

In Re July FCRC Public Hearing NYC - Mayor`s Office of Contract
Services (MOCS
July 12, 2023

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2 PUBLIC HEARING

3 FRANCHISE AND CONCESSION REVIEW COMMITTEE

4 -----X

5 22 Reade Street
6 New York, New York

7 DATE: July 12, 2023

8 TIME: 2:30 p.m.

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11 PUBLIC HEARING in the above-referenced
12 matter, held at the above time and place,
13 transcribed by Sabrina Brown Stewart, a Notary
14 Public of the State of New York.

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In Re July FCRC Public Hearing NYC - Mayor`s Office of Contract
Services (MOCS
July 12, 2023

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1 A P P E A R A N C E S :

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3 Chair/Mayor:
BILL HEINZEN

4

5 Clerk:
KIMBERLY EGBERT

6 Office of the Mayor:
MALCOLM CAIN

7

8 Office of Management and Budget:
NANCY LIN

9 Corporation Counsel:
MATTHEW BRIDGE

10

11 Comptroller:
CHRISTIAN STOVER

12 Borough President of Brooklyn:
JOHN DOUGLAS

13

14 Borough President of Manhattan:
TOMI VEST

15 Borough President of Staten Island:
LAUREN LEFKOWITZ

16

17 ANTHONY DELL'OLIO - Representative, Department of
Small Business Services

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1 CHAIR HEINZEN: Good afternoon. Thank
2 you for coming today. The Franchise and
3 Concession Review Committee Public Hearing
4 will now come to order.

5 Will you please call the roll.

6 THE CLERK: Mayor?

7 CHAIR HEINZEN: Bill Heinzen, present.

8 THE CLERK: Office of the Mayor?

9 MR. CAIN: Malcolm Cain, present.

10 THE CLERK: Comptroller?

11 MR. STOVER: Christian Stover, present.

12 THE CLERK: Corporation Counsel?

13 MR. BRIDGE: Matthew Bridge, present.

14 THE CLERK: Office of Management and
15 Budget?

16 MS. LIN: Nancy Lin, present.

17 THE CLERK: President, Borough of the
18 Bronx?

19 (No response).

20 THE CLERK: Let the record reflect,
21 President, Borough of the Bronx is not
22 present.

23 President, Borough of Brooklyn?

24 MR. DOUGLAS: John Douglas, here.

25 THE CLERK: President, Borough of

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1 Manhattan?

2 MS. VEST: Tomi Vest, present.

3 THE CLERK: President, Borough of
4 Queens?

5 (No response).

6 THE CLERK: Let the record reflect,
7 President, Borough of Queens is not present.

8 President, Borough of Staten Island?

9 MS. LEFKOWITZ: Lauren Lefkowitz,
10 present.

11 THE CLERK: Representative, Department
12 of Small Business Services?

13 MR. DELL'OLIO: Anthony Dell'Olio,
14 present.

15 CHAIR HEINZEN: Welcome to this public
16 hearing of the FCRC. The hearing being
17 conducted today has been publicly advertised
18 in accordance with the New York City Charter
19 and the Concession Rules of the City of New
20 York. In order to make sure that anyone who
21 wants to be heard has the opportunity to do
22 so, we ask that anyone wishing to speak fill
23 out a request slip, which may be obtained
24 from the Clerk.

25 People who have registered to speak

1 will be called upon to testify after the
2 calendar item has been called. You may also
3 submit written testimony to the Clerk, which
4 will be made part of the record and available
5 to every member of the Committee.

6 Any written submissions can be given to
7 the Clerk at the close of the public hearing
8 or may be e-mailed to
9 F-C-R-C@M-O-C-S.N-Y-C.gov. That's
10 fcrc@mocs.nyc.gov, till 9 a.m. tomorrow
11 morning, all written testimony will be
12 provided to the Committee for our review and
13 consideration.

14 We're going to give each speaker
15 approximately three minutes. When you
16 testify, we ask that you please restate your
17 name and affiliation, if any.

