

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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COMMISSION MEETING

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OPEN SESSION

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THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2024

The meeting convened via Video Teleconference, at 1:00 p.m. EDT, Teri Hawks Goodmann, Chair, presiding.

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS
PRESENT:

TERI HAWKS GOODMANN, Chair
 Presidential Appointee (At-Large)
ELIZABETH HEWLETT, Vice Chair
 Presidential Appointee
LINDA ARGO, Mayoral Appointee
EVAN CASH, Office of the Chairman of the Council
 of the District of Columbia
ANITA COZART, Office of the Mayor of the
 District of Columbia
CHELSEA DAVIS, U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
 Security and Governmental Affairs
ARRINGTON DIXON, Mayoral Appointee
RYAN GIACHETTI, U.S. House of Representatives
 Committee on Oversight and Accountability
BRYAN CLARK GREEN, Presidential Appointee
LAUREN HASSETT, U.S. House of Representatives
 Committee on Oversight and Accountability
PAUL McMAHON, Department of Defense
TAMMY STIDHAM, Department of the Interior
KRISTI TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS, General Services
 Administration

NCPC STAFF PRESENT:

MARCEL C. ACOSTA, Executive Director
JULIA KOSTER, Secretary to the Commission
ANNE SCHUYLER, General Counsel
DIANE SULLIVAN, Director, Urban Design & Plan
Review Division
MATTHEW FLIS, Senior Urban Planner
STEPHANIE FREE, Urban Planner
JAMIE HERR, Urban Planner
STEVE MORGAN, Webmaster

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 1:01 p.m.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: Good afternoon and
4 welcome to the National Capital Planning
5 Commission's May 2nd, 2024, open session. First,
6 Ms. Koster, can you please take the roll?

7 COMMISSION ROLL CALL

8 MS. KOSTER: Certainly. Commissioner
9 Cozart?

10 COMMISSIONER COZART: Here.

11 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Commissioner
12 McMahon?

13 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Sorry, I'm
14 here.

15 MS. KOSTER: Okay, great.
16 Commissioner Stidham.

17 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Here.

18 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Commissioner
19 Argo?

20 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I'm here.

21 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Vice Chair
22 Hewlett?

1 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Here.

2 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Chair

3 Goodmann?

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: Here.

5 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Commissioner

6 Green, I believe, is out right now.

7 Commissioner Tunstall-Williams?

8 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Here.

9 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Commissioner

10 Dixon?

11 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Here.

12 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Commissioner

13 Cash?

14 COMMISSIONER CASH: Present.

15 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Commissioner

16 Davis?

17 COMMISSIONER DAVIS: Here.

18 MS. KOSTER: Thank you, and

19 Commissioner Hassett? I know we had Commissioner

20 Hassett on --

21 COMMISSIONER HASSETT: I'm here.

22 MS. KOSTER: Oh, great. Thank you.

1 I'll also note that Marcel Acosta, the
2 Executive Director, Anne Schuyler, General
3 Counsel, and Diane Sullivan with the Urban Design
4 and Plan Review Division are also in the meeting.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
6 Ms. Koster. Noting the presence of a quorum, I'd
7 like to call the meeting to order.

8 Today's meeting is being live-streamed
9 and will be available in a few days as a video on
10 NCPC's website. If there is no objection, the
11 agenda as posted is adopted as an order of
12 business.

13 And now we'd like to play a brief clip
14 of the Pledge of Allegiance. Please feel free to
15 join me.

16 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

17 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Chair Goodman, I
18 believe you are on mute.

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: My apologies. Thank
20 you very much. NCPC will continue to conduct its
21 meetings online until renovations on the
22 Commission Chambers are complete. I want to

1 share how we will be conducting the meeting and
2 business today.

3 And that is following staff
4 presentations and any other testimony, I will ask
5 for a motion and a second as appropriate. During
6 Commission deliberations, I will use the round
7 robin format to ask each Commissioner if they
8 have any comments. At other times, when
9 Commissioners wish to be recognized, they should
10 unmute and ask or raise your hand.

11 Agenda Item Number 2 is the Report of
12 the Chair.

13 REPORT OF THE CHAIR

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: And I first would
15 like to welcome Kristi Tunstall-Williams from the
16 General Services Administration. We said goodbye
17 at our last meeting to long-time Commissioner
18 Mina Wright who was a great asset to this group.
19 And I know, I'm confident that Commissioner
20 Tunstall-Williams will also bring a wealth of
21 information and good counsel to our Commission.

22 So welcome to the Commission,

1 Commissioner Tunstall-Williams.

2 Now I would like to ask Julia, Ms.
3 Koster, to please read a resolution regarding our
4 general counsel, Anne Schuyler.

5 MS. KOSTER: Thank you, it's my
6 pleasure. "Whereas, Anne Schuyler has served as
7 NCPC's General Counsel since 2010, bringing a
8 wealth of legal and planning experiences and
9 expertise from her prior work with the U.S. Air
10 Force, WMATA, the State Department, other public
11 agencies, and private practice.

12 "Whereas, she developed thoughtful,
13 detailed guidance on the agency's authorities and
14 various legislation, executive orders, and other
15 documents to ensure that the agency conducted its
16 business in an appropriate, legally sound manner.

17 "Whereas, Ms. Schuyler helped
18 Commissioners and staff understand their unique
19 roles and responsibilities, whether the finer
20 points of the Height of Buildings Act, laws
21 regarding overhead wires, or demystifying the
22 Capper-Cramton Act.

1 "Whereas, her reviews ensured that
2 NCPC's Comprehensive Plan policies were legally
3 appropriate and consistent with Congressional
4 legislation and executive orders, and further,
5 she advised the Commission and staff on proposed
6 legislation related to commemorative works and
7 interpreting and applying the Commemorative Works
8 Act.

9 "Whereas, in response to complex and
10 often controversial issues, Ms. Schuyler worked
11 hard to find approaches to advance NCPC's work
12 that met rigorous legal and ethical standards.
13 She tackled these through deep research, and a
14 willingness to ask tough questions, and provide
15 clear-eyed advice.

16 "Whereas, Ms. Schuyler was
17 instrumental in advancing the Pennsylvania Avenue
18 Initiative by interpreting legislation and
19 memoranda of agreements, and providing opinions
20 that resulted in the ability to fund the planning
21 work to prepare the new plan.

22 "Whereas, Ms. Schuyler updated NCPC's

1 NEPA regulations, a major undertaking, to support
2 effective, clear agency reviews.

3 "Whereas, she advised on contracts,
4 personnel issues, and other administrative
5 matters with thoroughness, discretion, and tact.

6 "Whereas, Ms. Schuyler provided
7 training and guidance for Commissioners and staff
8 on ethics related activities, and she also led
9 the agency's response to Freedom of Information
10 Act requests.

11 "Whereas, Ms. Schuyler was an
12 incredible teacher, always thoughtful, patient,
13 and willing to help in any way possible.

14 "Whereas, as a one-woman shop, Anne
15 was a valued part of the larger NCPC team.
16 Funny, enthusiastic, and kind, she advocated for
17 NCPC staff day in and day out.

18 "Therefore, be it resolved that on May
19 2nd, 2024, the Commission members and staff of
20 the National Capital Planning Commission
21 recognize Anne Schuyler for her years of
22 dedicated service as general counsel.

1 "And further, as a colleague and
2 advisor, you will be missed, Anne. We wish you
3 the best in your future endeavors and thank you
4 for your service to the National Capital Planning
5 Commission and the country."

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: Hear, hear. Thank
7 you so much, Ms. Koster.

8 And I just wanted to say, on behalf of
9 the Commission, that there is unanimous support
10 for this resolution. Anne, you've been
11 invaluable to me personally in my short tenure
12 here, but I know, and I've heard of your
13 reputation, and you're a legend in our
14 organization.

15 And we're just so grateful for all the
16 support you give to the Commission and staff. So
17 congratulations and best wishes to you as you
18 approach this next chapter in your life. We're
19 just so grateful.

20 And I know you'll have a moment to
21 speak after our next agenda item with the
22 Executive Director, and we're looking forward to

1 hearing you say a few words. Because you will be
2 very missed. Thank you.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: Agenda Item Number 3
4 is the report from Executive Director Mr. Acosta.

5 REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

6 MR. ACOSTA: Thank you, Chair
7 Goodmann, and good afternoon.

8 Also on behalf of the NCPC staff, I'd
9 also like to express our appreciation and best
10 wishes to General Counsel Anne Schuyler. During
11 her tenure at NCPC Anne has always provided
12 thoughtful and constructive legal services and
13 advice to both the Commission and the staff.

14 So we're very thankful for Anne's
15 service to the Commission and particularly her
16 generous mentorship to her colleagues over the
17 last decade. We do wish Anne all the best in her
18 well deserved retirement.

19 NCPC and the Smithsonian Institution
20 invite the public to attend a NEPA public scoping
21 meeting and onsite tour for the Hirshhorn Museum
22 Building and Plaza Revitalization project.

1 Public comments are due on May 31st. Further
2 details about meeting and tour are on our
3 website.

4 This concludes my report. You'll find
5 my full report in your packets, and I'm happy to
6 answer any questions that you might have.

7 CHAIR GOODMAN: Do Commissioners have
8 any questions or comments for Mr. Acosta, any
9 questions or comments?

10 Hearing none, I will move on to Agenda
11 Item Number 4. Thank you, Mr. Acosta.

12 And now we will have a legislative
13 update from Ms. Schuyler. Ms. Schuyler, you have
14 the floor.

15 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

16 MS. SCHUYLER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

17 I do not have a report. But if I may, could I
18 say a few words?

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Absolutely.

20 MS. SCHUYLER: Wow, thank you, thank
21 you so very much for that resolution. It's nice
22 to know that I was able to do my job and do it

1 well.

2 And I'm really grateful for the
3 ability to have served as the Commission's
4 general counsel for the past 14 years, for your
5 faith in me to help you do what you do so well
6 legally, and for the dedication of the
7 Commission, and each and every one of you as an
8 individual, to consistently do the right thing.

9 Going forward, please continue the
10 good fight. I in turn will be cheering you on
11 from the sidelines. Thank you.

12 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
13 Ms. Schuyler. Thank you. We are grateful for
14 your service, and we will look forward to hearing
15 from you in the future. And feel free to share
16 any free legal advice in the future if you have
17 that, please. Thank you, Anne.

18 MS. SCHUYLER: I might wind up in
19 prison, it's an Antideficiency.

20 (Laughter.)

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: That's all right, we
22 will miss your smiling face. Thank you.

1 MS. SCHUYLER: Thank you.

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: Agenda Item Number 5
3 is the consent agenda.

4 CONSENT AGENDA

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: There are seven items
6 on this month's consent agenda.

7 The first item is the Commission's
8 concurrence with the RFK Stadium National Park
9 Service/District of Columbia Agreement as
10 requested by the National Park Service.

11 Next is to approve preliminary site
12 and building plans with comments for the U.S.
13 National Arboretum Elevated Canopy Trail project.

14 Third is to approve preliminary site
15 and building plans for the U.S. Naval Observatory
16 Booths, Gates, Parking, submitted by the
17 Department of the Navy.

18 Next is to approve the final master
19 plan for the Pentagon Reservation Master Plan
20 Update, submitted by Washington Headquarters
21 Services Department of Defense.

22 The fifth is to approve comments to

1 the Mayor of the District of Columbia regarding
2 the D.C. Capital Improvement Plan for FY 2025 to
3 2030.

4 The next is to approve preliminary
5 site and building plans with comments for the
6 Leckie Education Campus addition as submitted by
7 the District of Columbia Department of General
8 Services.

9 And finally, we have approved a report
10 to the Zoning Commission of the District of
11 Columbia regarding a Planned Unit Development
12 Modification of Significance at Square 1299
13 located at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and
14 Whitehaven Street, NW.

15 Are there any questions or discussion
16 on the consent calendar, any questions or
17 discussion?

18 Hearing none, is there a motion to --

19 (Simultaneous speaking.)

20 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Madam Chair?

21 COMMISSIONER DIXON: So moved.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Thank you.

1 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Madam Chair, I
2 second the motion to approve Items 5A through 5G.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.
4 There's been a motion and a second. Ms. Koster,
5 could you confirm the motion, please, and the
6 second, and take a vote of the Commission?

7 MS. KOSTER: Certainly. The motion
8 was made by Commissioner Dixon and seconded by
9 Vice Chair Hewlett. With that, Commissioner
10 Cozart?

11 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

12 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner McMahon?

13 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Yes

14 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Stidham?

15 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

16 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Commissioner
17 Argo?

18 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

19 MS. KOSTER: Vice Chair Hewlett? Vice
20 Chair Hewlett? I'll come on back.

21 Chair Goodman?

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes.

1 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Sorry.

2 MS. KOSTER: Was that a yes?

3 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Yes.

4 MS. KOSTER: All right. Commissioner
5 Tunstall-Williams?

6 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yes.

7 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Dixon?

8 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

9 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Cash?

10 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

11 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Davis?

12 COMMISSIONER DAVIS: Yes.

13 MS. KOSTER: And Commissioner Hasset?

14 COMMISSIONER HASSETT: Yes.

15 MS. KOSTER: Thank you.

16 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, the motion
17 clearly passes. Thank you very much, Ms. Koster.

18 Next we have a very busy agenda, as
19 many of you know, and several items on the open
20 session where we have multiple people signed up
21 to testify.

22 So Agenda Item 6A is a request to

1 approve preliminary and final site and building
2 plans for the Rock Creek Park Golf Course
3 rehabilitation. Ms. Herr will be making a
4 presentation today.

5 Ms. Herr?

6 MS. HERR: Yes. Can you see my screen?

7 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes.

8 MS. HERR: Wonderful. Good afternoon,
9 Madam Chair and members of the Commission. The
10 National Park Service has submitted, for your
11 review and approval, the preliminary and final
12 site and building plans for the Rock Creek Park
13 Golf Course rehabilitation at 6100 16th Street
14 NW, in Washington, D.C. The golf course is
15 located in Rock Creek Park west of 16th Street
16 and north of Military Road.

17 The Commission's final review focuses
18 on if the Applicant addressed the comments and
19 recommendations made during prior reviews and if
20 there are any outstanding issues, specifically
21 of the landscape plan, storm water management,
22 lighting, site circulation and parking, NEPA and

1 National Historic Preservation Act, open spaces
2 and overall design, and finalized in compliance
3 with applicable requirements.

4 Overall, the Applicant has worked
5 diligently with NCPC staff to address the
6 Commission's previous comments. And staff
7 recommends approval of the preliminary and final
8 site and building plans. In the following
9 slides, I'll provide a brief overview of the
10 existing site and analysis of the updates made
11 following the previous review.

12 The National Park Service is
13 responsible for three historic public golf
14 courses in the District. NPS has signed a 50-
15 year agreement with the National Links Trust to
16 rehabilitate the three courses.

17 National Links Trust is a 501(c)(3)
18 nonprofit dedicated to protecting and promoting
19 accessible, affordable, and engaging public golf
20 courses to positively impact local communities
21 across the United States.

22 The Rock Creek Golf Course will be the

1 first course to be renovated as it is in the
2 worst condition. The proposed design intends to
3 address the following project goals,
4 sustainability and historic preservation, revival
5 of an exemplary golf course, architectural and
6 environmental sustainability, growth in golf
7 participation via non-traditional golf options,
8 an expanded community, non-golf infrastructure
9 and non-golf programming.

10 The Rock Creek Golf Course is
11 currently listed in the National Register of
12 Historic Places as a contributing resource to the
13 Rock Creek Park Historic District. The site is
14 approximately 100 acres and includes an 18-hole,
15 parkland style golf course primarily designed by
16 golf course architect William S. Flynn.

17 The purpose of the project is to
18 develop a strategy to address deferred
19 maintenance, increase playability, broaden course
20 appeal to the local community, and achieve
21 financial stability for the operation of the golf
22 course.

1 Since the project is located within an
2 underserved community, the goal to increase
3 access to golf by more diverse populations aligns
4 with NCPG's draft equity guidance.

5 The draft of the introductory chapter
6 of the comprehensive plan guides federal agencies
7 to affirm the importance of local cultural
8 identity and diversity and to recognize the role
9 that cultural recognition plays in supporting
10 community enrichment.

11 As mentioned, the course was designed
12 by renowned course designer William Flynn between
13 1921 and 1927. It included two nine-hole courses
14 that could be combined into an 18-hole course,
15 the front nine, circled in blue, and the back
16 nine, circled in orange.

17 William S. Flynn created a layout that
18 highlighted the typography and incorporated
19 stands of mature trees. An existing 19th century
20 farm house was originally renovated for use as a
21 clubhouse but was eventually replaced in 1964.

22 The current golf course was modified

1 in the 1950s for the redesign of Military Road
2 and impacted the southern portion of the course.

3 The current clubhouse was built in 1964. It has
4 limited facilities, and is not accessible to
5 people with disabilities.

6 The course only has 14 active holes as
7 four holes, shown here in blue, are not in
8 service, because over time vegetation has
9 encroached on the fairways, and greens, tees,
10 making these holes unplayable. The main entry to
11 the course is from 16th Street NW and winds past
12 a maintenance building and parking area to the
13 clubhouse.

14 As noted, the current course suffers
15 from deferred maintenance that has impacted golf
16 course facilities as well as the playability of
17 the course. Woody vegetation encroaches on the
18 fairways, green, and tees.

19 Regardless of the proposed design,
20 however, tree removal would be necessary to make
21 the course playable and healthy. In addition,
22 over the years vegetation was planted in some

1 areas without following any distinct golf course
2 design guidance.

3 In other instances, invasive
4 vegetation, especially vines, has covered
5 original stands of trees which obscure views into
6 forested areas as pictured here. The course also
7 suffers from poor turf conditions caused by
8 traffic patterns, poor cart paths, poor drainage,
9 tree root competition, poor irrigation system,
10 and shade from encroaching trees.

11 The existing 1964 clubhouse is listed
12 as a contributing resource within the Rock Creek
13 Park Historic District. However, after
14 evaluation, it was determined that the building
15 could not be reused due to its small size and
16 lack of accessibility. The extensive use of
17 masonry interior partitions would also make
18 reconfiguration difficult.

19 As such, the demolition and
20 replacement of the clubhouse with the new
21 facility are proposed to meet the needs of
22 National Links Trust Golf Course patrons and the

1 community.

2 At the concept review in January of
3 2023, the Commission supported the proposed golf
4 course design and new clubhouse and provided
5 comments related to tree preservation, trail
6 connection improvements, the lighting approach,
7 inclusion of bicycle facilities, and reduction of
8 parking, fertilizer, and pesticides.

9 Since that time, the Applicant has
10 done extensive work through the NEPA process and
11 revised the plan for final review. The design
12 has not changed significantly since the concept
13 review. To achieve the goals of the project, the
14 Applicant proposes to configure the golf course
15 layout and add new amenities.

16 The new design will include a nine-
17 hole regulation course and a nine-hole par 3
18 course. Par 3 courses are shorter and less
19 difficult which will appeal to a broader range of
20 golfers. The plan also includes a new and
21 expanded clubhouse with an attached two-story
22 driving range.

1 The proposed changes start at the
2 entrance. A new maintenance facility is proposed
3 at Number 1, off to the side of the main drive
4 instead of a primary visual location. The main
5 drive winds past a parking lot, noted here as
6 Number 2. That has been reduced in size since
7 the concept plan and includes a new community
8 pavilion.

