?
25 How do we create that ninth seat? Those are the

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1 things the people are saying that make sense. I
2 am asking you all at the end of this process to
3 really take heed to make changes that make sense
4 to everyone who is here tonight. Thank you.

5 MR. ROUSE: I would also like to speak very,
6 very brief. My name is Winston Rouse. I am an
7 attorney and lived in the Bronx my entire life.
8 I also, as Mr. Dennis Cherry stated, I also do
9 not believe that the crown jewel of the Bronx,
10 which is Yankee Stadium, should be put into a
11 district in Manhattan.

12 And I believe that this area of the Bronx,
13 because our culture, our people, we live here. I
14 graduated Fordham University. I went to
15 Roosevelt High School. It is unique. And I also
16 believe is that because of that uniqueness, that
17 area of the Bronx should be placed in the Bronx
18 and not be assigned to a council district that is
19 outside of the Bronx who very well do not
20 understand or appreciate the value and the
21 significance of things that occur in the Bronx as
22 much as they would appreciate in Manhattan.

23 And again, I again, with Mr. Terry, wish to
24 state that I believe that, again, council
25 district in the Bronx area should be placed in

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1 the Bronx. And again, and I am also stating this
2 from personal perspective because I do plan on
3 running for the City Council in the 16th District
4 at this coming term. So, I do have a personal
5 feeling regarding that. And I want to thank you
6 very much for your time.

7 MR. RICHARDSON: Good evening. My name is
8 Bernell Richardson and I am the executive
9 director of Black United Leadership of the Bronx.
10 I am going to change the focus a little, and I am
11 not going to appeal to you anymore. But I am
12 going to appeal to the City Council, because this
13 plan goes back to the City Council. And I think
14 if there's anyone that understands the issues,
15 it's our City Council.

16 So, I would urge the City Council to hear
17 what we are saying tonight. Hear what the
18 community is saying. Hear what your constituents
19 are saying. Because with all due respect, let's
20 be real. Ladies and gentlemen, you make up the
21 Commission, but at the end of the day,
22 technically, your job is done. So, I now speak
23 so the City Council. Hear what we are saying.

24 Listen to us and make the changes conducive
25 to all of our community and don't allow lines be

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1 developed that split opportunities, split
2 culture, cause dissension among us. Let us
3 understand that. So, I appeal to you, the City
4 Council, and I have faith in you. Thank you.

5 MR. POWER: Good evening, my name is Maury
6 Power (phonetic). I didn't know I was speaking,
7 but I feel I must. I will say something very
8 briefly about Randall's Island and then also
9 about Yankee Stadium. I really have to say
10 because some of the facts are really worth noting.

11 I am concerned about the allocation of parks
12 or the ideas that communities do not control
13 parks and open space, whether they are privately
14 managed or not. I think it's very problematic to
15 have Manhattan representatives being the
16 officials of record making decisions about Yankee
17 Stadium, when the way Yankee Stadium reinvestment
18 happened was already a debacle.

19 To almost institutionalize the Bronx as
20 having a voice in the future of Yankee Stadium by
21 having that piece parcelled off to Manhattan for
22 Mayor Bloomberg's purposes is extremely
23 problematic. It's not a small thing.

24 The other thing is Randall's Island. So,
25 Randall's Island is not geographically part of

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1 the Bronx. However, it's also problematic that,
2 if there had been a district which included
3 Randall's Island with the Bronx, if that's not
4 the case anymore, because people who care about
5 open space in the New York City or who care
6 about, and this is very important, working class
7 children's access to public parks, you need to be
8 very concerned about an decision that was made a
9 few years back whereby some wing of the mayor's
10 office or City government allowed for private
11 schools, which cater to upper-class -- I am going
12 to keep it real.

13 I am a citizen. I am going to be -- this is
14 an Ice Age for a Latino and African-American poor
15 people in this city and this country. And our
16 city government allowed very elite high schools
17 in Manhattan to come together and legally be able
18 to use the recreational facilities at Randall's
19 Island in ways that are almost exclusive.