18 Can you please call the only calendar
19 item.

20 THE CLERK: New York City Department Of
21 Small Business Services, Calendar Item
22 Number 1: In the matter of the intent to
23 seek Franchise and Concession Review
24 Committee approval, pursuant to Section 1-16
25 of the Concession Rules of the City of New

1 York, to utilize a different procedure to
2 enter into a significant Sole Source interim
3 Concession Agreement with FirstFlight
4 Heliports, LLC, doing business as Saker
5 Aviation Services, to provide for the
6 operation of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport.

7 The agreement would provide for one
8 six-month term, with two six-month options to
9 renew at the discretion of SBS. This
10 agreement intends to keep the heliport
11 operational, while SBS solicits a new
12 heliport operator via a 1-13 Request for
13 Proposals.

14 CHAIR HEINZEN: Okay. Thank you.
15 We'll take testimony from the public in just
16 a second.

17 But first, does any member of the
18 Committee have a statement that they would
19 like to make?

20 (No response).

21 Okay. Hearing none, we'll now hear
22 testimony from the public. As a reminder,
23 you have three minutes to testify, and we ask
24 that you be respectful of other speakers'
25 time, and be courteous when providing your

1 testimony.

2 Can you please call the first person.

3 THE CLERK: Kate Madigan, please
4 provide your full name and affiliation for
5 the record.

6 MS. MADIGAN: Thank you, ladies and
7 gentlemen of the Committee, for listening to
8 our public remarks. My name is Kate Madigan
9 from The Public Theater, also known as the
10 New York Shakespeare Festival. And we
11 respectfully oppose any new expansion for
12 helicopter traffic in the New York City area.
13 This includes any changes to the Downtown
14 Manhattan Heliport.

15 For years, we have been vocal in
16 raising awareness that our Free Shakespeare
17 performances in the open air Delacorte
18 Theater in Central Park are continually
19 interrupted by hovering tourist helicopters.
20 Free Shakespeare in the Park is a 65-year
21 long tradition, experienced by thousands of
22 New Yorkers and tourists annually.

23 The Delacorte Theater, located along
24 the 81st Street traverse across Central Park,
25 experiences a significant amount of noise

1 during performances. Furthermore, each year,
2 there's a significant amount of sightseeing
3 helicopter traffic above the Delacorte
4 Theater that creates constant and disruptive
5 noises during performances.

6 The public theater stage managers and
7 government relations team keep record of
8 helicopter disruptions that shows -- that
9 data shows that night after night, our
10 performances are interrupted. Therefore, we
11 will continually oppose any room for
12 helicopter traffic expansion in NYC.

13 Currently, there is no recourse for the
14 -- in this Metropolitan area to control the
15 constant noise pollution created by leisure
16 helicopters and other tourist rotorcrafts
17 hovering above the City. We only have these
18 public spaces to expand upon the blatant
19 reduction of quality of life.

20 To be clear, the public theater
21 respects and understands the need for
22 official business carried out in the sky by
23 emergency medical teams, NYPD, and those
24 monitoring public safety from helicopters.
25 The luxury and sightseeing rotorcrafts are

1 the main disrupters and constantly threaten
2 the quality of life in New York City.

3 Overall, the noise pollution caused by
4 the hovering and circling of leisure
5 helicopters destroys our theater experience
6 for the audience and heavily distracts
7 performers. Not only have cast and crew of
8 the show prepared for weeks to deliver an
9 amazing performance, but the audience has
10 also waited hours in line for tickets.

11 The average citizen isn't prepared to
12 carry around noise canceling aviation
13 headsets. Furthermore, helicopters make more
14 noise when turning, compared to flying
15 straight, as the change in direction alters
16 the vortices around the blades. Therefore,
17 any helicopters that circles around the open
18 air Delacorte Theater in Central Park
19 maximizes their noise pollution.

20 Any sightseeing company is aware of the
21 noise pollution produced while circling
22 around, but they continue to ignore respect
23 and consideration for the communities below.

