



August 23, 2017/Calendar No. 17

C 170351 PCQ

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the New York City Fire Department and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the site selection acquisition of property located at 116-11 Beach Channel Drive (Block 16198, Lot 1) for use as a firehouse, Borough of Queens, Community District 14.

This application (C 170351 PCQ) for the site selection and acquisition of property located at 116-11 Beach Channel Drive (Block 16198, Lot 1) for use as firehouse, was filed by Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY) and the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) on April 10, 2017.

BACKGROUND

The FDNY and DCAS seek the site selection and acquisition of a privately-owned site to construct a new firehouse for Engine 268 / Ladder 137 in Rockaway Park, Queens, Community District 14. The project site is located approximately 250 feet north of the current firehouse for Engine 268 / Ladder 137, which is over 100 years old and, according to the FDNY, past its useful life as a firehouse.

The current Engine 268 / Ladder 137 firehouse is a three-story, 10,098-square-foot facility located midblock on the west side of Beach 116th Street. The firehouse was built in 1912-1913 by Frank J. Helmle and designed in the Colonial Revival style with Arts & Crafts elements, stone trim and an open loggia. It was designated a New York City landmark on February 12, 2013 (N 130202 HKQ).

In 2014, the FDNY directed its architectural and engineering consultant to perform a conditions survey of the firehouse. The consultant found that the firehouse had experienced significant water infiltration over time, and during Hurricane Sandy in 2012, resulting in damage to the perimeter walls, structural steel façade support system, and interior ceilings. Due to these expansive problems, the FDNY requested and received new needs funding from the New York City Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in Fiscal Year 2016 to replace the firehouse. The FDNY

reviewed over 1,000 potential replacement sites and only the project site associated with this application met the FDNY's size requirements for an engine and ladder company firehouse and would allow the FDNY to maintain its emergency response times on the Rockaway peninsula.

The project site is located at Beach 116th Street and Beach Channel Drive in Rockaway Park, Queens. Rockaway Park is a lower-density residential neighborhood in the middle of the Rockaway peninsula. Beach 116th Street is a local commercial corridor that runs two blocks north and south. Beach Channel Drive is a main thoroughfare and through truck route that runs east and west across the Rockaway peninsula.

Jamaica Bay is located immediately to the north of the project site, across Beach Channel Drive, and the Atlantic Ocean is located two blocks to the south of the project site. Land uses to the north of the project site include Tribute Park, a September 11th memorial, and local retail and service uses. To the east of the project site is the confluence of Beach Channel Drive and Newport Avenue, as well as several one-story local retail uses with at-grade parking. South of the project site, across Newport Avenue and along Beach 116th Street, are additional commercial and mixed-residential and commercial buildings ranging from one to four stories. The area west of the project site is primarily comprised of one- and two-family residences ranging from two to three stories.

Much of the area's zoning, including the zoning of the project site, was updated in 2008 as a part of the Department of City Planning's Rockaway Neighborhoods rezoning (C 080371 ZMQ), which sought to reflect established building patterns in lower-density residential areas and encourage the redevelopment of underutilized sites along major corridors and close to transit.

Public transit in the area includes the Q22, Q35, and Q53 bus lines, with stops along Beach 116th Street and Newport Avenue, as well as the Rockaway Park/Beach 116th terminal station for the Metropolitan Transportation Agency's "A" and "S" train lines.

The 18,985-square-foot project site is zoned R5B/C1-3, which would allow a firehouse as-of-right. The site was formerly leased to HSBC Bank, but the branch was damaged during Hurricane Sandy and did not reopen. The site is currently developed with a vacant single-story building and a

surface parking lot. The site is located in an A flood hazard zone with a base flood elevation of 10 feet (NAVD88), according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Preliminary Flood Rate Insurance Maps.

