9 IN ATTENDANCE:
10 BENITO ROMANO - Chair of the NYC Districting Commission
11 THADDEUS HACKWORK - General Counsel
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## CITY OF NEW YORK

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REDISTRICTING COMMISSION
SECOND ROUND PUBLIC MEETING
Bronx Community College
2155 University Avenue
Bronx, New York 10453
October 2, 2012. 5:48 P.M.

CARL HUM - Executive Director
MADELINE PROVENZANO (D-BRONX)
OSCAR ODOM III (R-KINGS)
GLORIA CARVAJAL WOLFE (R-NEW YORK)
JUSTIN YU (D-NEW YORK)
FRANK PADAVAN (R-QUEENS)
SCOTT CERULLO (R-RICHMOND)
JAMILA PONTON BRAGG (D-NEW YORK)
LINDA LIN (D-QUEENS)
JOHN ROBERT (D-BRONX)
ROXANNE J. PERSUAD (D-KINGS)
ROBERT W. HART (D-RICHMOND)
KAMILLAH M. HANK (I-RICHMOND)
MARC WURZEL (R-NEW YORK)

DIAMOND REPORTING (718) 624-7200 info@diamondreporting.com

MR. ROMANO: Good evening and thank you for coming tonight and welcome to the second round of the New York City Districting Commission's public hearing. My name is Benito Romano and I am the Chair of the New York City Districting Commission. On behalf of the Commission, I want to thank Dr. Carole Barotte Joseph for hosting us here tonight.

We have the facility for only a few hours tonight and I want to make sure that we hear from everyone who has signed up. For those of you who did not sign up and wish to speak, please see the staff at the registration tables outside this room to register.

If you require translation of your testimony, please let staff at the registration desks know. They will ensure that a translator will be provided when it is your turn to speak.

Before we take testimony, I would like to make a few observations.

At the beginning of this month, the Commission advertised in community and ethnic newspapers announcing the Commission's public hearing schedule; an email blast was sent to over 5,500 individuals and organizations; various
advocacy groups helped spread the word through their individual networks; and the hearing schedule was publicized on our Facebook page and Twitter feed. We, of course, will continue to find other ways to maximize community participation and interest, although we have no control over the weather.

Tonight represents the second round of public hearings that the Commission will conduct throughout the City. Over 450 people attended our first round of hearings in late August and the Commission heard from more than 131 witnesses.

Since then, the Commission has released a preliminary draft Council district plan on September 4th that adjusted the current Council lines for population proportionality, because in the last ten years many Council districts have either increased or decreased in population creating significant deviations from the ideal Council district population of 160,710. The preliminary draft plan was also posted on the Commission's Web site, www.nyc.gov/districting; displayed in public areas such as the Brooklyn Borough Hall, the Queens Library and the District

Commission offices; and linked to other Web sites such as the New York Public Library.

On the same day, the Commission will also launched an on-line mapping tool to allow the public to draw Council district maps for the Commission's consideration. The Commission staff also opened the Resource Room at the Commission's office in lower Manhattan. The Resource Room is available for those without access to computer terminals who wish to draw and submit a map to the Commission or for those wishing to receive one-on-one assistance with map-drawing as the Resource Room is staffed by Justin Bassett, our mapping associate. The Room is by appointment only, but is open past normal business hours. The Commission has received a few maps so far and we encourage you to explore the mapping tool available on our Web site. You will also be able to see some of the maps submitted by other members of the public.

Finally, the Commission also launched the Speakers' Bureau where an organization or group can request a staff member to talk about the decennial districting process. So far, the Speakers' Bureau has addressed a number of civic
organizations, community boards and even a grade-school class. If there is anyone wishing to have the Speakers' Bureau address their group or organization, please see Jonathan Ettricks or Carlos Carino to set up an appointment.

The Commission is eager to hear tonight's testimony and comments on the preliminary draft plan. After tonight's hearing and the others in the second round of hearings, the Commission will consider the comments during its next scheduled public hearing on October 18th. At that meeting, the Commission will direct the staff to revise the preliminary district plan in response to the comments received during the second round. Then at the Commission's public meeting on October 30th, a revised plan reflecting the comments received will be presented and the Commission will decide whether to adopt the plan. If the Commission adopts the plan, it will then be delivered to the City Council for its inspection and approval by November 5th.

According to the City Charter, by
November 26th, the City Council must either adopt the revised district plan at which point the plan will then be filed with the City Clerk or the

Council can object to the revised district plan at which point the plan will be returned to the Commission with the Council's comments and concerns. If the Council takes neither action, it will be deemed adopted.

If the Council objects to the revised district plan, the Commission will then have until January 5, 2013 to create a revised plan. This will then trigger a new set of public hearings to receive comment and feedback on the revised plan.

The Commission will then have until March 5th to create, adopt and submit a final plan to the City Clerk and to the U.S. Department of Justice for preclearance under the United States Voting Rights Act.

This process is described in a flow chart that is available for you tonight as it was in the first round of hearings. Other handouts include: a copy of the preliminary draft map; an enlarged map of the Bronx with the preliminary draft map lines; and a listing of the public participation tools that are available.

It is again worth noting that there are certain factors that the law obligates the

Commission to consider during the districting process. These include:

The difference in population between the least populous and the most populous districts shall not exceed ten percent of the arrange population for all districts;

Two, fair and effective representation of racial and language minority groups in New York City must be maintained;

Three, neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association must remain intact, if at all possible;

Districts should be compact and they should be contiguous, next to each other;

Keeping districts within a borough is priority;

And we should avoid diminishing the effective representation of voters.

Finally, I want to bring to your attention our Web site at www.nyc.gov/districting. The site is the central repository of all documents and videos relating to the Districting Commission.

It also contains a complete schedule of our
public hearings; all the documents and maps submitted to the Commission; our on-line mapping tool; and our portal where you can pre-register for all the hearings and be added to our mailing list. I hope you will all visit the site and let us know how it can be made more informative and for interactive.

That's all I have to say for now and I would like to now have the Commissioners introduce themselves and then we will here from our first witness.

Why don't we start from my extreme left at the end of the table and moving along.