20 And so, to compound what has already been
21 done, which is disastrous, with not allowing
22 people in Mott Haven for their voices to be
23 dominant in the discussion of the future of
24 Randall's Island, that is just disgusting. So,
25 both of those issues are not small issues. Who

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1 controls park land contiguous in the Bronx is
2 very important. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Is there anyone else who
4 would like to speak? We will stand in recess for
5 20 minutes in case someone wants to get up to the
6 podium and speak. We will return. We are hereby
7 adjourned.

8 MR. HACKWORTH: If you are interested in
9 speaking, please go to the registration desk and
10 fill out a card.

11 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

12 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Good evening. We are
13 about to resume. Thaddeus, if you would call the
14 next speaker.

15 MR. HACKWORTH: All right. Our next speaker
16 is Arthur Mychal Johnson, to be followed by Angel
17 Lopez.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Good evening. My name is
19 Arthur Mychal Johnson. I am a resident of Mott
20 Haven neighborhood in South Bronx and a member of
21 Community Board 1. I am here to give testimony
22 to implore the New York City Redistricting
23 Commission to reconsider and correct the
24 potentially devastating effects on the South
25 Bronx in the proposed December 4th revised plan.

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1 After consultation with many of my
2 colleagues in the Bronx and Manhattan, I have
3 carefully prepared a revised plan entitled the
4 Common Sense Bronx Plan to ensure fair and
5 effective representation of the South Bronx, keep
6 intact communities of interest in the South Bronx
7 and ensure compact and contiguous districts.

8 First, population. The December 4th revised
9 plan reduced population patterns in the Bronx
10 District 16, 17 and 18 in a haphazard way that
11 would carve out to inflate the population of
12 District 8 to maximize possible deviations of up
13 to 4.99 percent. Population deviation should be
14 as minimal as possible to achieve the least
15 amount of impact to racial and language minority
16 groups and their historical, political
17 representation. The Common Sense Bronx Plan
18 equalized the population distribution among
19 Districts 8, 16, 17 and 18 with a maximum
20 deviation 1.4 percent among all four districts.

21 Secondly, the fair and effective
22 representation of communities of interest, the
23 December 4th revised plan dramatically disrupts
24 the fair and effective representation of
25 concerned communities of interest, in particular.

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1 Approximately 9,000 African-Americans are cut out
2 of District 16, 6,000 African-Americans cut out
3 of District 17 and the African-American
4 population in District 18 is arbitrarily
5 increased, despite the district, 65 percent is
6 Hispanic majority.

7 I urge you to carefully reconsider
8 disrupting this historical and important
9 communities of interest and reflect on the very
10 foundation of the Voting Rights Act. The Common
11 Sense Bronx Plan more carefully balances the
12 population among the Bronx districts to preserve
13 fair and effective representation, while
14 retaining below-standard deviations as well as
15 ideal population values in surrounding districts.

16 For these and other key issues, with the
17 December 4th revised plan, I urge you to
18 reconsider the lines you have drawn for
19 District 8. This is one of the most important
20 and potentially harmful structural changes to one
21 of the City's long-neglected areas. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Mr. Johnson, your Bronx
23 Common Sense Plan sounds like a map we should
24 consider. Have you submitted it?

25 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I have, sir, and I have

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1 copies here today I submitted at the front
2 tables. I have additional copies I can give to
3 you. But also on your website, it's been
4 submitted formally.

5 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Angel
6 Lopez, to be followed by Corrine Kohunt, Esq.

7 MR. LOPEZ: Good evening. I am Angel Lopez.
8 I saw you guys last time in the Bronx Community
9 College. Back then, I said that I am a resident
10 of Mott Haven and I earn my living making maps.
11 And your map looked horrible back then and still
12 looks pretty, pretty bad.

13 There is an issue of compactness, okay? The
14 revised plan that you are presenting now
15 stretches from, at least on District 8 stretches
16 from 59th Street all the way to 166th Street.
17 That is five times as long as it is wide. That
18 doesn't make much sense.

