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CITY OF NEW YORK
2012-2013 DISTRICTING COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING
Staten Island Borough Hall
10 Richmond Terrace
Staten Island, New York 10301
August 20, 2012
5:15 P.M.

- IN ATTENDANCE:
- JUSTIN YU
 - MADELINE PROVENZANO
 - JAMILA PONTON BRAGG
 - LINDA LIN
 - GLORIA CARVAJAL WOLFE
 - ROXANNE J. PERSAUD
 - BENITO ROMANO, Chair
 - OSCAR ODOM, III
 - SCOTT CERULLO
 - KAMILLAH M. HANKS
 - THOMAS V. OGNIBENE
 - MARC WURZEL
 - ROBERT HART

DISTRICTING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

1 MR. ROMANO: Good evening and thank you for
2 coming tonight. Welcome to the New York City
3 Districting Commission's public hearing. And a
4 specifically thanks to James Molinaro, borough
5 president, for hosting us tonight. My name is
6 Benito Romano and I am the chair of the New York
7 City Districting Commission.

8 We have this facility until 9:00, although
9 we may -- it looks like we are going to finish
10 earlier. I want to make sure we hear from
11 everyone who has signed up. For those who did
12 not sign up and wish to speak, please see one of
13 the Districting Commission staff to register.

14 There is Jonathan Ettricks, who is around.
15 There he is, okay, and Brian Flynn is here, and
16 Shirley Malone. See any one of them to register
17 to speak. If you require translation for your
18 statement, please let the staff at the
19 registration desk know. They will ensure that a
20 translator will be provided when it is your turn
21 to speak.

22 Before we begin to take testimony, I would
23 like to make a few opening comments. At the
24 beginning of August, the Commission advertised in
25 community and ethnic newspapers announcing the

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1 Commission's public hearing schedule. An e-mail
2 blast was sent to over 5,000 individuals and
3 organizations. Various advocacy groups helped
4 spread the word through their individual
5 networks, and the hearing schedule was publicized
6 on Facebook and our Twitter feed.

7 From the look of his room, it seems we are
8 able to reach many of you. Nevertheless, as we
9 go forward in this process, we will seek other
10 additional ways to maximize community
11 participation.

12 Tonight, we continue the first stage of New
13 York City's districting process as laid out in
14 the New York City Charter. After the Commission
15 holds public hearings in each of the five
16 boroughs, the Commission will meet again this
17 Friday at 1:00 P.M. at Council Chambers in City
18 Hall to discuss what we have learned during this
19 process.

20 At this August 24th Commission meeting, we
21 will direct the staff to create a preliminary
22 district plan according to the Commission's
23 instructions. On September 4th at 1:00 P.M. at
24 the Council Chambers in City Hall, the Commission
25 will meet again, this time to review and adopt

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1 the preliminary district plan that will then be
2 made available for public inspection and comment.

3 Please note that both these meetings will be
4 open to the public, but there will not be any
5 opportunity to speak or make comments, at least
6 not then. The public will have an opportunity to
7 comment on this preliminary district plan during
8 the second round of public hearings held
9 throughout the five boroughs from 5:00 to
10 9:00 P.M. on October 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 10th and
11 11th.

12 The places are still to be determined, but
13 the venues will be different than the locations
14 that we have previously used in order to maximize
15 opportunities for participation. Comments from
16 this round of public hearings will then be
17 considered during the Commission meeting
18 scheduled for October 18th, where staff will once
19 again be directed to revise the preliminary
20 district plan in response to the comments that we
21 received.

22 At the next Commission meeting,
23 October 30th, the revised plan will be presented,
24 considered and adopted by the Commission. This
25 revised plan will then be delivered to the City

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1 Council for its inspection and approval by
2 November 5th.

3 According to the City Charter, by
4 November 27th, the council must either adopt the
5 revised district plan, at which point the plan
6 will then be filed with the City Clerk, or the
7 Council can object to the revised district plan,
8 in which case the plan will be returned to the
9 Commission with the Council's comments and
10 objections.

11 The Commission will then have until
12 January 5, 2013 to create a revised plan. This
13 will then set the stage for a new set of public
14 hearings which has been tentatively scheduled for
15 January 18th to February 8th in each of the five
16 boroughs. Again, we aim to have these hearings
17 in different elections from the prior two rounds
18 of public hearings in order to maximize public
19 participation.

20 The Commission will then have until
21 March 5th to create, adopt and submit a final
22 plan to the City Clerk and to the United States
23 Department of Justice for Voting Rights Act
24 Section V preclearance. This process is
25 described in a flow chart that is available for

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1 you tonight. Another handout that is available
2 are two maps. One map is of the five boroughs
3 with the current City Council district lines, and
4 another is a map of Staten Island with the
5 borough's current City Council district lines.

6 Both maps include total populations within
7 the districts. The population figures in the
8 handouts have already been adjusted to reflect
9 prisoners serving state sentences, but having
10 residences within their respective districts as
11 of the time of the taking of the U.S. Census in
12 2010. The Commission will take into
13 consideration when drawing the district lines.