MR. WURZEL: Hi, I'm Marc Wurzel and I'm from the Borough of Manhattan.

MR. HART: Robert Hart, from Staten Island. MS. PROVENZANO: Madeline Provenzano, from the Bronx.

MR. YU: Justin Yu, from Manhattan.
MR. ROBERT: I'm John Robert, from the Bronx.

MS. LIN: Linda Lin, from Queens.
MS. CARVAJAL WOLFE: Gloria Carvajal Wolfe, Manhattan.

MR. HACKWORTH: Thaddeus Hackworth, staff to
the Commission.
MR. ROMANO: I'm Benito Romano. I reside in Manhattan, but $I$ was born and raised in the Bronx.

MR. HUM: Carl Hum, staff to the Commission. MS. HANK: Kamillah Hank, Staten Island. MR. ODOM: Oscar Odom, the Third, Brooklyn. MS. PERSAUD: Roxanne Persaud, Brooklyn. MS. PONTON BRAGG: Jamila Ponton Bragg, Manhattan.

MR. CERULLO: Scott Cerullo, Staten Island. MR. PADAVAN: Frank Padavan, from Queens. MR. HACKWORTH: Our first speaker will be Herman Francis, to be followed by Council Member Annabel Palma.

MR. HERMAN FRANCIS: Good evening everyone. I do not have a prepared text, but I'm a lifetime resident, born and raised in Bronx County. I was formally a member of Community Board 1 and now I'm just a community resident.

But it seems like to me that the Voting Rights Act have been co-oped and are being utilized as lip service. The Bronx is not to be partitioned off. The section of the Bronx I happen to be living in right now is getting ready
to be partitioned off to be joined with Manhattan.

You already just said the districts should be located entirely within the county, and this was what was put in place years back, years ago; that representation should be within the entire county.

The people are entitled to dignity. We are talking about the distribution of resources and also ethical representation. It's bad enough we are being petitioned by a county line, we are also being separated by a ribbon, it sounds like a great divide, a great wall somewhere.

Evidently, when the Voting Rights Act was passed, a whole lot of people have seemed to forgotten, it was put there because there was a group of people that was immoral and did not have the best interest of the people and, um, and their mind.

So we say onto you, let's consider this and put the entire district located entirely within the Bronx.

MR. ROMANO: Thank you.
MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be Council Member Annabel Palma, to be followed by

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz.
MS. ANNABEL PALMA: Good evening members of the Commission, colleagues of government and proud Bronx residents. I would first like to thank the Commission for addressing many of the concerns that have been raised by Bronx residents.

While many of us feel that the Commission's proposed district lines for the Bronx Council seats are not ideal, they do indicate that we are moving in the right direction.

Considering the voting population growth over the last ten years, it could easily be argued that the Bronx can support a 9th Council District. That being said, the eight and a half districts proposed by the Commission is a positive step towards that end.

Ten years ago, due to redistricting, the Bronx became home to two of the largest City Council districts. Bearing in mind that the average size of a New York City Council district is approximately 160,000 residents, it is important to know that seven of our eight Bronx Council districts contain more than 160,000 people. While some Council districts in the City
have less than 150,000 inhabitants, two of our eight Council districts have over 175,000 residents.

These statistics highlight the need for more uniformity in terms of numbers of residents containing each of the 51 Council districts across the five boroughs. In many of our borough's neighborhoods, Bronxites face significant financial challenges. Particularly in these tough economic times, many of our constituents in all eight Bronx Council districts must access our City social safety net in order to survive.

As a proud Bronx representative of Council District 18, it is important for the Commission to know that on a daily basis my constituents contact my office in need of assistance with housing, child care, education, job opportunity and health care. My colleagues and I have worked tirelessly to save funding and support programs that help meet the needs of our borough's constituents, despite the slumping economy.

However, with the surging numbers of residents in our Council districts, our capacity to assist our constituents can easily become
overwhelming, especially considering the size of our district.

Again, Bronx residents are currently nestled into eight Council districts, with all except one over the average size of a Council district around the City. We in the Bronx were hopeful that after the last census when it was found that the Bronx grew by over 100,000 new residents, that the borough would see the creation of a New City Council seat.

By adding a new Council seat, the borough would achieve more manageable district size which would, in turn, lead to more manageable caseloads for our staff. Most importantly, it translates into better services for our borough's constituents. A ninth Council member would be a welcomed addition to the Bronx team and would undoubtedly bring more strength to the public services provided to our borough's residents. As President Bill Clinton recently reminded us, there is one word especially important for us to remember in government and that is arithmetic. The Bronx currently has 1.392 thousand residents. If we divide that number by 160,000, which again is the average size of a Council district, we
will have 8.7 districts. If, say, the Bronx districts were drawn at the lower range of resident deviation, mainly 153,000 residents, the borough would have 9.15 districts.

In conclusion, the Bronxites and the Bronx overall deserves better than to have overdrawn and overpopulated districts; particularly considering that many districts around the City are significantly smaller. Quite simply, our residents deserve a fair amount of representation. As a voter, we will continue to raise this issue to ensure that Bronx gets it's fair share and equitable share. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker is Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz followed by Eddie LaGuerro.

MR. JEFFREY DINOWITZ: Thank you. Good evening, I'm Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz. I represent the 81st Assembly District in the northwest Bronx and I reside in the 11th Council District.

Several times during the course of the year I speak before various commissions, boards, MTA, so on and so forth on matters that come before the public and more often than not I'm critical
of what they've done or what they didn't do that they should have done, but in this case I want to say that I am generally pleased with what the Commission came up with for the Bronx, generally pleased.

In our own 11th Council District you
listened to some of the testimony last time. For example, there is a very nice neighborhood on the east side of Allerton Avenue, Bronx Park East area which kind of was tacked on to our district, but frankly, probably would prefer to be with the rest of their neighborhood and you listened to that and you did just that.

The Bedford Park community, the line now goes straight across Bedford Park over; no zigs, no zags. So, I think general speaking that district was drawn in a very appropriate way; neighborhoods were kept together. It's a very neat district and will certainly be well served as a result of that.

