



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Anthony Notaro, Jr. CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

**Economic Development Corporation
Franchise and Concession Review Committee &
Department of Small Businesses
Hearing on Amendment of Concession Agreement,
Downtown Heliport
Diana Switaj, Director of Planning and Land Use
2 Lafayette Street, 14th Floor, New York, NY
Monday, July 11 at 2:30PM**

Thank you for holding this important public hearing today and inviting our testimony. My name is Diana Switaj, and I represent Community District 1 in Lower Manhattan where I am Director of Planning and Land Use for Community Board 1 (CB1). Community District 1 includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge, as well as Ellis Island, Governors Island and Liberty Island.

Our Financial District Committee unanimously adopted the attached resolution which will come before our full board later this month regarding the amendment of the concession agreement between the New York City Department of Small Business Services and the operator of the Downtown Heliport located at Pier 6.

CB1 has long been concerned about the safety, quality of life and environmental issues from helicopters landing and taking off from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport at Pier 6 in our densely populated district which has some of the tallest buildings in the country. We are on the record by the passing of five resolutions on this issue since July 2011; we have testified often on this subject and have had numerous meetings with various agencies and elected officials over the years.

The concession agreement is being amended to extend the expiration date through April 30, 2021. The amended concession agreement will also (i) reduce the maximum number of tourist flights allowed, (ii) require the cessation of tourist flights over land, (iii) require air quality monitoring and (iv) require the Operator to actively research additional mitigation of noise emissions and implement any such technology as it becomes commercially feasible.

Helicopter traffic has lessened and conditions have improved since the initial concession agreement, most notably in relation to the moratorium on Sunday flights. However, the helicopter traffic is still by no means unobtrusive.

CB1 commends the City for reaching this agreement, which is an important step in addressing the chronic quality of life issues related to the helicopter tourism industry. We reiterate the importance that the number of flights, air and noise quality monitoring be conducted by an independent third party, and requests that an air quality monitoring station be placed at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport.

We further request that the moratorium be expanded to include major holidays that do not fall on Sunday. Finally, CB1 requests an update on what has been done thus far regarding the monitoring of air quality and requests that the City Council share with us copies of the reports containing flight count and air quality information.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

COMMUNITY BOARD #1 – MANHATTAN
RESOLUTION

DATE: JULY 26, 2016

COMMITTEE OF ORIGIN: FINANCIAL DISTRICT

COMMITTEE VOTE: 10 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained 0 Recused
BOARD VOTE: In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained 0 Recused

RE: Amendment of Helicopter Concession Agreement – Downtown Manhattan
 Heliport, Pier 6

WHEREAS: The NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYC EDC) owns and leases Pier 6 to the Downtown Manhattan Heliport operator and estimates that prior to the January 2016 concession agreement, there were 50,000 takeoffs and 50,000 landings for a total of 100,000 operations per year. Residents had seen up to eight helicopters landing and taking off simultaneously in the restricted small area of Pier 6, making it one of the most heavily congested heliports in the country; and

WHEREAS: Community Board 1 (CB1) has long been concerned about the safety and quality of life (environmental) issues from helicopters landing and taking off from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport at Pier 6 in our densely populated district which has some of the tallest buildings in the country; and

WHEREAS: CB1 is on the record by the passing of five resolutions: “Downtown Manhattan Heliport tour flights (July 2011), “Tourist Helicopter Flights from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport” (October 2009), “Downtown Manhattan Heliport at Pier 6 and elsewhere in CB1” (June 2015), “Int. No. 858 & Int. No. 859” (November 2015), and “Helicopter tourism in Lower Manhattan” (February 2016) and has testified often on this subject and had numerous meetings with various agencies and elected officials over the years; and

WHEREAS: In January 2016, an agreement was reached between NYC EDC and the Helicopter Tourism and Jobs Council regarding the helicopter tourism industry; and

WHEREAS: Under the agreement, tour operators were to reduce the number of flights to and from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport at Pier 6 in Lower Manhattan by 50% by January 2017, resulting in the elimination of nearly 30,000 flights per year; and

WHEREAS: In addition, operators agreed to end all flights on Sundays and prohibit flights over Governor’s Island and the agreement included air and noise quality monitoring; and

WHEREAS: Operators were required to provide monthly reporting to the NYC Council on the number of flights conducted, and if they were determined to have violated key terms of the agreement, the City has authority to mandate further reduction in operations; and

WHEREAS: The January 2016 concession agreement is being amended to extend the expiration date through April 30, 2021; and

WHEREAS: The amended concession agreement will also (i) reduce the maximum number of tourist flights allowed, (ii) require the cessation of tourist flights over land, (iii) require air quality monitoring and (iv) require Operator to actively research additional mitigation of noise emissions and implement any such technology as it becomes commercially feasible; and

WHEREAS: Helicopter traffic has lessened and conditions have improved since the initial concession agreement, most notably in relation to the moratorium on Sunday flights. However, the helicopter traffic is still by no means unobtrusive; now

THEREFORE

BE IT

RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 commends the City for reaching this agreement with the Helicopter Tourism and Jobs Council, which is an important step in addressing the chronic quality of life issues related to the helicopter tourism industry; and

BE IT

FURTHER

RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 highlights the importance that the number of flights, air and noise quality monitoring be conducted by an independent third party, and requests that an air quality monitoring station be placed at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport. We also request that the City Council provide us with reports containing flight count and air quality information; and

BE IT

FURTHER

RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 further requests that the moratorium be expanded to include major holidays that do not fall on Sunday.