



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

**The Council of the City of New York
Committee on Governmental Operations
Fiscal Year 2014 Preliminary Budget Hearings**

**Testimony by Catherine McVay Hughes, Chair,
Manhattan Community Board One**

**Thursday, March 14, 2013, 2 p.m.
250 Broadway, 14th Floor**

Thank you, Chair Brewer and members of the City Council Committee on Governmental Operations, for convening this important hearing and for this opportunity to testify today. I am Catherine McVay Hughes, the Chair of Community Board One (CB1).

First of all I would like to thank you, Chair Brewer, for your strong support for community boards in recent years. We have appreciated your leadership in restoring proposed reductions in recent years, most recently including the mid-year reduction of \$11,172 included in the Program to Eliminate the Gap for FY 2013.

I am speaking in regard to the proposal in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget to reduce the budgets of all community boards in FY 2014 (beginning July 1, 2014) by \$15,658. This would be a reduction of 8% that would leave us with a total budget of \$191,237. We currently spend \$205,650.00 of our total budget of \$206,895.00 on salaries, so this would almost certainly require us to eliminate a staff position from our city personnel budget.

You and your colleagues on the City Council have demonstrated many times in recent years that you understand the hardship that the proposed cut would impose on community boards throughout the city. Our budget provides the minimum resources that we need to adequately carry out our responsibilities as mandated by the New York City Charter. Community boards have very small staffs. CB1 has three full-time employees and one part-time employee. Together we provide operating support for ten committees and address issues and inquiries pertaining to the quality of life in Lower Manhattan. In 2012 we processed applications for 70 street activity permits, 62 liquor licenses, 26 sidewalk cafes, and 5 newsstands along with 43 applications to the Landmarks Preservation Commission and 10 to the City Planning Commission. We testified at 13 public hearings in 2012 including the hearing before this committee when we were also faced with a budget cut.

Among our other responsibilities are researching and drafting correspondence and scheduling committee and other meetings. We interact on a regular basis with city, state and federal agencies and non-profit organizations to get the word out about their programs and initiatives and we work together with government agencies to improve or refine services that they provide or oversee. Strong community

boards are important partners to the City Council and other elected and appointed officials that help your efforts to maintain quality of life in the city. For a very modest investment in terms of the overall city budget, we significantly increase efficiency and effectiveness throughout city government. We harness for the public benefit the energy and talents of fifty dedicated volunteer board members, many of whom have special expertise in the areas that we assess.

All of you who serve on the City Council work in CB1, and are aware of how deeply affected Lower Manhattan was by Superstorm Sandy which arrived on our shores on October 29, 2012. The area around the South Street Seaport remains blighted by many vacancies and lingering damage to infrastructure that has left many businesses unable to reopen. We convened a special task force to address the needs of businesses adversely affected by the storm and issued a document called *Emergency Preparedness: Lessons Learned from Superstorm Sandy* which included numerous detailed recommendations about how the city can better prepare for future emergencies.

In addition we continue to grapple with impacts from construction projects underway throughout our district, including major projects like the World Trade Center and disruptive street reconstruction projects on Chambers, Fulton and Hudson Streets and the Brooklyn Bridge, Peck Slip and Route 9A. Other projects are set to begin at Pier 17 at the South Street Seaport and South Ferry Subway Station and on Broadway, John and other important streets. All of these must be carefully monitored so that adverse impacts from air and noise levels and vehicular congestion are controlled to the greatest extent possible. The Lower Manhattan Construction Command Center is expected to sunset at the end of this year although they are currently overseeing 70 major construction projects, including major projects expected to start in coming months. It is therefore critically important for CB1 to have staff and resources in place to monitor these impacts and intervene with government agencies to address problems that arise.

Lower Manhattan has the fastest growing residential population in New York City, and this rapid increase is also placing a strain on infrastructure and services in the area. The release of the 2010 U.S. Census confirmed our in-house projections that the population of Lower Manhattan grew by over 77% from 34,420 to 61,000 in the ten years between the 2000 and 2010 Census. A study completed by CB1 in March 2010 projected that by the end of 2013, CB1's population would likely reach 63,561. CB1 helps to manage this rapid growth by advocating for the infrastructure needs of our growing community, such as more school seats and open space for active and passive recreation, and working in tandem with government agencies to ensure that quality of life in the area will be sufficient to retain new residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We greatly appreciate your past support and urge you to reject the proposed reduction and instead support an increase in the budget for community boards which we have not had in a very long time.