There was much testimony last time regarding the 15th Council District and keeping that district intact and you did that. The one, I guess, complaint that $I$ have and it relates to what Councilwoman Palma said, concerns the amount
of representation that the Bronx is getting. The Bronx, by the math, if we had whole districts, should have nine Council districts. For the past ten years we have had eight and a quarter districts. We have been under represented; meaning, that our average district in the Bronx has a greater population than other boroughs' Council districts and to a certain extent that continues.

Going from eight and quarter districts to eight and a half districts is certainly a step in the right direction, but as you do the math, you realize that were are much closer to nine than we are to eight and we are certainly closer to nine than we are to eight and a half.

Therefore, since we want to not cross borough lines, the only sensible thing to do is for the Bronx to have nine districts; certainly more than eight and a half districts. Because the fewer districts we have, the larger districts they are, it means that it's more difficult to represent them.

And I would think that given the fact that the Bronx is the most heavily minority district of all the five boroughs in the City, that we
would certainly want to pay careful attention to the fact that we are under represented. In fact, I forget who put out the plan, I saw one group put out a plan that would only give the Bronx eight districts. To me that's shocking that anybody would suggest such a thing. We should have nine districts. I hope you will certainly look at that.

But overall, I do commend the Commission because I think you did listen to that which was brought up at the last hearing and other people who submitted testimony, so thank you very much. MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Eddie LaGuerro, to be followed by Julio Munoz.

MR. EDDIE LAGUERRO: Thank you. I'm Eddie LaGuerro. I'm a resident of the Bronx, but, you know, I grew up in East Harlem. My mom still lives in Taino Towers, my brother lives in Taino Towers and most of my relatives are in East Harlem.

I'm very concerned in particular about the 8th Council District; this is why I'm here. It's important for Latino, particularly Puerto Ricans, to have representation. What we had in the past was that the majority of the district was in the
west side of Manhattan and at any point in time any strong candidate from that district would have just basically taken over the district.

I commend the Commission for expanding that district and allowing for the Latino community to be represented in the Bronx. That has historically been the way that the people in East Harlem have been able to get representation.

Because, as you know, with all the housing that has been built in the past ten years, if you look at the demographics, along 99th Street all the way to 116th Street, every single high-rise building that's being built there right now does not represent the community that grew up there like me; no longer a Boricua community.

The numbers are significantly higher with all the buildings. As a matter of fact, the last two buildings that are being built on Third Avenue and 121st, 122nd Street, those building, you know, are for people of medium income of \$100,000 which does not really reflect the composition of my mom's and the people that I grew up there with and the kids that are still living there.

So I commend the Commission for allowing the
people of East Harlem to join hands in the South Bronx and at least that community can continue to have representation. Thank you so much and I commend you for drawing those lines. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Julio Munoz, to be followed by Robert Carrillo.

MR. JULIO MUNOZ: I would like to thank the Chairman and the Commissioners for listening to me. I don't have a prepared statement, but I used to be the district leader in the 80th Assembly District which covers part of the 13th.

Ten years ago, at another college in the Bronx, I testified concerning the same issue. Ten years later, the 13th has become more Hispanic and more Afro American and I'm going to say same thing I said ten years ago; that I believe that the 15th District should be bring over to about Williamsbridge Road.

The increase that we see here has been in the last ten years and I want to dispute the number, the population; it's much more than 166,000, in the Census Bureau.

But the population along the Bronx Zoo, Bronx River, White Plains Road, Cruger Avenue have all become Hispanic, predominantly Puerto

Rican. And we said this ten years ago, that -and thank God we have right now a City Councilman who is attentive, Jimmy Vacca. But he's term limited and we don't know what's going to come next. I feel that the 15th should be brought over to about Williamsbridge Road to include -leads to a solid Hispanic district, predominantly Puerto Rican. Because if another City Council person comes in, they might not look upon that population; which is a minority in the 13th. We are a minority within a minority.

MR. ROMANO: Mr. Munoz, just to be clear, are you talking about the 15th now or the 13th? MR. JULIO MUNOZ: The 13th, sir. MR. ROMANO: All right, thank you. MR. JULIO MUNOZ: The 15th, we would like the 15th to come over to include those people. Now, ten years ago I said the same thing and ten years now -- I might not be around the next ten years, but this population is -- by being Puerto Ricans, they are American citizens and they vote. And they have always have been kept out of $a$ minority district. They are a minority within a minority. So that's my testimony, thank you very much for listening.

MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker will be Robert Carrillo followed by Kenneth Thomas.

MR. ROBERT CARRILLO: Good evening. My name is Robert Carrillo, I'm representing the South Bronx Community Association.

Our particular section -- and I don't have a prepared statement -- our particular section of the community that have borders in Mott Haven and Highbridge, Morris Heights has long been neglected. Those of us who live there know as much and many of the improvements that have allowed for new co-ops to be built or co-ops to be switched or new housing stock has been due to tenants and residents in the communities organizing for those services and putting pressure, really, on the elected officials.

The organization has been accomplished with all of our resources when all the resources are in one geographical area; for example, our planning boards, our precincts, police precincts, fire departments, et cetera. This is also true of our elected City Council Members which has jurisdiction over those City agencies.

It has been -- through our experience, it
has shown that the pressure that we have put on the elected officials because we live in the neighborhood and community has actually forced those elected officials to support our initiatives. We've seen this through quality of life issues and it's a testament of why we need City Council representatives that can be held accountable by the community members.

If our City Council representatives relies on a base of voters from another borough, in this case I'm talking about the 8th in Manhattan, he or she will not be necessarily under any pressure by those whose concerns and needs should be addressed.

This can be a major problem for us as a community that has finally begun to organize more and unite to address the issues to improve our quality of life. Our community is still undergoing major changes; new zoning, gentrification, major developments that are being discussed and that have already happened. If we as residents who have invested in homes and co-ops and those who have chosen to rent in our neighborhood don't have full access in the ability to put pressure on elected officials,
then again, those issues at the forefront won't be discussed and won't be taken care of.

Lastly, I think it makes kind of sense that certain Bronx staples such as Hostos Community College, Lincoln Hospital, Pregones should remain Bronx staples. So, you know, they are strong and influential voices that we have right now that we will basically be losing to Manhattan constituents, and that's it.

MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker is Kenneth Thomas, to be followed by Aureo Cardona.

MR. KENNETH THOMAS: My name is Ken Thomas, a lifetime resident of the Bronx, a member of Community Board 9 and I represent an organization based in the South Bronx and I have a prepared statement.

The cornerstone of any vital democracy is an appropriate and adequate representation of the people who comprise it. Within the context of the preliminary demarcating lines that would be throughout the borough of the Bronx, I think some more thought should be given in terms how these lines are drawn.

Based off of the 2010 census data for the

Bronx, the population has increased by nearly four percent. In keeping with the maintenance of population distribution limits, there is, of course, a need to modify the boundaries of effective districts. However, with that being said, $I$ urge that new consideration be made in an effort to assess the existing district boundaries while facilitating an additional district, so that our Bronx City Council Members can effectively represent the concerns and interests of the constituents that they serve.

I feel that any significant modifications, particularly within the South Bronx could be problematic in the long run if a full 9th District isn't carved out. Bronxites, such as myself, deserve appropriate and adequate representation and I believe that this goes by expanding our City Council representations.

Ultimately, we need more representation, not less. Thank you.

MR. ODOM: Any particular district you're speaking about?

MR. THOMAS: Yes, actually, the 8th District that carves into the Southwest Bronx -- excuse me, Southeast Bronx.

MR. ODOM: Thank you.
MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Aureo Cardona, to be followed by Anthony Curry.

MR. AUREO CARDONA: Good evening. Mr. Chairman, thank you for being here tonight.

I think a little history very quickly, I came here when I was two years old. I was born in Puerto Rico, but raised in the South Bronx and I grew up, as a kid in the South Bronx, with Jewish, Irish and Italian kids. Obviously, in my lifetime, things have changed. So I come here to give you my credentials of the South Bronx personally. I still live in the South Bronx. I live in the proposed 8th in the Mott Haven historic district.

As a South Bronx resident, I've overcome benign neglect with our U.S. Senator Diane Moynihan; planned shrinkage, if you remember Russell Starr, our esteemed leader of housing; and the fires, if anybody is old enough to remember when they tried to burn us out of the South Bronx. We overcame all of that stuff and we are still here.

You know, the history is important. I was the chairman of Planning Board 1 in the old days,
responsible for -- we were responsible for coterminality. Remember that, when we put everything together? Then I was also the district leader of the old 75th Assembly District and eventually became the president of the South Bronx Community Housing Corporation, which was a vehicle put together by the Fed, State and City and effectively the first community housing organization in the United States and the model for redevelopment across America.

So I know a little bit about stuff; political stuff, economic development stuff. And now I'm seeing again a political neglect for this community.

I live in a district which is predominantly Latino. The Congressional District is close to 70 percent Hispanic. If I talked Spanish to this panel, you wouldn't know what I was talking about, most of you, but the people in that district, that's what we do. That's our culture and we are Americans.

When you take your district lines and you leave half in Manhattan and half here, if you were to look at your own documents, your statistical sheets that show the new proposed
line, well, the 8th is in Manhattan, it doesn't even talk about the Bronx. It doesn't even talk about the Bronx. And I suggest that we are not standing for that. We are not going to stand for that; been through it.

We have a history of oppression and overcoming and empowering ourselves to still be here. We need a district, it's up to you to make sure we get one. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Anthony Curry, to be followed by Dr. Jim Fairbanks. MR. ANTHONY CURRY: Good evening, how are you? I want to start off by saying that in the Bronx's entirety -- I represent the National African American Council -- in the Bronx's entirety, to this time and day, we have two City Councilmen throughout the Bronx, just two. What you guys have done in effect of changing the lines has effectively created no more African American, but we'll only have one black which would be West Indian, uptown. You did that with one swoop of the pen.

One of the areas that has -- one of the reasons that -- this 16th Councilmanic District is what I'm talking about, and one of the reasons
why the 16th Councilmanic District has remained in the hands of a black is not because the population stated so or dictated so, but because the numbers were close enough that we, as a higher voting rate, was able to contain that. What you've done, you redrawing the lines, what appears someone did, someone strategically removed me from the 16th Councilmanic District, put me in the 8th. They have conveniently removed Concourse Village, which is one of the strongest voting blocks for African Americans, out of the 16 th and placed it in Carmen Arroyo's district, which is predominantly Hispanic.

So it appears that what has happened is that they are dividing and basically not only dividing, but they are weakening the black vote in the west side of the Bronx. I don't know if this is happening just happen sake or whether or not it's planned or whatever, but it is in effect what is happening.

The Concourse Village has always been in the 16th Councilmanic District and is one of the main reasons why the district remained being represented by a black individual. We don't have any blacks representing us in the district.

You know, the whole purpose and the main people who died and lost their lives were African Americans so that these rules and regulations were put in place. They gave their lives for these things and it seems like the only people who are benefiting from it is everyone else. You guys need to take a look at these lines and see the people that you are disenfranchising by doing this.

We only have one elected black official. We only have -- we have I think it's two black officials as far as State Assembly line goes. And the State Assembly only has one black district which is uptown, the same district what we talked about where Larry Seabrook is, where the chairperson is of the Bronx Democratic Party.

I'm asking you to reconsider, reconsider removing Concourse Village mostly. You removed me, I don't have a problem as much; but I know in order for the district to continue to get the services that is deeply needed, it needs to have a strong voice and it needs to have somebody, a strong voting block that would intimidate these leaders who you so-called leaders or politicians that are put in place, and that could only be
made and be consistent by placing Concourse Village back in the 16th District. Thank you. MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Dr. Jim Fairbanks, to be followed by Ann Noonan. DR. JIM FAIRBANKS: I'm Chief of Staff to City Councilwoman Helen Diane Foster, but amazingly she let's me say what I want to say at any time. When I moved to the Bronx in 1969 to Highbridge, to a black and Hispanic community, I was shocked to find out there were no black and Hispanic elected officials. And then I remembered the '65 Voting Rights Act which says because of the history of white racism in the Bronx, that we must be cleared by the Justice Department. And so that's why I'm advocating for however you draw the lines, that it be possible for two African Americans to be elected in the Bronx. The numbers are certainly there.