19 What Mr. Johnson presented here, the Common
20 Sense Bronx Plan, a map that we are presenting
21 here scales back those northern boundaries to
22 make the district much more compact while
23 maintaining below-standard deviations, as well as
24 ideal population variance in surrounding districts.

25 The other issue that we see is the issue of

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1 continuity. Here again, the revised plan, you
2 stubbornly maintained the idea of taking
3 Randall's Island from the Bronx and Manhattan.
4 You give the island to Queens as if you were the
5 King of Spain, "Here, we give you this island."

6 And we have four bridges connecting the
7 Bronx to Randall's Island. Queens has one
8 bridge. That symbolically speaks of the value
9 and the historical importance and the connection
10 that we have there. We need that island. Our
11 children need and deserve access to that open
12 space. Randall's Island is part of the assembly
13 district of the Bronx and it's part of Community
14 Board 11 in Manhattan.

15 We need that island. We need that open
16 space because our children face eight times the
17 national average in asthma, okay? The Common
18 Sense Bronx Plan that Mr. Joseph presented here
19 reincorporates Randall's Island into District 8
20 while maintaining below-staining standard
21 deviation as well as the population in
22 surrounding districts. So, I hope you rethink
23 seriously this map (timer dings). Thank you.

24 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Corrine
25 Kohut, Esq., to be followed by Herman Francis.

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1 MS. KOHUT: Hello, my name is Corrine Kohut.
2 I am a resident of the Mott Haven neighborhood in
3 the South Bronx and I am here to give testimony
4 against the current redistricting lines as
5 proposed in the December 4th revised plan of the
6 New York City Redistricting Commission,
7 specifically as they relate to District 8.

8 I also, like my neighbors and colleagues,
9 Arthur, Michael Johnson and Angel Lopez, support
10 the Common Sense Bronx Plan and urge you to take
11 a strong look at that plan, because it is indeed
12 common sense.

13 One of the criteria for districting is
14 keeping intact neighborhoods and communities with
15 established ties of common interest and
16 association. The South Bronx waterfront is lined
17 with a publically-owned, 96-acre parcel of land
18 called the Harlem River Rail Yards. The
19 December 4th revised plan continues to slice in
20 half this critical waterfront property and divide
21 it between two different City Council districts.
22 And this is unacceptable.

23 The South Bronx waterfront is crucial to the
24 district's short, medium and long-term
25 development, and the community surrounding this

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1 land has for decades been united in common
2 interest around its usage. For more than ten
3 years, the South Bronx has struggled for and
4 recently achieved the Randall's Island connector,
5 a footbridge mentioned by Angel Lopez, a
6 footbridge from the Bronx to Randall's Island
7 that crosses over a narrow waterway that
8 separates our residents from 480 acres of green
9 space.

10 As currently configured in the December 4th
11 revised plan, tens of thousands of South Bronx
12 residents that are within one mile of walking
13 distance to the connector would have to cross
14 district lines to access the Footbridge, despite
15 a decade of having worked together for its
16 completion.

17 The Common Sense Bronx Plan corrects this
18 obvious error and keeps intact the South Bronx
19 waterfront, while maintaining below-standard
20 deviations as well as ideal population values in
21 surrounding districts.

22 Another area of common interest and
23 associations, which has been arbitrarily stripped
24 away from Mott Haven and Port Morris in the
25 December 4th revised plan is the central business

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1 district of the South Bronx known as The Hub,
2 which is centered at Third Avenue and 149th Street.

3 In its hasty effort to make District 8 take
4 up a greater percentage of the Bronx, the
5 Commission seemed to carefully carve out the
6 economic foundation of the neighborhood. As one
7 the poorest districts in New York City, residents
8 of the South Bronx are more than anything an
9 economic community of interest.

10 The Common Sense Bronx Plan places the South
11 Bronx tax revenue base back into -- (timer
12 dings) -- District 8, while maintaining
13 below-standard deviations as well as ideal
14 population values in the surrounding districts.