14 It is also important to keep in mind that,
15 as we conduct these public hearings, we are not
16 writing on a blank slate, but are operating
17 within an established legal framework. The law
18 obligates the Commission to consider during the
19 districting process the following: The total
20 population difference of any district cannot be
21 greater than 10 percent of the average population
22 of all the districts.

23 District lines have to ensure fair and
24 effective representation of racial and language
25 minority groups in New York City. The lines must

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1 keep neighborhoods in communities with
2 established ties of common interest and
3 association intact. The district line must make
4 contact and must be contiguous, that is to say,
5 next to one another.

6 The lines must keep districts within the
7 boroughs. And, of course, we must avoid
8 diminishing the effective representation of
9 voters. I want to bring to your attention our
10 website, www.nyc.gov/districting. The site is
11 the central repository of all documents and
12 videos relating to the Districting Commission.

13 It also contains a complete schedule of our
14 public hearings and a portal where you can
15 preregister for all hearings and be added to our
16 mailing list. I hope you will visit the site and
17 let us know if it can be made more informative
18 and interactive.

19 One final note. We have a number of
20 speakers tonight, not many, but a number. Each
21 of you has three minutes, which is not very long.
22 Keep in mind, however, we already have a
23 substantial amount of data from the U.S. Census.
24 We will accept and read your written submissions.
25 All of this data is important to our decision.

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1 But your testimony at these hearings is
2 critical as well. In your remarks, tell us about
3 your neighborhoods. Where are its natural
4 boundaries as you see them? So that we can
5 follow your comments, please tell us what Council
6 district you are concerned about and how, if at
7 all, you would like to see it changed.

8 At this point, we will have the
9 commissioners introduce themselves and then we
10 will hear from our first witness. If we can
11 start from that end.

12 MR. WURZEL: Hi, Marc Wurzel.

13 MR. HART: Hi, Rob Hart. I live in the west
14 Brighton section of Staten Island.

15 MR. CERULLO: Hi, Scott Cerullo. I live in
16 the section of Staten Island.

17 MS. HANKS: Kamillah Hanks, I live in the
18 Stapleton section of Staten Island.

19 MR. ODOM: Oscar Odom III, Brooklyn.

20 MR. HUM: Carl Hum, staff to the Commission.

21 MR. HACKWORTH: I am Thaddeus Hackworth,
22 also staff to the Commission.

23 MS. PERSAUD: Roxanne Persaud, Brooklyn.

24 MS. WOLFE: Gloria Wolfe, Manhattan.

25 MS. LIN: Linda Lin, Queens.

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1 MS. BRAGG: Jamila Ponton Bragg, Manhattan.

2 MS. PROVENZANO: Madeline Provenzano, the
3 Bronx.

4 MR. ROMANO: Thank you. Let's call our
5 first speaker.

6 MR. HACKWORTH: Our first speaker will be
7 Joseph Granello, which will be followed by
8 William Stanford, Jr.

9 MR. GRANELLO: Good evening everyone. Thank
10 you for the opportunity to speak on this
11 important topic. This evening, I will limit my
12 comments to the requested three minutes. I have
13 electronically submitted the complete comments to
14 the Commission.

15 My name is Joe Granello. I am a home and
16 business owner in the Sunnyside section of Staten
17 Island. Sunnyside is part of Community Board 1,
18 on which I am proud to have served for eight
19 years as a member, transportation chair and first
20 vice chair under two former borough presidents,
21 Anthony Gaeta and Ralph Lamberti.

22 I have been informed that Staten Island, for
23 the first time in 30 years, will have three
24 self-contained council districts which do not
25 cross county lines. I hope this commission will

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1 consider the geographic boundaries of the three
2 council districts to be coterminous with our
3 existing three community boards. The concept of
4 community boards has been involved since the year
5 of 1951.

6 Citywide, voters have reaffirmed the
7 importance of the 59 boards. Community boards
8 provide the citizens of New York City with
9 neighborhood governance. Council members must
10 work closely with their community boards. They
11 are officio members, nonvoting members of the
12 board. They submit nominations for community
13 board membership approved by the borough
14 president.

15 Community boards advise Council Members on
16 the expense and capital budgets. All three
17 Council Members on board will sit with the three
18 community board chairs. To quote Mr. Jim Caras,
19 Deputy General Counsel of New York City Council
20 in his remarks on the Commission at July 17, "One
21 of the main reasons for increasing the number of
22 districts in 1989 was to make the council body
23 more closely represent the rich diversity of our
24 city."

25 As a follow-up to Mr. Caras' remarks, I

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1 quote the words spoken at the same meeting by
2 Dr. Joseph Salvo from the City Planning
3 Department regarding population change on Staten
4 Island: "Let's go, Staten Island. White
5 population down, Staten Island is the only
6 borough where the Hispanic and black populations
7 both increased, most heavily in Community
8 District 1. Community District 1 is now no
9 different from the different areas in the rest of
10 the city. It's an amazingly diverse place."

11 In conclusion, let's seize the opportunity
12 to maintain this amazingly diverse place by
13 making it Council District 49. Do not carve out
14 white communities or minority communities to
15 protect incumbents. The diversity is too
16 important. Good government is too important.
17 Thank you.