I know when I came, I was so shocked and I wasn't a political person at the time, I became politically involved. I started working for Wendell Foster and Gilberto Gerena Valentin to try and do something about it.

You must remember that in the history of the

Bronx there have only been two blacks elected to a City position, Wendell Foster and Helen Diane Foster; neither one. And because of the numbers in the 16th and the changes being made to it, it looks like there is the possibility of only one African American to be elected in the Bronx and that just continues a long history of white racism.

So I'm preaching to the choir I know, and fortunately we have the head of Justice Department who is born and raised in the Bronx. So I hope we will get justice and at least have two seats where it's possible for an African American to be elected. Thank you very much.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Ann Noonan, to be followed by Cheryl Pahaham.

MS. ANN NOONAN: Good evening. Thank you for holding this event tonight. I'm a lifelong Bronx resident and I only have one simple message for your Commission and that's to please consider to continue the redistricting line and that's to please keep neighborhood intact. It's very important.

In the past, districts have been broken by -- neighborhoods have been broken by districts
and it doesn't let people have the voice that they deserve from their neighborhoods and from their communities. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Sheryl Pahaham, to be followed by Kenneth Kearns.

MS. CHERYL PAHAHAM: Hi, I'm actually Cheryl Pahaham and I'm here to ask you to take on a task that's really not your mission as described in the Charter.

You've been now hearing lots of complaints from people all over the City about the lines that you've proposed and how they don't like them and I would suggest that the process itself is flawed. It's not your maps that are problematic, it's the process.

We are starting this process way too late for meaningful public participation. By the time you get around to talking to the public, politicians have already made up their minds about what the district should look like. We are left out of the equation and the only thing that's going to solve this is a Charter revision.

So I'm asking you to consider in your discussions how to make a recommendation to the Council and the Mayor to open up this process so
that we do keep neighborhoods intact and you don't see so many angry people feeling that they are not represented. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Kenneth Kearns, to be followed by Rey Allen.

MR. KENNETH KEARNS: Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Kenneth Kearns, I'm District Manager of Bronx Community Board 10 serving the Northeast Bronx.

For many years we have enjoyed a successful working relationship with our elected officials at all levels of government, effectively delivering constituent services and advocacy on behalf of the communities we jointly represent.

I would like to take this opportunity to speak in strong support of the new 13th Councilmanic District that this body has proposed. The proposed new district keeps the communities of City Island, Country Club, Pelham Bay, Throgs Neck and Westchester Square united, which we at the Board feel is vital to ensuring the most effective elected representation possible. These communities share much in common with each other as well as our sister communities of Morris Park, Allerton and Pelham Parkway,
including housing, demographics, neighborhood institutions, and perhaps most significantly, a strong sense of shared community.

It is our opinion that the relatively minor changes the proposed map makes to the current 13th District does not harm this important sense of community and, if anything, takes steps toward increasing the unity which is so vital to any districting process.

Thank you very much for your attention and consideration.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Rey Allen, to be followed by Carlos Siera.

MR. REY ALLEN: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Rey Allen, I'm from the 16th Councilmanic District. Again, I would like to echo what was said earlier in terms of Concourse Village, of keeping Concourse Village together. It's very important for us in terms of a community.

Also, Lebanon -- Bronx-Lebanon Hospital on the Concourse was taken out. We would like to see our hospital kept in the same Councilmanic District. And Woodstock also, which is Trinity Avenue, 163rd Street. We would like to see the
community staying together as was echoed earlier in terms of a people of the same and for the same purposes. Thank you very much.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Carlos Siera to be followed by Harry Bobbins.

MR. CARLOS SIERA: Good evening, panelists. Thank you all for choosing Bronx Community College once again to held such an important hearing. Bronx Community College was chosen before when we were going over the redistricting process from the assembly and the senate.

I'm basically here to advocate on behalf of the creation of a new Council District in the Bronx. As you are all aware, the population grew and I think that we should deserve at least to have a new Council District. In addition to that, $I$ am also advocating on behalf of preserving the community; making sure that as you look into drawing the lines, that you consider the people that live in the neighborhoods, the people that have been working together already. Different lines are going to be subject to change.

In the area where I live, which is Highbridge, you know, if you look at the
diversity that we have there, I think it's vital that we preserve the community as it is. It is a vibrant community, an emerging community that's there that's composed of Mexicans, Dominicans and many other groups, Puerto Ricans, African Americans. We all live in harmony and I think it's important for us to preserve that unity among all of us. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our last registered speaker is Harry Bobbins.

MR. HARRY BOBBINS: Hello, thank you. I also want to talk about the proposed 8th and, therefore, the 17th District because that's also impacted. Some of the people looking at the Bronx map of the proposed 8th District and it looks like a sideways middle finger to our community.

For many years the South Bronx has been gerrymandered and diluted; you've heard that repeatedly here tonight. The ideal outcome -and this doesn't have to do with any of the personal City Council Members -- is not to have the 8th District in the Bronx in the first place. It's always been ludicrous to have the Upper West Side and East Harlem and then a little
sliver of the South Bronx. But if you do consider expanding the 8th into the South Bronx, the unity map offers a better basis and it should be stretched from Harlem River to East River and include more of the communities that would otherwise be divided in Mott Haven and Port Morris; those communities are not kept intact.

Another one of your Commission things says that one district shall not be twice as long as it is wide. The 8th District goes from Central Park to Highbridge; that's over 100 blocks. So again, by bringing down that jutting knife into the South Bronx with a proposed 8th District and spreading it out into the lower South Bronx, that would be a better outcome, I think.

In your proposal Randall's Island goes to the 22nd District in Queens when it's closer to the Bronx and it's closer to Manhattan and it's absolutely ludicrous. The only determination that could be made is that that's a political ploy, because our Council Members Arroyo and Viverito in the 17th and 8th Districts have been fighting vigorously for East Harlem and the South Bronx community to gain access to that green space.

Queens is further away than both the Bronx and Manhattan and the Bronx will have more connections once the Green Way is down to Randall's Island. So Randall's Island should be in the Bronx district, the 17th or the 8th District.