15 Thank you in advance for addressing these
16 very concrete concerns not only raised by myself,
17 but also my neighbors and my colleagues, and
18 embracing a viable alternative for District 8 in
19 the Common Sense Bronx Plan.

20 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker
21 is Herman Francis, to be followed by William
22 Stanford, Jr.

23 MR. FRANCIS: Good evening, everyone. It's
24 good to see that common sense have come to the
25 redistrict. Once again, we go back that this is

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1 about addition of morality. It goes back to the
2 U.S. Constitution, because if those who have made
3 decisions did what they were supposed to do, we
4 would not be here this evening.

5 No one in the community in this country will
6 stand by and have their community divided into
7 two different counties. That is ridiculous. In
8 New York State are 62 counties. If you look at
9 it, every local is represented entirely within
10 the county on lines.

11 Yet, in the Bronx, the State senators cross
12 county lines. The congressional districts cross
13 county lines. Why do the City Council districts
14 have to cross county lines? All of the sudden
15 districts are dislocated entirely from their
16 county. It's all because it goes back to 1787.
17 I am a firm believer in solutions. If you want
18 to ask me something, all you have to do is look
19 at archives and yes, somebody pulled up a book
20 and common sense has to prevail. We will see how
21 long we will continue.

22 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is William
23 Stanford, Jr., to be followed by Winston Rouse.

24 MR. STANFORD: As I said before, the name is
25 Mr. X. Apparently, you forgot what happened just

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1 two days ago. Apparently, you forgot what
2 happened just one day ago. To your memory, you
3 have a poor memory, a poor-track mind, okay?

4 December 4th, you held a public meeting at
5 the Manhattan law school. The location, didn't
6 bother to e-mail it to me even though I am on
7 your mailing list. October 2nd, you held a
8 public meeting; didn't bother to accommodate me.

9 I found out at 8:30, and here you are with
10 your tail between your legs? That wasn't very
11 swift. October 2nd, I complained about that,
12 okay? Did the chair apologize to me? No, what
13 did he do instead, he showed me his feminist
14 side, because that's all he's good at doing.
15 There's no excuse for that. You owe me an
16 apology for that, okay?

17 December 4th, you could have e-mailed to me.
18 I discovered your website two days later. You
19 could have e-mailed it to me. I don't care if it
20 was on your website. You could have e-mailed it
21 to me.

22 MR. HACKWORTH: Do you have anything to say
23 about redistricting?

24 MR. STANFORD: Why are you so fast to cut me
25 off? Why are you so fast to cut me off? You

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1 think I drove around, too? During round two, you
2 took the microphone twice while I was speaking.
3 Did you forget that part? I didn't find that
4 amusing. You said it was a problem with the
5 microphone. It wasn't a problem with the
6 microphone. It gone off twice when I spoke [sic].

7 When everyone else spoke, it was fine. You
8 turned it off. And now you want to rush me. I
9 don't think so. You are not a bulldozing me
10 [sic]. I don't think so. I just came in from
11 Albany. I watched Cuomo make his speech. That's
12 why I arrived late. The least you could do is
13 give me my allotted time to speak.

14 And if it's too much trouble for you to
15 listen to what I have to say, then maybe you
16 should stay home and be a housewife. All you
17 have to do is put on an apron or a dress or a
18 miniskirt and take a tape measure -- I will give
19 you a wedgie. As far as dishes goes, this is
20 worse than that.

21 You see this here? This is worse than that,
22 okay? As I said before, you want to draw these
23 lines perfectly, all you have to do is go by the
24 bus corridors. You are zigzagging, okay? I just
25 zigzag scissors that people use, okay? You treat

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1 it like a sewing machine, okay? Don't zigzag.

2 Go straight across. I know you know how to
3 draw, but apparently you think you don't. You
4 are still in kindergarten. You need to draw
5 these lines better. This is what I expect from a
6 kindergarten student, not from someone who is
7 older than me like you. You can do better than
8 these districts.