The FDNY expects that the new firehouse will be a two-story, approximately 13,000-square-foot building. The firehouse would be sized to house an engine and ladder company's apparatuses as well as space for other programs and operations, including training and work areas and storage for high-axle vehicles for use in response to flood events. New curb cuts would be provided on Beach Channel Drive and Newport Avenue to facilitate the movement of the apparatuses entering and exiting the firehouse, and an additional curb cut would be provided on Newport Avenue near Beach 116th Street to provide access to a staff parking area. While a firehouse of this size would not require off-street parking, it is expected that 10 accessory parking spaces would be provided on site. The firehouse would be constructed to meet or exceed all flood resiliency standards, including locating the building mechanicals, electrical systems and emergency generator above the flood plain on the second floor or the roof of the building.

The existing firehouse will stay within the FDNY's portfolio until the project site is acquired and a new facility is constructed on it. Upon relocating Engine 268 / Ladder 137 to the new firehouse, the FDNY will surrender jurisdiction of the current facility to DCAS to determine a reuse.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The application (C 170351 PCQ) was reviewed pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and SEQRA regulations set forth in Volume 6 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations, Section 617.00 et seq and the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The designated CEQR number is 17FDO003Q. The lead agency is the FDNY.

After a study of the potential impacts of the proposed action, a Negative Declaration was issued on April 6, 2017.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

This application (C 170351 PCQ) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on April 24, 2017, and was duly referred to Community Board 14 and the Borough President in accordance with Title 62 of the Rules of the City of New York, Section 2-02(b).

Community Board Public Hearing

Community Board 14 held a public hearing on June 13, 2017 on this application (C 170351 PCQ), and on that date, by a vote of 20 to 5 with one abstentions, adopted a resolution recommending disapproval of the application. The board's recommendation included the following comment:

“Community board 14 recognizes the need and supports a new fire house at a location that is more suitable for the adjacent community and more importantly that the fire house and vehicle storage/parking be completely raised above BFE so vehicles will not be subjected to flooding- we suggest B 112 street and Beach channel drive on the large LIPA/PSEG site.”

Borough President Recommendation

This application (C 170351 PCQ) was considered by the Borough President, who held a public hearing on this application on June 29, 2017 and issued a recommendation on July 20, 2017 approving the application with the following conditions:

“Community Board 14 has expressed concerns about the proposed site and has recommended another site for consideration. The Fire Department should evaluate the feasibility of the alternative site recommended by the community board.”

“The landmarked Beach 116th Street firehouse has been an iconic part of the community for over 100 years. The Rockaway Peninsula is in need of a cultural and arts center. Beach 116th Street is centrally located and has long been an important economic and cultural hub of Rockaway. Adapting the landmarked firehouse for re-use as a cultural and arts center would be a logical repurposing of the building that would serve the entire peninsula.”

City Planning Commission Public Hearing

On July 12, 2017 (Calendar No. 7), the City Planning Commission scheduled July 26, 2017 for

a public hearing on this application (C 170351 PCQ). The hearing was duly held on July 26, 2017 (Calendar No. 39). There were two speakers in favor of the application and one in opposition.

The Chief of Staff to the Deputy Fire Commissioner and the Queens Borough Commander spoke on behalf of the FDNY. These speakers described the need to replace the current firehouse and the project that the proposed site selection and acquisition would facilitate, stating that the action requested would allow the FDNY to construct a new, resilient firehouse that would improve their overall operational capacity on the Rockaway peninsula and not negatively affect their response times.

A representative of the property owner spoke in opposition to the application. The speaker urged the Commission to compel the FDNY to evaluate the alternative firehouse site recommended by Community Board 14. He also stated that the owner was not made aware of the FDNY's interest in acquiring the site until the application was certified as complete.

Subsequent to the hearing, on August 4, 2017, the Commission received a letter from the FDNY. The letter detailed the FDNY's willingness to explore additional plantings and screenings along the edge of the project site to create a more inviting pedestrian experience between it and the Beach 116th Street commercial corridor, the nearby residential area, and Tribute Park; their research into the alternative site recommended by Community Board 14 and reasons for concluding that constructing a firehouse on it would be impracticable; and their outreach to the owner of the project site, which dated back to April 2016, a year prior to the certification of the application.