9 The proposed driving range, noted as
10 Number 3, takes advantage of the existing
11 topography and connects the new clubhouse to the
12 new cart barn. The new course design includes a
13 nine-hole regulation course, circled in blue, and
14 a shorter par 3 course, circled in orange.

15 The shorter par 3 course takes up less
16 space, allowing the northern portion of the site
17 to remain for a large pollinator meadow and a
18 multi-use trail open to the public.

19 One of the concerns raised by the
20 Commission, staff, and the public during the
21 concept review and the EA process was tree
22 removal. The Applicant surveyed over 2,500 trees

1 on the cite. The tree removal details included
2 in the draft EA stated that approximately 1,200
3 trees were slated for removal with a majority of
4 those being dead or invasive.

5 The Applicant acknowledged the
6 feedback regarding tree removal and did
7 additional work, described in the final EA and
8 the submission, to refine the amount of impacted
9 trees and the process by which trees are
10 evaluated for removal.

11 The five tree stands shown here in the
12 different colors are in varying health conditions
13 and have a substantial amount of non-native and
14 invasive growth in the understory. The average
15 understory of the stands is made up of
16 approximately 40 percent non-native and invasive
17 plant material which is inhibiting the growth of
18 the next generation of healthy native trees.

19 The Applicant received several
20 comments that they were in violation of the
21 District's Heritage tree preservation law. It is
22 important to note that this law is not applicable

1 to federal land. The site is governed by the
2 Federal Elements of the comprehensive plan's tree
3 preservation and replacement policy.

4 This policy states that trees 31.85
5 inches in diameter, or 100 inches in
6 circumference or greater, may not be removed
7 unless removal is critical to accomplishing the
8 mission of the agency and planning design
9 alternatives that would preserve such trees have
10 been explored and determined incapable of
11 accommodating program requirements. Or the trees
12 are considered invasive, hazardous, or high risk
13 for a arborist's evaluation.

14 The proposed design requires selective
15 removal of specific areas of trees and focused
16 removal of non-native and invasive plant species,
17 encroaching successional forest noted here in
18 pink. After thorough review and consideration
19 during the development of the final EA, the
20 Applicant determined that they needed to remove
21 1,139 trees for the rehabilitated course layout.

22 This removal is necessary for the

1 safety of visitors, for healthy growing
2 conditions for the surrounding vegetation, for
3 the health of the rehabilitated course, and to
4 accommodate relocation of the maintenance
5 facility.

6 Of these trees, 51 percent are unsafe,
7 in poor condition, or dead, or are non-native or
8 invasive species. Thirty-five percent, or 395
9 trees, are native, healthy trees. And the
10 remaining 14 percent will be removed to allow for
11 sustainable turf growing conditions, increased
12 sunlight, and air circulation.

13 This tree removal will be selective,
14 focusing on tree condition, non-native and
15 invasive species, and sustainable tree
16 management. Before identifying a tree for
17 removal, consideration will be given to pruning,
18 elevation of lower limbs, opening crowns, and
19 other measures that could achieve the same goals
20 as removal. Certain trees that contribute to the
21 historic integrity of the course will be
22 maintained.

1 To mitigate the removal of the 395
2 healthy native trees needed to rehabilitate the
3 course as required by the tree replacement
4 policy, the Applicant initially was planning to
5 plant at least 200 trees, including Eastern
6 redbud, dogwood, American holly, Eastern red
7 cedar, several native oak species, and sassafras.
8 This number was limited given the level of design
9 information during the EA process.

10 As the design process progressed, the
11 Applicant and their partner, National Links
12 Trust, in coordination with other partners,
13 transitioned to acreage of tree canopy as a
14 better representation of replacement.

15 The total tree canopy removal of 6.2
16 acres will be replaced by 7.1 acres of tree
17 canopy in accordance with the Federal Elements of
18 the Comprehensive Plan tree preservation
19 replacement policy which allows for tree
20 replacement by acre of canopy.

21 The existing tree canopy is shown on
22 the left, the proposed final tree canopy is shown

1 on the right. The proposed removal, 6.2 acres,
2 amounts to less than half a percent of the Park's
3 approximately 1,420 acres of forested canopy.
4 And the replacement will increase the canopy at
5 maturity, and will be healthier and more
6 sustainable in the long run.

7 The Applicant will continue to refine
8 the design and identify other areas for
9 additional tree plantings to ensure the tree
10 replacement complies with the tree preservation
11 and replacement policy.

12 While implementation of the selected
13 alternative requires the removal of trees,
14 approximately seven acres of trees clustered in
15 the northern portion of this course will remain
16 intact. And the contiguous forest that currently
17 surrounds the golf course will also remain.

18 The Applicant has demonstrated a
19 thorough process for evaluating which trees will
20 be removed as part of the project. And staff is
21 confident it will comply with the tree
22 preservation and replacement policy.

1 But additional information may be
2 necessary as the project moves through
3 construction to ensure compliance. And staff
4 recommends the Commission requires the National
5 Park Service to return to the Commission prior
6 to Phase 2 construction in 2025 when more
7 informed planting decisions can be made with a
8 briefing on the tree replacement strategy.

9 Landscape plantings will integrate
10 pollinator and native plant species compatible
11 with the historic William Flynn design to create
12 the diversity of landscapes throughout the golf
13 course. The largest pollinator meadow at the
14 northern end is indicated in magenta. The other
15 meadows and riparian improvements are scattered
16 throughout the site. The total is over 11 acres
17 of meadows and grasses.

18 The proposed action includes an
19 ecological trail through the golf course for non-
20 golfers to experience the site on foot,
21 separately from the cart path. This pedestrian
22 trail would be an approximately one-mile loop

1 trail with the trailhead at the clubhouse and
2 offering the loop to the north and west.

3 While some portions of the trail will
4 be relatively steep, the slopes of greater than
5 one to 20 to follow the course's rolling
6 topography, all materials for paved paths would
7 be compliant with the Architectural Barriers Act
8 accessibility standards.

9 The proposed planting design focuses
10 on scenic views into the site coming from 16th
11 Street by utilizing a mix of low-growing
12 perennials and grasses while framing views with
13 native canopy and understory trees.

14 The planting design then builds on the
15 sense of enclosure and protection from the
16 elements as patrons progress up Joyce Road toward
17 the future clubhouse. This is created through an
18 addition of canopy trees, evergreens, shrubs,
19 perennials, and grasses.

20 The planting strategy at this location
21 also provides naturalistic screening from the
22 maintenance building and yard. As patrons

1 progress up the hill, they will experience the
2 grand opening to views across the landscape. The
3 landscape design complies with the NCPC
4 pollinator best practice guide.

5 The planting around the clubhouse and
6 parking lot will build on the collection of
7 existing canopy trees to remain with the proposed
8 palette of canopy trees and more refined lower
9 perennials, grass, and shrub zones that provide
10 long views across the site from the clubhouse,
11 driving range, and cart barn.

12 The planting plan celebrates the
13 agricultural history of the site with the
14 introduction of meadows in the high rough
15 through the course, pollinator planting zones,
16 natural riparian areas, and refined native
17 planting zones directly around the clubhouse,
18 driving range, and cart barn.

19 The historic Allée Road will be
20 acknowledged with the proposal of cedars on the
21 west side to bring back the double row of cedars
22 along both sides of the road.

1 The proposed clubhouse will be located
2 near the existing clubhouse which will be
3 demolished. The Applicant proposes to replace it
4 with a new 10,400 square foot fully accessible
5 two-level clubhouse offering a food and beverage
6 operation, rest rooms, community room, indoor
7 golf training, pro shop, and support areas.

8 In addition, the clubhouse will house
9 classrooms, program spaces, and the
10 administrative headquarters of First Tee of
11 Greater Washington, a golf-based youth
12 development organization.

13 The building would be oriented to
14 enhance and emphasize the panoramic views from
15 the clubhouse to the golf course, sited to
16 preserve the mature trees that surround the
17 existing clubhouse and nestled into existing
18 topography of the site.

19 From the main approach in the south,
20 the clubhouse appears as a one-story structure.
21 Aesthetically, the goal is to create contemporary
22 design which is compatible with the historic

1 context of Rock Creek Park.

2 The massing of the building draws from
3 traditional forms and the building features
4 extensive use of natural stone, wood timber,
5 horizontal siding, and slate shingles that
6 combine with large expanses of glass, steel, and
7 other elements.

8 A two-tiered driving range structure
9 will extend west from the main clubhouse
10 building. The range itself will sit within an
11 existing basin that is already cleared of trees,
12 so little to no tree removal occurs with the
13 construction of the range.

14 And the natural topography, combined
15 with the relatively transparent nature of the
16 structure itself, minimizes its visual impact on
17 the landscape. The Applicant is also proposing
18 photovoltaic panels on the roof of the driving
19 range.

20 The range terminates on its west end
21 with another two-story structure, the cart barn,
22 created similarly to the clubhouse to present as

1 a one-story structure around most of the
2 perimeter.

3 The main floor includes an indoor
4 putting green, community and events space,
5 restrooms in support areas, in addition to a
6 covered open-air porch and hitting base. The
7 ground floor includes storage for golf carts, the
8 range picker cart, general storage, restrooms,
9 and open area and bays.

10 The Applicant is also proposing a new
11 maintenance facility that is out of view compared
12 to the original and designed to blend into the
13 surrounding trees. In addition, a new community
14 pavilion is proposed south of the parking area as
15 an amenity for the public.

16 Lighting will be timed appropriately
17 so that areas are only lit when open for
18 operation and when necessary for safety. When
19 the course is closed, all golf course lighting
20 will be off.

21 While hours of operation for the
22 rehabilitated course have not been set, the team

1 anticipates the course closing by 10:00 p.m.,
2 subject to ongoing coordination with the National
3 Park Service.

4 Exterior facility lighting will be
5 limited to the clubhouse, including driving range
6 bays and cart storage, maintenance, and parking
7 light areas. Driving range lighting is minimized
8 50 yards to allow the ball-tracing technology to
9 function.

10 This technology allows driving range
11 users to see the trajectory of their drive using
12 a digital interface which requires a minimum of
13 50 yards of light to track the ball. Beyond this
14 distance, little to no lighting would be used,
15 unlike a typical driving range. If a ball is hit
16 beyond this distance into unlit space at night,
17 the screen at each hitting bay displays the
18 ball's trajectory.

19 Lighting consists of a combination of
20 berm, pole-mounted, and roof-mounted lighting.
21 All lighting will be timed appropriately so that
22 areas are only lit at times when it is necessary

1 for functionality of the course.

2 Fixtures are dark sky-approved, and
3 the lighting plan considers Institution of
4 Lighting Professionals' guidance for reduction of
5 obtrusive light, for bats, and artificial
6 lighting.

7 Some specific mitigation measures
8 incorporated include use of a color range to
9 reduce sky glow and be less disruptive to bats
10 using the area, use of berm mounted lighting, use
11 of individual reflectors internally on every LED
12 and each module to reduce light spill, and
13 tightly control where light is put in the
14 environment, and use of an additional visor to
15 help shield the face of the thing from view to
16 help further control light.

17 The new clubhouse, driving range, golf
18 course, storage facility outlined in blue, patios
19 and parking lot, will introduce increased
20 impervious area to the site. These improvements
21 require the addition of stormwater management.

22 The golf course itself does not

1 require stormwater management, as it will
2 continue to be maintained as a golf course,
3 meadow, or woodlands.

4 The Applicant is proposing a series of
5 micro-bioretenion bio-swales, noted by the
6 orange arrows, and a modest system of storm
7 drains to divert and treat storm water. And
8 we'll continue to coordinate with the District
9 Department of Energy and Environment on their
10 stormwater management program.

11 The following slides show rendered
12 images of the proposed clubhouse and driving
13 range. The picture on the left is a rendered
14 view looking southwest from the top of the
15 driving range. The view on the right is looking
16 northeast from the 9th hole green.

17 This rendered view shows the new main
18 entry to the new clubhouse facility. This
19 rendered view shows the two-story driving range
20 and cart barn. This rendered view shows the
21 putting green and clubhouse.

22 In summary, as noted here, Rock Creek

1 Park is over 1,700 acres, spanning Washington,
2 D.C. and Maryland. It offers both a natural
3 respite in the middle of the city and plenty of
4 recreational activities, including a large tennis
5 center, miles of biking and hiking, and several
6 cultural sites like Pierce Mill.

7 The Rock Creek Golf Course has existed
8 in Rock Creek for nearly 100 years. The course
9 is a historic cultural landscape that is in the
10 worst condition of the three District National
11 Park Service courses due to deferred maintenance.

12 Large parts of the course are unplayable because
13 of overgrowth.

14 The National Park Service has
15 committed to replacing over six acres of trees
16 that need to be removed to restore the course to
17 a playable condition with 7.1 acres of tree
18 canopy. NPS has completed a detailed inventory
19 of tree removal and will come back to NCPC in
20 2025 with more specificity regarding the new 7.1
21 acres of tree canopy once they have more
22 information.

1 As stewards of national parks all over
2 the country, the National Park Service preserves
3 the natural and cultural resources and values of
4 the national park system for the enjoyment,
5 education, and inspiration of this and future
6 generations.

7 The National Park Service cooperates
8 with partners to extend the benefits of natural
9 cultural resource conservation and outdoor
10 recreation throughout the country and the world.

11 This design will provide an important
12 community amenity managed by the National Links
13 Trust who is dedicated to protecting and
14 promoting accessible, affordable, and engaging
15 public golf courses to positively impact local
16 communities across the United States. As such,
17 staff recommends the Commission approve the
18 preliminary and final set of building plans.

19 This concludes my presentation. I
20 have listed the executive director's
21 recommendations here for your reference.

22 Brian Joyner, Acting Superintendent of

1 Rock Creek Park, National Park Service, would
2 like to say a few words, followed by Damian Cosby
3 with the National Links Trust, and Mike
4 Stachowicz from the National Park Service.

5 Myself, along with other members of
6 the Applicant team, are also available to answer
7 your questions. Thank you.

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Ms. Herr.
9 Superintendent Joyner, did you have something to
10 say, to add?

11 MR. JOYNER: Absolutely, good
12 afternoon, members of the Commission and staff,
13 esteemed members of the public and featured
14 guests, thank you for joining us this afternoon
15 at today's open session.

16 As the acting superintendent of Rock
17 Creek Park, I am excited to share this project
18 with you. Rock Creek Park Golf Course holds a
19 special place in history, listed in the National
20 Register of Historic Places as one of the
21 nation's oldest and continuously used public golf
22 courses.

1 Thanks to the dedicated investment,
2 unwavering commitment, and meticulous
3 rehabilitation efforts by the National Links
4 Trust, this 100-year-old cultural landscape can
5 be restored to its former glory, as designed by
6 renowned golf course architect William Flynn, as
7 a parkland-style golf course.

8 The restoration would not only benefit
9 golf enthusiasts, but it also provides updated
10 facilities for non-golfers. Enhanced walking
11 trails, and a stronger focus on environmental
12 sustainability, addressing the course's
13 maintenance backlog, enhancing playability,
14 environmental sustainability, accessibility, and
15 affordability for everyone, is at the core of
16 this project.

17 Rock Creek Golf Course stands as a
18 testament to our shared public heritage,
19 portraying the intricate relationship between
20 humanity and the natural world across time.

21 Guided by the invaluable insights of
22 the National Park Service 2019 Cultural Landscape

1 Report, our project team, composed of
2 historians, landscape architects, biologists, and
3 more, carefully crafted a vision that respects
4 the site's rich history, natural resources, and
5 the community.

6 It's essential to note that your
7 voices have been heard. An interdisciplinary
8 team diligently reviewed and incorporated the
9 feedback received in the public comment period,
10 shaping the project's evolution.

11 Today's presentation will showcase how
12 your invaluable input has shaped this
13 rehabilitation project. We listened, we acted,
14 and we hope you will witness the fruits of our
15 collective efforts in this presentation.

16 Thank you again for your support and
17 important contributions. Together we'll preserve
18 the history in creating a brighter future for
19 Rock Creek Park Golf Course and the community.

20 And with me today is our partner,
21 Damian Cosby, from National Links Trust, who will
22 speak for a few minutes, followed by Michael

1 Stachowicz, Acting Chief of Commercial Services
2 and the project manager for the golf course
3 leases. Thank you.

4 MR. COSBY: Good afternoon, everyone.

5 My name is Damian Cosby. I am the executive
6 director for National Links Trust. I am
7 originally from the Washington, D.C. area, and
8 I've worked in public golf the majority of my
9 career as a PGA golf professional.

10 I have a personal strong passion for
11 municipal golf, because I see it as an onramp to
12 the game and as a vehicle to change lives.

13 Go to the next slide.

14 Before I discuss some specific
15 elements of the project, I wanted to provide
16 everyone with a brief snapshot of our
17 organization. National Links Trust is a non-
18 profit organization whose mission is to
19 positively impact our community and change lives
20 through affordable, accessible, and engaging
21 municipal golf.

22 We operate Washington D.C.'s free

1 public golf courses, Rock Creek, Langston, and
2 East Potomac, for a 50-year lease with the
3 National Parks Service.

4 We intentionally established National
5 Links Trust as a non-profit so that every dollar
6 spent at the facility is reinvested to the
7 courses, either through paying our hundreds of
8 course employees, short-term course improvement
9 projects, community programming, or long term
10 capital projects like we're discussing here about
11 Rock Creek.

12 Just to be clear, not one dollar spent
13 at our golf courses is used to fund NLT
14 operations, our overhead, and that includes NLT
15 staff salaries.

16 Along with the Parks Service we've
17 embarked on this ambitious campaign at Rock
18 Creek, and later at Langston in East Potomac, to
19 invest in the rehabilitation of these courses and
20 thus put our mission into action.

21 With this investment, we will increase
22 the ability to positively impact the community

1 and change lives through golf by expanding the
2 reach of our programming and provide better
3 access to quality affordable recreation and green
4 space.

5 Next slide, please. Some of you in
6 the audience may be wondering why are NLT and the
7 Park Service deciding to do this project now, so
8 I wanted to provide some clarity.

9 Currently Rock Creek Park Golf is in
10 dire need of attention. Its facilities are
11 inadequate and lag far behind those of the other
12 two courses in the city. The clubhouse is not
13 ADA accessible and does not have food and
14 beverage infrastructure. The golf course suffers
15 from extremely poor conditions and a lack of
16 forest management over many decades.

17 These factors have led to severe
18 under-utilization of the property. And simply
19 put, Rock Creek sees the fewest number of
20 visitors at our facilities by far and thus does
21 not generate a budget that supports community
22 programing and environmental stewardship

1 initiatives.

2 According to the National Golf
3 Foundation, and our numbers in East Potomac in
4 Langston, golf is booming in popularity with more
5 people of color and more women taking up the game
6 every day.

7 Rock Creek's location in the city and
8 ease of access through public transportation
9 makes it an incredible vehicle to reach those
10 historically left behind by the industry and to
11 provide the community with the numerous proven
12 mental and physical health benefits associated
13 with playing the game of golf.

14 Next slide, please. With this
15 tremendous opportunity in front of us to make the
16 facility more accessible for all, we need to
17 build a business that will be financially
18 sustainable.

19 The improved facilities will increase
20 Rock Creek's appeal to golfers and non-golfers in
21 the community. The rehabilitated course will be
22 playable and engaging for golfers of all skill

1 levels. The driving range and putting course can
2 introduce new golfers to the game.