9 Again, black and white, is there any reason
10 why we have the black and white version and you
11 guys have the color version? Do you know what a
12 color ink cartridge is? I guess not. You are so
13 used to a black ink cartridge. You're used to
14 the 1950s, black and white (timer dings).

15 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Winston
16 Rouse, to be followed by Harry Bobbins. Do we
17 have Winston Rouse? Harry Bobbins?

18 MR. BOBBINS: Hello again. It's really
19 great to see you all again. I would remind you
20 last time I spoke that no one listened to or
21 changed anything to, according to the plan, we
22 were supporting the Unity Plan and keeping
23 Randall's Island in the South Bronx and East
24 Harlem district.

25 None of you did a thing about it. It's

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1 embarrassing, those of you who care, to have to
2 be tried out yet again to support Christine
3 Quinn's backtracking on Vito Lopez's attempt to
4 become a council member. That's why this has
5 happened, not because us in the South Bronx/East
6 Harlem are unified to stop the tearing out of
7 Randall's Island from our district, but for your
8 politics.

9 So, those of you who are assembled today who
10 have ethics, who have truth behind you and a
11 track record of being advocates, I really feel
12 for you because you are put in this position as a
13 rubber stamp, and it's extremely embarrassing.
14 You can change it, though. You can, again, make
15 modifications to the plan as was done before.

16 Before, it was because of an outcry against
17 this powerful person who is running for mayor.
18 In this case, it's a community or communities,
19 the South Bronx and East Harlem, that have, as we
20 all know, been historically neglected and dumped
21 upon. You can make a really great stand for
22 democracy by modifying this plan and making sure
23 that Randall's Island is included.

24 As I mentioned before, I see Council Member
25 Arroyo here tonight. This is merely a ploy to

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1 continue the privatization of Randall's Island
2 and cut out of the voices of our current Council
3 Members Arroyo and Viverito, who have worked with
4 communities to stand firm against Mayor
5 Bloomberg's privatization schemes to turn over
6 Randall's Island to rich, white private schools
7 in Upper East Side and Randall's Island. That's
8 basically the issue that is going on and turning
9 over to Queens, which is geographically further
10 away.

11 With the rest of my time, I want to read
12 Juan Gonzalez's column in The New York Daily
13 News, in case you didn't get a chance to read it.
14 And I saw someone put his hand up like that and
15 that was an affront to him. And I will jump
16 right to the middle.

17 (Reading): "The media fury of over the
18 Lopez maneuver grew so loud that the Commission
19 was forced to go back to the drawing board. But
20 that scandal has obscured an equally indefensible
21 proposal by the Commission involving Randall's
22 Island and the 8th Council District and East
23 Harlem. If you ever spent time on Randall's
24 Island, you know it is geographically closer to
25 the industrial southern tip of the Bronx than to

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1 any borough. The island has always been more
2 accessible, though, to Manhattan. Yet, it's been
3 put into a Queens district."

4 Please change that (timer dings). Thank you.

5 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Michael
6 Amos, to be followed by Lille Smallwood.

7 MR. BOBBINS: Hello, my name is, as you
8 said, Michael Amos, and I am born and raised in
9 the Bronx. My family born and raised in the
10 Bronx. My uncle was one of the members of the
11 Kelly Street Block Association. So, as far back
12 as I can remember, there has been organizing and
13 community development in my family.

14 Recently, in the past two years, I decided
15 after an East Coast tour as far north as Boston
16 and as far south as Atlanta to come home, to come
17 back home to the Bronx because this is where I
18 belong. And one of the pleasures that I had in
19 coming back to the Bronx was taking my
20 grandchildren to Roosevelt Island.

21 I remember when I grew up, we would always
22 go out of the Bronx to get to water, all the way
23 up north to get to grass. My grandchildren had
24 such a great time coming 20 minutes, less than a
25 half an hour from their house to get to water, to

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1 get to grass where I could point out across there
2 and over there was where I had an apartment.