24 In conclusion, the recently proposed
25 expansions for the Downtown Manhattan

1 Heliport are unacceptable and need not move
2 forward. Protecting the quality of life for
3 New Yorkers is of the utmost concern. We
4 would be happy to discuss these concerns with
5 you and your teams at your requests.

6 Thank you so much for your time and
7 careful consideration of this important
8 issue.

9 THE CLERK: Thank you.

10 Verne Zimmer, please provide your full
11 name and affiliation for the record.

12 MS. ZIMMER: Thank you to the Committee
13 for allowing me to speak as a member of the
14 public. My name is Verne Zimmer, and I'm a
15 new member of Stop The Chop, but I'm not
16 representing in any official capacity. They
17 are just about personal experiences.

18 I find helicopter traffic to make
19 unnecessary noise that's very disturbing,
20 whether it's viewing performances by the
21 Hudson Classical Theater along the Hudson
22 Park Outdoors, that's very -- it's ruining
23 the experience there, and the times at
24 Central Park, which provides a wonderful
25 space to commune with nature and other

1 like-minded New Yorkers.

2 The helicopter traffic makes
3 unnecessary noise that's to the point of
4 being a nuisance there. And whether it's a
5 helicopter hovering directly over my
6 apartment for 20 minutes at a time, provides
7 a lot of stress.

8 As I studied in New York City, the Open
9 Center with the sound of music healing
10 course, and also from my own experience of
11 being healed by sound and healing, sound
12 makes a difference in people's health,
13 whether it's physical, mental, emotional.
14 The wave producing sound can integrate all
15 these healing factors to change your whole
16 system, your immune system.

17 So, I'm against expanding any heliport
18 traffic. Thank you.

19 THE CLERK: Thank you.

20 Barb Rietschel, please provide your
21 full name and affiliation for the record.

22 MS. RIETSCHEL: I'm Barb Rietschel.
23 I'm unaffiliated. I'm sure you've all read
24 the New York Times article about what the
25 noises do to the health of everyone in Lower

1 Manhattan; so, we all know that.

2 But my question is, and I don't know if
3 this is part of what you could do, but if
4 there's congestion pricing for cars because
5 of the pollution from cars, why isn't the
6 aviation fuel that's spewing diesel on us
7 part of that consideration? The governor had
8 said people in the cars could take trains.
9 People coming in helicopters from the
10 Hamptons could also take the trains.

11 So, I don't know if this is part of
12 your purview, but I think we should close
13 that port on 30th Street, as opposed to
14 expanding it, if you think about the
15 pollution from the aviation fuel.

16 So, that's just my addition, but I'm
17 sure you're going to hear all the stuff about
18 the noise. It's constant and it's impossible
19 to work if you live in Lower Manhattan, so
20 that's it. I don't need any more time.

21 Thank you.

22 THE CLERK: Thank you.

23 Anne-Marie Riccitalle.

24 MS. RICCITALLE: Yes, Riccitalle. I'm
25 here. Thank you.

1 THE CLERK: Thank you. Please provide
2 your full name and affiliation.

3 MS. RIETSCHEL: Certainly. Thank you.
4 Thank you all for the opportunity to speak.
5 I'd like you to know that I'm a frequent
6 visitor to Chelsea Piers. I live on 17th
7 Street Union Square. And my life partner and
8 I would frequently go there, and now I go
9 there alone. And it's impossible to sit
10 there and read. Impossible.

11 For 30 minutes I sat there one Saturday
12 afternoon and I counted 26 helicopters,
13 literally every three minutes, sometimes in
14 tandem. Please realize, noise is a deadly
15 threat. It is where smoking was decades ago.
16 Please be responsible. Please end this
17 noise.

18 Thank you.

19 THE CLERK: Thank you.

20 Bill Thomas, please provide your full
21 name and affiliation for the record.

22 MR. THOMAS: Hi. I'm Bill Thomas, and
23 I'm a board member of Stop the Chop New York
24 and New Jersey. I'm a resident of Manhattan
25 but a native of Queens.