18 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
19 William Stanford, Jr., to be followed by Council
20 Member Debi Rose.

21 MR. STANFORD: If you hold future public
22 hearings here, you should consider getting a
23 bigger room, for starters. We are packed like
24 sardines here, okay? What I am seeing here in
25 Staten Island today is similar to what I saw in

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1 Brooklyn last Monday. All I said was to get a
2 bigger room last Monday, and a smaller room
3 today.

4 If you remember, last Monday, your public
5 hearing lasted under two hours, between 5:00 and
6 7:00. It started after 5:00 and ended before
7 7:00. And this public hearing started after 5:00
8 and I anticipate it will end before 7:00. That's
9 embarrassing, Okay? What's also embarrassing,
10 like us, some of you were late, okay? But,
11 what's different from that last month, this time
12 you remembered to turn off your cellphones and to
13 put them on vibrate, which I noted of last Monday
14 and Thursday.

15 As far as City Council districts go, I think
16 the lines should just go straight, rather than go
17 zigzag, just go straight. I know you have to
18 redraw them. I think they should just go
19 straight, not zigzag, to be more concise, be more
20 consistent. To me, it's a little confusing.

21 What I have here, it goes straight across.
22 Unfortunately, here in Staten Island, you can't
23 go by the bus corridors, because this borough is
24 shaped differently, which I also previously
25 noted. But you can go straight across rather

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1 than zigzag, because that's a little confusing.
2 So, you should consider doing that.

3 If you do, give the constituents what they
4 want, not what you want. Don't make the same
5 mistake Bradford did. They did whatever the hell
6 they wanted and, you know, didn't care about us,
7 okay? So, that's my only comment.

8 See if you can go straight across, straight
9 across. It's not -- it won't be perfect, but you
10 can try. Let's make an effort. Let's make a
11 difference in our lives, rather than make
12 childlike excuses like Nicholas Bradford made.

13 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
14 Council Woman Debi Rose to be followed by
15 Dr. Mohammad Khalid.

16 MS. ROSE: Good evening. I want to welcome
17 the commissioners to Staten Island, but more so
18 to Staten Island in my district, which as you
19 know, is the fastest-growing and the most
20 diverse. So, I want to thank you. My remarks
21 are going to be brief, which is unusual for a
22 politician. So, everybody should applaud that.
23 (Laughter.)

24 We will be brief and general. So, once
25 again, I would like to welcome you and commend

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1 you as you take the arduous task of reconfiguring
2 the board of the councilmanic districts of Staten
3 Island. This complicated process, often
4 misunderstood, occurs every ten years in order to
5 comply with the population changes according to
6 the Census and to ensure that the mandate of one
7 person/one vote is realized.

8 And as I stated, my district had the
9 distinction of being the district that grew the
10 most. This process has to happen. And the
11 director of the Commission has assured me that
12 every effort will be made to preserve communities
13 of interest within the districts so that Staten
14 Islanders will be fairly represented in the new
15 districts.

16 I have represented the 49th Councilmanic
17 District for two years and eight months, and I
18 have come to know many of my constituents in and
19 the community groups. The possibility of no
20 longer representing some neighborhoods is really
21 upsetting to me as my staff and I have worked
22 hard to put the needs of our constituents first.

23 And just to reiterate that, I really would
24 like to keep all of my constituents as they are
25 now. I know that's not possible. I am asking

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1 the Commission to recognize, however, that the
2 redistricting of Staten Island is unique. As I
3 found as a member of City Council, that often,
4 there is applied a cookie-cutter formula for all
5 of the boroughs.

6 We are not that. We are very unique. And I
7 need for that to be considered and a part of the
8 discussion. And when we get to the specifics, I
9 will be pushing that. I am asking the Commission
10 to recognize the relatively small size of our
11 population in comparison to the other boroughs,
12 combined with our geographic factors has created
13 unique problems in transportation, environment,
14 economic development and the delivery of
15 municipal services.

16 In one sense, there's a broad community of
17 interest across Staten Island about these issues.
18 However, Staten Island also has nearly
19 innumerable small neighborhoods, many of only a
20 few blocks, each with very individual communities
21 of interest -- (timer dings) -- and some are very
22 well-established, old communities, and some are
23 very newly-emerging communities. I am asking you
24 to keep these neighborhoods in the forefront of
25 your consideration as you try to balance the

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1 population changes with identifiable communities
2 of interest.

3 Thank you for your hard work and as the work
4 of the Commission continues, I am looking
5 forward -- not only looking forward, I will
6 continue to have input from Staten Island. I am
7 encouraging to have input from Staten Islanders
8 and I continue to be a loud voice in this
9 process. Thank you.

10 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is
11 Dr. Mohammad Khalid, to be followed by James
12 Ditzian.

13 DR. KHALID: Honorable Chairman, members of
14 the Redistricting Commission, thank you for
15 holding the public hearing on Staten Island. I
16 want to thank Mayor Bloomberg and other officials
17 for appointing you as distinguished members of
18 the Commission.

