



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

New York City Council Committee on Waterfronts Oversight: Update on the Development of Governors Island

Testimony by Diana Switaj, Director of Planning and Land Use Manhattan Community Board 1

**Wednesday, October 14, 2015
Committee Room, City Hall, New York, NY
1:00 PM**

Good afternoon. My name is Diana Switaj and I represent Community Board 1 (CB1) in Lower Manhattan where I am Director of Planning and Land Use. Our district includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge. The district also includes Governors Island, Ellis Island, and Liberty Island.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the ongoing redevelopment of Governors Island.

CB1 applauds the successful planning effort by the Trust for Governors Island that has been underway since the decision was made in 2003 to transform Governors Island into a public resource. These efforts include plans to transform the Island into a vibrant, mixed-use destination which continue to the present with recent enhancements to the Island. We are particularly excited about the increased active recreation and ball field space on the Island, which are great resources in a district deprived of open space.

CB1 has been actively involved in the efforts by the Trust to bring to the Island an appropriate mix of non-profit and commercial uses. We have supported the efforts for adaptive reuse of existing buildings in the Governors Island Historic District that have been vacant and falling into disrepair for years. CB1 has reviewed and recommended approval of applications for expansion of the Harbor School into building 555, use of building 301 by Spaceworks, a non-profit organization for affordable artists' studios and recently, conversion of buildings 111, 112 and 114 for use by QC Terme for a Day Spa.

We found that appropriate mixed-use development of these buildings will promote the goals of the Special Governors Island District, complement existing uses within the special district, and be compatible with the nature, scale and character of other uses within the special district. CB1 has also considered and recommended approval of liquor licenses requested by restaurants to support increasingly active use of the Island.

CB1 is concerned about the need for a consistent FDNY presence on the island, specifically in the off season when the school is in session. This is important to make sure that the people on the island are safe, as well as the cultural resources of which there are many of historic significance.

In [May 2015](#), CB1 adopted a resolution in support of the Billion Oyster Project (BOP), acknowledging the critical importance of restoring live oysters to New York Harbor, and supporting BOP's efforts to partner with local schools and groups to ensure the success of the program.

In [June 2015](#), CB1 adopted a resolution calling for the elimination of helicopter tourism flights originating at the Downtown Heliport at Pier 6. CB1 continues to receive complaints regarding helicopters, which has been a contentious issue, especially since the consolidation of heliports to Pier 6 in 2010. We believe the flights significantly detract from the enjoyment of Governors Island and that is another compelling reason to limit them.

CB1 recently submitted [testimony](#) on the Draft Scope of Work for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Citywide Ferry Service (attached). The testimony requests that the impact of increased activity on noise and air quality be studied, and that new ferries be retrofitted using the best available technology and industry standards and use ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel. Further, CB1 requested that ferry standards be established including speed limits, or the requirement that new ferries meet minimal-wake standards, and that these new standards be enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard and the NYPD.

In September 2015, CB1 adopted its [FY2017 budget priorities](#), several of which pertain to Governors Island:

- #5: Provide funds to continue transformation of Governors Island. The current City capital budget for the Island focuses on the completion of the ambitious capital program begun in FY 2013 and the identification and purchase of a new ferry boat to expand transportation access to the Island. Upon completion of these projects, the Trust's priorities will shift to maintaining historic structures, open space and infrastructure (Capital - EDC).
- #13: Provide funds to continue maintenance of Governors Island. The current City expense budget includes funding for the expansion of public access to Governors Island. The Trust's priority is to maintain this budgeted level of funding to facilitate the budgeted levels of service to New Yorkers (Expense - EDC).
- #21: Earth Matter NY accepts and processes food waste as part of DSNY's NYC Compost Project. Allocate additional funding to Earth Matter for increased operations and programming on Governors Island (Expense - DSNY).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We hope that the City Council will schedule a hearing soon on helicopters and their impact, including on the waterfront in New York City so that we can focus attention on this important quality of life concern in our district.