3 So, I have a simple question; why? If
4 Randall's Island is closer to the Bronx and now
5 part of South Bronx and East Harlem, why? When I
6 was growing up, my mother used to always tell me,
7 if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Thank you.

8 MR. HACKWORTH: Our final registered speaker
9 is Lille Smallwood.

10 MS. SMALLWOOD: Hi, I am Lille Smallwood.
11 Hi everybody. I am with South Bronx Unit and I
12 am a South Bronx resident. Hi. And I just
13 wanted to say that I back what my friends who
14 just came up here said, my colleagues. I would
15 like to keep Randall's Island in the South Bronx.

16 I have not been here as long as many of you.
17 I have been living in the South Bronx for a year,
18 over a year now, in the Bronx for about a year
19 and a half. I grew up in Washington State,
20 though, on 18 acres of country, so I can't
21 imagine not being able to see water or trees
22 ever, hardly.

23 And so, I think the least we could do here
24 is keep something that is already part of the
25 Bronx here for the children and for everybody.

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1 And that's about all I have to say. So, thank
2 you.

3 MR. HACKWORTH: Mr. Chairperson, we have no
4 additional registered speakers.

5 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: We have no additional
6 registered speakers. Would anyone else like to
7 speak and be recognized?

8 MR. HACKWORTH: Just begin by stating your
9 name, please.

10 MR. LOPEZ: Sure. My name is Michael S.
11 Lopez, Michael Lopez, L-O-P-E-Z, okay?

12 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: A little closer to the
13 mic.

14 MR. LOPEZ: A little closer to the mic?
15 Michael Lopez; is that good? Okay. I want a
16 little anecdote so you could understand how
17 important Wards Island is. It is right across
18 the bridge, the footbridge on 102nd Street where
19 I group up. Every September, my teacher would
20 ask me, "What did you do for the summer?" And I
21 would say, "I went to the island." Said, "Wow,
22 that's great." What island was I talking about?
23 Wards Island.

24 About, maybe, two months ago, I went to the
25 island to see the new structure and where the

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1 baseball fields that are no longer baseball
2 fields on Wards Island it's only volleyball -- I
3 mean, soccer, and on Randall's Island, it's only
4 baseball fields. But in between, I am walking
5 and I see something called "John Rose Academy of
6 Tennis." Where did he come from? How did that
7 happen?

8 I mean, I could understand some
9 restructuring, but this is the type of
10 privatization of what is going on. And once I
11 even saw "Coming soon, Cirque du Soleil on
12 Randall's Island." I said, hey, I think this is
13 something. I did get some free tickets, by the
14 way, I got to admit.

15 But it's part of the change that is
16 happening. And I think, especially for
17 youngsters if it wasn't for Randall's Island and
18 Wards Island, we wouldn't have an island. I
19 visited my island when I was 20. Everything else
20 was Randall's and Wards Island. So, for children
21 growing up, that grass is very important.

22 And the other thing is, with the high
23 school, I heard there was a difficulty with the
24 high schools from Queens, the permits trying to
25 get a baseball field or a volleyball field. It's

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1 very difficult, because the schools have them
2 pretty much all week, and then there is some
3 reserved for the weekend. So, there's something
4 going on with the Queens; I'm not sure.

5 I can't give you any facts. But I think it
6 was a great solution to give it back to where it
7 belongs and I think then we could have a little
8 bit more to say about what goes on on the island.
9 Thank you for your time.

10 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Is there anyone else that
11 would like to address the Commission at this
12 time? We are going to stand adjourned until
13 tomorrow. The Commission is going to stand
14 adjourned -- let me finish -- until tomorrow and
15 Brooklyn.

16 The staff is going to remain to receive any
17 written testimony that people who come later may
18 want to submit. Anyone who wants to speak? I'm
19 sorry. If I missed someone, I apologize. I
20 still can't see.