3 For those that don't play golf, there
4 will be walking and hiking trails, a picnic
5 pavilion, a restaurant to enjoy, and all in a
6 unique park setting within the city.

7 The increased revenue at the facility
8 will be reinvested into its operations, community
9 programming, and for future projects at the other
10 two facilities. Just as one example, our current
11 operations support less than two full time
12 employees to maintain the golf course and the
13 surrounding property.

14 Following this project we will be able
15 to employ at least ten who will tend to this --
16 ten employees who will tend to this important
17 work. NLT will also be able to expand our
18 community programs which I will detail in the
19 next slide.

20 Next slide, please. Thank you.

21 At our core, National Links Trust is a
22 community driven organization that believes in

1 affordable and accessible golf. Our investment
2 into Rock Creek is driven by this core belief.
3 We will maintain affordability and increase
4 accessibility to golf and other passive
5 recreation on the site.

6 To better serve our community as a
7 whole, we will increase the usage of the facility
8 by non-golfers through adding free recreational
9 options like walking and hiking trails, the
10 putting course, and the picnic pavilion.

11 We will also provide environmental
12 education programs, both independently and in
13 partnership with local schools, taking advantage
14 of the facility's easy access and wide variety of
15 native areas, including a properly managed
16 forest with new pollinator meadows.

17 From a golf course perspective, the
18 addition of a driving range and course facilities
19 will allow for expanded free clinics for kids and
20 adults of all backgrounds.

21 One program I would like to
22 specifically highlight is our Jack Vardaman

1 Workforce Development Program. This program
2 provides kids and teens from the community with
3 job and life skills as well as a pathway to full
4 college scholarships through the Western Golf
5 Association Evans Scholars program.

6 This past year, the program produced
7 our first Evans scholar, a young woman who will
8 be the first in her family to attend college.
9 This was made possible through her participation
10 in the Vardaman program.

11 The increased activity and offerings
12 at the facility will allow us to create a
13 Vardaman program cohort at Rock Creek, thus
14 increasing access to life changing opportunities
15 in scholarships.

16 While we are proud of this work, we're
17 also proud to partner with world class
18 organizations who share our belief that golf can
19 change lives. We've partnered with the First Tee
20 of Greater Washington, D.C. on this project.

21 First Tee of Greater Washington, D.C.
22 is a youth development organization that uses

1 golf to help kids build character and tackle
2 challenges throughout their lives. They're in
3 their 25th year of programming, and they annually
4 work with over approximately 2,000 kids from the
5 community.

6 They will have a dedicated
7 headquarters space in the clubhouse at Rock Creek
8 and will have increased capacity for programming.

9 According to their executive director, this
10 project will triple the number of kids who can
11 participate in their programs at the facility.

12 We also plan to expand our partnership
13 with Fairways to Leadership, an organization that
14 uses golf to teach leadership skills to diverse
15 college students. Currently we've partnered with
16 them for programming at Langston, and the
17 addition of a new facility will help further
18 their work.

19 Next slide, please. One back, yes,
20 thank you. Equally as important to our community
21 programming is our commitment to environmental
22 stewardship at Rock Creek. Again, these efforts

1 will be made possible by the increased financial
2 viability of the facility.

3 We are committed to rehabilitating
4 this historic property in an environmentally
5 sustainable way, including through introduction
6 of pollinators, native meadows, riparian buffer,
7 and modern turf grasses which need less inputs
8 such as water.

9 The project sets the facility up to be
10 a sustainable economically and environmentally
11 and improve the business to be able to support
12 significant work required to maintain the golf
13 course, meadows, and forest over the life of our
14 lease.

15 Part of our mission is to be a
16 positive force in the community, and being a good
17 steward of the land is an integral part. It is
18 our goal to make the facility a model of
19 sustainable golf and an example for other
20 facilities around the world.

21 We are excited to partner with the
22 National Parks Service and any other organization

1 that wants to be part of the solution to
2 accomplish this goal.

3 Next slide. With that, I would like
4 to thank the Commissioners, and those who have
5 tuned in, and the many people who have submitted
6 comments both for and against this project. We
7 are always willing to listen and learn to the
8 community.

9 To help everyone better understand our
10 project and the work, we've included a QR code on
11 the screen that leads to a web page that contains
12 more details about the project. We've recently
13 added a frequently asked questions section to our
14 website that we think will be helpful as we
15 continue to navigate this process.

16 Thank everyone so much, appreciate it.

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
18 Mr. Cosby. And I believe, is Mr. Stachowicz
19 going to be speaking at this time?

20 MR. STACHOWICZ: Yes.

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

22 MR. STACHOWICZ: Hi, everybody. My

1 name is Michael Stachowicz. I am the National
2 Park Service Golf Course lease manager.

3 Previous to this post, I was a project
4 manager for the National Mall's turf project and
5 also, more recently, the program lead for
6 landscape preservation training and maintenance
7 in the northeast region.

8 I came back to D.C. specifically for
9 this project, because I believe in its potential
10 to showcase the highest level of stewardship made
11 possible through the support a non-profit in a
12 sustainable golf revenue model.

13 Next slide, please. I wanted to share
14 a little bit about our process for developing
15 the plan and the environmental assessment. As
16 part of the NEPA process, and to comply with the
17 requirements of Section 106 of the National
18 Historic Preservation Act, the NPS involved the
19 public in project scoping by holding a 30-day
20 public comment period from January 9th, 2023, to
21 February 8th, 2023. A virtual public scoping
22 meeting was held on January 26th, 2023.

1 During the public scoping period, the
2 NPS received comments that covered a wide range
3 of topics including the project purpose and need,
4 elements of existing alternatives, other
5 alternatives, and issues related to adjacent
6 land, vegetation, wetlands and riparian areas,
7 lightscapes, wildlife, erosion, storm water, and
8 visitor use experience.

9 The EA was released on September 25th,
10 2023, with a 30-day comment period that would
11 have ended on the 24th of October, 2023, but was
12 extended to November 4th, 2023, to allow more
13 time for comments. The Section 106 process was
14 completed during the course of the EA and ended
15 with the MOA that was executed in March 2024.

16 In addition, this project was at NCPC
17 for comments on concept in January 2023, at CFA
18 for concept review in November 2022, and final
19 review in October of 2023.

20 Next slide, please. Currently, as has
21 been alluded to, Rock Creek Golf Course has
22 suffered from a massive amount of deferred

1 maintenance which has led to the worsening
2 condition of the course. The image in the lower
3 right illustrates the increase in tree canopy,
4 it's in orange, since the original design, which
5 you can see from the 1927 aerial underneath.

6 The increase in tree canopy serves the
7 course well in some places, as it adds to the
8 parkland character and habitat, while in other
9 areas it choked out sunlight to the turf as
10 needed for growth and the air circulation needed
11 to limit turf grass disease.

12 The expanded tree canopy has made the
13 course unplayable in places. And as a result,
14 many of the original holes were closed in 2016,
15 as was mentioned. The encroaching forest has
16 been made worse by invasive plants that are
17 thriving at the forest edge.

18 Typically, this would have been
19 managed in such a way to keep playing courses
20 free from this type of encroachment, but revenues
21 at the golf course have not supported the staff
22 necessary to manage this.

1 The property has lost turf, leaving
2 much of the course with bare or compacted soil
3 which has contributed to runoff, water
4 penetration, erosion, and compacted unhealthy
5 soil.

6 In addition, invasive plants like
7 Oriental bittersweet, porcelain-berry, and mile-
8 a-minute weed, which are abundant in this
9 picture, choke native vegetation and harm tree
10 health.

11 This project aims to balance the
12 restoration of the cultural landscape of the
13 historic golf course with improving the tree
14 canopy, and wildlife habitat, and natural
15 resources.

16 Next slide, please. As many are
17 aware, we will be removing about 139 trees in
18 order to rehabilitate the course layout to assist
19 for par 3 holes, for the safety of visitors, for
20 healthy growing conditions for the surrounding
21 vegetation, and to accommodate the relocation of
22 the maintenance facility.

1 This tree removal will be selective
2 focusing on tree condition, non-native species,
3 and sustainable tree management. Before
4 identifying trees for removal, consideration will
5 be given to pruning, elevation of lower limbs,
6 opening crowns, and other measures that could
7 achieve the same goals as removal. Certain trees
8 that contribute to the historic integrity of the
9 course will be maintained.

10 The NPS created an ArcGIS dashboard
11 that's online and is pictured here. The QR code
12 that is there will bring you to the park planning
13 page where you can access that and other
14 materials on the tree inventory.

15 This was a tool to be able to
16 accurately understand the tree canopy and make
17 educated decisions related to trees. That is
18 reflected in the design presented by NCPC today
19 with tree replacement numbers, acreage set aside
20 for trees, and meadow sizes.

21 Initially the NPS identified at least
22 200 trees to be replanted. We are now planning

1 to implement a three to one replacement of
2 healthy trees resulting in the implementation of
3 7.1 acres of canopy to be replaced, an increase
4 of 0.9 acres overall.

5 Next slide, please. To maximize
6 habitat rehabilitation, we'll reduce the amount
7 of turf on the course by 20 percent compared to
8 the original design. This approach has allowed
9 for more meadow and tree habitat to be
10 incorporated. Meadow sizes and breakdown are
11 documented here.

12 The potential habitat diversity we
13 feel will be beneficial. We understand the level
14 of effort needed to maintain meadows, especially
15 given the prevalence of invasive, non-native
16 plants at this property, but feel that successful
17 golf course operation would support this work
18 based on standard industry practices.

19 Next slide, please. Here you will see
20 the difference from the current condition to what
21 is planned as part of the rehabilitation.
22 There's another QR code to bring you to the park

1 planning site where a slider graphic has been put
2 in place to be able to view this.

3 This shows the current tree cover and
4 the proposed future tree cover and meadows.

5 After implementation, as planned, the course will
6 have less forest fragmentation, more natural
7 habitat connections, and better habitat
8 diversity.

9 You will also see here in pink the
10 conversion of two golf holes to 4.5 acres of
11 pollinator meadows. Plans to restore these holes
12 were considered, but tree impacts would have
13 been greater, and we would not have been able to
14 improve the accessibility of the facility.

15 Next slide, please. Environmental
16 considerations have been at the forefront of this
17 project. We have taken steps to minimize our
18 carbon footprint. Trees that are removed as part
19 of this project will be used for wood chips for
20 mulch and re-purposed for clubhouse construction,
21 as you can see by this table on the right.

22 A three to one tree-planting strategy

1 will help us sequester more carbon in a typical
2 mature forest as we improve health. So it'll
3 help in nurturing native vegetation and
4 maintaining turf, and we expect even greater
5 carbon sequestration from healthy soil.

6 And while meadows may not match
7 forests in carbon sequestration, they still
8 contribute significantly more than turf areas
9 that have been replaced, underscoring our
10 commitment to sustainability.

11 Next slide, please. The golf course
12 currently contains minimal lighting. With this
13 project, a lighting plan has been developed that
14 minimizes light pollution and directs light
15 downwards in an effort to be compliant with dark
16 sky best practices.

17 The planning includes lighting for the
18 driving range, parking lot, and clubhouse, not
19 the entire golf course. The lights will be shut
20 off at a maximum of 90 minutes after sunset.
21 This will exceed bird migration best practices
22 guidance that states lights off between 11:00

1 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

2 We are continuing to work on this and
3 minimize effects of lighting through the
4 continued design of the project. We are
5 committed to minimizing neighborhood lighting
6 nuisances by greatly reducing allowable spill and
7 glare, managing high angle glare, implementing a
8 lighting curfew, limit light level to the minimum
9 needed, and promoting best practices, best
10 lighting practices.

11 Next slide, please. The current
12 growing, this is part of the growing environment
13 for turf which we touched on earlier. And it
14 does not promote single practices. What you see
15 here is typical to overgrown holes on the golf
16 course, thin turf and turf that is there is
17 crabgrass. Many types of grass have been tried
18 over the years, and none have succeeded.

19 Sustainability in horticulture
20 requires good growing environments to allow the
21 plant to grow robustly on its own without a lot
22 of manipulation from the gardener. On this

1 slide, you will see the many components that go
2 with the successful management of landscapes,
3 gardens, farms, meadows, forests, et cetera.

4 At Rock Creek Golf Course, the trees
5 and the accompanying density brought by invasive
6 plants are reducing sunlight and air circulation.

7 The diseased and drought resistant turf
8 varieties that are slated to be planted do
9 require sunlight and will not survive in these
10 current conditions.

11 Other items on this list will be
12 addressed with this project and will help provide
13 full vegetative cover for the golf course, which
14 will be good for golfers but also good for storm
15 water management. And it's just light
16 penetration, water penetration, filtering,
17 limiting silt and erosion, and slowing surface
18 water flow.

19 Next slide, please. This shows an
20 informal path that can catch, that has caught and
21 funneled water and causing erosion. This will be
22 avoided with an improved circulation plan. I

1 also want to highlight other efforts we are
2 proposing to manage storm water, including
3 bioretention basins, an irrigation cistern, and
4 new riparian plantings.

5 Next slide, oh, do I have a next
6 slide? Yes.

7 In closing, I'd like to thank the
8 public for their participation, and the
9 Commissioners, for their efforts through this
10 process.

11 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.
12 I want to thank Ms. Herr, Superintendent Joyner,
13 Mr. Cosby, and Mr. Stachowicz for that thorough
14 presentation. Thank you very much.

15 Now, do Commissioners have any
16 questions for the presenters at this time, any
17 questions?

18 Yes, sir, Commissioner Dixon?

19 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I'm going to
20 limit this, I promise. Two questions on the
21 presence of any restroom facilities that could be
22 strategically placed for golfers and maybe for

1 the hiking community.

2 And secondly, whether there are going
3 to be any golf paths created in the plan, hard
4 surface golf paths or soft surface golf paths?

5 MR. COSBY: Michael, you want to take
6 that one?

7 MR. STACHOWICZ: Yeah. So for the
8 paths, we're right now going to do -- when we
9 start the project we're looking at doing some
10 mockups of different types of cart paths. We're
11 looking to try to get cart paths that will allow
12 for water penetration into them and not
13 contribute to run-off. We're going to be testing
14 that to see how those go. But they will be
15 limited in scope to only high traffic areas.

16 As far as restroom facilities, the
17 restroom facilities in the clubhouse will be open
18 to the public. There are returning nines, so
19 having a restroom out elsewhere on the golf
20 course is not nearly as important as it would be
21 maybe at another 18 hole golf course.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Mr.

1 Stachowicz. Any other Commissioners have
2 questions? Any questions for the presenters?
3 Hearing none I'd like to move on.

4 Now we do have over 40 people here
5 today who have signed up to speak. So I ask
6 everyone to keep to the time that's allocated.
7 And that is three minutes for individuals and
8 five minutes if you represent a civic
9 organization or group.

10 And I'd also ask people if they could
11 provide their testimony in groups of four. Then
12 the Commission will stop and we will direct
13 questions to that group of four, rather than
14 taking each question, or each presenter one at a
15 time.

16 So just to begin, the first group of
17 four will be starting will be Mr. Anthony Startt,
18 Massie Risch, Vanessa Bertelli, and Bernard
19 Berne.

20 So if we could begin with Anthony
21 Startt, you will have three minutes to provide
22 your testimony. Please let us know when you're

1 ready. Anthony Startt. I think we'll move on
2 then to Massie Ritsch. You have three minutes to
3 provide testimony.

4 MR. STARTT: Hi. This is Anthony
5 Startt. I was just unmuted, just --

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: No worries. Okay,
7 great. Thank you. Go ahead, Mr. Startt.

8 MR. STARTT: Okay. Good afternoon,
9 members of the Commission. As I said my name is
10 Anthony Startt. I'm a resident of Takoma Park,
11 Maryland. And I strongly support the proposed
12 renovation of Rock Creek Golf Course.

13 I've been a resident of the D.C. area
14 for over 25 years. But my formative years were
15 spent, excuse me. My formative years were spent
16 in my neighboring city of Baltimore, where at the
17 age of 12 I played my first round of golf at a
18 municipal course.

19 I think spent a significant portion of
20 my teen years playing rounds at the ten municipal
21 courses in Baltimore City and County. During
22 that time I learned the value of municipal golf

1 provide to a community, and how lucky I was to
2 have access to such high quality and affordable
3 courses.

4 During my time in the D.C. area I've
5 often lamented the lack of municipal golf access
6 in the heart of the city. Those public courses
7 in the area are located in the far suburbs.

8 As the only three truly public courses
9 in the region that are easily accessible by mass
10 transit Langston, East Potomac, and Rock Creek
11 golf courses are of immense importance in
12 providing access to golf for city residents.

13 But all these courses have seen better
14 days. All have been severely neglected for
15 years, and have suffered from poor to non-
16 existent maintenance and capital improvements.

17 Rock Creek especially has become
18 partially unplayable and is in dire need of new
19 life, which is why I was thrilled to hear of the
20 plans of the NLT to renovate, upgrade, and modify
21 Rock Creek Golf Course.

22 The plan to convert the outdated short

1 course to a regulation length nine hole course,
2 while also adding a Par 3 course, driving range,
3 and practice areas will promote accessible and
4 affordable golf to a broad range of skill levels.

5 I understand the concerns of my fellow
6 community members regarding the removal of trees.

7 I too was taken aback by the click bait
8 headlines in various blogs and media sources
9 about the removal of close to 1,200 trees.

10 But after further reviewing the NLT
11 plan I learned that nearly half of the planned
12 removal is of dead, dying, or non-native trees.
13 And I also learned of plans to mitigate tree
14 removal by planting hundreds of new trees and
15 acres of native grasses.

16 I truly believe the NLT's plan
17 provides a perfect balance of enhancing
18 recreational opportunities while minimizing
19 negative impacts on the environment.

20 Urban parks are meant for recreation.

21 And I believe Rock Creek Park is the best urban
22 park in the nation because of the wide range of

1 recreational activities it provides.

2 A renovated golf course will further
3 enhance the park by providing city residents of
4 all backgrounds the access to high quality and
5 affordable golf that I had while I was growing
6 up.

7 My 11 year old son, like me, has taken
8 up golf at an early age. And like me he is
9 beyond excited about playing on a renovated Rock
10 Creek course.

11 While my son plays a variety of sports
12 I frequently remind him that golf is the sport he
13 is most likely to still be playing when he is 80
14 years old. My hope is that 70 years from now he
15 will still be playing rounds with his grand-kids
16 at Rock Creek.

17 Therefore, I encourage the Commission
18 to support the plan proposed by NLT to renovate
19 and restore Rock Creek Golf Course. Thank you
20 for your time.

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
22 Mr. Startt. Massie Ritsch, please.

1 MR. RITSCH: Thank you, Chair
2 Goodmann. Good afternoon, Commissioners. My
3 name is Massie Ritsch, and I strongly support
4 this project as well.

5 My family and I live in D.C.'s
6 Crestwood neighborhood, about a half block from
7 Rock Creek Park's eastern boundary. I was in
8 there minutes ago with my dogs. And we're near
9 the Carter Barron Amphitheater, which is a
10 renovation project we can discuss another time.

11 Today I want to talk about the many
12 beneficiaries of Rock Creek Park Golf Course in
13 this project. Many of those beneficiaries are
14 unavailable to testify today because they are at
15 school. One of them is my 14 year old son.