There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM CONSISTENCY REVIEW

This application (C 170351 PCQ) was reviewed by the Department of City Planning for consistency with the policies of the New York City Waterfront Revitalization Program (WRP), as amended, approved by the New York City Council on October 30, 2013 and by the New York

State Department of State on February 3, 2016, pursuant to the New York State Waterfront Revitalization and Coastal Resources Act of 1981, (New York State Executive Law, Section 910 et seq.). The designated WRP number is 16-055.

This action was determined to be consistent with the policies of the New York City Waterfront Revitalization Program.

CONSIDERATION

The Commission believes that this application (C 170351 PCQ) for the site selection and acquisition of property located at 116-11 Beach Channel Drive (Block 16198, Lot 1) for use as a firehouse is appropriate.

The Commission notes that approval of the application will facilitate the construction of an approximately 13,000-square-foot firehouse for Engine 268 / Ladder 137 in Rockaway Park, Queens, Community District 14. The current firehouse for Engine 268 / Ladder 137 was built in 1912-1913 and is in poor physical condition. The Commission believes that the proposed firehouse will allow the FDNY to more effectively serve the Rockaway peninsula by providing them with a modern, resilient building with adequate space to store their vehicles and equipment, including high-axle vehicles for use during flood events.

The Commission believes that the proposed firehouse will be compatible with the lower-density residential, commercial, and open space uses that exist in the immediate vicinity of the project site. It will be located to minimize the movement of emergency vehicles through local streets in residential areas. The Commission notes that emergency vehicles would exit the site from Beach Channel Drive, which is a main east/west corridor on the Rockaway peninsula and a through truck route. Beach Channel Drive will provide the FDNY with quick access to the residential neighborhoods of Rockaway Beach, Rockaway Park, Belle Harbor, and Neponsit, while minimizing the travel of emergency vehicles on local streets.

At the public hearing, as well as in their August 4, 2017 letter, the FDNY stated that they would, as part of the final design of the firehouse, look to incorporate additional plantings and screenings to improve the edge condition of the site along Beach 116th Street and Beach 117th Street. The Commission recognizes that these enhancements go beyond the applicable street tree planting requirements in the Zoning Resolution, but believes that additional attention to the public realm will enhance the proposed firehouse's connection to surrounding area, including Tribute Park, and bolster its role as an anchor to the northern end of the Beach 116th Street corridor.

The FDNY also stated that in their letter that they, at the request of the Borough President, looked into the alternative site proposed by Community Board 14 located at Beach Channel Drive and Beach 108th Street. The Commission notes that this site is owned by a utility company and was used to manufacture natural gas until 1958. The by-products of gas production that were released on the site are responsible for contamination, which is now being addressed through a Remedial Action Plan and Remedial Design approved by, and being conducted under the oversight of, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). The Commission notes that in June 2017, the FDNY reached out to representatives of the utility company and NYSDEC to assess the timeline and feasibility for redeveloping the site. The Commission understands that the environmental status of the site is not yet known, that the utility company will not make a determination on the future use of the site until the environmental status of the site is known and it has had a chance to evaluate its options, and that the timeline for the utility company to make such a determination is uncertain.

The Commission also understands that constructing a firehouse on this alternative site raises operational concerns for the FDNY, as it would place the new firehouse closer to an existing firehouse at Beach 94th Street and increase its emergency response times further west on the Rockaway peninsula.

Additionally, the Commission notes that the alternative site proposed by Community Board 14 is a largely vacant, nine-acre site that is located across Beach Channel Drive from Jamaica Bay, a waterfront esplanade, and a terminal of the NYC Ferry that is utilized by thousands of area

residents and visitors to Rockaway's beach and boardwalk each week. While the Commission acknowledges the challenges of redeveloping the site, including its environmental encumbrances, dedicating a potentially catalytic development site with good access to mass transit for use as a firehouse may not be the highest and best use for this alternative site.