19 Mr. Chairman, my name is Dr. Mohammad
20 Khalid. I represent two large civic associations
21 of Staten Island as the president. These
22 associations are the Iron Hills Civic Association
23 and the Pakistani Civic Association of Staten
24 Island. I am proud to say that our membership in
25 these two associations runs in thousands. We are

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1 very much in favor of the redistricting of 51
2 council districts. There is no doubt that there
3 is a change in population. In all these
4 districts, we must follow the mandates
5 established by the federal government.

6 As previously mentioned in the press, Staten
7 Island council will lose part of the Brooklyn in
8 some of these districts. I think losing part of
9 Brooklyn as a district will not make a
10 difference, because it was a small attachment to
11 Staten Island anyway.

12 As a Staten Islander, I feel that
13 Brooklynites are neighborhood and close friends
14 played a major role in making Staten Island grow
15 faster, as hundreds and thousands of them moved
16 to Staten Island and made their home and
17 businesses here. I have no doubt that our
18 neighbors in Brooklyn can easily manage their
19 affairs with their own Council delegates without
20 our help.

21 Currently, Staten Island is the most fastest
22 growing county in the state. People from
23 everywhere are moving to Staten Island as this is
24 the most safest borough to raise family. We have
25 great schools, parks, senior centers and

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1 hospitals who can take care of our residents.

2 Mr. Chairman, regarding the press reports in
3 Staten Island, of our current delegation, City
4 Council has no objection in losing part of
5 Brooklyn as a district. As a community leader of
6 Staten Island, I do support our councilmembers
7 for their input in this matter.

8 I think this new change for three Council
9 Districts of Staten Island will work in
10 uniformity for the people of Staten Island. As a
11 member of Staten Island community for the last 40
12 years, I think we are moving in the right
13 direction. These changes with the three district
14 councils for Staten Island only will definitely
15 make Staten Island more desirable place to live
16 for our current and future residents.

17 Mr. Chairman, lastly, I want to say that the
18 redistricting will certainly help our borough,
19 but I want to make sure that we are not
20 shortchanged with our budget, Staten Island has a
21 very famous name called "the forgotten borough."
22 Mr. Chairman, thank you for giving me the
23 opportunity to speak before you.

24 MR. ROMANO: I want to acknowledge, before
25 we hear the next speaker, Commissioner Justin Yu.

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1 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is James
2 Ditzian, to be followed by Jennifer
3 Gray-Brumstein.

4 MR. DITZIAN: To the members, I have
5 prepared a few words on how redistricting will
6 effect voting rights in New Dorp. I have lived
7 there since 2005. I was voting at Staten Island
8 Tech High School located at --

9 MR. ROMANO: Mr. Ditzian, do you know what
10 district that's in?

11 MR. DITZIAN: I do not.

12 VOICE FROM AUDIENCE: 50.

13 MR. DITZIAN: Okay, 50. I didn't do all the
14 research I needed to do. I was voting at Staten
15 Island Tech High School, located at 485 Clarkson
16 Avenue within New Dorp. Without a car, it was a
17 short, direct walk from my home. In the 2012
18 redistricting, I was reassigned to PS 23, which
19 is located at 30 Natick Street in Richmondtown.
20 This is a much longer walk and it is not direct,
21 as there are streets that are cut off from New
22 Dorp walking in that discretion.

23 The entrance used for voting is at 90
24 Maplewood Avenue. I didn't know where Maplewood
25 Avenue was. I had to Google it and find it on a

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1 map. It is more than a mile and a half from my
2 home and it is the opposite discretion from my
3 work location in Lower Manhattan.

4 I believe this was a wrong move, because it
5 may lead to voter suppression. The elderly and
6 infirm will not be able to make the walk under
7 the best of conditions. Last year, there was a
8 mild snowstorm which left several inches of snow
9 on the ground less than a week before election
10 day.

11 Without the change, the only way for the
12 elderly and infirm to go vote will be relying on
13 the S74 bus to drop them off at Wilder Avenue and
14 Richmond Road, which will still leave a
15 four-and-a-half-block walk. If they can't afford
16 the bus fare, they did not bother to go vote at
17 all.

18 The only alternative is to be informed ahead
19 of time and request an absentee ballot. Again,
20 that is if they are well-informed prior to
21 election day. Thank you for your time.

22 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
23 Jennifer Gray-Brumstein, which will be followed
24 by Charlie LaGanga.

25 MS. GRAY-BRUMSTEIN: Good evening, ladies

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1 and gentlemen. I want to take this time as a
2 supporter from the West Side for Liberia for
3 giving me the opportunity to stand and address
4 this Commission. The last time we had a
5 demographic like this was ten years ago. A lot
6 has changed on the North Shore of Staten Island.
7 My concern is the 49th District.

8 Based on the Census report, that district
9 was unaccounted. Certain districts grew by
10 11 percent. I don't know if one of you of you in
11 the last three months ever walked down Park Hill
12 or Stapleton. You will see that the faces of
13 Park Hill and Stapleton demographic has changed.
14 Of five people, of those five people, four of
15 them will be African. Of the voting base in Park
16 Hill, even you come to five people, three of
17 those people will be Africans.