Finally, there should be another hearing after you make any kind of revisions to this map. There is a very paltry public input process and hopefully there could be another hearing through you or hopefully our City Council Members can have a hearing there. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: We have an additional speaker registered, Joanne Smitherman. MS. JOANNE SMITHERMAN: I would like to say good afternoon to everybody and thank you for setting this up. But one thing that I must say, I'm not political, I'm political minded and also I'm a community person. And one of the things that I beg of you, please, since you are a Commissioner and you are here today to listen to the residents and the political people, I live in Highbridge, when I moved in Highbridge, Highbridge was made up of no Hispanics. All we had was Irish and Italians and Jewish. We had
three black families that moved into the Highbridge development and I was one of them. Now, since I've been in Highbridge over 40 years, I've looked at my community has changed tremendously and we have to take in consideration the residents who live there, because those are the people who vote for the same people who speak as politicians.

I went to a meeting last week and they said that Ms. Melissa, who is a Councilwoman, is supposed to be coming into Highbridge. Now, I know where she is coming from, she's in Manhattan. She's all the way in Central Park and she is coming over the bridge and she is going to take over Highbridge, which I disagree because I think she should stay where she is at. Because number one, she is already, she is already in the South Bronx because she has the developments Mott Haven, Middle Brook, Adams and St. Mary's. So what does she need to come to Highbridge? I want to ask her that.

I'm not saying that she might not have the knowledge, but I'm saying that we need another Council person for Highbridge. Because we did have my lovely friend, and I love her dearly,

Councilwoman Arroyo. We love her dearly in Highbridge, but we need another Council seat because, if you know, Helen Foster has to leave. She is our Council Member, but she has to leave. Now, I ain't heard nobody saying who is going to take her place. There is a whole lot of people that want to run, that's good, but we want to know who they are and if you know who they are, then you supposed to tell us because you are the Commissioner and you supposed to go back to that Council and they supposed to vote on this. How the devil they going vote on something when a lot of the politicians already made up they minds where they going, where they going. And the community don't even know that. So, you had this here Commission.

My thing is when I found out the Commission, because I'm a member of Community Board 4, you had a representative that came at the last end of the meeting to tell us about this Commission. I go to every meeting because I want to know what's going on politically because it looks like the residents and the people is the last to know until somebody comes up underneath your door with 50 million flyers saying they running. See, we
have to change that because how the devil are you going to go back to the Council and they going to vote on something when the Council already made up they mind.

The community has a fight on they hands and you going to see that. We have to stop taking stuff that y'all tell us what to do and how to do and when to do. We have to stand up and say what we want because we are the ones that vote, we are the ones that know more than the politicians know. And I know I know more about my community than any politicians, any of y'all sitting up there. And my community has changed and we want representation.

I don't go according to color, I go according to what you going to do and how you going to do it for the people. That's what we should do and that's what you supposed to instill in people and that's what I instill in my community.

MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you, Ms. Smitherman.
MS. JOANNE SMITHERMAN: What's your name?
MR. ROMANO: There are people waiting to speak behind you.

MS. JOANNE SMITHERMAN: Well, I'm a
community person and a community person has over the people that's going to speak. Everybody spoke about Randall's Island and all this other stuff. I'm speaking about Highbridge. Thank you very much.

MR. ROMANO: Thank you.
MR. HACKWORTH: We have two additional registered speakers and if anyone else would like to register to speak, you can do so at the table in the outside. Our next speaker will be Carmen Vasquez, to be followed by Walter Newsome.

MS. CARMEN VASQUEZ: Good evening. Can you hear me?

MR. HACKWORTH: Yes.
MS. CARMEN VASQUEZ: First, I would like to say that I traveled an hour and a half to get here tonight because I come from El Barrio, New York. That's East Harlem, that's one of the districts that is being split apart.

El Barrio is a cradle of the Puerto Rican community, it has been for many, many years. The Puerto Rican population in East Harlem should be represented under one Council District, as it is currently is. The lines as they are drawn are a reflection on where the Puerto Rican and Latino
population is concentrated within the neighborhood. East Harlem Puerto Rican and Latino community and all residents of our community must continue to be fairly represented by the City Council.

Now, La Marqueta is an iconic building to us. It represents many generations of sweat and tear. It is ours and it's been split into two places, two parts, into two districts. La Marqueta is not only important historically to us, it's a landmark for the Puerto Rican community currently residing in District 8.

And if anybody here doesn't know who Melissa Mark-Viverito is, our Council person, you must really look into the books in the last years that she's been our Council Member. Not only is she tenacious about our rights, she represents every single one of us. She is for the aged, the senior citizens, the youth, affordable housing in our community and she has no fear of speaking up for us in any way that she feels that is not right. She comes from the heart. She is a politician because she loves us. She is not a politician because she has a lot of muscle behind her, like a lot of people do, okay. She is not
following the money, she is following the heart and she is representing us.

We want her to remain on District 8. What's happening to El Barrio is not fair. We want to be one community united and we must stay that way. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our last registered speaker is Walter Newsome. We have another, actually, but Walter Newsome is next and then Mark Escoffery-Bey.

MR. WALTER NEWSOME: Good evening all. My name is Walter Newsome, I'm a lifelong resident of the 16th Councilmanic District and also on Community Board 4. And what I'm here to speak about today -- I had no intention of speaking -but what I'm here to speak about today is pride.

As you well know, we live in the poorest Congressional District in the United States, okay. What Concourse Village represents to us is a working class poor. In the 16 th they have been a long standing source of pride for us.

I've grown up. I've become an All-American basketball player, I went to law school and I chose to come back and live in my district so I can instill pride in my community members, okay.

Now, what I've done is I've given back to my community and we've sent over 40 minority at-risk youth to colleges throughout the country here in the 16th.

What I point to is various sources of pride; yes, we have our Yankees, yes, we have this, we have new developments, but we also have Concourse Village. Right there where our kids can see are people who have worked hard, who are homeowners. Be they may cooperatives, they are homeowners there in Concourse Village. These are people who serve as role models to us.

We don't have much in the 16th, and no offense to you all, but what's being happening is that's being removed from us. All I'm saying is I care about my community; we don't have much, please do not pilfer and take away what we already have. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our last, again, registered speaker is Mark Escoffery-Bey.

