



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

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New York City Council Committees on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment and Cultural Affairs

Oversight Hearing: Update on the Status of the 9/11 Museum

**Testimony by Catherine McVay Hughes, Chair
Manhattan Community Board 1**

**Wednesday, November 13, 2013
250 Broadway, 16th Floor Committee Room, NY
2:00 PM**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Margaret Chin and members of the Committee on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment and Cultural Affairs. Thank you for convening this important oversight hearing regarding the status of the 9/11 Museum.

Last week, we had the opportunity to meet with Lynn Rasic, Executive Vice President of External Affairs and Strategy, and Jim Connors, Executive Vice President of Operations of the 9/11 Memorial and Museum regarding the current status of the museum and the months leading up to its opening in Spring 2014. We were very pleased to learn of the continuing progress of both the 9/11 Museum and Memorial. It will be enormously significant for our community to finally have a completed proper, inspiring place for family members, survivors, and the nation to grieve and pay tribute to those who died on September 11, 2001.

As you well know, the World Trade Center (WTC) is at the epicenter of Manhattan Community Board One (CB1). Many of our members were deeply affected on that day, and we continue to live through the painstaking rebuilding process that has been underway at the heart of our community for over twelve years.

We have been encouraged by progress in preparation for the museum opening. We remain concerned about the expected influx of tour buses and whether our community is prepared to handle additional visitors, but we understand that the 9/11 Memorial and Museum staff has been making an effort to minimize the negative impact of tour buses and congestion by scheduling arrivals around the morning and afternoon rush hours, and by promoting use of public transportation. As we draw closer to the opening of the museum, we believe that every attempt must be made to have visitors utilize public transportation to access the Memorial and Museum rather than clog the narrow congested streets of downtown with more idling buses. Enforcement of rules prohibiting buses from idling and loading/unloading in unapproved areas rather than parking in assigned spots is already an issue, and without needed improvements in this area, it is likely that the problem will be compounded once the 9/11 Museum opens.

We understand that the Vehicular Security Center (VSC) will have 67 below-grade parking spots dedicated for tour buses (according to the WTC Campus Security Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement). We would like to know how the buses will be managed once the VSC is

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operational – specifically, where the buses will load/unload visitors. Also, how the buses will be managed when access to the memorial changes over time after the fencing comes down. More importantly, the city and state should encourage the use of mass transit rather than private tour bus companies. Visitors should utilize the PATH at the WTC site, the Fulton Center, and other modes of mass transit to visit the site. A universal MTA/PATH/ferry pass should be put in place with an online purchase component to encourage visitors to use mass transit even more – and to promote the new NYC Bike Share Program. For example, on the 9/11 Memorial website, the “Getting Here” section does not yet include information on NYC Bike Share, although it was implemented downtown in spring 2013.

We would like to know what measures have been taken to ensure the resiliency of the 9/11 Memorial and Museum site in consideration of possible extreme weather events in the future. The WTC site is included in Zone 1 of the New York City evacuation map, the most vulnerable zone. We must ensure that this important community asset is well protected.

Illegal street vending also continues to be an issue around the perimeter of the WTC site and outside the 9/11 preview site. There must be adequate enforcement now, when the fence around the memorial begins to come down, and when the museum opens and additional visitors will be passing through what is already a very crowded area to gain access to the museum.

Most importantly, we request that all necessary measures be taken in order to ensure that the fencing surrounding the perimeter of the memorial site be taken down in time for the opening of the museum, if not sooner. We understand that the ability to remove the fencing by Spring 2014 is dependent on the status of construction of the western interface of the Memorial along Route 9A by the NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the sidewalk by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) and completion of the sidewalk along the southern edge of the Memorial along Liberty Street. In addition, we recognize that the progress of construction will be affected by the weather during the upcoming winter. However, we request that the PANYNJ, the NYSDOT, and other involved agencies make every effort to ensure that construction remains on schedule in order to allow for the removal of the fencing by Spring 2014. The removal of the existing fencing will allow for a great increase of site capacity, eliminate the need for the queuing area at Greenwich and Albany, and allow for the free-flow of pedestrians through the site, reducing pedestrian congestion in the area.

The continued operation of the Lower Manhattan Construction Command Center (LMCCC) is crucial in this effort. The LMCCC will help ensure that projects remain on schedule and there is as little slippage as possible in meeting deadlines. We need your help now to extend it for several more years beyond its current sunset date of December 31, 2013.

For the first time, it is possible to envision the completion of this enormous project, which will have a major ripple effect on the surrounding residential and business community. We appreciate your efforts to ensure that the survivor community will be well represented in the 9/11 Museum, and that the upward of 5 million annual visitors to the 9/11 Memorial and Museum will be adequately managed without adverse impact to the area’s residents and workers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.