21 MR. HACKWORTH: There's one more. You can
22 leave the mic attached.

23 DR. GHOLSON: How are you doing this
24 evening? In observing the comments --

25 MR. HACKWORTH: I'm sorry, could you state

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1 your name?

2 DR. GHOLSON: I'm sorry, Dr. Vicky Gholson,
3 Community Board 9, attending high school in the
4 Bronx. It is so important from the time the
5 first map came out, if it were to be observed,
6 one would think it was put out to infuriate and
7 to intimidate. There was a second map that came
8 out after countless recommendations, people
9 sending in information, people going and sending
10 in maps and several meetings being held in the
11 Commission's office.

12 There has not been another change on the map
13 that really accomplishes what has been said. But
14 this evening, anyone in the South Bronx that
15 understands the struggles and the fight and the
16 relationship between the residents of the South
17 Bronx and the residents of East Harlem,
18 historically and out of respect, it is criminal
19 to put forward the map that is now on the table.

20 In terms of the accomplishments of those
21 from Puerto Rico, in particular, those
22 accomplishments in developing communities that
23 have been ignored, creating something from
24 absolutely nothing, the artistic and cultural
25 legacies that flow through these communities, the

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1 Commission has a responsibility to protect and
2 preserve cultural legacy and civic accomplishment.

3 In addition, there should never be a time
4 that we look back through the years from now and
5 see that we participated in a process that
6 undermined the self-esteem and the historic
7 accomplishments of a people. If the map goes
8 forward as it stands, that is what it will do.
9 The process is hampered from the outset. We know
10 that it's tampered in terms of political
11 manipulation.

12 But each and every member of this Commission
13 and each and every resident in both East Harlem,
14 West Harlem, Central and the South Bronx has a
15 responsibility to make sure that we look back and
16 see that we did the correct thing, that we did
17 what was set out by those politicians who broke
18 the barriers in the '40s and in the '50s, those
19 community organizers that fought to hold on to
20 vacant and abandoned mass lands and streams of
21 property to develop.

22 We made the sacrifices to send those
23 children off to college to get those MBAs and to
24 get those degrees to return to the communities
25 that they grew up. We have a

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1 responsibility -- (timer dings) -- to maintain
2 and build upon what has been done.

3 So, I again stand for the Commission and
4 before my neighbors and I ask that we do the
5 correct thing, that we have another presentation
6 of the map with the changes that I am sure you
7 are going to make after having observed the
8 dialogue and the conversations --

9 MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you.

10 DR. GHOLSON: Before a final vote is taken.
11 And I thank you for your time and I thank my
12 neighbors.

13 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: The staff will remain
14 behind.

15 MR. HACKWORTH: There is one more.

16 MR. EMMANUEL: Yes, Castillo Emmanuel, South
17 Bronx. I am wondering why you come to the
18 solution that you want to do something with
19 Randall's at this point? Because I knew growing
20 up, that was my safe haven, my haven. That was
21 spitting distance from me.

22 Growing up, late '80s, early '90s, I used to
23 play baseball. In fact, I was MVP a couple of
24 times. I used to play there. All my baseball
25 players from before, they don't have a place to

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1 go to, we really, excuse my language, we're
2 fucked. We can't do much.

3 I would like to have a place for our kids to
4 grow up and say, "Look, your daddy played in that
5 park." And I was MVP, of course. I want them to
6 have a place to grow up so they can have a place.
7 So, why are you going to do this realignment or
8 anything? Why not keep it spitting distance from
9 my neighborhood so I can go there constantly?
10 Boycott Fresh Direct.

11 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: We stand adjourned until
12 tomorrow, Downtown Brooklyn at Saint Francis
13 College.

14
15 (Whereupon, at 8:01 p.m., the above matter
16 was concluded.)

17
18 I, JOSHUA B. EDWARDS, RPR, a Notary Public
19 for and within the State of New York, do hereby
20 certify that the above is a correct transcription
21 of my stenographic notes.

22
23



25

JOSHUA B. EDWARDS, RPR

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