16 Rock Creek Golf Course is a convenient
17 metro bus, bike, or car ride from our home and
18 many others. But in the course's current
19 neglected condition, and without a driving range
20 or a robust instructional program the facility is
21 a poor place for D.C. youth who lack access to
22 private courses, to get outdoors, develop their

1 golf skills, and pursue their dreams of playing
2 in college or even professionally.

3 There's a campaign underway to block
4 this project, or at least to delay it
5 indefinitely, because it does require some trees
6 to be removed, as you've heard.

7 What opponents ignore, however, is
8 that the golf course already exists within a
9 densely forested national park of more than 1,700
10 acres. The acreage proposed for tree removal for
11 this project amounts to less than 4/10ths of one
12 percent of Rock Creek Park's total size.

13 Currently Rock Park's mix of publicly
14 accessible affordable recreation includes tennis
15 courts, fields for soccer and other sports,
16 exercise courses, playgrounds, hiking trails,
17 biking and running paths, picnic shelters, and
18 even a horseback riding stable.

19 Like Rock Creek's 100 year old golf
20 course putting in these amenities did necessitate
21 the removal of trees to provide a variety of uses
22 for our diverse National Capitol Region.

1 The golf course project seeks to
2 mitigate negative impacts on Rock Creek's health
3 and native trees, and on wildlife that depend on
4 them.

5 The rehabilitated course will contain
6 more than 11 acres of meadow habitat, which is in
7 short supply in Rock Creek Park, and will benefit
8 creatures of all kinds. The plan also envisions
9 features that can appeal to non-golfers as well.

10 To summarize, the plan before you
11 responsibly balances natural habitat and
12 recreation. And importantly it promotes the
13 accessibility of an all ages athletic activity
14 that has been historically inaccessible to too
15 many in our region.

16 On behalf of the junior golfer in my
17 own household and future golf champions of our
18 region I urge you to approve this project as
19 proposed. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
21 Mr. Ritsch. Ms. Vanessa Bertelli, please.

22 MS. BERTELLI: Hello. Yes, can you

1 hear me?

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, thank you.

3 MS. BERTELLI: Hello. Good afternoon.

4 My name is Vanessa Bertelli. And I am certified
5 by the National Parks Service to remove invasive
6 vegetation. I work as a volunteer for National
7 Links Trust. And over the last few years I have
8 worked across all areas of Rock Creek Park Golf
9 Course.

10 I object to the current rehabilitation
11 plan because the public has been misled. And
12 you, Commissioners, are being misled too. It
13 does not feel good to be misled, particularly
14 from a federal agency.

15 From January of 2023 when the plans
16 were made public until late October no mention of
17 the extensive tree removal was ever made. In the
18 many public engagement meetings NLT and NPS were
19 presented as referred to addressing the deferred
20 maintenance or encroaching vegetation, and touted
21 the environmental sustainability of the plan.

22 Once the extent of the tree removal

1 was revealed in the fall of 2023 there was
2 general outcry. And 3,212 members of the public
3 sent comments to NPS.

4 Throughout, NPS and NLT referred to a
5 tree survey that finds that over 546 trees are in
6 poor condition or dying. After months of asking
7 for this detailed survey we received the detailed
8 ArcGIS map of trees to be removed yesterday, less
9 than two hours before the deadline to submit
10 comments to you.

11 I now know why NPS was so cagey about
12 this tree survey. This morning I went to take
13 pictures of those trees in poor condition or
14 dying to show you, Commissioners. Unfortunately
15 your staff would not allow me to share pictures
16 during this testimony.

17 But the trees listed as in poor
18 condition or dying are instead thriving and full
19 of flowers, rubinias, cedars, oaks, poplars.
20 You're being misled.

21 Please postpone your decision until
22 the data can be properly evaluated by you and

1 your team, who have only received the ArcGIS map
2 earlier this week.

3 You're also being misled on acres and
4 acreage of meadows. The Rock Creek Park
5 Conservancy has devoted years, and invested tens
6 of thousands of dollars to partially restore a
7 meadow near the 8th hole that is less than a
8 third of an acre.

9 In January of 2023 NLT stated that
10 implementation and maintenance of the meadows
11 will be carried out by volunteers. As one of the
12 three regular volunteers who work on the golf
13 course I can tell you that is not going to
14 happen. NLT has unsuccessfully tried to increase
15 the number of volunteers for over two years.

16 The problem here is that when NLT will
17 pull the plug on the meadows the NCPC will not be
18 able to bring back the over 1,300 trees it agreed
19 to have removed. Please make the cutting of the
20 trees contingent on the successful meadow
21 implementation.

22 You're also being misled on

1 participating by, participation by youth. In
2 fact, all of the students and youth organizations
3 who identified themselves as such in submitting
4 comments are emphatically against the facts.

5 I ask that NCPC do not approve this
6 plan until the youth have been asked whether
7 they're willing to sacrifice trees to play this
8 course.

9 And finally, you're being misled about
10 course appeal to the local community. A quick
11 analysis of the 3,000 --

12 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

13 MS. BERTELLI: -- two hundred and --

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

15 MS. BERTELLI: -- shows that
16 approximately 90 percent of the commentaries in
17 zip code 2011 adjacent to the golf course on the
18 east side of the park are --

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

20 MS. BERTELLI: -- opposed to the
21 current proposal.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you for your

1 comments. Thank you very much, Ms. Bertelli.
2 Mr. Bernard Berne, please.

3 MR. BERNE: Yes. Thank you for that I
4 may speak. I submitted a recent, or an update to
5 my testimony yesterday, which you may or may not
6 have in your files. So it won't be the same I
7 have written. It was based on information I was
8 sent recently.

9 The project fails to follow many of
10 the recommendations in the NCPC's Pollinator Best
11 Practices Resource Guide. For example, and most
12 importantly, the project does not contain any
13 milkweeds. This is despicable actually when you
14 think about it.

15 The NCPC Guide supports the planting
16 of milkweeds to help restore the National Capital
17 Region's declining monarch butterfly populations.

18 This follows a recommendation in the 2015
19 National Strategy to promote the health of honey
20 bees and other pollinators.

21 The NPS should therefore add common
22 milkweed, *asclepias syriaca* to the plan's sunny

1 areas, which the NCPC Guide strongly recommends
2 and which monarchs require for preservation, as
3 well as poke milkweed, *asclepias exaltata*, to the
4 shady areas.

5 These are especially important for the
6 pollination of meadows. You can't just have a
7 pollination meadow without pollinator, without
8 milkweed.

9 The NCPC should also add black cherry,
10 *prunus serotina*, to the planting plan to replace
11 the many that they are removing. This tree
12 offers nectar and pollen to native pollinators
13 and honey bees when it flowers and whatnot March
14 through June.

15 Most importantly the *P. serotina* is a
16 host for caterpillars of 450 species of
17 butterflies or moths, including the Tiger
18 Swallowtail, Viceroy, Red Spotted Purple
19 Butterflies, and for the *Cecropia*, *Promethea*, and
20 Columbia Silk Moths.

21 More than 40 species of birds feed on
22 its fruit. You are removing some. But there's

1 no evidence you're going to replace any.

2 The golf course, this is a really bad
3 one here. The golf course will contain Bermuda
4 Grass, which is not native to the United States,
5 to North America.

6 Maryland and Utah laws have declared
7 it to be invasive, as have Virginia's Colonial
8 National Historic Park and several, seven other
9 national parks. It's been found outside of
10 cultivation throughout the National Capital
11 Planning, the National Capital Region.

12 To protect Rock Creek Park and its
13 neighborhood, which is supposed to be challenged,
14 the NPS should not use it on the golf course.
15 You just don't plan invasive plants in the middle
16 of our national park.

17 The project's planting plan contains
18 Devilwood, an evergreen tree that is not native
19 to the National Capital Region. The NPS should
20 remove this from the plant list, as it can invade
21 Rock Creek Park and displace the park's native
22 species.

1 The NCPC Guide states on Page 4, take
2 care when planting, when selecting plant
3 cultivars. Some plants are selected for traits
4 attractive to humans but not pollinators, such as
5 size, colors, and shape. Therefore, prioritize
6 the original native species whenever possible.

7 However, the project's planting plan
8 contains nine cultivars that have no more
9 resistance to disease than it merits.

10 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

11 MR. BERNE: I have identified these in
12 messages. These replacements --

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

14 (Simultaneous speaking.)

15 MR. BERNE: -- so it's another species
16 if the parent is not native to the National
17 Capitol Region.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

19 MR. BERNE: Thank you.

20 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Mr. Berne.

21 Now we've had our first four speakers. And if
22 the Commission has any questions for any of the

1 four that would be, Mr. Startt, Mr. Ritsch, Ms.
2 Bertelli, and Mr. Berne.

3 Any questions from the Commission at
4 this time? Any questions? Third time, any
5 questions for these first four speakers? Thank
6 you very much. Now we'll be moving on to the
7 next four speakers.

8 And I do encourage anyone, we want to
9 hear all of your comments. If anyone however
10 wants to say, I support this statement or that,
11 for or against, we also appreciate that type of
12 support and comment.

13 Okay, next, the next four. We have
14 Gerald Andriole, followed by Anne DeBuys, Kelly
15 Collins Choi, and Dr. Trish O'Kane. So first we
16 will have Mr. Andriole, please.

17 MS. KOSTER: I believe he's not
18 present right now.

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Then we'll
20 move on. And I do apologize with these name
21 pronunciations. Is Anne on, please? And could
22 you correct me on how to pronounce your last

1 name, please?

2 MS. DeBUYS: Thank you, Chair
3 Goodmann. It's Anne DeBuys.

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: DeBuys.

5 MS. DeBUYS: Yes. Thank you. And
6 good afternoon to you and members of the
7 Commission, also those who are listening and
8 testifying today.

9 Thank you for this opportunity to
10 testify as a District resident concerned about
11 the mitigation plan, following the removal of
12 1,368 of the total 2,763 trees in the Rock Creek
13 Park Golf Course Rehabilitation Project area.

14 I understand that during the second
15 phase of the project additional trees will be
16 assessed for elimination, with about half
17 presumably to be culled.

18 The mitigation plan for tree
19 replacement is incompletely developed and
20 insufficient at this time. After 395 healthy
21 native trees have been destroyed, only about half
22 that number, or 200 trees will be replaced. The

1 goal has been amended to say at least 200 trees,
2 only a token improvement.

3 And there is still limited data on the
4 size, planting density, and species of trees.
5 Not until 2025 will NPS return with a better
6 informed scheme.

7 We already know that a number of the
8 replacements are not canopy species trees. The
9 oak replacements will require decades of growth
10 to reach the carbon sequestration capacity of the
11 massive trees being removed, if that is they ever
12 do given our increasingly worsening climate.

13 I bring your attention to the National
14 Capital Planning Commission's own regulations as
15 set out in the Comprehensive Plan Federal
16 Elements, Section FEG 2, Item 2, Parts A and B
17 prescribe tree replacement with great
18 specificity, including replacement trees should
19 have a mature canopy spread equivalent to or
20 greater than the trees removed.

21 Furthermore, there is a precise
22 formula for how many new trees are required to

1 take the place of just one existing tree, using a
2 scoring system.

3 For example, a 25 inch diameter tree
4 with a species rating of 60 percent and a
5 condition rating of 75 percent equates to three
6 trees to be planted to replace this one
7 moderately large tree.

8 A number of massive trees on the
9 property exceed this size, and could require
10 planting as many as 6 new trees.

11 I would like to point out that Part C
12 of this procedure, which directs the planting of
13 one acre minimum for every one acre removed is
14 given equal but not superior importance to the
15 foregoing elements, and is not intended to
16 supersede them, as evidently has been done.

17 How closely will the NCPC's own
18 specifications be followed? Is there an adequate
19 budget and plan for the consistent watering and
20 other types of care the young trees will need
21 over time to become established?

22 Otherwise we can expect a significant

1 failure rate, and a loss of tree canopy that the
2 District cannot afford. Replacement trees must
3 be maintained in importance with the most current
4 American Horticultural --

5 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

6 MS. DeBUYS: -- Association industry
7 standards. One more sentence please, sir.
8 Approving the final rehabilitation plan at this
9 afternoon's meeting is premature. I urge the
10 Commission to defer a vote pending submission of
11 the central details regarding the mitigation
12 plan. Thank you.

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: My apologies. I was
14 on mute. I wanted to ask Ms. Choi to speak now,
15 please. Ms. Choi.

16 MS. COLLINS CHOI: Yes. I'm trying to
17 turn my video on.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay.

19 MS. COLLINS CHOI: Good afternoon,
20 Commissioners. My name is Kelly Collins Choi,
21 and I'm the Director of Policy and Land
22 Conservation at Casey Trees. Our mission is to

1 restore, enhance, and protect the tree canopy of
2 our nation's capital

3 The District of Columbia has a goal of
4 40 percent tree canopy by 2032. But recent data
5 shows our canopy is declining, with three times
6 the rate of loss happening on our public land and
7 park lands.

8 During the public comment period for
9 the Rock Creek Golf Course environmental
10 assessment Casey Trees submitted comments
11 regarding significant concerns with the project,
12 primarily the extensive loss of over 1,200 trees,
13 including healthy native trees and estimate of
14 over 200 heritage trees.

15 Very little detail was given on that
16 time on the project's tree inventory, or how
17 replacement plantings would adequately offset the
18 proposed eight acres of canopy loss.

19 Transparency and communication have
20 been inconsistent issues throughout this process.

21 Many of the organizations testifying today,
22 including Casey Trees, petitioned to extend the

1 EA's original public comment deadline, because
2 they were not notified of such a large project in
3 their own back yard.

4 This speaks to a broader lack of
5 engagement that should be addressed in any future
6 projects, particularly as this may be the first
7 of NLT's three golf course rehabilitation
8 projects located on NPS land within the District.

9 We also felt the environmental
10 assessment did not sufficiently address
11 alternative design plans. For instance, the
12 design plans prioritize minimizing public sight
13 lines associated with the maintenance facility
14 and employee parking locations over forest land
15 preservation.

16 At least eight healthy native heritage
17 trees will be removed for visual non-critical
18 purposes, to be replaced with impervious surface.

19 To say that removing these trees preserves the
20 historic characteristics of the site ignores that
21 these trees are older than the golf course
22 itself.

1 Maps provided in the EA show a total
2 of eight acres of trees to be removed, and new
3 plans reduce that removal to 6.1 acres. While we
4 welcome this reduction, the documents still noted
5 individual tree removal numbers have not changed.

6 It's not clear how the canopy removal
7 acreage has shrunk by two acres, given the number
8 of trees slated for removal remain the same. And
9 clarity on this reduction would be appreciated.

10 Through this project the District is
11 losing ecosystem services that will take decades
12 to replace through reforestation efforts that are
13 currently minimally defined.

14 We are pleased to see that canopy
15 replacement acreage has increased. But we are
16 lacking many details, such as size, density, and
17 species to help us understand how exactly this
18 will be accomplished.

19 NCPC's own tree preservation and
20 replacement guidelines state that local
21 stakeholders should be consulted in forest and
22 replacement.

1 We encourage NPS and NLT to include
2 local stakeholders in the reforestation planning,
3 including D.C.'s Urban Forestry Division,
4 Department of Energy and the Environment, and
5 Rock Creek Conservancy.

6 If mitigation is necessary off site it
7 should be guided by Rock Creek Park's Forest
8 Resilience Plan. Casey Trees also stands ready
9 if invited to consult on reforestation efforts
10 moving forward.

11 We also strongly support the NCPC
12 Executive Director's recommendation requiring NPS
13 to return to the Commission prior to Phase 2
14 construction begins to ensure the tree
15 replacement strategy is meeting requirements.

16 We continue to ask that heritage trees
17 be respected and retained to the greatest extent
18 possible, and that NPS work closely with NLT
19 throughout the construction process to minimize
20 the loss of these precious natural and historic
21 resources. Thank you for the opportunity to
22 testify.

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
2 Ms. Choi. We appreciate your comments. Now we
3 have Dr. Trish O'Kane, please. And that, you
4 have three minutes to speak.

5 DR. O'KANE: Can you see me?

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes.

7 DR. O'KANE: You can hear me? Okay.
8 Thank you. Good afternoon, and thank you for the
9 opportunity to speak. I teach environmental
10 justice at the University of Vermont.
11 Environmental justice means, as you probably
12 know, where, the environment is where we live,
13 work, and play, not some distant wilderness.

14 It's a movement founded by leaders of
15 color who were fed up with the white
16 environmentalism that ignored racism and social
17 injustice.

18 It means urban heat islands, and
19 factory corridors, and toxins are also urgent
20 environmental issues, not just endangered
21 species. In the environmental justice world our
22 species is the endangered species.

1 The National Links Trust proposal
2 states that the renovated course will create
3 programs to introduce kids to golf. We urgently
4 need to get kids outside. Because our children
5 and the college students I teach are facing an
6 unprecedented mental health crisis.

7 As part of my environmental justice
8 work I've spent the last 13 years getting kids
9 outside through an after school program that has
10 worked with more than 1,000 children.

11 But I was struck by the fact that in
12 the NLS initial stakeholder survey 25 percent or
13 less of those surveyed were under the age of 35.

14 How many were under 18? How many of the
15 District's children were asked how they felt
16 about 1,200 trees getting cut down?

17 I work in a world of climate science.
18 We just had the hottest summer on record,
19 followed by the hottest winter. According to
20 Duke University heat is now the leading cause of
21 death from extreme weather in our country.

22 And right now on the other side of the

1 planet millions of children in Southeast Asia
2 cannot go to school, much less play outside
3 because of a record breaking heat wave.

4 The situation on our planet is
5 frightening. But we have a solution. Trees.
6 According to the EPA one large tree is a massive
7 free air conditioner that can cool the air
8 beneath it by as much as 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

9 In a world where we are already losing
10 millions of trees, and are going to lose millions
11 more because of disease, invasive insects,
12 stronger hurricanes and storms, flooding, and
13 fire, every healthy tree should become a heritage
14 tree.

15 There are so many good ideas in this
16 proposal, especially kids' scholarships. But the
17 proposal does not take climate change into
18 account.

19 Please think of our children before
20 you approve the destruction of over 1,200 life
21 giving trees. Trees are our children's life
22 insurance policy. Thank you.

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
2 Dr. O'Kane. We appreciate your comments. Is Mr.
3 Gerald Andriole on? No? Julia, or Ms. Koster,
4 do you see --

5 MS. KOSTER: No, he is not.

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: Then we're going to
7 move on. But first I will ask the Commissioners
8 if they have any questions for the three
9 speakers, Anne DeBuys, Kelly Collins Choi, or Dr.
10 Trish O'Kane. Any questions from the
11 Commissioners? Any questions from the
12 Commissioners?

13 Okay. Hearing no questions from the
14 Commissioners we're going to move on to the next
15 cohort, which is going to include Courtney
16 Tolbert, followed by Jose Morales, Michael Smaha,
17 and Beth Skorochood.

18 I'm trying here, folks. Please feel
19 free to correct me when your opportunity to speak
20 comes up. So first we will have Ms. Tolbert.
21 Please feel free to share now.

22 MS. TOLBERT: Hi. Good afternoon.

1 And thank you for hearing me. I hope I'm
2 visible. Yes?

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: You are. We can hear
4 you and see you. Yes, thank you.