18 So, my concern here is, resources and
19 services to Park Hill, being that that district
20 was unaccounted, the resources and services in
21 the needs of those people will not be served. I
22 am appealing to this Commission here today to see
23 how we can recount that district, because it was
24 very uncounted, especially Park Hill.

25 I take, for example, 55 Boyd. You have 156

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1 apartments in that building. And as immigrants,
2 we have our brothers, we have our sisters. We
3 have our extended relatives. In a two-bedroom
4 apartment, you are going to find five or six
5 persons or over ten persons in one apartment. If
6 the Census were to count the people in 55 alone,
7 you will see what I am talking about. The people
8 in the 49th District was unaccounted in the
9 Census.

10 However, I also want to thank the Census for
11 taking the initiative. A point where we started
12 and I think 24 Commission can do a little more so
13 the 49th District can be served. If we go back
14 and count that district, if not possible, you
15 won't only have three districts. By the time you
16 finish counting the people in the 49th District,
17 especially, Stapleton and Park Hill, you may have
18 a fourth district.

19 So, thank you and I look forward to sending
20 more information electronically so that that
21 district can be served properly. But it was
22 grossly unaccounted as a result. The 11 percent,
23 if you were to go back and count, you maybe have
24 22 percent increase, because we have a huge
25 inflow of African immigrants towards the North

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1 Shore area, and they are being underserved.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. ROMANO: Thank you.

4 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Charlie
5 LaGanga which will be followed by Marcus Marino.

6 MR. LAGANGA: My name is Charlie LaGanga. I
7 have been a community activist here on Staten
8 Island for 50 years, quality-of-life issues, both
9 on the charitable community and political side.
10 I go all the way back to 1959, when I campaigned
11 for Al Maniscalco, a great borough president. We
12 used to call him "Uncle Al."

13 And as you can see here tonight, the
14 aspirations and the hope that these wonderful men
15 and women who came before, our great
16 councilwoman, and this woman from the North
17 Shore -- I am from Mid-Island -- and I have seen
18 when I go to Curtis High School on the North
19 Shore and I give a scholarship out, or my Public
20 School 11 Dongan Hills in Mid-Island, I see the
21 pride that the children, the educators take in
22 their areas, in their neighborhoods, in their
23 streets.

24 And I have seen Staten Island grow
25 tremendously over a half a million people. And I

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1 can remember sitting in John Marchi's office, our
2 great senator, when that the great senator wanted
3 to secede, and in retrospect, how that would have
4 happened to Staten Island.

5 We are here tonight and that is what I am
6 all about. We are here tonight for the
7 education, to educate our children, to educate
8 the young people, to educate Wagner College,
9 College of Staten Island, to let them learn about
10 the politics, to let them learn it's a good thing
11 to do. Change is a great thing.

12 I would like to see the community,
13 Mid-Island, North Shore -- North Shore, Debi is
14 getting the new district now, expanding, South
15 Shore -- work within their areas. I can remember
16 when I was campaigning with politicians and
17 councilmen and state senators. We used to go to
18 Brooklyn, small little area in Brooklyn, and then
19 come back to Staten Island the same day, the same
20 night, and we missed one priority meeting.

21 We missed one forum. If we keep our
22 districts within the realm of our hope and --
23 (timer dings) -- have the education of our
24 children, that's what I feel. And I will go away
25 with that today. Thank you so very much for

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1 giving me the privilege of speaking before you,
2 Mr. Chairman and members. Thank you.

3 MR. ROMANO: Thank you.

4 MR. HACKWORTH: The final registered speaker
5 is Marcus Marino.

6 MR. MARINO: Good evening, everyone. My
7 name is Marcus Marino. I am an architect with
8 offices in New York City and a resident of both
9 the existing and proposed District 50. I would
10 like to point two basic things out to you. The
11 first is districts in the Bronx, 14 versus 16,
12 Brooklyn, 33 versus 34, 35, I believe, and in
13 Manhattan, 4, versus Districts 2 and possibly 5,
14 appear to be what is commonly called jigsaw
15 pieces, which also is commonly referred to our
16 appears as gerrymandering.

17 And I think as a commission, your primary
18 goal should be to avoid that at all costs and
19 avoid the appearance of it at all costs, because
20 it harms the very nature of our democracy when
21 the citizens see governments acting in the best
22 interest of people other than the general
23 citizenry.

24 The second issue I would like to bring up is
25 closer to Staten Island. And that is, if you

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1 look at the numbers, and I did very briefly
2 tonight, it appears that, of the three districts
3 of Staten Island, there are only four districts
4 in the entire city that have less population than
5 the proposed 50th. And yet, there are 14
6 districts with population greater than the
7 proposed 49th.

8 The 49th has a piece of Brooklyn. To try to
9 keep districts contiguous in communities and
10 neighborhoods is very important. Obviously,
11 boroughs is even more important, especially to
12 that of Staten Island, which is an island and has
13 a very much island-all philosophy among its
14 people.

15 We know, throughout the city, we are a city
16 of neighborhoods. Staten Island is more so a
17 city of a borough as opposed to individual
18 neighborhoods. I think if you look at the
19 statistics and the numbers, it should not be able
20 to contract the 49th to within the borders of
21 Staten Island and readjust the borders of the
22 49th and the 50th to be able to accommodate all
23 of your other goals. Thank you.

