

**New York City Districting Commission
St. Francis College: January 10, 2013
Testimony: Mr. Andrew Sloat**

My name is Andrew Sloat. I am a Clinton Hill resident and I am actively involved in the community in which I live.

I am concerned about the shift in boundaries between the 33rd and 35th Council districts being proposed by this Commission. As a resident of Clinton Hill, this change would reduce the influence of Clinton Hill and Bedford-Stuyvesant voters in my district by needlessly dividing our communities up. I am disappointed to see communities of similar housing stock and development patterns split up.

However, I am pleased to see that the current Council map proposal unites Park Slope in the 39th Council District. This is a laudable goal that finally brings the neighborhood of Park Slope together into one legislative district. This strikes me as the implementation of sound, good-government redistricting principles.

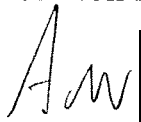

That being said, the new borders try to limit the brownstone Brooklyn population in the 33rd district for political reasons. The boundary of 4th Avenue between the 33rd and 39th districts makes sure to overpopulate the southern, 39th District, while the 33rd District can afford to take in more population.

Making 5th Avenue the boundary between the two Council Districts virtually equalizes these two districts, doesn't change the uniting of communities that the Redistricting commission attempted to create, and doesn't have any adverse effects on the Voting Rights Act. It will also put 4th Avenue squarely in one district, perhaps bringing some measure of accountability to the fast-paced and careless development that's taking place.

5th Avenue is a more logical and appropriate dividing line between the two districts and allows for cohesive neighborhoods to be represented in the 33rd and 39th Districts. I hope the Commission will consider this modest, but important modification to the Council maps.

Thank you,

Andrew Sloat
Clinton Hill Resident

Good Evening,

My name is Annette Roque. I am a proud native of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and have run successful social service programs there for the past 21 years. While I pride myself as a community leader and social service provider of assisting my community in every way possible, my main function over the 21 years has been to service people who are substance abusers and unfortunate victims of HIV/AIDS. With regard to the former, I worked for many years for a residential drug program called El Regreso and was instrumental in creating the first residential women's program in that district. El Regreso also has ambulatory care services.

In my current role as the director of La Nueva Esperanza, which means new hope, I service people who are the unfortunate victims of HIV/AIDS. In all of our service activities, our main goal is prevention. It may surprise many of you to know that the majority of people we service in our HIV/AIDS program are persons over the age of sixty. I would estimate that about 90% of our service recipients are senior citizens. Furthermore, almost half of our clients reside in public housing in the communities of Williamsburg and Bushwick where we perform the majority of our services and outreach.

I am here to advocate for the district lines for the 34th Councilmanic District in Williamsburg/Bushwick. There is a common expression –“If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”.

Our district is a tight-knit community primarily of people of color. We network with a multitude of service providers throughout Bushwick and Williamsburg to provide a wide range of services to the most vulnerable population. As stated earlier, much of these services are provided to residents of public housing. I, therefore question, why one of our highly serviced public housing developments, Hope Gardens in Bushwick, which contains a 14-story, 130-unit building for the elderly is being disenfranchised by being removed from the 34th Council District where it has been appropriately included in this district for decades?

I passionately urge you to bring the lines in the 34th Councilmanic District, as it pertains to the Bushwick community, back to where they were for the past several decades.

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Testimony: MR. BENNETT BARUCH

My name is Bennett Baruch and I am a resident of the 33rd Council District. I have come today to comment on the seemingly random incorporation of a portion of Bedford-Stuyvesant into the district I live, which includes the neighborhoods of DUMBO, Brooklyn Heights, Boerum Hill, Gowanus, Williamsburg, and Greenpoint. None of which are communities that have all that much in common with Bedford-Stuyvesant.

In my perspective, the Commission has two alternatives to remedy this situation. Firstly, and preferably, would be to reverse this proposal altogether and not move any portions of Bedford-Stuyvesant into the 33rd Council District. The current incumbent Councilmember Letitia James, a distinguished lawyer in her own right, has indicated that reversing this proposal would not impact the Voting Rights Act as a large majority of more than 70% of residents would be non-white and a sizable plurality of more than 48% of residents would be African-American. The 33rd District could take on additional voters from a neighboring district that has population to spare, such as the 39th District.