Therefore, the Commission concurs with the FDNY's conclusion that constructing a firehouse on the alternative site proposed by Community Board 14 is impracticable due to the need to replace the current firehouse for Engine 268 / Ladder 137 in a timely manner, the uncertain environmental status of the alternative site, and the negative impact on emergency response times on the Rockaway peninsula, were the firehouse to be located on the alternative site.

Finally, the Commission notes that the current firehouse for Engine 268 / Ladder 137 is a City landmark and centrally located on Beach 116th Street. The Commission encourages DCAS to work with area stakeholders to identify a reuse for the current firehouse that complements the existing mix of locally-oriented commercial and community facility uses along this corridor, supports the preservation of the building, and addresses needs in the Rockaway community, including uses that would expand arts and cultural programming on the peninsula.

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, that the City Planning Commission finds that the proposed action described herein will have no significant impact on the environment; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the City Planning Commission, in its capacity as the City Coastal Commission, has reviewed the waterfront aspects of this application and finds that the proposed action is consistent with WRP policies; and be it further

RESOLVED, by the City Planning Commission, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, that the site selection and acquisition of property located at 116-11 Beach Channel Drive (Block 16198, Lot 1) for use as a firehouse, Borough of Queens, Community District 14, in an

application submitted by the NYC Fire Department and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, dated April 10, 2017, is approved.

The above resolution (C 170351 PCQ), duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on August 23, 2017 (Calendar No. 17), is filed with the Office of the Speaker, City Council, and the Borough President, in accordance with the requirements of Section 197-d of the New York City Charter.

MARISA LAGO, *Chair*

KENNETH J. KNUCKLES, *Esq., Vice-Chairman*

RAYANN BESSER, IRWIN G. CANTOR, P.E.,

ALFRED C. CERULLO, III, MICHELLE DE LA UZ,

JOSEPH I. DOUEK, CHERYL COHEN EFFRON, HOPE KNIGHT,

ANNA HAYES LEVIN, ORLANDO MARIN, *Commissioners*



Application #:	Project Name:
CEQR Number:	Borough(s): Community District Number(s):
Please use the above application number on all correspondence concerning this application	

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Complete this form and return to the Department of City Planning by one of the following options:
 - **EMAIL (recommended):** Send email to CalendarOffice@planning.nyc.gov and include the following subject line: (CB or BP) Recommendation + (6-digit application number), e.g., "CB Recommendation #C100000ZSQ" ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
 - **MAIL:** Calendar Information Office, City Planning Commission, 120 Broadway, 31st Floor, New York, NY 10271
 - **FAX:** to (212) 720-3488 and note "Attention of the Calendar Office"
2. Send one copy of the completed form with any attachments to the applicant's representative at the address listed below, one copy to the Borough President, and one copy to the Borough Board, when applicable.

Docket Description:

Applicant(s):		Applicant's Representative:	
Recommendation submitted by:			
Date of public hearing:		Location:	
Was a quorum present? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		A public hearing requires a quorum of 20% of the appointed members of the board, but in no event fewer than seven such members.	
Date of Vote:		Location:	
RECOMMENDATION <input type="checkbox"/> Approve <input type="checkbox"/> Approve With Modifications/Conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Disapprove <input type="checkbox"/> Disapprove With Modifications/Conditions			
<u>Please attach any further explanation of the recommendation on additional sheets, as necessary.</u>			
Voting # In Favor: # Against: # Abstaining: Total members appointed to the board:			
Name of CB/BB officer completing this form		Title	Date

Queens Borough President Recommendation

APPLICATION: ULURP #170351 PCQ

COMMUNITY BOARD: Q14

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the New York Fire Department and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the NYC Charter, for the site selection and acquisition of property in an R5B/C1-3 District located at **116-11 Beach Channel Drive**, Block 16198 Lot 1, Zoning Map 30b, Rockaway, Borough of Queens

PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing was held in the Borough President's Conference Room at 120-55 Queens Boulevard on Thursday, June 29, 2017, at 10:30 A.M. pursuant to Section 82(5) of the New York City Charter and was duly advertised in the manner specified in Section 197-c (i) of the New York City Charter. The applicant made a presentation. There were no other speakers. The hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

Subsequent to a review of the application and consideration of testimony received at the public hearing, the following issues and impacts have been identified:

- An application for site selection and acquisition of a privately owned property has been filed by the Fire Department of New York and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services for the purposes of constructing a new firehouse to relocate the fire companies of Engine 268/Ladder 137 into it;
- The approximately 18,985 sf proposed site is located in an R5B/C1-3 district and is developed with a vacant 6590 sf building. The property is located on a block between Beach Channel Drive and Newport Avenue between Beach 117th & 116th Streets. The building was formerly occupied by a bank and has been vacant since Hurricane Sandy in 2012. The building would be demolished for construction of a new firehouse;
- Beach Channel Drive is a major east-west connecting roadway for much of the Rockaway peninsula. Beach 116th Street and the areas to the east and north of it are developed with a mix of commercial, retail and industrial uses. The areas beyond Beach 117th Street to the west and Newport Avenue to the south are primarily developed with low-rise residences;
- Engine 268/Ladder 137 is currently operating out of a landmarked firehouse built in 1912-1913. The age of the 10,098 sf three-story facility and water infiltration damage due to Hurricane Sandy have left the building structurally unsound and in need of ongoing repairs just to keep it operational. An architectural and engineering survey conducted in 2014 found water damage to the perimeter walls, interior ceilings, roof leaks, and the front façade pulling away from the building. There is severe damage to the brick walls and structural steel façade support system most likely caused by corrosion of the steel supports imbedded in the concrete. A separate inspection also found asbestos and other hazardous materials present in the building;
- The proposed new state-of-the art firehouse would be a two-story, 13,000 sf building built to the latest flood resiliency standards and requirements. All building mechanicals, electrical systems and emergency generator would be located above the flood plain or on the roof of the proposed building. The vehicle bays would be designed to be large enough to accommodate the fire response vehicles and other emergency vehicles, there would be space in the facility for training, equipment storage, locker rooms and other spaces needed by the on-duty firefighter crews;
- Community Board 14 (CB 14) disapproved this application by a vote of twenty (20) against with five (5) in favor and one (1) abstention at a public hearing held on June 19, 2017. CB 14 also recommended "a location more suitable for the adjacent community" at Beach 112th Street and Beach Channel Drive. Some of the concerns raised about the location proposed in this application were that traffic and congestion around it would be exacerbated by the movement of fire vehicles in and out of the site. There was also discussion that the firehouse would negatively affect the quality of life around the neighboring residential properties;

RECOMMENDATION

The location of firehouses are critical in determining response times and the overall strategy of the Fire Department to provide fire and emergency protection for our neighborhoods and communities. It is also critical when replacing existing firehouses to ensure continuity and timeliness of service. On the Rockaway Peninsula, there is the added challenge of proximity to the waters of Jamaica Bay and the Atlantic Ocean especially during extraordinary weather events.

Based on the above consideration, I hereby recommend approval of this application with the following conditions:

- Community Board 14 has expressed concerns about the proposed site and has recommended another site for consideration. The Fire Department should evaluate the feasibility of the alternative site recommended by the community board.
- The landmarked Beach 116th Street firehouse has been an iconic part of the community for over 100 years. The Rockaway Peninsula is in need of a cultural and arts center. Beach 116th Street is centrally located and has long been an important economic and cultural hub of Rockaway. Adapting the landmarked firehouse for re-use as a cultural and arts center would be a logical repurposing of the building that would serve the entire peninsula.



PRESIDENT, BOROUGH OF QUEENS

July 20, 2017
DATE