24 MR. ROMANO: Thank you. Let me acknowledge
25 that commissioner Thomas Ognibene has just

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1 arrived and joined us. That concludes those
2 speakers who preregistered. If anyone else would
3 like to speak?

4 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be
5 Helen Settles.

6 MS. SETTLES: Good evening ladies and
7 gentlemen, Commissioners. My name is Helen
8 Settles. I am an officer with the Staten Island
9 branch of the NAACP. I am a former educator and
10 community activist on Staten Island.

11 The thing that concerned me tonight, first
12 of all, is that this hearing started at 5:00.
13 Most people are not getting off work until 6:00
14 to 7:00. That's a major concern with me. Also,
15 the 49th Councilmanic District is of utmost
16 concern to me because that's where I live.

17 It is diverse. It does not need to be
18 piecemealed in any way, or, keep it intact. As
19 Jennifer testified before, it was grossly
20 undercounted. I live in Stapleton. I know. I
21 see the people who have lived there, who have
22 come there, and who have come here, say, within
23 the last ten years and how much it has grown and
24 how much it has been undercounted.

25 I live on Targee Street, the upper part near

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1 Van Duzer. I have just been informed I have to
2 go all the way up to Victory Boulevard, 700
3 Victory Boulevard, to now vote. They have taken
4 my area, the 11th. It used to be the 11th DC.
5 Now I am in the 50th-something, of the 61st, and
6 they have divided that.

7 They have a lot of elderly people, a lot of
8 disabled people who are not going to be able to
9 make that progression up the hill, because we are
10 talking about, and first of all, the bus
11 transportation. If they even want to get to 700
12 Victory Boulevard, the busing, they absolutely
13 redirected busing. There is no more 60. It goes
14 up Grymes Hill. It's now the 66th.

15 So, to come from Stapleton, they have to
16 take a bus down Bay Street, transfer to a bus to
17 take the bus to Victory Boulevard. That's two
18 buses just to get to go vote, whereas they used
19 to walk down the street. So, that's one thing.
20 That's a concern to me, since I am very active in
21 my community.

22 The other thing is just making sure that the
23 North Shore, particularly the 49th, is kept
24 intact, as far as the councilmanic lines are
25 drawn, because we need more service. If the

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1 district is cut and meandered as you are
2 suggesting here, instead of keeping it intact,
3 then the resources that are available is going to
4 be even less.

5 So, I am asking as a former educator on this
6 island for 36 years and servicing many different
7 populations of children, asking that we keep it
8 intact, and also, that you look at, when you draw
9 these lines, think about the constituents that
10 live in this area and how it is going to be very
11 difficult for them to even exercise their right
12 to vote. Thank you.

13 MR. ROMANO: Ms. Settles, can I ask you, the
14 map that you are referring to, those are the
15 existing lines?

16 MS. SETTLES: No, no, I am saying don't
17 change them. If you are thinking about
18 gerrymandering the district, I am saying keep
19 them intact. Do not change them. Thank you.

20 MR. ROMANO: Is there anyone else who would
21 like to address the Commission?

22 MS. BROWN: I didn't fill out the card.

23 MR. ROMANO: You can just spell your name.

24 MS. BROWN: M-A-R-Y-L-I-N, and my last name
25 is Brown. And I am here wearing two hats. I am,

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1 first, an educator. So, I am an educator on the
2 North Shore in the 49th District. I also serve
3 as a Community Board 1 who serves as chair.

4 And just to reiterate what
5 Ms. Gray-Brumstein said, we need to keep the 49th
6 District exactly the way it is. I have been
7 doing research with regards opening a new high
8 school, and I found that all, but three schools
9 on the North Shore are mostly populated not only
10 with the Liberian community, but Hispanics. And
11 everything that Ms. Brumstein said, also
12 transfers over to the Latino population. That's
13 one.

14 Two, in the last ten years, and as a child
15 who was educated on the North Shore in the 49th
16 District, yes, we have dropped the ball a little
17 bit. But now, we are just becoming a village now
18 and if you change the district lines, you are
19 going to ruin that. Those of us who grew up in a
20 lowsocioeconomic background, single-family
21 household, we are grown up now. That would be
22 me. And we are reinstating the village capacity.
23 And if you change that, you are going to ruin
24 everything.

25 It's just building up now. There is lots of

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1 us who live here, who work here, and want to see
2 it get better here. But to change the dynamics
3 right now, when it's just starting to balance
4 out, you are going to make a negative impact on
5 student education.

6 The parents are starting to trust people,
7 trust their neighbors, trust their councilperson.
8 Really, she's really an important person in our
9 community, not because she's Debi Rose,
10 councilwoman, but I am going to tell you, I knew
11 her when she was doing the town choir and I was a
12 little girl just listening, who is this crazy
13 woman walking around with all this information?

14 But that's me now. And I learned that from
15 her and I am teaching our kids to do that now.
16 But if you take that away with the rezoning of
17 lines of neighborhoods you see here and there,
18 it's not just a neighborhood. It's a family now.