1 The proposed agreement between the EDC
2 and the FirstFlight Heliport should not be
3 approved in its current form. The agreement
4 unacceptably maintains the status quo with
5 respect to nonessential tourist flights
6 originating from the heliport. The agreement
7 continues as unchanged with rules established
8 in 2016, that were essentially designed to
9 mitigate the acknowledged. This part the EDC
10 acknowledges the impact of noise and
11 pollution by tourist helicopters on New York
12 City communities.

13 However well-meaning, these mitigation
14 and efforts have not worked. Helicopter
15 complaints to 3-1-1 have increased
16 exponentially from about 3,000 in 2019 to
17 over 20,000 and counting in 2022, and now in
18 into '23. Any agreement to operate the
19 Downtown Heliport should contain a provision
20 which bans its use for tourist flights. And
21 I would note, this is the only heliport under
22 EDC's jurisdiction that actually allows
23 tourist flights.

24 So, we've also noted that there is a
25 lot of opposition to maintaining tourist

1 flights on the part of our elected leaders.
2 For example, there's legislation in the City
3 Council 0551, which has the majority as the
4 City Council as cosponsors, which would ban
5 tourist flights in New York City heliports.

6 So, if nothing else, EDC should be
7 thinking about the inevitability that even if
8 EDC decides to continue, boldly in our view,
9 with this, eventually, the legislation will
10 sort of supercede this issue. EDC should be
11 thinking about how to operate these heliports
12 without tourist flights.

13 If, however, you do decide to go
14 forward, we do suggest some amendments to the
15 2016 agreement provisions; one, further
16 restrict the number of flights by, we think,
17 at least 50 percent. Further restrict the
18 air space in which the helicopters can fly,
19 keeping as far away from land as possible,
20 even if over water. If you're over water,
21 you can still be heard on land, as my
22 predecessor indicated.

23 The types of pollutants should be
24 expanded to reflect the latest guidance from
25 the Federal EDC, and complaints should be

1 addressed not by EDC, but an independent
2 third-party, who has its mission to monitor
3 noise and other pollutants.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to speak
5 to you today. You do have my written
6 testimony, as well as the letter that my
7 organization sent to EDC in May, which goes
8 into further detail.

9 Thank you.

10 THE CLERK: Thank you.

11 David Sander, please provide your full
12 name and affiliation for the record.

13 MR. SANDERS: Hello, is this on?

14 David Sanders. I'm a member of Stop
15 the Chop. I'm unaffiliated elsewhere. And
16 thank you for providing this opportunity to
17 speak in the case against tourist
18 helicopters.

19 Hudson River Park and Central Park are
20 treasured sanctuaries amidst New York's noisy
21 and often chaotic urban landscape. And these
22 green spaces were created and designed to
23 provide a much-needed respite, offering
24 solace, relaxation and an opportunity to
25 reconnect with nature. So, if you picture

1 yourself strolling along the tranquil
2 pathways to Central Park with banks of the
3 Hudson River and Hudson River Park, these
4 moments of solitude and personal recharging
5 are essential for our mental well-being and
6 overall quality of life. And yet, the serene
7 atmosphere is almost always shattered with
8 the constant stream of helicopters overhead.

9 I'm recently retired. I'm a landscape
10 architect. I spend my life creating gardens
11 and beautiful landscapes for people to enjoy,
12 and I can bicycle down to the Hudson River
13 Park. This is the one -- I lived on the
14 Upper West Side for the last 50 years. This
15 is the one part of the entire Hudson, the
16 West Side Highway, where there are buildings
17 between the highway and river.

18 And so, when I bike down there, I say
19 "Oh, I can just enjoy the river," and one
20 helicopter after the next comes overhead.
21 And I stopped going there because it's not
22 enjoyable to be there, but I used to make the
23 joke to people from the beginning, I said,
24 "It's like sitting under a runway at the
25 airport," until I realized it is a runway.