A second option would be to maintain the southern portion of this area under consideration between Myrtle Avenue to the north and DeKalb Avenue to the south and Classon Avenue to the west and Nostrand Avenue to the east in the 35th District. These changes would remove the Bed-Stuy additions south of Myrtle Avenue rather than the current, aggressive extension that uses a southern boundary of DeKalb Avenue. This change would move around 6,500 residents and keep all districts well within the deviation allowed for each district's total population. In addition, this change would barely change the racial dynamics for Non-Hispanic Blacks and their protected status within the 35th Council District that forms a majority to elect a candidate of choice. The voting age population goes from 51.1% in the Council proposal to 50.0% with this change. Overall, the Non-Hispanic white percentage changes by only 0.7%.

The 33rd District grew in population by a greater number of people than any other district in the County of Kings. Having grown by more people than any other Brooklyn district might lend one to assume that it would not be reaching into an entirely new, disconnected neighborhood – Bedford-Stuyvesant – for additional population. I encourage this Commission to ignore the political considerations of incumbent protection and maintain the current boundaries between the 33rd and 35th Council districts.

Thank you,

Bennett Baruch
33rd Council District Resident

New York City Districting Commission
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Testimony: MS. DEBORAH HOWARD

My name is Deborah Howard and I am the Executive Director of Pratt Area Community Council, which is the local nonprofit community development corporation serving Community Districts 2, 3 and 8 including the neighborhoods of Clinton Hill and Bedford-Stuyvesant which are affected by the proposed redistricting. We are about to celebrate our 50th anniversary providing and preserving affordable housing, eviction prevention and tenant organizing, small business assistance, homebuyer and homeowner education and counseling to keep people in their homes throughout these neighborhoods.

I would like to thank Chairman Romano, the members of the Commission, Executive Director Carl Hum and his team for providing this opportunity for the public to speak on proposed plans to ensure the best representation for New Yorkers.

I am concerned about the northwestern portion of Bedford-Stuyvesant being moved from the 35th District into the dissimilar 33rd District comprised of neighborhoods like Brooklyn Heights and Greenpoint.

Bedford-Stuyvesant is a historic, important community that would have its voice diluted by the current proposed maps. The 33rd Council District proposed redistricting also adds Community Board 3, to the responsibilities of a Council District which already encompasses Community Boards 1 and 2 and 6.

The Community Board is just one of many official city agency maps that reflect the division of the communities of Williamsburg and Bedford-Stuyvesant at the Flushing Avenue border, which is clear demarcation and reflected in the existing Council map. This Commission is also proposing to slice off portions of the 79th and 81st Police Precincts that have distinct and separate concerns than the neighboring 90th precinct in Williamsburg to accommodate them into the 33rd Council District.

At Pratt Area Community Council, in partnership with community residents and under the auspices of DEP, we are responsible for managing a large open space in CB 3 at Myrtle Avenue and Franklin Street called Myrtle Village Green. In the redistricting this site is set to be moved from the 35th Council District represented by Ms. James to the 33rd District. With community input including members of CB3, we are planning to convert the Myrtle Village Green into large open space, affordable housing, and potentially a community facility. This site will meet urgent needs of the residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Clinton Hill and we will be best positioned to make this needed community development happen with a Councilmember that is intricately involved in the Bedford-Stuyvesant and Clinton Hill communities.

At Pratt Area Community Council, we manage housing properties throughout Bedford-Stuyvesant and Clinton Hill and Fort Greene. This is a standard catchment area for many nonprofit organizations and civic associations and our city contracts with HPD as a Neighborhood Preservation organization. I cannot understand how we would divide this community up further into a third Council district. It serves to dilute and ultimately weaken our voice as a community and creates challenges for us to educate and inform and get the attention of elected officials who represent random slices of our community.

Even the State Senate Republicans, did not consider so radical a break of the Bedford-Stuyvesant community as these Council drafts propose.

Thank you,

Deborah Howard
Executive Director, Pratt Area Community Council

Jo Anne Simon

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January 15, 2013

I am pleased to offer this brief testimony to the Districting Commission for the City of New York.