19 So, we need that. And our way of life right
20 now, when our kids are dealing with a lot more
21 than they should be at their age, a lot more than
22 I had to deal with, and I think you know this,
23 Ms. Hanks, because we all grew up together, you
24 know we are trying to get that back. We lost a
25 little bit, but we are not trying to lose

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1 anymore. So, in you change the lines, we are
2 going to lose. Our economy can't afford for us
3 to lose. That's all I have to say.

4 MR. ROMANO: Ben, thank you. We are going
5 to adjourn for 20 minutes and then reconvene
6 before we adjourn for the evening.

7 MR. HACKWORTH: If anyone else would like to
8 speak, please register at the desk. We will be
9 back in 20 minutes.

10 (Whereupon, at 5:55 p.m., a recess was
11 taken.)

12 (Whereupon, at 6:16 p.m., the proceedings
13 resumed.)

14 MR. ROMANO: It appears that no one else has
15 registered to speak to the Commission, so we will
16 adjourn until our next meeting tomorrow in
17 Queens. The staff will remain at this location
18 until 8:00 in case there are any other persons
19 who have come late who have submissions they
20 would like to make to the Commission. The staff
21 will be here to receive those submissions.
22 Without any further business, we stand adjourned
23 until tomorrow.

24 (Brief pause.)

25 The Commissioners have agreed to stay for a

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1 half-hour, 45 minutes, an hour or so in the hopes
2 that will there be another speaker who comes
3 forward from the community to address us. In
4 that time frame, some of us may withdraw, but
5 others will remain for that period of time.

6 We appear to have another speaker, Edward
7 Josey, the Staten Island branch of the NAACP.

8 MR. JOSEY: Good evening. I have a written
9 statement here. It says -- can you hear me?

10 MR. ROMANO: Yes.

11 MR. JOSEY: Redistricting Commission
12 Hearing, Borough Hall, Richmond Terrace, Staten
13 Island, New York 10301, topic, redrawing City
14 Council lines for the Borough of Staten Island.
15 Staten Island currently has three Council
16 districts, 49th District, which is North Shore,
17 the 50th District, which is Mid-Island and a
18 portion of Brooklyn, and the 51th portion, South
19 Shore, Staten Island.

20 But possibly Mid-Island standing alone,
21 losing a part of Brooklyn is a good idea. Every
22 ten years, we have a Census count that tells us
23 the increase and decrease in population in our
24 communities. According to the laws, the voting
25 lines, the district lines, federal, state or

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1 local, should be drawn to give all communities
2 equal population and voting strength.

3 I am a long-time resident of Staten Island
4 and I have voted every time since I have been of
5 age. I often wondered if the concept has served
6 the African-American community. It is my
7 understanding that the 49th District, which is
8 the largest African-American population in Staten
9 Island, is slated to lose 10,000 people due to
10 the increase in population.

11 According to the Voting Rights Act of the
12 Constitution, preserving the racial strength is
13 important to the districts and should not be
14 diluted. I am speaking in terms of maintaining
15 of the strongest possible African American vote
16 possible. I asking you to remove any of the --
17 do not remove any African-American streets,
18 blocks or communities from the 49th District.

19 You have a difficult task, but it's
20 something you must do, because 10,000 possible
21 people are leaving this 49th District. So, do
22 what you can to keep the African-American
23 community intact. Thank you.

24 MR. ROMANO: Thank you, Mr. Josey. Is there
25 anyone else who would like to address the

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1 Commission?

2 MR. JERMAINE: Hi, how are you guys doing?
3 My name is Saint Jermaine. Thank you. You guys
4 are doing an outstanding job. We like this
5 forum, the public hearing forum where people can
6 come and give testimony. I know we have some
7 concerned citizens here and not all districting
8 commissions do that. So, I don't think there is
9 much to say. I think you guys are pretty much
10 working with the Census numbers.

11 MR. ROMANO: Mr. Jermaine, what district do
12 you reside in or are most concerned with?

13 MR. JERMAINE: I live in the 49th District,
14 but I am concerned about the entire island. I
15 think that, you know, if you didn't use the
16 Census numbers or if there was another count,
17 then maybe there would be room for a fourth
18 district or something. I don't know exactly, so
19 I am not going to say that definitively.

20 But I think that this island is drastically
21 undercounted, and I think we need to just do as
22 much as possible to keep the communities
23 together. I know we are going to move the 50th
24 District into Staten Island, make that only a
25 Staten Island district. I think that's a smart

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1 move. Beyond that, I'm not sure how much you can
2 do, given the Census numbers. But just do as
3 much as possible to keep those communities
4 intact. And I think you guys are doing a good
5 job so far. That's about it.

6 MR. ROMANO: Thank you. We have another
7 registered speaker, which I would like to call up
8 to the podium, Marjorie Garvin.

9 MS. GARVINE: Good afternoon. My name is
10 Marjorie Garvine and I work very hard in the
11 Staten Island community. We are devoted to
12 registration and education. And I feel you
13 should please try to help deep the way it is and
14 not do anything, because I do have a number of
15 people going out to vote and I would like to see
16 that continue to happen, and to keep the district
17 the way it is and make no changes.