1 It's a runway to the heliport on 30th Street
2 and that's exactly what it is. And sometimes
3 there's two or three helicopters, but I no
4 longer go there. So, now I go to Central
5 Park and I like to visit Rambles every day.
6 And I don't know if you've ever been there,
7 birds are chirping, there's streams running
8 by, it feels almost like in Vermont, I can't
9 hear the City, and then every few minutes a
10 helicopter comes by, all the sounds are
11 blocked out.

12 And the same helicopter disturbs tens
13 of thousands of people enjoying the park, and
14 for what, so that three tourists can look
15 down over the park. So, these helicopters
16 infiltrate the spaces that contradicts the
17 very purposes that these spaces were built
18 and exists.

19 So, in conclusion, I implore that you
20 listen to the concerns of residents who live
21 here. There's so little we can do to reduce
22 noise pollution. It keeps getting worse. We
23 can't stop commercial jet aircraft. We can't
24 stop army and police helicopters. We can't
25 stop loud trucks or motorcycle. Perhaps the

1 only thing we could do at this point is stop
2 tourist helicopters.

3 So, I ask you to please make a
4 responsible and compassionate choice by not
5 allowing tourist helicopters to throw this
6 approach.

7 Thank you.

8 THE CLERK: Thank you.

9 Jonathan Baum, please provide your full
10 name and affiliation for the record.

11 MR. BAUM: Thank you. My name is
12 Jonathan Baum. I work for Stop the Chop
13 doing some videos for them. But I also live
14 right here, right actually down the block. I
15 wasn't going to come to this meeting, but as
16 I started to read the e-mail, I felt I
17 should. So, here's some of my thoughts.

18 I'm here to testify to the fact that
19 sightseeing flights now takes place six days
20 per week. When I moved down here almost
21 30 years ago, it was mostly quiet during the
22 days and weekends here. Nowadays, air
23 traffic has multiplied significantly.

24 My apartment faces the Brooklyn Bridge,
25 my windows, so almost each and every day I

1 can hear helicopters going back and forth.
2 They sometimes pause, so they could take
3 pictures of the bridges, circle sometimes
4 over and over to get those Instagram-type
5 shots that everyone is looking at on their
6 phone all day.

7 But for the people that live here, and
8 some do work from home like me, it could be
9 truly difficult because these choppers create
10 noise, excessive noise pollution, that you
11 can hear from the inside of your apartment.
12 One thing also is, I will say, I'm working
13 from home. After this I was working in an
14 office, I worked from home since the pandemic
15 to do sound. I can't do any kind of sound
16 today anymore, unless I built in a studio.
17 I'm in an apartment. I used to be able to do
18 it. Those days are kind of over.

19 The Lower Manhattan heliport East River
20 appears, sees 30,000 helicopters take off
21 each year, according to the EDC. While east
22 at least 34 helicopters have capped by 28,000
23 flights annually. I'm sure you all know
24 this. After a decade, it just seems
25 (inaudible) complaints rarely received more

1 than a thousand complaints a year. 2020 saw
2 ten thousand complaints about helicopters.
3 Last year, the number rose to 26,000, so you
4 can see a lot of New Yorkers are not happy
5 about this situation.

6 Imagine trying to have a peaceful meal
7 inside your apartment and you have these
8 choppers hovering outside, and you hear this
9 noise rumble, which sometimes shakes the
10 building.

11 So, I'm asking you here to limit the
12 amount of nonessential flights in Lower
13 Manhattan all the way in order to improve the
14 quality of life for those of us who live and
15 work in Lower Manhattan.

16 Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

17 THE CLERK: Thank you.

18 Javi (inaudible), please provide your
19 full name and affiliation for the record.

20 SPEAKER: Hi there. My name is Javi
21 (inaudible). I'm an acoustical consultant by
22 profession, though I'm just representing
23 myself as an individual. But for the record,
24 I'm listed in the New York City Environmental
25 Protections list of approved noise

1 consultants.