First, I want to thank the Commission for holding additional hearings on the council district lines. As we know, lines were redrawn subsequent to public process that would have permitted and encouraged Brooklyn's former County Leader, Assemblymember Vito Lopez to run for city council in the 34th council District. In a redistricting year, candidates may run in any district, but would need to relocate to the district thereafter. Assuming the address in question to have been his actual residence, Lopez would not have had to relocate. Clearly he might still run for that seat and later relocate, but the issue is not one of whether he may run, but whether the revision of lines to satisfy the interests of a powerful politician rather than the established criteria of the City Charter were proper. I believe that the public is better served by the Commission's decision to withdraw those maps, issue new proposed maps on December 4, 2012 and conduct additional public hearings.

As you know, the Commission must use the following criteria in determining the City Council lines:

1. **Population.** The difference between the most populous and the least populous council district must not exceed 10% of the average population for all council districts. Any such differences in population must be justified by one or more of the other criteria stated in the City Charter. N.Y. CITY CHARTER, ch. 2-A, Section 52(a) (2004)
2. **Fair and effective representation.** The redistricting plan must be established in a manner that ensures the fair and effective representation of the racial and language minority groups in New York City which are protected by the Voting Rights Act. N.Y. CITY CHARTER, ch. 2-A, Section 52(1)(b) (2004).
3. **Communities of Interest.** District lines should keep intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association, whether historical, racial, economic, ethnic, religious or other. N.Y. CITY CHARTER, ch. 2-A, Section 52(1)(c) (2004).
4. **Compactness.** Each district must be compact and cannot be more than twice as long as it is wide. The redistricting plan must be established in a manner that minimizes the sum of the length of the boundaries of all of the districts included in the plan. N.Y. CITY CHARTER, ch. 2-A, Section 52(1) (d)(g) (2004).

5. **Contiguity.** Each district must be contiguous, and whenever a part of a district is separated from the rest of the district by a body of water, there must be a connection by a bridge, a tunnel, a tramway or by regular ferry service. N.Y. CITY CHARTER, ch. 2-A, Section 52(2) (2004).
6. **Political boundaries.** A district cannot cross borough or county boundaries. If any district includes territory in two boroughs, then no other district may also include territory from the same two boroughs. N.Y. CITY CHARTER, ch. 2-A, Section 52(3) (2004).

New York City Charter, ch.2-A, Section 52(1) (2004), quoting

http://www.brennancenter.org/content/pages/redistricting_in_new_york_city

Before issuing its district maps, and keeping in mind that the public's interest is best served by more information not less, the Commission should explain fully and in writing its rationale for each district's specific lines. In doing so, the Commission should address each of the criteria above fully, especially as it relates to maps that were not changed or where the Commission felt a particular interest to be of overriding importance.

In addition, I address a specific concern with regard to the map for the 33rd Council District in Brooklyn. First no one can say that the prior district made much sense with regard to geography or the cohesiveness of the Latino and Orthodox Jewish communities. While effort has been made to consolidate more voters from the Orthodox community, the 33rd remains oddly disproportionate with regard to parts of Williamsburg and by moving the northern Park Slope section to the 39th Council District (better uniting Park Slope) it results in a highly disproportionate weighing of the Orthodox community. As embodied in the Campaign Finance regulations, which encourages competition by making it easier for candidates to raise money without the support of political organizations, the public's interest is furthered by voters having real choices. The City Charter criteria are consistent with this notion as well. The currently proposed map of the 33rd is so unbalanced as to constitute a Commission imprimatur inconsistent with the Charter criteria and heavily advantaging incumbency and ties to the vested interests of the Democratic party organization to the detriment of adequately ensuring that the neighborhoods in the 33rd are equally represented. The Commission should take a hard look at balancing out the interests of neighborhoods in this area.

Hearings

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 10, 2013 12:01 PM
To: Hearings
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Thursday January 10th meeting - BROOKLYN

NYC Districting Commission
Attn: Jonathan Ettricks
253 Broadway, 7th Fl.
New York, NY 10007

We strongly request that the Districting Commission, meeting on January 10th , 2013 designates Saratoga Avenue as the boundary of Stuyvesant East historic district, (which is also the eastern CB3 boundary).

Sincerely

Judith & Emad Khaja - Architect

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11233