5 MS. TOLBERT: Okay. It's Courtney
6 Tolbert. And I am pleased to be a part of this
7 event. Now, due to the previous testimony I have
8 amended what I wanted to say, because I don't
9 want to be redundant.

10 Although I am supportive in part of
11 this project my deep concerns are with the
12 removal of the trees. So I thank the previous
13 testimonies with the factual information about
14 carbon mitigation, the replacement of heritage
15 trees with new growth. The ratio is not one to
16 one. And that is something that is very
17 important to me.

18 I am pleased that we have upped the
19 amount of acres for planting of new trees to 7.1,
20 to replace the 6.2. I do have acres that will be
21 removed. I have concerns about how this will be
22 implemented.

1 My latest understanding is that our
2 woodlands are under such great duress that the
3 types of trees to be planted and how they will be
4 cared for is of concern.

5 I don't understand why so many black
6 cherry trees are being removed and not replaced.

7 They are an integral part of our ecological
8 system. And I don't know what is the
9 accountability to the follow through with these
10 proposed plantings.

11 And how will the public be informed on
12 the ongoing progress of these plantings and care
13 of these trees? Is there an effort to preserve
14 the ecosystem that is developed due to the
15 deferred maintenance of the area? Or is that
16 ecosystem deemed to be detrimental to the
17 development?

18 Is there any evidence of beaver
19 activity within the area? And if so, what will
20 be done to encourage and preserve their presence?

21 And also, will the environmental
22 education session simply recall how the

1 destruction of the ecosystem has generated a
2 profitable viable recreation facility? Or will
3 we take the opportunity to do the comprehensively
4 right thing, not just for the now but for
5 generations to come?

6 As we harken back to historical
7 precedent, 1927 wasn't a banner year for thinking
8 of the ecology. And certainly there were
9 decisions made within our city that were
10 detrimental to the ecological layout of the city.

11 And they were fixed later on.

12 Sixteen years ago it was estimated
13 that we cut down about 41 million trees a year,
14 which, you know, equates to about 15 billion.
15 And that level of removal of the carbon mitigated
16 factor, and part of the instrumental and key
17 component of our thriving ecosystem in this urban
18 situation is very concerning to me.

19 And I really hope that as a native
20 Washingtonian not only I will be able to live out
21 the last of my years in relative confidence that
22 we are conscientious of the economic and

1 environmental footprint.

2 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

3 MS. TOLBERT: But that my children
4 will as well. Thank you so much for your time.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you. We
6 appreciate your comments, Ms. Tolbert. Thank you
7 very much. Jose Morales, are you present? Mr.
8 Morales, are you present? Okay. We'll move on.
9 Mr. Smaha? Is that proper? I'm sorry.

10 MR. SMAHA: You got it. You nailed
11 it. Thank you.

12 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Sure. Thank
13 you.

14 MR. SMAHA: No problem at all.
15 Commission, I appreciate this opportunity to
16 speak for the record. My name is Michael Smaha,
17 proud resident of Ward 5 in the Brookland
18 neighborhood.

19 I'm here today to lend my support to
20 the National Link Trust's commendable proposal to
21 rehabilitate the Rock Creek Golf Course.
22 National Links Trust has proven itself to be a

1 responsible custodian of D.C.'s public golf
2 courses, a fact underscored since its lease
3 granted back in August of 2022.

4 So, the Trust has been transparent and
5 reliable, fulfilling their commitments to both
6 Langston and East Potomac Courses. And their
7 dedication to the mission of making public
8 courses accessible and affordable to all here in
9 the city and the region is really commendable.

10 Moreover, their collaboration with
11 community groups to preserve and enhance the
12 natural environment of those two courses is a
13 testament I think to their overall commitment to
14 sustainability.

15 The proposal is a unique opportunity
16 for both golfers and non-golfers alike. And I
17 think there's great benefits that the community
18 could see, such as updating the landscape, which
19 really some tender loving care in its current
20 condition.

21 New trees will be added to replace the
22 dead ones and those that are overwhelmed by

1 invasive plants. And right outside my window as
2 I speak there are several honey bees buzzing
3 around a flowering tree. These bees do need more
4 fields to collect pollen. And I'm glad that the
5 Trust proposal does include that.

6 Nature paths that will be created add
7 to opportunities for D.C. residents and visitors
8 to reconnect with nature. And best of all, this
9 is paid for by the Trust and private
10 philanthropy.

11 So in conclusion I do hope that the
12 Trust listens to the concerns that have been
13 brought up here. And that there can be some
14 agreements and concessions made.

15 But I really think it's important that
16 the Commission allow this plan to progress
17 forward. And I really appreciate your time.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
20 Mr. Smaha. We appreciate your remarks. And I
21 see Mr. Morales joined us, I believe. I thought
22 I saw you --

1 MR. MORALES: Yes.

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: -- on there. Okay.

3 I --

4 MR. MORALES: Yes. Sorry. I got --

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: That's okay.

6 MR. MORALES: -- kicked out on the
7 panel. So I'm glad I'm back.

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Well sorry
9 about that too. Welcome. And you have three
10 minutes to provide testimony. Please go forward.

11 MR. MORALES: Thank you. I have been
12 a 12 year resident of Ward 5. I live in
13 Northeast in the Trinidad neighborhood, so close
14 to the Arboretum, but a frequent visitor to the
15 golf courses in D.C., East Potomac, Rock Creek,
16 and Langston, which is also in my neighborhood.

17 Rock Creek holds a special place in my
18 heart. It was one of the first rounds of golf I
19 ever got to play. I grew up in an underserved
20 community on the West Coast, and see the
21 opportunity that we have here to really have an
22 egalitarian place for the entire city of D.C. and

1 especially underserved communities to have access
2 to great golf facilities.

3 Currently Rock Creek Park
4 unfortunately is not one of those because of the
5 disrepair that it is in. But it is such a
6 beautiful place to enjoy the game of golf.

7 And I do think that the game of golf,
8 you know, is a place where people of all skill
9 levels, all socioeconomic levels, creeds, races,
10 get to join and enjoy an activity together.

11 And because I learned how to play as
12 an adult I'm playing catch up. And I do want the
13 opportunity for my son and daughter to have great
14 public options in our area to play golf.

15 So I really appreciate everyone's
16 support, and everyone's hard work in putting this
17 thoughtful plan together. And again, just throw
18 my resounding support behind it, and hope that we
19 can get it accomplished. So thank you very much
20 for everyone's hard work.

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Mr.
22 Morales, for your patience and for your comments.

1 Now we have Ms. Beth Skorochood.

2 MS. KOSTER: My understanding is she
3 is not in the meeting.

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: Oh, okay. Well then
5 thank you very much, Ms. Koster. Then we will
6 take a break here and ask, does anyone have a
7 question?

8 Any of the Commissioners have
9 questions for the last three speakers, Ms.
10 Tolbert, Mr. Morales, or Mr. Smaha? Any
11 questions? Any questions? Not seeing any. Not
12 hearing any. Okay. Well thank you very much.

13 Next we have Jim Monsma, Elsa Boehm,
14 Jaiya Joubert, and Sam Krause. And please accept
15 my apologies in advance. Mr. Monsma.

16 MR. MONSMA: Yes. Good afternoon.
17 Good afternoon, everyone.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: You do have five
19 minutes because you're an organization, not an
20 individual.

21 MR. MONSMA: Yes.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

1 MR. MONSMA: I'll try not to take it
2 all. But I --

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay.

4 MR. MONSMA: -- do appreciate this
5 opportunity. My name as you've heard --

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

7 MR. MONSMA: -- is Jim Monsma. I am
8 the Executive Director of City Wildlife, a
9 community based non-profit that provides wildlife
10 rehabilitation services to the District of
11 Columbia.

12 City Wildlife was one of the many
13 organizations that submitted statements of
14 concerns about the National Links Trust's plan to
15 rehabilitate the Rock Creek Park Golf Course last
16 October.

17 And my comments today are offered as
18 friendly suggestions on how we believe this
19 renovation can be accomplished. Because no one,
20 absolutely no one is against that basic goal.
21 We're all for it.

22 But accomplished in a way that builds

1 trust and a spirit of mutual cooperation between
2 National Links Trust and the community. To do
3 this would require taking another look at the
4 renovation plans.

5 And that, we realize, would require
6 time. But a delay of the NCPC's approval might
7 well be warranted in the interests of getting
8 this right.

9 First attempts at a plan do not often
10 result in the best plan. And despite the fact
11 that more than 3,000 comments were submitted in
12 response to the call for input, the plan as
13 initially proposed by the NLT appear not to have
14 been significantly changed.

15 Perhaps, I would suggest, this
16 represents a disconnect between the plans and the
17 needs and desires of many members of the broader
18 community.

19 Among those who expressed the need to
20 alter the plans was D.C. Council Member Janeese
21 Lewis George, whose ward includes the golf
22 course. Last fall she told the Washington Post,

1 I hope the National Parks Service and National
2 Links Trust will modify their proposal to reduce
3 the total loss of trees and strengthen mitigation
4 measures.

5 That did not happen. But it certainly
6 should be possible. And a good place to start
7 might be to ensure that the golf course
8 renovation conforms to the laws of the District
9 of Columbia.

10 It is well known that the National
11 Links Trust's plan for removing trees sidesteps
12 the District's laws concerning heritage trees.
13 More than 200 of which are currently slated to
14 come down.

15 Neither do the plans conform to the
16 District's goal of expanding the city's tree
17 canopy by 40 percent by 2032.

18 In my own field City Wildlife worked
19 very hard to get a new bird friendly architecture
20 law passed, which it was when Mayor Bowser signed
21 the bill in January of 2023.

22 So I was very pleased when I was told

1 by the National Links Trust that their new
2 clubhouse would be built with bird friendly
3 glass.

4 But then I noticed that the FONSI
5 stated on the contrary, that they will be placing
6 window decals or bird friendly film on select
7 windows, to make the glass more visible to birds.

8 This is not the same thing at all.
9 And it would not meet the requirements in the
10 District's new law. I wonder what the real plan
11 is, decals on select windows, or bird friendly
12 glass.

13 And there are numerous other points of
14 confusion in the FONSI. Information that should
15 be clarified before the permit to proceed is
16 granted.

17 The meadow, for instance. Will the
18 meadow be 11 acres, as stated on Page B1 of the
19 FONSI, or 19 acres, as stated in the
20 environmental assessment on Page 16, or 13 acres
21 as the assessment says on Page 46?

22 I imagine that there's probably a good

1 explanation for these discrepancies. But at the
2 moment the extent of the meadow is not clear.

3 Also, a list of specific trees to be
4 removed was just released on April 30th. Would
5 it not make sense to take the time to review this
6 list before any permits to proceed were issued?

7 Similarly, with the National Links
8 Trust claim that the plan meets dark sky
9 criteria? But which we now understand might in
10 fact not allow for new lighting on the golf
11 course.

12 How can the driving range and practice
13 greens be lit with new lighting, which does not
14 now exist, in a way that is dark sky compliant?
15 Perhaps this should be discussed prior to the
16 approval of the plan.

17 I could go on. But I think the point
18 is clear. The National Links Trust may not be
19 obligated to comply with the District laws. But
20 would it not be something that they would want to
21 do in the interest of solutions which respect and
22 build trust with the community?

1 And clearly environmental concerns
2 have been an important consideration for National
3 Links Trust. But it seems a bit worrisome that
4 despite their efforts so many local environmental
5 groups, including my own, have expressed their
6 opposition to the plans as they exist.

7 That too could be rectified given
8 time. And we believe that is something that all
9 parties should be welcoming as a goal. Thank you
10 for your opportunity to share this, to share
11 these thoughts. And I appreciate your
12 consideration.

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
14 Mr. Monsma. We appreciate your testimony. Now
15 we'll be moving on to Elsa Boehm. Can you help
16 me with that, please?

17 MS. BOEHM: Yes, Boehm. Yes.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay.

19 MS. BOEHM: You basically said it
20 right.

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, great. You
22 have three minutes. And thank you for your

1 participation.

2 MS. BOEHM: Thank you. So good
3 afternoon, Chair Goodmann and everyone here
4 today. And thank you for the opportunity to
5 share why I believe cutting down trees to
6 renovate the Rock Creek Park Golf Course would be
7 detrimental to the well being of the D.C.
8 community.

9 My name is Elsa Boehm. I'm a 16 year
10 old D.C. resident. And I am testifying today to
11 call on the community to hear the voices of the
12 youth and the D.C. stakeholders, who are asking
13 to preserve the natural environment of this golf
14 course.

15 It has been argued that cutting down
16 1,000 trees will help youth by increasing their
17 access to golf. As a young person I can say I
18 care much more about the future of this planet
19 for the next generation, and the natural beauty
20 of D.C. parks than the opportunity to golf with
21 great visibility.

22 The heritage trees that this proposal

1 would cut down have been alive for around 100
2 years, long enough to see our city warm, they've
3 been alive long enough to see our city warm
4 nearly five degrees, and our tree canopy
5 deteriorate significantly.

6 It would be unfortunate if the almost
7 100 year anniversary of the creation of this golf
8 course was inaugurated by backsliding in terms of
9 environmental protections.

10 Like many others here today I applaud
11 the idea of having another community space, and
12 rehabilitating this golf course to better serve
13 this function.

14 And I do agree that we should cut down
15 trees and other plants that are invasive, or that
16 are genuinely dead or near dead. But as has been
17 mentioned by community leaders so far, moderation
18 and mitigation are key.

19 This Commission has done vital work in
20 the past to ensure economic projects are in
21 keeping with regulation. Chopping down
22 unhazardous native heritage trees without strong

1 exigency goes against D.C. regulations.

2 And the mitigation measures proposed
3 to remedy this are few in comparison to the
4 amount of environmental destruction enacted.

5 If we want to help the D.C. community
6 and provide them with opportunity we should
7 protect our tree canopy, elevate youth in
8 stakeholder voices, and make space for us to
9 enjoy our forests even as we play sports.

10 Writing a blank check for
11 deforestation efforts would hurt our communities
12 more than helping them.

13 Youth across D.C. are prepared to help
14 support our environment. I represent a working
15 group of like-minded students from across the
16 city who have proposed a Youth Climate Advisory
17 Council to the Transportation Environment
18 Committee.

19 And it is in the same spirit of
20 mobilization and desire for representation that
21 we kindly request that you save these trees.

22 I admire all your dedication to the

1 environment and to genuinely improving our
2 communities. And truly hope that if you do
3 approve this project you approve the preliminary
4 plans only out of consideration for the process
5 of law and local stakeholders. Thank you for
6 your time.

7 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
8 Ms. Boehm. Appreciate your comment. And now,
9 Mr. Joubert, You have three minutes to speak, and
10 welcome. Please continue.

11 MR. JOUBERT: Hello. My name is Jaiya
12 Joubert. I am with Elsa. And we are raising
13 concerns about this proposal. I am a 17 year old
14 D.C. resident. I've been here since I was very,
15 very young.

16 And this proposal has a lot of issues,
17 and some that were not said already was one, the
18 publicity on this was not great. I didn't even
19 know about this until the 24th of last month.
20 They, there should be an extension on the comment
21 period, and allow more community non-profits to
22 be consulted.

1 And then on the topic of the trees
2 themselves. I'd like to bring up that not all of
3 the non-native trees are invasive, and serve
4 their purpose in the ecosystem.

5 In addition to that, the wildlife that
6 is already inhabiting these forest areas will be
7 displaced. And I, aside from a few pollinators I
8 haven't heard plans about how to reintegrate that
9 wildlife.

10 Next I want to just really bring to
11 light that these 1,300 trees being cut down, and
12 then only 200 added, they are saying that they
13 are going to expand the canopy. But this just
14 does not, that doesn't really add up, 1,300 cut
15 down, 200 added.

16 And then we also don't know much about
17 the added trees, like the age. And I really just
18 want to say, all of the mitigation that has been
19 stated has not been enough. I think, it is my
20 view that their, the National Parks Service
21 should not have this black and white mentality.
22 We should --

1 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

2 MR. JOUBERT: Thank you. We should
3 not have this black and white mentality. We can
4 change the plans. We don't have to cut down
5 1,300 --

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

7 MR. JOUBERT: -- because the initial
8 plans say. Thank you.

9 CHAIR GOODMAN: And thank you very
10 much, Mr. Joubert. And thanks for attending
11 today and sharing your thoughts. Now we have Mr.
12 Sam Krause. And Sam is with the Claytonia Garden
13 Design organization. And he will have five
14 minutes to provide testimony. Are you here?

15 MS. KRAUSE: Hi, yes. And I'm not a
16 he.

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

18 MS. KRAUSE: No worries. No worries.
19 Hi, Commissioners.

20 CHAIR GOODMAN: I apologize.

21 MS. KRAUSE: No. It's okay. Hi,
22 Commissioners. Thank you for being here. And I

1 want to say thank you to all of the community
2 members who are here speaking as well.

3 I think it's really encouraging. My
4 cat is here too. But I think it's really
5 encouraging to hear from so many different
6 people. And I'd like to just bridge these
7 communities together.

8 And to make a point that the golf
9 course can still be restored. It just requires
10 more selective tree removal that can allow for
11 the rehabilitation to proceed while protecting
12 the important habitat for birds and amphibians.
13 It doesn't have to be either or.

14 And so, Rock Creek Park is my front
15 yard. I have gotten super involved in the park.

16 And I have learned so much from the amazing
17 environmental stewards as well as community
18 activists here, which has allowed me to create my
19 own business, which has been really fun.

20 And my mission is to restore bird
21 habitats through plantings and gardening. And
22 I've learned from like specifically the National

1 Parks Service botanist here in Rock Creek Park.

2 I used to work at the Conservancy. So
3 I was learning about race and its impact on Rock
4 Creek Park. And so there are so many different
5 sorts of people and communities that are involved
6 in this.

7 And I do want to point out that it
8 would be great to restore this golf course. And
9 I know that the National Links Trust says that
10 they're doing this for and by the community.

11 But according to their sustainability
12 assessment, written by their sustainability
13 consultant, Andrew Szunyog, sorry if I pronounced
14 that incorrectly, the people they, there are 645
15 external shareholders that they interviewed to
16 drive their sustainability initiatives, consist
17 of 88 percent male, 85 percent white, 73 percent
18 over the age of 35, and 88 percent are golfers.

19 They do mention they included five
20 percent of those engaged being from the community
21 or a non-profit. So we don't actually have
22 numbers on community members that were engaged.

1 And they do also mention that from
2 those external shareholders three percent were
3 civil or public service professionals. So the
4 sustainability report is not factoring in people
5 who know the environment, who know Rock Creek
6 Park like the back of their hands.

7 And regarding the invasive removal, in
8 my line of business last week I hired someone to
9 remove 40 feet of English Ivy and porcelain berry
10 that were strangling a fence, which in my opinion
11 is harder to remove because it wraps itself in
12 every crevice. And he did that within 12 hours.

13 And I think it's important to note
14 that the people maintaining the course and doing
15 the invasive plant management are volunteers for
16 Rock Creek Conservancy. And they're not allowed
17 to use any power tools.

18 If we had people out there who were
19 committed and knowledgeable about the invasive
20 plant removal we could get this work done, and we
21 could free these trees from their demise.

22 And so I'm asking that you guys, the

1 NCPC go back to the drawing board with NPS. And
2 I know that historically the NPS consistently
3 looks at third alternatives that just present an
4 alternative plan.