2 And I'd like to register my opposition
3 to entering into this concession agreement
4 with Saker Aviation. I'm opposed for two
5 sort of distinct reasons. As others have
6 noted, there's a well-established negative
7 health effect of helicopter noise and noise
8 in general. And helicopter noise is a big
9 contributor, especially in Downtown
10 Manhattan. And then, just because of the
11 general degradation of the Urban Soundscape
12 from idling flying helicopters, frankly,
13 helicopter noise is obnoxious and an
14 imposition on New York City residents.

15 Secondly, the diesel pollution and
16 subsequent CO2 emissions caused by
17 helicopters, it is the height of
18 irresponsibility to allow frivolous and
19 unnecessary recreational helicopter flying
20 when the effects of climate instability
21 caused by greenhouse gas emissions are
22 increasingly and dismaying evident.

23 I ask that this agreement will be
24 wholly and cheerfully rejected.

25 Thank you.

1 THE CLERK: Thank you.

2 Luca Benedetti, please provide your
3 full name and affiliation for the record.

4 MR. BENEDETTI: Thank you.

5 My name is Luca Benedetti. I'm
6 representing myself, my partner. We have
7 been in New York for about 20 years. We
8 recently moved to Red Hook a year and a half
9 ago where we were already visiting Portland.
10 And since living there, we can attest to the
11 fact that traffic at first wasn't as audible
12 as it became in the fall of 2022, so and now
13 it seemed to have died down, but the poor
14 quality is (inaudible) first helicopters. So
15 we kind of have a before and after
16 perspective. I expect it to be back at some
17 point.

18 It's incredibly disruptive. There's
19 birds around (inaudible) that part of New
20 York and also Governor Island in order to
21 seek respite from the chaos of the city. I'm
22 a musician, so I do appreciate some silence
23 at time. And we noticed at times you could
24 download flight radar app. As many as 12
25 helicopters at one time used to hover above

1 Governor's Island and the Statue of liberty.
2 It's a good resource to check just how many
3 helicopters are flying over New York. We
4 noticed over Prospect Park as well and it's
5 simply unnecessary.

6 I support all the statements to reject
7 this agreement. I just want to testify this
8 (inaudible) have went up and have gone down
9 considerably just out of perspective, as many
10 helicopters as there have been. One day I
11 remember about eight hours straight -- I
12 remember because I had to make a social media
13 post, ranting about eight hours straight
14 about incessant helicopter traffic
15 (inaudible).

16 So, please be responsible. These are
17 luxury emissions, extravagant pumping of
18 harmful greenhouse gas into the atmosphere,
19 exasperating family crisis for a marginal
20 benefit to a small group of individuals.

21 Thank you very much.

22 THE CLERK: Thank you.

23 Was anyone missed that wanted to
24 testify?

25 (No response).

1 THE CLERK: Okay. We have now heard
2 all testimony on this calendar item. For
3 those who want to, you may submit written
4 testimony to FCRC at mocs.nyc.gov until
5 9 a.m. tomorrow morning. You can also hand
6 written testimony to me at the close of the
7 hearing.

8 CHAIR HEINZEN: Thank you.

9 Before we conclude, does any of the
10 agencies present want to make a statement
11 today, for the record?

12 (No response).

13 CHAIR HEINZEN: Okay. Hearing none, no
14 one else wishes to speak, that concludes
15 today's hearing.

16 We ask that the reporter make the
17 entire public hearing agenda, which was made
18 publicly available and distributed at this
19 hearing, part of the final record of this
20 proceeding.

21 The hearing is now closed. Thank you.

22 (TIME NOTED: 3:00 p.m.)

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK)

:SS

COUNTY OF QUEENS)

I, Sabrina Brown Stewart, a shorthand reporter within and for the State of New York, do hereby certify that the within is a true and accurate transcript of the statement taken on July 12, 2023.

I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or by marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 31st day of July, 2023.

Sabrina Brown Stewart
Sabrina Brown Stewart

**In Re July FCRC Public Hearing NYC - Mayor`s Office of
Contract Services (MOCS)**

July 12, 2023

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**In Re July FCRC Public Hearing NYC - Mayor`s Office of
Contract Services (MOCS)**

July 12, 2023

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