MR. MARK ESCOFFERY-BEY: Well, first of all, thank you. I mean, I've been to many events and you got my name right on point. I can't believe you got my name on point and you draw these lines.

I'm here to speak particularly to address the 16th Councilmanic District where the Concourse Village was taken away. For me, this is such an injustice. I feel the same thing was done with Berlin, but at least they built a wall to separate brothers from brothers.

You know, we have two, two minority, black minority Councilmanic Districts and the way the lines are being drawn now it's very difficult now for us to have, to continue to have two, which would represent 20 percent of the majority votes. Now, we won't be able to have that, we will only have ten percent.

We suffered the same injustice when the State drew their lines and we come out ahead and we still had the same representation, but that's only because our representation were not challenged. Now, we won't be able to keep that representation in the City Council.

You know, now, we've been doing so much with so little for so long that $I$ guess the panel believe that anything is better than nothing. I'm saying no, you know, I need you guys to bring back Concourse Village into the 16th so that we can have the proper representation.

The other thing I want to address is this whole thing about the 8th being in the Bronx and Manhattan when we have the population that justifies having another Councilmanic District in the Bronx. When you dump a whole lot of people in the same Councilmanic District and they still just have the same represent -- the same -- their Council Member have the same vote in the Council, that's under representation because one is representing 50 people and one is representing a thousand, so those thousand people are disenfranchised. And the Bronx now, according to these lines, seems to be a dumping ground for people that you don't care about. That's why you give the representation such little value, you know.

I'm begging you to reconsider to bring the Concourse Village back into the 16th and to please consider having additional, at least more proportional representation closer to nine Councilmanic Districts in the Bronx as opposed to what you have now, which is just a monstrosity and I ask you not to perpetuate it. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. There are no additional registered speakers.

MR. ROMANO: If anyone wants to speak, if they could just register in the back of the room. Anyone arrives later, we will be here for a little while hoping people will show up. We are going to take an adjournment for a few minutes.
(Whereupon, at 6:47 p.m., a short recess was taken.)
(Back on the record at 7:04 p.m.)
MR. ROMANO: The Commission's meeting is coming to order. We have some additional speakers.

MR. HACKWORTH: Before we start with the additional speakers, Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz would like to provide a very brief correction to his testimony.

MR. JEFFREY DINOWITZ: Thank you for allowing me to use the rest of the three minutes that I didn't use before.

I misspoke when I mentioned the 15th Council District before. I meant to say the 16th District, the district represented by Councilwoman Foster. But what I didn't realize and what a lot people didn't realize, and it was brought out in the testimony, is the issue of Concourse Village. And I just want to put on the
record that Concourse Village must be part of the traditional 16th Council District and I apologize for focusing more on the part of the map that affects my own Council District.

I think I mentioned that in the previous meeting a lot of people talked about the 16th and it's very important that that district be maintained. It's one of two predominantly African American districts in the Bronx and it should certainly stay that way. So thank you very much for letting me speak for another minute.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be Ruben Dario Vargas, followed by Michael Johnson.

MR. RUBEN DARIO VARGAS: Good evening distinguished Members of the Commission. Good evening everyone. My name is Ruben Dario Vargas, I'm a member of United Democratic Organization. It's an institution that devote to encourage people participation in the electoral democratic process. Our statement, mission statement is we do politics, we make politicians. Our concern at this time, this occasion is the redistricting. As we know, it is because of the changing of the population that that has happened. We not
trying to, we not asking to be changed all of the districts, City Council Districts around the City, however, they have to be changed due to the census. And because of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the City Charter 5th District, the 6th, and as well we have to comply with the Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act which encourage us, require us when we interphase this district, I mean borough, county, especially New York County, Bronx County and Brooklyn, they have to comply with the requirement with the preclearance from the Department of Justice.

The proposed districts by the Commission, it's the United Democratic Organization belief and has thoroughly looked at it, read it and walked around the districts, especially those districts, District 10, 7 and the district interchanging with Manhattan -- with the Bronx. The district are in compliance with the law. The district also are compliant with cultural togetherness, the nest, and the people of common thinking of being grouped together in this district.

I, on behalf of United Democratic Organization, Ruben Dario Vargas, would like to
recognize the Commission and an extensive vote of recommendation for the job well done on the mapping this district. Thank you and we hope that this district -- we know that making this district compliant with pleasing everybody in the world is impossible and any matter with anything, but finally we support the current proposal of the district, Commission, New York City Commission on mapping of the district. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Thank you. Our next speaker will be Michael Johnson, to be followed by Nancy Negron.

MR. MICHAEL JOHNSON: Good evening. My name is Michael Johnson, I'm a resident of Mott Haven, I'm also a member of South Bronx Unite, an organization and coalition and I'm also a member of Community Board 1.

My organization, South Bronx Unite, has a great deal of -- we don't feel that this redistricting is fair. It does not, as it pertains to the 8th District, which has historically crossed boroughs and counties to reach into the Borough of the Bronx from Manhattan, it now seemingly, according to your
plan, is to stretch all the way up to Highbridge, where there is unique characteristics differences in our community and that of Highbridge.

You've also excluded Randall's Island which we worked for a decade, for at least ten years on creating what's considered a connector to Randall's Island from the Bronx. Randall's Island should not be taken away from District 8. It doesn't make sense that it's the closest location to the Bronx, it's always been in District 8. Why would it now be excluded from it seems purely arbitrary and to include such a very long -- well, according to your own Charter it states that the district should not be more than twice the length as the width of the district, and if you look at District 8's proposed new outline it's 120 blocks; from 59th Street in Manhattan to about 180th Street in the Bronx. That's really incredible to even think that should be proposed. It lends to the whole thought of what type of a person would have to run in that district and when would seemingly have to be part of some sort of a machine which would lessen the voice of the people in those districts and have less representation.

We are fighting now for representation. We have been -- our people and our community have been successful in fighting against things that we feel injustice in your community because of proper representation.

We do understand it should be maybe according to population growth, a little encroached and more into Mott Haven, Port Morris, maybe to 149th Street, but to branch off and go around Yankee Stadium then up to Highbridge seems to be by design and I don't understand whose design. So it's a question that I think we need to really look at carefully if we don't want to disenfranchise people in Mott Haven or East Harlem including Highbridge into that district.