5 And as a designer I never show someone
6 one set plan. I work with my client. And I say,
7 here are a few options. Pick the one that you
8 like the most. And it's clear that the community
9 wants a third option.

10 And we have so many intelligent people
11 from all walks of life, not just 88 percent male
12 and 85 percent white golfers. We have people who
13 know the wildlife. We have people who are out
14 there golfing every day. And they know the plan.

15 And just last, or just yesterday I
16 went out with the D.C. Bird Alliance. And we
17 held a bird walk around the golf course. And we
18 engaged some of those golfers who, might I say,
19 go to the course every single day, and were not
20 alerted to this plan. They didn't know what was
21 going on. They didn't know how many trees would
22 be cut down.

1 And then one of the golfers that I was
2 talking to actually reached out to us afterwards.

3 And he was like, I would love to help and talk
4 to the National Links Trust. I'd love to bridge
5 that divide and get my golfing community out here
6 to work with the birders, and to work with the
7 people who know so much --

8 MR. MORGAN: Five minutes.

9 MS. KRAUSE: -- about plants and
10 trees. And so, let me just have one -- Again,
11 the point of my comments was to bridge a divide
12 and to bring people together to create a plan
13 that works for everyone. And that is usually the
14 --

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

16 MS. KRAUSE: -- what the NPS has
17 historically done. A third option.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Very good. We
19 appreciate your comments about both and. Thank
20 you very much, Ms. Krause. I got that right.

21 Now, do any Commissioners have
22 questions for the four speakers, Mr. Monsma, Ms.

1 Boehm, Mr. Joubert, or Ms. Krause? Any questions
2 from the Commissioners for our speakers? Any
3 questions? Any questions?

4 Hearing none, we will move along to
5 the next cohort. We have Nathan Harrington,
6 Delores Bushong -- Oops. I'm getting a lot of
7 reverb. Nancy Sandburg and Guy Brandenburg. Mr.
8 Harrington --

9 MS. KOSTER: I think this might be
10 coming from Ms. Bushong.

11 CHAIR GOODMAN: I'll try again. No.

12 MR. MORGAN: Ms. Bushong, if you are
13 on, you should just be on one device, please.

14 MS. BUSHONG: I'm only on one device.
15 I don't have anything else on, except my phone.
16 I'll turn it off.

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: If we could, hmm.

18 MS. BUSHONG: I have nothing else on.

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Perhaps you could
20 turn off (audio interference) Harrington.

21 MS. BUSHONG: So you want me to do
22 mute?

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes. If you could
2 mute, Ms. Bushong, until Mr. Harrington is
3 finished with his comments. I'm just going to
4 try this.

5 MR. HARRINGTON: All right. I'm
6 ready.

7 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, Mr. Harrington.

8 MR. HARRINGTON: Hi. Thank you. My
9 name is Nathan Harrington. I'm the founder and
10 Executive Director of Ward 8 Woods Conservancy.
11 We work to improve the health, beauty, and public
12 enjoyment of urban forests on the east side of
13 D.C. in Wards 7 and 8.

14 So it's rare for me to speak out or
15 become involved in anything that's happening in
16 northwest as a general matter. Areas like Rock
17 Creek Park receive a lot more resources and
18 attention, and protection than do the park lands
19 on the east side of the city.

20 But usually I'm able to just kind of,
21 you know, stand back, you know, support other
22 groups who are doing works in those areas, and

1 assume that they're going to be okay. They don't
2 need the kind of intensive attention that we do
3 east of the river.

4 But this is an exception. Because
5 what's being proposed for the Rock Creek Golf
6 Course is truly egregious. It is bad enough that
7 we're losing thousands of mature trees each year
8 to development on private land.

9 In the work that we do I would never
10 dare to ask the Parks Service for permission to
11 cut down a tree. They are usually a strong
12 defender of the natural areas entrusted to us.

13 East of the river the Parks Service
14 will tell us we can't build a trail. We can't
15 put in a bench or a sign. We can't even dig a
16 hole to plant a tree, because the level of
17 protection of the historical and natural
18 resources is so high that you can't do any of
19 that without an extensive compliance process,
20 which takes years.

21 And yet here we have a proposal to cut
22 down more than 1,000, 1,200 trees, including 237

1 heritage trees, in a process that has been
2 rushed, with completely inadequate and un-diverse
3 public input.

4 As has been said the D.C. Heritage
5 Tree Law, enacted by the Mayor and Council makes
6 it illegal to cut down a heritage tree on
7 District land or on private land.

8 So if I were a land owner and I wanted
9 to cut down 237 trees I would have to pay over
10 \$100,000 dollars to have each and every one of
11 those relocated.

12 I understand that as a technical legal
13 matter those laws don't apply to federal park
14 lands. But think about this logically. To say
15 that federal park land, that the trees there
16 receive less protection is the sort of wide,
17 wanton deforestation that would never be allowed
18 on city owned land or private land.

19 It should not be on this land that
20 should be the lungs of the city, with the highest
21 level of protection. It's just outrageous.

22 The claim here, we just heard so much

1 gas lighting and misleading rhetoric. We're
2 being told that 200 trees are going to cover as
3 much acreage of canopy as the 1,200 that are
4 being lost.

5 They must think we're stupid. That is
6 crazy. That cannot possibly be true. D.C. can
7 ill afford to lose more trees in this time of
8 extreme heat.

9 I respect the goal of making this
10 course more playable. I have nothing against
11 golf. But as the other witnesses have said, they
12 need to go back to the drawing board and do this
13 in a much more sustainable and much more
14 inclusive way.

15 So I urge the NCPC to block this
16 reckless plan. Send National Links Trust back to
17 the drawing board, and create a plan that
18 actually strikes the correct balance. Because
19 this is not it.

20 And I'm frankly astonished that we're
21 even --

22 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

1 MR. HARRINGTON: -- having to have
2 this discussion. It's shameful.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Mr.
4 Harrington. We appreciate your comments. Thank
5 you very much. And now we have Ms. Bushong.

6 MS. BUSHONG: Yes. Good afternoon.
7 My name is Delores Bushong and I live in Ward 5.
8 And I am testifying today on behalf of Langdon
9 Park Forest Stewards.

10 I've long advocated for the protection
11 of heritage trees in the District of Columbia.
12 Heritage trees are those trees over 100 inches in
13 circumference. Health heritage trees cannot
14 legally be removed in the District of Columbia.

15 I look at their beauty and size in
16 awe. But it is not just their beauty that needs
17 to be considered. They provide an amazing amount
18 of benefits to all of us.

19 Why do these trees receive such great
20 protection in the District? Because our citizens
21 and our elected officials realize their
22 importance to all of us, no matter where in the

1 city we live.

2 Large canopy trees provide many
3 ecosystem benefits. Our local government
4 understands that to protect residents from the
5 effects of climate change they need to protect
6 the natural environment first.

7 Our futures are linked. Large canopy
8 trees mitigate the high temperatures that come
9 with a large amount of impervious pavement and
10 buildings that are part of living in a large
11 city.

12 They store carbon, help control storm
13 water runoff, provide cleaner air, provide
14 habitat and food for animals, and contribute to
15 our physical and emotional well-being.

16 I think the National Parks Service
17 should be just as concerned about global warming
18 and the need to protect citizens as the District
19 is, by protecting our large canopy trees.

20 Yet instead the National Parks Service
21 plans to cut down 1,200 trees, including special
22 and heritage size trees as part of their proposed

1 rehabilitation.

2 I understand that NPS land is not
3 District land in the legal sense. But the
4 benefits of these large canopy trees do not stop
5 at the boundary of District and federal property,
6 nor will the detrimental effects caused by the
7 removal of over 250 heritage trees. Air does not
8 stop at this artificial boundary. Water does not
9 stop at this boundary.

10 There was a white oak in my yard that
11 was over 140 inches in circumference. And I used
12 to think of it as my white oak. Then one day I
13 realized it wasn't mine.

14 It was on my property. But I was only
15 its guardian. For it provided benefits for the
16 entire community and city, not just shade and
17 beauty for me and my neighbors. Please think
18 about that. You're guardians. You don't own
19 them.

20 The entity that is asking for this
21 rehabilitation of the golf course is National
22 Links Trust. We believe they should be held to

1 the same laws as any developer in the district
2 when it comes to tree protection.

3 Trees, no matter where they're growing
4 within the District of Columbia, even on federal
5 land, provide ecosystem benefits to our entire
6 city, and should be protected.

7 NPS is only their guardian. I ask
8 them to stand up for trees, not cut them down.
9 Thank you very much.

10 MS. KOSTER: Chair Goodman, it's my
11 understanding that Ms. Sainburg is not here. And
12 I know you're muted right now. And Mr.
13 Brandenburg should be able to, I think, go ahead.

14 And we have allowed him to talk. Or he can
15 accept the change to being a panelist, so we can
16 hear him.

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay.

18 MR. BRANDENBURG: Okay. Can you hear
19 me?

20 MS. KOSTER: Yes.

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes. And thank you.

22 MR. BRANDENBURG: Oh, great. Okay. I

1 was having difficulty. Sorry about that.

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: All right, Mr.
3 Brandenburg, yes. You have five minutes because
4 you represent National Capital Astronomers. So
5 please go ahead.

6 MR. BRANDENBURG: Okay. Great. Okay.

7 I'm a DC native, current president of National
8 Capital Astronomers, or NCA. And that's a local
9 educational and scientific nonprofit astronomy
10 club. I also teach at the school that is
11 directly across 16th Street from the Rock Creek
12 Golf Course.

13 I, and every member of NCA that I've
14 spoken to, are opposed to installing a brightly
15 lit nighttime golf driving range there. Right
16 now, the golf course is one of the most nearly
17 pristine areas of District of Columbia.
18 Installing an illuminated nighttime golf driving
19 range will have a very severe impact on all night
20 loving creatures in that part of the park. And
21 those creatures include not only insects, birds,
22 and four-footed mammals and plants, but also

1 humans nearby.

2 One special reason for my testimony is
3 that members of my club have been literally
4 holding exploring the sky sessions for the public
5 inside Rock Creek Park every month except winter
6 in conjunction with the National Park Service
7 rangers that are stationed at the nature center
8 and the planetarium for over 75 continuous years,
9 only a short distance from this driving range.

10 So the field where we show planets,
11 stars, and galaxies to the public, at no cost,
12 including, just two days from now on May 4th if
13 the weather's clear, is located just south of the
14 intersection of Military Road and Oregon Avenue.

15 And according to Google Maps, it's about 4,000
16 feet, less than a mile away from these new
17 lights.

18 Now despite today's testimony about
19 Jamie Herr about the lights, which don't sound as
20 bad as I originally thought, I still fear that
21 those new lights will make observing the sky from
22 our site nearly impossible and also affect

1 residents along upper 16th Street.

2 And having a lit up installation like
3 this at Rock Creek Park contradicts the fact that
4 the Parks Service turned off all the street
5 lights in the park some years ago. I wish more
6 publicity had been given to this nighttime
7 illumination aspect. Previously, sorry, I'd only
8 heard about the cutting of mature trees. And I
9 think that more review of this issue is needed by
10 the local chapter of DarkSky International.

11 And yes, I'm fine. I love being
12 outside in a field at night during clear weather.

13 In fact, one of my first dates with my wife over
14 40 years ago was a nighttime stroll on a moonlit
15 golf course in College Park, serenaded by owls.
16 And nighttime's the only time when people can see
17 into the deep universe with their own eyes and
18 see the Milky Way and the stellar furnaces that
19 produce the very molecules that we are all
20 composed of.

21 But wasted, useless lighting at night,
22 or WULAN, like what I fear this proposed driving

1 range will cause, makes it impossible for people
2 to see any of this. And as an aside, even if
3 there are habitable planets out there somewhere,
4 laws of physics and the vast distances mean
5 there's no way at all ever to reach them. So
6 there's no planet B. And we do not need to pave
7 over, poison, and light up all of this planet,
8 and especially not this lovely national park.

9 So as a -- I've only been in the park,
10 sorry, in the golf course twice, myself. And I
11 find it's actually quite lovely. It's a series
12 of beautiful open meadows in the heart of the
13 nation's capital surrounded by large trees. Now
14 not being a golfer, the only changes that I would
15 recommend would be to remove all those invasive
16 alien vines, the mile-a-minute stuff or the
17 porcelain-berry, English ivy and so on that are
18 smothering so many of those trees.

19 But let us not bulldoze and light up
20 this lovely set of meadows. And I recommend
21 reviewing the lighting proposal again. Thank
22 you.

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.
2 Appreciate your comments, Mr. Brandenburg.

3 And now that cohort is finished
4 speaking. Do Commissioners have any questions
5 for these four people? Any questions? Any
6 questions? Hearing none, we're going to move
7 onto the next cohort.

8 Next is Joel Merriman, Sterling
9 Washington, Tema Masters, and Richard Lambert.
10 So we will begin with Joel Merriman.

11 Mr. Merriman, you have three minutes.

12 MR. MERRIMAN: Great. Thank you. And
13 good afternoon, Commissioners. My name is Joel
14 Merriman. I'm a DC resident and a wildlife
15 biologist with 20 years of experience in land use
16 planning, environmental impact assessment, and
17 habitat management. By my reading, it appears
18 that the Rock Creek Golf Course rehabilitation
19 plan may fail to meet the Commission's tree
20 retention and replacement policy on three counts.

21 First, the plan intends to only
22 replace healthy, native trees. I find no

1 exception in the policy for dead, dying,
2 unhealthy, or hazardous trees. Indeed, section
3 FEG3 specifically states that trees should be
4 replaced where they have died. It would be
5 logical that this would extend to dying or
6 otherwise perceived unhealthy trees.

7 Second, the proportion of trees deemed
8 unhealthy is unusually high. It raises the
9 question of whether some of these trees could be
10 retained through stand management, such as
11 removing vines. This warrants additional
12 scrutiny.

13 Third, I find no data or methodology
14 for how the acreage was calculated for the
15 eventual canopy of trees to be planted or what
16 this entails. The FONSI specifies 200 trees to
17 be planted, which would be woefully inadequate to
18 replace trees removed.

19 Today we heard about a forestry plan
20 and a 3 to 1 tree replacement ratio. This is new
21 news, and I have not seen this in any formal
22 documentation that I have reviewed. Information

1 about tree removal and replacement is unclear
2 and, in multiple places, appears contradictory.
3 Far too little information has been provided
4 regarding tree replacement, and this seems to be
5 evolving on the fly.

6 For the preceding reasons, I
7 respectfully submit that the project's adherence
8 to the Commission's tree retention and
9 replacement policy should be further scrutinized
10 and that the details be provided in formal
11 documentation for public review and comment.

12 The project proponents assert that the
13 removal of trees at the level planned is
14 necessary to rehabilitate the golf course. How
15 do we know that this is necessary? It's
16 difficult to believe that there is no other
17 option for course layout that would reduce
18 environmental impacts.

19 This is why alternatives are required,
20 which the project's proponents failed to do.
21 Alternatives offer the public a choice for how
22 our lands are managed. In contrast, the National

1 Park Service's preliminary renderings to improve
2 the Rock Creek Park's visitor center complex
3 included three alternative layouts, plus no
4 action. The golf course project, which is on a
5 much larger property and proposing considerably
6 greater impacts, should do no less.

7 I urge you not to approve the project
8 as currently proposed. Instead, please require
9 the project proponents to provide additional
10 alternatives for course layout and provide a
11 concrete plan to fully compensate for tree loss.

12 Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: And thank you very
14 much, Mr. Merriman. We appreciate your comments.

15 And now we have Sterling Washington.

16 You have three minutes to provide
17 testimony, please.

18 MR. WASHINGTON: Thank you. And good
19 afternoon. I am here to testify against the
20 current rehabilitation plans for the Rock Creek
21 Golf Course, which calls for the removal of 1,364
22 trees. As a longtime resident of 4A, I have

1 benefitted from the tree cover on the course and
2 surrounded areas and feel that losing it is
3 unnecessary and very harmful.

4 No doubt, some who testify today will
5 try to convince us that trees on the course are
6 currently dying or that heritage trees provide
7 few benefits. On the contrary, even dying trees
8 provide unique habitats for myriad organisms,
9 from fungi to birds to amphibians. Trees
10 continue to provide nutrients and create humus,
11 which is invaluable to the growth of new trees,
12 not that most of the trees on the course are
13 dying.

14 In terms of heritage trees, of which
15 there are 237 on the course, their benefits are
16 innumerable. Older trees sequester carbon, fix
17 nitrogen levels, create below-ground conditions
18 that are ideal for the growth of beneficial
19 lichen, which also sequester carbon.

20 According to Peter Wohlleben in his
21 landmark book, "The Hidden Life of Trees," trees
22 nurture the saplings, their saplings, allowing

1 them an edge in their early years. In addition,
2 older trees provide superior genetics to their
3 offspring as they themselves possess
4 characteristics allowing them to weather
5 resistance in an urban environment. Trees help
6 prevent overpopulation of animal species and
7 provide a better microclimate for animal species
8 than newer forests do.

9 Therefore, the National Park Service's
10 FONSI on April 17th was puzzling and falls short
11 of the promise of environmental sustainability
12 and cannot be fixed by environmental education
13 programs. As it relates to the current plan and
14 the National Link's petition, I would argue that
15 the Rock Creek Golf Course plan can be altered to
16 maintain the trees.

17 Unfortunately, the minor changes made
18 to the plan after blowback from the FONSI calls
19 for the removal of even more trees. The FONSI is
20 noncompliant with the law by providing
21 alternatives to the -- by not providing
22 alternatives to the current plan as dictated by

1 the environmental -- the National Environmental
2 Policy Act after several legal precedents
3 established that, namely Klickitat County vs.
4 Columbia River Gorge Commission and Friends of
5 Congaree Swamp vs. FHWA.

6 The current plan has no viable
7 alternative project configuration. And this at a
8 time that we are facing environmental challenges
9 that the presence of those trees can mitigate. I
10 believe that the changes to the current plan can
11 be made so that we truly have a win-win scenario,
12 protected trees and a rehabilitated golf course
13 that is ADA accessible.

14 This only takes the willingness of
15 part of the National Parks Service, the National
16 Links Trust, the community and stakeholder
17 organizations like the Rock Creek Conservancy and
18 Casey Trees. Therefore, I urge NCPC to reject
19 the current proposal until such time as the tree
20 survey results can be evaluated, the current plan
21 has some viable alternatives, and the community
22 can truly weigh in at that time. Thank you very

1 much.

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: And thank you, Mr.
3 Masters. We appreciate your participation.

4 MR. WASHINGTON: Mr. Washington.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: I apologize. Mr.
6 Washington. I'm moving to Mr. Masters. I do
7 apologize.

8 Mr. Masters, you have three minutes to
9 provide testimony.

10 Thank you, Mr. Washington, for
11 participating.

12 MR. MASTERS: Thank you, Chairman.
13 And thank you to all the Commissioners. I'm Tema
14 Masters. I've been a DC native, grew up in DC,
15 didn't pick up golf until later going into high
16 school. And I actually had my very first
17 experience with Rock Creek in my high school
18 tryouts for St. John's College High School.

19 I believe the Rock Creek plans are
20 going to bring accessible golf for all walks of
21 life. Me, coming from a family that was a
22 working family, we did not belong to a club. We

1 did -- a lot of the golf courses around here are
2 private or semi-private. They have initiation
3 fees that are astronomical. People can't afford
4 to be a part of these clubs.