18 MR. ROMANO: Ms. Garvine, which district is
19 yours?

20 MS. GARVINE: The 49th.

21 MR. ROMANO: Thank you. We have an
22 additional speaker, Michelle Akyempong.

23 MS. AKYEMPONG: Close enough. It's Michelle
24 Akyempong. Good evening. My name is Michelle
25 Akyempong. I am the democratic county secretary,

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1 as well as a community activist in my community
2 and I reside in the 49th District. And according
3 to this, the current City Council district, the
4 49th, there has been a development of over 10,000
5 residents there. And we would like you to know
6 that it is very diverse.

7 And this would affect the African Americans
8 that live in this district. So, we are urging
9 you to keep this district as it is. We have the
10 most growth here compared to others, especially
11 Staten Island. So, we would like to you keep
12 that councilmanic district. We are urging you to
13 do so.

14 We have many voters there. People will be
15 affected by it. We are just trying to galvanize
16 them together now. I know it doesn't mean that
17 much to you, but to us, it means a lot in Staten
18 Island to have the African American vote there.
19 So, we are asking that you really, just look at
20 it and do not take away the lines that we
21 currently have, and to keep the 349th
22 councilmanic district. Thank you.

23 MR. ROMANO: Thank you.

24 MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Dora
25 Berksteiner. While we are waiting for her, we

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1 can call Clara Ogburn. First we have Dora
2 Berksteiner.

3 MS. BERKSTEINER: Yes. Good evening,
4 everyone. Thank you for the opportunity for
5 letting me speak this evening. I was looking at
6 the chart and I was trying to understand exactly
7 why they would redistrict. And so, I get it. We
8 are 10,000 above the means. So, you are supposed
9 to have at least 160,000 people in that section,
10 and we are over, because we are populating fast.
11 We are growing fast on the North Shore.

12 My concern is this. Where will you be
13 pulling the people out from? Because if you are
14 taking them like they did with assembly, if you
15 are taking out the portion of Mariners Harbor and
16 Arlington, then we will be forgotten. If we have
17 to redistrict, I think it would be best that we
18 start from near Fort Wadsworth, in that area,
19 because in that area, they won't be forgotten.

20 It's closer to Oddo's district, closer to
21 his people -- not "his people" in that way --
22 closest to his district, whereas the end of
23 Staten Island, we are almost like a forgotten
24 portion of the borough anyway. So, to me, I
25 would think it would make more sense if you would

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1 just work around the lines of Bay Street, the
2 tip, where Fort Wadsworth is, and Rosebank. And
3 then this way, we will still have a fair
4 representation.

5 Because I am telling you, when we get
6 redistricted like we did with the assembly, we
7 are forgotten. Mariners Harbor is one of the
8 parts of Staten Island that is forgotten. And we
9 will be forgotten.

10 So, I just hope you take that into account
11 when you are making these decisions and that you
12 just keep in mind that we don't want to be any
13 further discounted than we are already, okay?
14 So, I want to thank you for the time and
15 opportunity and again, please take that into
16 consideration.

17 MR. ROMANO: Thank you.

18 MR. HACKWORTH: Next, we have Clara Ogburn.

19 MS. OGBURN: Okay. Good evening, everybody.
20 I am basically going to be redundant to what Dora
21 just basically said. Our main concern is not to
22 see certain portions of this community weakened.
23 And from the looks of it, and as so often in
24 terms of anything that goes down the pike, is the
25 areas of Arlington and Mariners Harbor and

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1 anything going from, I would say, the Bayonne
2 Bridge over towards the Goethals.

3 I would like some, I guess, further
4 clarification in how did you really do determine
5 which areas you are going to redistrict or put
6 into another area, okay? And I see everyone
7 looking at me, like, "What is she saying?" But,
8 if you can sort of clarify that for me, I really
9 need that, because a lot of people, neighbors and
10 friends who aren't able to be here this evening
11 would like some clarification on it so that we
12 don't feel picked on, so to speak, and thought of
13 as being readily eliminated and put aside.

14 I think with the Census in 2010, I hope
15 there was a large enough response from the
16 community so that everyone could be counted, you
17 know, and services that continued to be
18 eliminated and downgraded for us. Arlington
19 Apartments, as you know, has a very high crime
20 rate. There's a large population of people
21 living there, which warrants a security of that
22 whole community alone. So, I thank you.

23 MR. ROMANO: Thank you.

24 MR. HACKWORTH: Are there any other speakers
25 in the room who wish to testify? Does anyone

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1 know of anyone on their way to testify?

2 MR. ROMANO: The Commission stands adjourned
3 until its meeting tomorrow. The staff will
4 remain behind until 8:00 to greet any speakers
5 who come in late, take their written submissions
6 and arrange to meet with them if that becomes
7 necessary. We stand adjourned.

8 (Whereupon, at 7:15 p.m., the above matter
9 was concluded.)

10

11 I, JOSHUA B. EDWARDS, a Notary Public for
12 and within the State of New York, do hereby
13 certify that the above is a correct transcription
14 of my stenographic notes.

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JOSHUA B. EDWARDS, RPR

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