I really hope you all reconsider this, think about it. We will also be putting these in writing and sending our own map in terms of what we see as being a true boundary in representing the people in our district. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be Nancy Negron, to be followed by Angel Monxo Lopez.

MS. NANCY NEGRON: Good evening everyone. My name is Nancy Negron, I live in 2824 Morris

Avenue which is currently located in the 15th Council District. I have been informed that this Commission has begun the process of remapping the City Council lines which would be effective in 2013.

I reside in the community that is directly affected by this. As a closer area, I regular shop and also my church is located, um, in that area, in this district. I'm asking that the area located east and 198th Street and Jerome Avenue be included in the 14th City Council District; specifically, the lines should extend up Goulden Avenue, right on Bedford Park, south of Jerome Avenue, left on 198th Street going towards Grand Concourse then south.

I believe in the vision and the leadership of the 14th District representative and I have asked that you add this block to the district. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Angel Monxo Lopez, to be followed by Shepel Castillo.

MR. ANGEL MONXO LOPEZ: So, I live my life in a bike so $I$ know much of the South Bronx pretty well and I make my living drawing maps. I'm a cartographer, a mapmaker, and that map that
you have is like a work of contemporary art that nowhere I've seen something so horrible and so irrational and so senseless. I don't know who draw it, but you know, it's like wow.

So the proposed change that you're presenting represents a radical politically motivated attack on my community. It's an attack on our traditions, our political history, to the fabric of our community. The South Bronx is one of the poorest regions in the whole country and we cannot suffer such a radical redistricting experiment just to indulge in the ambitions of some in power who dream of higher office.

If the current speaker, if the current speaker of the City Council feels insecure or politically threatened by the current Council Members, she should buy herself a dog or look for an appropriate way of dealing with her insecurities. A decade-long radical experiment is not the way to proceed.

The current draft map violates the spirit of the Charter of the City of New York and it doesn't protect a community of interest. Although you have alternatives, such as the unity map, the unity plan who has been supported by a
variety of grass roots organizations.
Finally, I also urge all of you to amend the process regarding the redistricting, okay. You must offer more opportunities and points for the public to participate. It was really difficult to get here. This is not your plan, these are not your districts and this is not your map. This is about our lives, so act accordingly. A bit of humility on your part would be much appreciated. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker will be Shepel Castillo, followed by Marybell Mendez.

MS. SHEPEL CASTILLO: Good evening. My name is Shepel Castillo and I live at 2788 Grand Concourse, which is located in the 15th Council District. I have never testified on an issue as this one. Although, I ask that the lines for the 14th Council District be extended out to East 198th Street and Jerome Avenue; specifically the lines should extend up Goulden Avenue, right on Bedford Park, south on Jerome Avenue, left on 198th Street going towards Grand Concourse then south.

My family and neighbors share a common interest which affects our neighborhood.

Therefore, $I$ rather be represented within the 14th Council District. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: Our next speaker is Marybell Mendez, to be followed by a final speaker, Bernette Richardson.

MS. MARYBELL MENDEZ: Hi, my name Marybell Mendez and I reside at 2767 Morris Avenue, which is located in the 15th Council District. This is my first time ever testifying before a Commission.

I ask that the Commission will consider redrawing the Council lines for the upcoming 2013 election to include Jerome Avenue and 198th Street, including the Grand Concourse be included in the 14th Council District; specifically the lines should extend up to Goulden Avenue, right on Bedford Park, south on Jerome Avenue, left on 198th Street going towards the Grand Concourse then south.

The reason why I ask for this is because our community shares a lot in common with the residents of the 14th Council District, for example, the Kingsbridge Armory which is right around the corner from where I live and would affect my life in the community tremendously, if
not decided by the 15th District Council Member, but by the 14th District Council Member.

I personally attend the church in the 14th District, shop in the 14th District and send my child to school in the 14th District. Therefore, it seems more natural that I should be represented by the Council Member who represents that area. Thank you.

MR. HACKWORTH: And our last registered speaker is Bernette Richardson.

MR. BERNEL RICHARDSON: The name is Bernel, B-E-R-N-E-L.

MR. HACKWORTH: Bernel Richardson.
MR. BERNEL RICHARDSON: Thank you. Let me begin, Members of the Commission, by first asking a question. I noticed on the announcement that there are public viewing of the maps in just about every borough except the Bronx. And I'm just wondering why?

Okay. Having not gotten an answer, I'm here to speak on behalf of the 16th Councilmanic District. We are concerned that the way that district has now been submitted, that we are seeing this evening, would make it totally impossible for an African American to get elected.

That district is the only African American representative district in the entire southern part of this borough. That district has been African American for as long as I've been involved in the political process. When you remove Concourse Village -- which we heard has been put back, but being cynical, until I see the map with Concourse Village back, I'm going to take the position that Concourse Village is not in. When you remove Concourse Village, when you remove half of the Highbridge community, you make it totally impossible for solid communities of interest to be represented.

Ladies and gentlemen, we will not, again I repeat, we will not tolerate that. We have come too far, we have fought too hard and we will not tolerate it. So I ask that when you go back, that you reconsider, that you consult more with the community and not only at these minutes and meetings that last for less than two hours and communities are not given enough time to consult the maps prior to testimony.

If for whatever reason the Commission do not exceed to our wishes, trust me, we will see you
in court. Thank you.
MR. HACKWORTH: There are no additional registered speakers.

MR. ROMANO: If there is anyone who would like to register now and address the Commission, please see the attendant at the back of the room. The staff will remain to take any written testimony from witnesses that arrived late. We know that the weather has been inclement and people may have difficulty getting here, so written testimony will be taken by the staff.

If there are no other witnesses who want to appear and give testimony, we will adjourn this meeting until Thursday for our next meeting in Manhattan. Thank you all for coming tonight.
(Whereupon, at 7:22 p.m., the above matter concluded.)

I, SOPHIA TORIBIO, a Notary Public for and within the State of New York, do hereby certify that the above is a correct transcription of my stenographic notes.


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