5 Rock Creek, Langston, and East
6 Potomac, they provide that for the people. For
7 me, it was beneficial because I was able to go,
8 right from St. Johns over to Rock Creek. It was
9 nice to be able to actually have a facility close
10 because I took public transportation to school.
11 I had to have my clubs on the bus or the metro
12 every day when I would transport.

13 So it was nice to be able to go there
14 because when we would have high school matches
15 out at Maryland or something or at different
16 courses, we had buses provided. But it only was
17 for matches. For practice, we had to get there
18 on our own leg. Rock Creek being right there was
19 easy access. And the course is, I mean, amazing.

20 I mean, the bones of that facility are just
21 amazing.

22 And what the renovation and the

1 rehabilitation is going to bring, it's going to
2 bring so much positive outlook for the community.

3 The communities are going to be able to get
4 stronger, they're going to be able to have a
5 place where they can come and just hang out.

6 Golf courses are meant for people to be able to
7 play golf, learn the game of golf, but also a
8 place to go and socialize.

9 It's going to be an amazing community
10 center for all of the people that live around the
11 area. Living in Ward 6, we only have nothing
12 apartment complexes, housing, and housing.
13 Having that kind of park right there where people
14 live, it's going to be amazing.

15 And just the next junior golfers, as
16 I'm a golf professional, teaching professional,
17 it's amazing. We want this. The growth of golf
18 is through the next generation. It's not you,
19 me, and everyone else. It's the young kids
20 today. That is who's going to keep the business
21 of golf moving forward and making it as prominent
22 as is from the COVID boom. I really think this

1 is going to be amazing.

2 I know we talk a lot about all the
3 trees that are going to be cut down. But these
4 new 200 native trees are going to be planted.
5 They're going to provide so much canopy for
6 golfers. There's going to be plenty of trees.
7 Sometimes you have to think, right? I understand
8 taking a bunch of trees out.

9 But the way that the plan is, these
10 trees are going to provide so much shade and
11 cover at the facility that you're going to be
12 growing, actually, the amount of space and
13 coverage from these big, natural trees.

14 I also think it provides an amazing
15 opportunity for First Tee of Greater Washington,
16 DC, as they're a nonprofit youth development
17 organization. They're teaching life skills
18 through the game of golf. They are doing the
19 work that everyone in the community should do.
20 They are changing people and creating game
21 change. That is the whole purpose of what Rock
22 Creek, NLT, and First Tee. They want to bring

1 community together.

2 And I believe this plan is going to
3 bring community together. And it's going to
4 enhance everything. The light is going to become
5 just amazing. The park, being able to go, having
6 a natural height, being able to walk around, see
7 golfers, see a hundred-foot green that you could
8 just putt on and have a drink, relax, and enjoy
9 on a Friday evening. That's why I believe it's
10 an amazing opportunity. And this project is
11 going to be so cool when it comes through. Thank
12 you.

13 MS. KOSTER: Madam Chair, you're on
14 mute.

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: I do appreciate that.
16 Thank you. I'm sorry. And now we are at the
17 point where we ask these four speakers if we have
18 any questions for them.

19 MR. LAMBERT: Oh, one more. One
20 more, I think.

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Mr. Lambert. Number
22 4.

1 MR. LAMBERT: Thank you. I
2 appreciate that.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: I appreciate all
4 this.

5 MR. MASTERS: Perfect pass-off,
6 Richard, to you.

7 MR. LAMBERT: Thank you, Tema.
8 Appreciate it. Good afternoon, Commissioners.
9 My name is Richard Lambert. I live in Kansas
10 Avenue in Ward 4.

11 As a Black father in DC with two Black
12 boys, 11 and 5 years old, who are passionate
13 about golf, who are incredibly excited about the
14 Rock Creek Golf Course rebuilding project, this
15 initiative goes far beyond simply renovating a
16 course. It's about unlocking doors and
17 opportunity for communities of color who are
18 woefully under represented in golf, the business,
19 and places of power, and on this call.

20 I think about the words of President
21 Eisenhower who says you can learn a lot about a
22 person in a few hours on a golf course. This

1 rings true. Golf offers a unique space to build
2 relationships, the kind that can lead to
3 opportunities often out of reach for Black and
4 Latino communities.

5 Consider what President Clinton once
6 remarked. Sometimes the most important things in
7 politics are discussed playing golf. These
8 informal conversations can shape careers and
9 policies. And Black and Latino youth often lack
10 access to these circles. Some on this call may
11 not understand that.

12 Imagine the possibilities. This
13 project will not only create 60 new jobs,
14 federalize green spaces, and plant new trees.
15 But it will also provide a platform for our
16 youth, like my Black son, Tyler, who dreams of
17 playing college and professional golf, and also
18 wants to be an entrepreneur, to connect with
19 mentors and build networks that can shape their
20 future.

21 Speaker Pelosi perfectly captured the
22 essence of golf's potential when she stated golf

1 is a great way to bond with people. This project
2 is about building those bonds, fostering a sense
3 of belonging and affirm that the playing field in
4 DC becomes a little more level.

5 The National Links Trust vision goes
6 beyond this golf course itself. The project will
7 also include multi-use trails, a picnic pavilion,
8 and crucially, a dedicated headquarters for First
9 Tee Greater Washington, DC, an organization
10 committed to empowering youth through golf.

11 The presence of First Tee within the
12 project adds another layer of transformative
13 potential. Right here in DC, First Tee has
14 impacted 2,000 young people annually through its
15 on-course programming. And it's helping 200,000
16 people, young people through its school
17 programming. This rehabilitation project,
18 coupled with the unwavering dedication of First
19 Tee presents a unique opportunity to level the
20 playing field for our children, not just in golf,
21 but in life itself.

22 In closing, this project isn't just

1 about improving a golf course. It's about giving
2 our children, especially those in underserved
3 communities, a fighting chance to succeed in a
4 sport and establish relationships that have
5 historically been out of reach for us. So let's
6 support this initiative and ensure that every
7 child, regardless of background, has the
8 opportunity to thrive on the golf course and
9 beyond. Sorry for the trees. My kids mean much
10 more to me right now. Thank you.

11 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
12 Mr. Lambert. Thanks for participating. Thanks
13 for keeping me on task here.

14 Now we can ask questions from the
15 Commissioners. For questions from the
16 Commissioners for this, these four speakers, that
17 would be Mr. Merriman, Mr. Washington, Mr.
18 Masters, and Mr. Lambert. Any questions from the
19 Commissioners? Any questions? Any questions?

20 Hearing none, we're going to move on.
21 I want to thank you all for your participation.
22 Next we have Benjamin Foster, Jane Sherman,

1 David Roberts, and Greg Van Houten. First, we
2 have Mr. Benjamin Foster.

3 You have three minutes for your
4 testimony, please. I see you, Mr. Foster.

5 Julia, is he allowed as a panelist?

6 MS. KOSTER: Why don't we proceed to
7 the next one and then circle back?

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Jane Sherman.

9 Ms. Sherman? Would you like to begin,
10 please?

11 MS. SHERMAN: Yes. Thank you for this
12 opportunity to testify. I've been a resident of
13 Ward 4 for 26 years. My youngest son developed
14 an interest in golf in 8th grade. And the easy
15 access and affordability of the Rock Creek Golf
16 Course enabled him and many of his high school
17 friends to learn how to play. I agree that the
18 course has been long neglected and needs care.
19 However, I agree with Rock Creek Conservancy,
20 Nature Forward, and Casey Trees that the plant
21 removal of almost 1,200 trees is unnecessary and
22 unwarranted.

1 In my immediate neighborhood, Maret
2 School recently cut down over 60 mature trees,
3 many of which were healthy. The result has been
4 a dramatic and palpable increase in temperatures
5 in our neighborhood. Removing so many trees from
6 Rock Creek will add to urban heat, both by
7 removing canopy and by eliminating the natural
8 cooling effects of transpiration.

9 In addition, I have serious concerns
10 about the effect of the tree removal on native
11 wildlife and migratory birds. Even dead and
12 dying trees provide critical habitat for woodland
13 creatures.

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Julia, could you --
15 oh, you're mute now. Thank you.

16 MS. SHERMAN: I ask the National Park
17 Service to work with Casey Trees to eliminate all
18 unnecessary tree removal in a revised plan. I
19 also ask for a commitment not to use any plastic
20 grass as part of the renovation. All artificial
21 turf contains PFAS, forever chemicals which are
22 linked to a host of adverse health effects, even

1 with minimal exposure.

2 Last month, the EPA introduced
3 stringent drinking water standards, limiting PFAS
4 to 0 to 4 parts per trillion. Plastic also
5 leaches microplastics and nanoplastics into the
6 environment. Microplastics are now being found
7 in many of our freshwater fish populations. Any
8 use of plastic, any use of plastic will increase
9 the toxic load of PFAS and microplastics leaching
10 into Rock Creek.

11 Finally, I ask that National Links
12 make a commitment to organic management of an
13 entirely natural grass course. Natural turf
14 management has made enormous strides, and there
15 are many examples of successful organic grass
16 athletic facilities. Resources supporting
17 organic management abound, including TURI, the
18 Toxics Use Reduction Institute, at the University
19 of Massachusetts Lowell, Osborne Organics, who
20 has worked with the NPS in the past, and Beyond
21 Pesticides, based right here in DC.

22 I hope National Links will commit not

1 to use toxic pesticides, herbicides, and other
2 chemicals in the Rock Creek water shed. The
3 National Park Service has an obligation to lead
4 the way on all aspects of environmental
5 stewardship. I hope they will find a way to
6 rehabilitate the Rock Creek Course in a more
7 environmentally sensitive way. Thank you.

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you for your
9 input, Ms. Sherman.

10 And is Mr. Foster live yet? I don't
11 see a microphone there.

12 So I'm going to keep going and ask,
13 Mr. Roberts, please, if you could provide your
14 three minutes of testimony.

15 And I'll get back to you, Mr. Foster,
16 when we can get you on. Thank you.

17 Mr. Roberts, please.

18 MR. ROBERTS: Thank you very much.
19 Members of the Commission, it's my pleasure to
20 address you today as you consider plans for the
21 course at Rock Creek Park. I urge you to approve
22 these plans without hesitation.

1 The opportunity for public comment now
2 and the ongoing public engagement throughout this
3 process is a testament to your mission, the work
4 of the National Park Service, and to the
5 seriousness with which the National Links Trust
6 understands their role as stewards of these three
7 courses located on National Park Service land. I
8 commend everyone involved for your commitment to
9 this process and to ensuring that the many
10 individuals and organizations with interest in
11 this project have the opportunity to engage in
12 meaningful ways.

13 As a D2 resident, a dad, and yes, a
14 golfer, it has also been extremely frustrating to
15 watch as organized interests continue to argue
16 for the preservation of something that only
17 exists as it does today because Rock Creek and
18 the other courses in DC were, for decades,
19 treated the same as the concession stands on the
20 National Mall.

21 To be clear, many of those arguing
22 against the removal of trees as part of this

1 project are not just arguing against this land.
2 They are arguing against the very existence of a
3 golf course at Rock Creek Park. If it was the
4 intent of the National Park Service to maintain
5 the course at Rock Creek Park as it has become, a
6 maintenance nightmare and a missed opportunity,
7 they would never have engaged with the National
8 Links Trust in the first place.

9 But for as much as people may want to
10 talk about preserving what stands now, that was
11 never the intent. The intent was always to
12 rehabilitate the course at Rock Creek Park into
13 what it once was and what it should be, a beacon
14 of affordable, accessible golf in our nation's
15 capital. Many people today will talk about
16 maintaining the beauty of Rock Creek Park, and
17 rightfully so. It is an oasis of opportunity,
18 surrounded by the vibrancy of urban life. That
19 there is inherent tension between those two
20 opposing force is understandable.

21 But to me, the real beauty of having a
22 place like Rock Creek Park in an urban center

1 isn't just the trees or the wildlife or even the
2 sense of escape. It's that Rock Creek Park
3 offers a little something for everyone. Want to
4 hike along a stream, bike for miles without
5 seeing a car, have a birthday party, a picnic,
6 ride a horse, or explore the remnants of a Civil
7 War fort? Head to Rock Creek Park. It truly has
8 something for everyone.

9 And as much as some may want you to
10 forget or ignore, that something includes a golf
11 course, where golf was meant to be experienced
12 and enjoyed by everyone. It's easy to paint
13 golf, and by association golfers, with a broad
14 brush. It's easy to point to the ring of pricy
15 private courses that surround DC as an example of
16 golf's exclusionary past. But golf in DC is
17 anything but.

18 Rock Creek, East Potomac, and
19 Langston are great equalizers in this city. No
20 matter who you are, where you work, where you
21 grew up, what car, bike, or public transportation
22 you rode to get there, when you pay your

1 extremely modest fee, the course is yours.
2 Within a park that offers something for everyone,
3 golfers deserve a course that is accessible,
4 affordable, and engaging.

5 And the local community deserves a
6 place that is open and inviting for golfers and
7 non-golfers alike. The existing course with its
8 overgrown corridor, is not that. It is a shell
9 of its historic self, and it deserves better.
10 The plan proposed by the National Links Trust
11 does not take away anyone else's something. It
12 rightfully restores one of the many somethings
13 that Rock Creek Park offers.

14 This plan is a continuation of the
15 work put in motion when the National Links Trust
16 responded to the National Parks Service's plea
17 for help to rediscover these courses' place in
18 history and rethink the fundamental way in which
19 the course at Rock Creek Park was maintained and
20 managed. The National Links Trust has followed
21 the rules.

22 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

1 MR. ROBERTS: They have been
2 responsive to public comments, and they have been
3 unwavering in their commitment to create
4 community spaces that welcome all.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.

6 MR. ROBERTS: The National Park
7 Service did its job in collecting the right
8 partner. It's time to let the National Links
9 Trust do their job in restoring Rock Creek.

10 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Mr.
11 Roberts. Thank you very much. And I'm going to
12 jump back here.

13 Do I see, is Benjamin Foster online?
14 I don't see him right now. So I'm going to move
15 to Mr. Van Houten next.

16 Thank you for coming. And you have
17 three minutes to provide your testimony. And
18 we'll still circle back to Mr. Foster if we can
19 find him. Thank you.

20 MR. VAN HOUTEN: Yeah. Thanks for
21 having me. I live in Brookland. I've been there
22 six years. I have a two-year-old who's already

1 using his plastic golf clubs and Turkey Thicket
2 across the street. And I can't wait to take him
3 to Rock Creek Park at the -- to the refurbished
4 golf course. I strongly support the project.

5 In my opinion, we need more places
6 that bring people together. When I go to the
7 public golf courses in DC, I play alongside
8 people who don't look like me, who don't think
9 like me, and it's great. It's a great melting
10 pot. And I can't wait for my son to experience
11 that at these courses when he's old enough to be
12 there.

13 If the trees are not removed, the
14 property and all of its benefits will fall into
15 further disrepair and will die. It's -- in its
16 current state, it's junk. Okay? It's
17 embarrassing. And it suggests that you need to
18 live in Potomac, Maryland, be rich and white to
19 play golf. That's not how it should be.

20 And all great things, all great
21 development often comes at a cost. And in my
22 opinion, the cost, the loss of trees, the minimal

1 light pollution, is more than outweighed by the
2 benefits that I just mentioned. And I'll leave
3 it there. Thank you.

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
5 Mr. Van Houten. We appreciate your input today,
6 and I'm going to again circle back to Benjamin
7 Foster.

8 Is, Ms. Koster, do you see him
9 anywhere online here? I could tell he was --

10 MS. KOSTER: No. On the --

11 CHAIR GOODMAN: -- yeah. He was
12 trying to get in.

13 MS. KOSTER: He was trying. So why
14 don't we proceed. And I'll have staff reach out
15 and see if we can connect them.

16 CHAIR GOODMAN: Sure. If we can
17 include him before the --

18 MS. KOSTER: Yeah.

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: -- this testimony is
20 finished, we'd like to include him. So thank
21 you, Ms. Koster.

22 Do Commissioners have any questions

1 for these three people, Ms. Sherman, Mr. Roberts,
2 or Mr. Van Houten? Any questions.
3 Commissioners, any questions? Hearing none,
4 we'll move on then.

5 And next we have Daniel Wolkoff, Greg
6 Schmidt, Mr. Peter Jones, and Ms. Paula Edwards.

7 So we will begin with Mr. Wolkoff.

8 You have three minutes to provide
9 testimony. Thank you for coming.

10 Okay. Mr. Wolkoff is not here. I
11 don't see him, or -- yes, I do see him.

12 Mr. Wolkoff, you're on mute. Would
13 you like to unmute and speak? Mr. Wolkoff?

14 Okay. I'm going to move onto Mr.
15 Schmidt. And, Greg, I see you here.

16 MR. WOLKOFF: Hello?

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: Oh, okay. Mr.
18 Wolkoff, you're here.

19 MR. WOLKOFF: Thank you.

20 CHAIR GOODMAN: Sure.

21 MR. WOLKOFF: Thank you, Chair
22 Goodmann.

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: You bet.

2 MR. WOLKOFF: All right. I'm a
3 historic preservation specialist with Adams
4 Morgan Stained Glass. I spent eight years trying
5 to save McMillan Park from the massive
6 development, the monstrosity on Michigan Avenue.

7 You are the stewards of a future for
8 posterity to live in a healthy environment. I
9 see the conflict on your faces. I went through
10 eight years of the pressure of big business,
11 corruption, and how much money is made on these
12 projects. You're intelligent, and I don't love
13 to see the compromises you're going to be making.

14 It's obvious.

15 We have to adapt our priorities to the
16 present reality. We have to find alternatives.
17 There are two other golf courses. We need to
18 return our lands to native plants. We have to
19 have a healthy ecosystem. We have to adapt and
20 reuse properly and intelligently. And the DC
21 government obviously isn't.

22 Twenty years ago, I testified to

1 transition away from gas-powered lawn equipment.

2 This Rock Creek Golf Course will be nothing but
3 gas-powered lawn equipment. All right? So we're
4 going to change carbon fixing to carbon
5 emissions. Of course the NPS is being ingenuous
6 all the time. It's obvious. We -- 20 years ago.

7 And we didn't transition away from gas-powered
8 lawn equipment. Everywhere we go, the District
9 is mowing lawns.

10 All right. I've watched the
11 corruption to push the McMillan development
12 ahead. If your Commission approves it, okay?
13 Thirty thousand more cars will be coming to North
14 Capitol. When -- a young 28-year-old arborist,
15 Tim Clark, who lived on North Capital, and he
16 supported McMillan Park, he died of asthma.

17 The pollution from these projects is
18 unacceptable. We're not giving us clean air,
19 clean water. It's funny, they're going to remove
20 the dead trees. Everyone knows, dead trees are
21 part of the environment. Your Commission needs
22 to be in the reality, the reality of what's

1 really going on on this planet: wildfires, dead
2 animals, mass extinctions, floods. Maybe some of
3 your houses need to be wiped out in a flood
4 before you'll recognize the real responsibility
5 you have is not to corruption, not to National
6 Park Service, which is being totally ingenuous
7 and breaking all kinds of laws.

8 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

9 MR. WOLKOFF: All right? Golfing is
10 not a priority.

11 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Mr.
12 Wolkoff.

13 MR. WOLKOFF: Golfing is a nice word
14 for a minority of people, a tiny --

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

16 MR. WOLKOFF: -- fraction of the
17 population.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Mr. Wolkoff, we
19 appreciate your comments. Thank you.

20 Mr. Schmidt, you have three minutes to
21 provide your testimony.

22 MR. SCHMIDT: Thank you. My name is

1 Greg Schmidt. I live in Chevy Chase, DC. And
2 I'm honored to testify in support of a plan
3 which, I believe, will provide one of the most
4 significant improvements in the quality of life
5 for DC residents, young and old, since I first
6 played Rock Creek Golf Course in 1966.

7 I was a member of the, then Wilson,
8 now Jackson-Reed High School golf team, for whom
9 Rock Creek was our home course. One of my
10 fondest memories comes from being a member of the
11 '68 Wilson team that won the city championship
12 over Anacostia High at East Potomac Golf Course.

13 I'm sad to say that in recent years,
14 public school golf in DC has largely fallen away.

15 I think there's a vigorous private school
16 program, but not the public courses -- not the
17 public schools. I believe only one DCPS team
18 played in the state championships last year. But
19 the restoration of these three public courses
20 could catalyze the revival of public school golf.

21 Rock Creek Golf Course in particular
22 is surrounded by at least four public high

1 schools, three on the east side of the park, plus
2 Jackson-Reed. With Langston and East Potomac
3 serving the southern end of the city and with the
4 plan to not only improve the courses but to then
5 add practice facilities, but to make them as
6 affordable and accessible as possible, I'm
7 optimistic that NLT, with its partnership with
8 First Tee can jumpstart public high school golf
9 throughout the city.

10 The NLT plan for Rock Creek is also
11 ideally configured to serve my neighborhood with
12 its book-ended demographics. We have both the
13 largest concentration of seniors in the city and,
14 because of a recent influx of young families, the
15 most overcrowded schools. There are six over-65
16 golfers on my block alone and now a couple of
17 teenagers learning the game as well. And I know
18 a course with a par 3 and, crucially, a driving
19 range will optimize the experience of both of
20 these constituencies.

21 I am also confident that NLT's plans
22 will result in a far richer and healthier forest

1 with more native trees and more lively meadow
2 land than were present when the course was first
3 reclaimed from a farm a hundred years ago and,
4 indeed, at any point since then.

5 Forests, as we have learned, once
6 materially altered, require active management.
7 And active management requires financial
8 resources. For Rock Creek, a critical source of
9 these resources will come from the driving range,
10 which I can assure you will draw vast numbers
11 from DC and nearby Maryland golfers, whose only
12 alternatives now are places like Potomac or
13 College Park or going downtown to Langston and
14 East Potomac.

15 In short, this is a very strong
16 proposal from a very strong proponent that will
17 have a great impact on our city and our region.
18 And I urge you to endorse it. Thank you.

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
20 Mr. Schmidt. Thank you for participating today.

21 And now we have Mr. Jones.

22 Mr. Jones, are you prepared?

1 MR. JONES: Yes.

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay.

3 MR. JONES: Thank you very much. Good
4 afternoon. My name is Peter Jones. And I speak
5 today in support of the Rock Creek Golf Course
6 renovations. I look forward to introducing my
7 two young daughters to butterflies in the
8 pollinator gardens, nature trails, the putting
9 green, and yes, the golf courses.

10 But I also want to speak in support of
11 returning a DC gem to its historical era. Like a
12 Wardman rowhouse missing its front porch, Rock
13 Creek Golf Course lacks the playability and
14 conditions envisioned by architect William Flynn.

15 Flynn is one of the greatest golf architects of
16 his generation, having designed dozens of courses
17 that consistently find their way on top 10 lists,
18 including Shinnecock Hills, host of numerous
19 major tournament like the 2026 US Open. Most of
20 these Flynn courses are private country clubs,
21 available only to those that can afford them.

22 Rock Creek has offered many, many

1 thousands of DMV residents an affordable
2 opportunity to play a course whose design and
3 location is truly unique over the past 100 years.

4 Due to deferred maintenance and overgrown
5 conditions, the course has steadily deteriorated
6 and received less and less use, even hindering
7 management of the other DC public courses.

8 Golf in Rock Creek has always been
9 controversial. Woodrow Wilson called it an
10 unforgivable piece of vandalism to have sporting
11 facilities in Rock Creek before being informed
12 that the land purchased for the course is already
13 cleared former farmland.

14 Yet, golf amongst the trees and beauty
15 of Rock Creek National Park has also been wildly
16 popular. A year after the full course opened in
17 1926, it hosted 75,000 rounds of golf. It has
18 hosted Supreme Court justices; US presidents, it
19 was actually one of President Harding's final
20 rounds before he passed away; and regular folks
21 from all over DC.

22 It has also been altered over the

1 years, first for the expansion of Military Road,
2 and later by various course operators. Without
3 modifying Military Road, of course, the original
4 Flynn full course cannot be restored. And I
5 believe the proposed plan preserves many of
6 Flynn's best original full corridors with vastly
7 improved and sustainable facilities.

8 It's fitting that Gil Hanse, one of
9 the great golf architects of our time, will be
10 given the opportunity to restore Flynn's Rock
11 Creek. Hanse, who designed a course for the 2016
12 Rio Olympics, will provide his signature touch on
13 a world-class short course while preserving space
14 for non-golf activities and habitat of the
15 footprint of the original back 9.

16 When completed, Rock Creek Golf Course
17 will change from underutilized, overgrown space,
18 to a world-class course, suitable to be played by
19 presidents, pros, and neighborhood kids picking
20 up the game through First Tee. I'm excited to
21 enjoy what will likely be the most affordable
22 Flynn or Gil Hanse course in the country, which

1 is a testament to public golf in our nation's
2 capital, and all without any taxpayer dollars.
3 Thank you.

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
5 Mr. Jones. We appreciate your comments and your
6 participation. Moving on to Ms. Edwards.

7 Ms. Paula Edwards, I see you there, if
8 you would like to unmute.

9 MS. EDWARDS: Hello?

10 CHAIR GOODMAN: Hello, yes.

11 MS. EDWARDS: Oh, hi. Thank you. My
12 name is -- okay. My name is Paula Edwards. I'm
13 the Commissioner for ANC 4A-01. My comments are
14 my own and do not represent my constituents or
15 the Commission. I'm a native Washingtonian who
16 grew up in the Shepherd Park neighborhood north
17 of the golf course. I'm very familiar with the
18 golf course when it was more fully used. I'm
19 still a frequent user of the park and its trails
20 and appreciate any efforts to maintain and
21 improve it.

22 This discussion mimics the discussion

1 of the early 20th century with conservationists
2 versus the preservationists when this golf course
3 was designed. Indeed, the Organic Act of 1916
4 still informs much of our current discussion.

5 I have read the report and recent
6 studies on park management and environmental
7 diversity. This situation offers no course of
8 action that will not have negative effects. I'm
9 impressed by the acknowledgment of the down sides
10 of the various options and the efforts of risk
11 mitigation. But specific methodology is needed.

12 I'm not an expert in forestry
13 management and environmental effects and defer to
14 those who are. I know that there are a variety
15 of opinions on this matter. But I urge the
16 Commission to follow the science in making this
17 decision. I think it's essential to quantify the
18 effect of the trees being removed in light of
19 recent research regarding the effects of dense
20 forests on climate change mitigation. I think we
21 need much less rhetoric and more science.

22 As others have pointed out, this will

1 affect less than one-half of 1 percent of the
2 total tree canopy of Rock Creek Park. It is
3 equally important to ascertain that the
4 mitigation plan will ameliorate the --

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Diane or Julia?
6 Thank you.

7 MS. KOSTER: Go ahead. I apologize.
8 Go ahead. Go ahead, Paula. Sorry for that
9 interruption.

10 MS. EDWARDS: Will ameliorate the
11 removal of existing trees to the greatest extent
12 possible if that's the option chosen.

13 I believe that bringing this facility
14 back to its usefulness will enhance the
15 educational, recreational, and employment
16 opportunities open to the neighborhood and will
17 benefit young people who need more outside
18 recreation. The devil is in the details and NPS
19 should work with our community and the DC
20 government agency City Wildlife and other
21 nonprofit groups to the greatest extent possible
22 to ensure that whatever option is chosen is

1 successful.

2 Again, there's no perfect solution
3 here. The existing situation is the result of
4 decades of neglect. Over-management poses its
5 own risks. Some of us are expressing our fears
6 and concerns, and they should be taken seriously.

7 However, this can be a wonderful opportunity to
8 develop a model for human recreation and natural
9 coexistence to arrive at the best solution
10 possible. I urge that we work out the details
11 and move forward. Thank you.

12 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
13 Ms. Edwards. We appreciate your comments.

14 I would like now to take a moment and
15 see if any of the Commissioners have questions
16 for any of the four speakers, Mr. Wolkoff, Mr.
17 Schmidt, Mr. Jones, or Ms. Edwards. Do we have
18 any questions from the Commissioners? Any
19 questions? Hearing no questions, we're going to
20 move onto the next cohort. And that group
21 includes Mr. Adrian Stewart, Mr. Clint Sanchez,
22 Mr. Aaron Rosenthal, Mr. Brian Wee. If we could

1 please begin with Mr. Stewart.

2 MR. STEWART: Yes.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: And you have three
4 moments. Or, three moments. Three minutes.
5 Thank you.

6 MR. STEWART: Yes. Thank you. And
7 thank you for having me. As you mentioned, my
8 name is Adrian Stewart. I am a chef instructor
9 at Crossland High School and an adjunct professor
10 at Prince George's Community College. I don't
11 live in DC. But as a child, I grew up at all
12 three of the golf courses in Langston, more
13 specifically, Langston and Rock Creek.

14 I heard someone mention earlier, golf
15 is just a sport. It's leisure. It's things like
16 that. For me growing up, that was not the case.

17 Without these golf courses, I honestly would not
18 -- I do not know where I would be. My parents
19 were very hardworking. They used to drop us off
20 at the golf course in the morning and pick us up
21 in the evening.

22 And programs like the Vardaman Caddy

1 Program at Langston, programs like that kept me
2 out of trouble, kept a lot of my friends out of
3 trouble. And now I'm in a position where I can
4 teach these -- our young people about golf and
5 how to be better people. And programs like the
6 Vardaman group helped me to kind of connect those
7 students to that.

8 I also started a golf team at
9 Crossland High School this past school year for
10 the first time with the help of National Trust
11 Links and Langston Golf Course and Rock Creek.
12 So I just want to let everyone know, I am a huge
13 supporter of the plan. I believe it's
14 detrimental to our young people, especially in DC
15 with the crime rates being astronomical. And
16 yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much for your
17 time.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.

19 We appreciate your comments, Mr. Stewart. Thank
20 you for providing testimony today.

21 Mr. Clint Sanchez, you will have five
22 minutes, as you are representing the First Tee.

1 MR. SANCHEZ: Thank you, Madam Chair
2 Goodman. It's good to be here. Yes, I am the
3 executive director of the First Tee, Greater
4 Washington, DC chapter. We're a youth
5 development organization that teaches golf and
6 life skills.

7 As Damian Cosby mentioned earlier, we
8 are in our 25th year. So a big year for First
9 Tee, a 25th anniversary. And we've had a lot of
10 impact in that time. And our mission really is
11 about impact. It's to impact the lives of young
12 people by providing educational opportunities to
13 build character and instill life-enhancing values
14 through the game of golf. So the last word of
15 our mission is golf for a lot of different -- a
16 lot of different things before the game of golf.

17 But I'm here to talk about the First
18 Tee and the overall project. We've had a lot of
19 growth in those 25 years. Twenty-five years ago,
20 we were just at Langston Golf Course, historic
21 Langston Golf Course. We had 90 young people in
22 our program. And now we're up to 2,000 in our

1 program, as Damian and Tema both mentioned. And
2 700, over 700 of those young people are in DC
3 alone.

4 We provide programming at all three
5 courses in DC and as well as courses in northern
6 Virginia and Montgomery County and Prince
7 George's County, Maryland. Seventy percent of
8 the young people in our program are diverse.
9 We're one of the most diverse chapters in the
10 country. There's 150 chapters in the First Tee
11 total across the country.

12 So with that, we were really excited
13 in 2020 when this bid came up for the National
14 Park Service RFP. And when National Links Trust
15 -- we were very supportive of the National Links
16 Trust then. And when they received the bid, we
17 were really excited about the opportunity that
18 they had here, which you've heard a lot about
19 today.

20 We remain excited about that. And we
21 were really excited a couple weeks ago when they
22 had received their FONSI approval and the finding

1 of no significant impact, which is a big step in
2 this process. I can tell you that National Links
3 Trust has been very discerning and patient with
4 this process and very open-minded, which we've
5 heard a lot of that today.

6 So this project really will have a
7 great impact on the youth in the area to have a
8 dedicated learning center for the First Tee and
9 the kids in our program. It'll really allow us
10 to serve our young people and serve them better.

11 So we're excited about the opportunity to have a
12 dedicated learning center, which will all be
13 housed within the Rock Creek Park Golf Course as
14 part of a new clubhouse the National Links Trust
15 is going to build.

16 And it'll help us really promote our
17 mission of preserving and renovating the historic
18 golf course that's at Rock Creek. So we're
19 really excited about that opportunity to have
20 that safe space, a place where our kids can call
21 home. We've never had that. And I think to have
22 it at Rock Creek would be a tremendous

1 opportunity. So I appreciate everyone's time
2 that spoke on that behalf today.

3 As Damian mentioned, we'll be able to
4 triple our impact right here at Rock Creek.
5 Instead of having 60 young people at a very
6 limited practice facility, we'll be able to have
7 well over 200 people annually, young people
8 annually in Rock Creek Golf Course to be able to
9 provide -- to provide year-round programming,
10 winter programming, after school programming,
11 amenities that will include a classroom,
12 multipurpose classroom, indoor to outdoor hitting
13 space for our young people. Just a great place,
14 as Tema Masters mentioned, just to hang out and
15 be the best version of their selves.

16 So we'll have a great opportunity
17 here. I'm really excited about sharing it with
18 you and just really think it's a tremendous
19 opportunity and one that I'm hoping I'll have the
20 opportunity to talk to you about.

21 In closing, I think this is a really
22 opportunity in the learning center will be a

1 transformative opportunity, a transformative
2 project, not just for the young people with First
3 Tee in Greater Washington, DC, but for young
4 people in the community. It's a very diverse
5 community, which you've heard about today.

6 So I fully support the initiative and
7 the project. And I really appreciate everyone's
8 time today and everyone's comments. So great
9 job, everyone. Thank you.

10 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
11 Mr. Sanchez. We appreciate your input today.
12 And I'd like to move now to Aaron Rosenthal.

13 Is -- yes, I see you. There you are,
14 Mr. Rosenthal. Thank you. You have three
15 moments for testimony, or three minutes for
16 testimony, please.

17 MR. ROSENTHAL: Thank you. And thank
18 you for having me. I'm a resident in Ward 4 near
19 the golf course and cannot wait for work to begin
20 on rehabilitating Rock Creek Park Golf Course
21 owned by the Parks Service. The National Links
22 Trust, or NLT, is an organization that is

1 responsive to the community. NLT addressed
2 concerns regarding tree removal and practice
3 facilities.

4 As a father of four young children,
5 I'm elated that NLT elected to include a
6 dedicated short game area. As a result of this,
7 a parent will be able to drop off their child
8 after school and let them be inside -- let them
9 be outside and practice golf with their friends
10 or family, even if they don't have any money, or
11 the driving range or round of golf. A -- golfer
12 can just show up and practice putting, chipping,
13 and hitting shots from the bunker.

14 But what is so great about the vision
15 for this space is how it takes a cue from
16 successful models from golf courses abroad where
17 everyone shares the nature space together. So
18 people walk their dogs, go on hikes, alongside
19 others who want to play golf. And the golf
20 course is that best way to connect people to
21 nature, each other, and the local community.
22 Most importantly, I know the founders and have

1 the utmost faith that they will do right by DC's
2 residents, our environment, and the US taxpayer.

3 And just to reference some of the
4 other points, I think this isn't an issue of the
5 environment or choosing between that. But
6 exposing more children to nature actually will
7 get them to appreciate the outdoors and,
8 hopefully, protect our natural resources moving
9 forward. So please excuse the bad pun, but the
10 National Capital Planning Commission hit a hole-
11 in-one with this project. So thank you. And
12 fully support your efforts.

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
14 Mr. Rosenthal. We appreciate your input today.
15 Dr. Brian Wee, you have three minutes.

16 DR. WEE: Chair Goodmann, thank you
17 for the opportunity to testify. My name is Brian
18 Wee. I'm a retired PhD ecologist. I live in
19 Adams Morgan. And I visit the golf course
20 regularly to photograph wildlife. I am
21 presenting my concerns with the proposed tree
22 removal plan.

1 I have commended the NCPC to require
2 the NPS to brief the Commission on the tree
3 replacement strategy prior to phase 2 of the
4 construction project. However, I would also urge
5 the NPS to give consideration to the following
6 three issues which have been stressed by other
7 concerned citizens.

8 Issue number 1, biodiversity impacts.

9 Now within the 0.32 square miles occupied by the
10 golf course and the surrounding forest, there are
11 at least 573 species of organisms, as reported by
12 336 community scientist volunteers between
13 January 2019 and April 2024. Now the NPS
14 currently points out that animal and bird
15 wildlife will likely be temporarily disturbed and
16 displaced.

17 However, the NPS failed to address the
18 potential impact of these types of movement
19 parents on nonmotile organisms, like plant,
20 fungi, and protozoan life forms in the
21 surrounding forest, as a result of that
22 displacement. Now replaced trees will naturally

1 require time to grow to maturity. You don't
2 plant the tree there one day and have a 30 feet
3 tall tree in two days, all right?

4 So the temporary displacement of these
5 animals will have its impacts on the intact
6 surrounding forest. That kind of impact will be
7 measured in decades, not weeks, not days, all
8 right? And this is not pointed out in the
9 publicly released materials.

10 Issue number 2, dead trees. Now dead
11 trees provide nesting and den sites for various
12 birds, mammals, insects, reptiles, and amphibians
13 that utilize cavities and crevices for shelter
14 and reproduction. The decomposition of woody
15 materials support healthy soils due to its
16 beneficial effects on water retention and --
17 cycling.

18 The tree removal plan does not
19 acknowledge this fact, nor does it propose a
20 clear rationale to evaluate which dead trees to
21 remove. Provided that the dead trees do not pose
22 a threat to humans, they are a natural part of

1 the natural landscape that the golf course aims
2 to blend into and should therefore be retained to
3 a certain extent.

4 Last issue, issue number 3, heritage
5 trees. The plan includes the removal of more
6 than 200 trees considered heritage trees, which
7 is a lot, given that this is federal land.
8 However, what message does this send to
9 developers in Washington, DC, who already
10 routinely flout DC's heritage tree laws or who
11 rather pay a fine because of the return on
12 investment on such illegal actions? The NPS must
13 act as a responsible corporate citizen by not
14 giving the respective --

15 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

16 DR. WEE: -- actors a template for
17 illegal action. Thank you for your time.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Dr. Wee.
19 And thank you for your testimony today.

20 Do Commissioners have questions for
21 these most recent four folks, Mr. Stewart, Mr.
22 Sanchez, Mr. Rosenthal, or Dr. Wee? Any

1 questions from the Commissioners? Any questions?

2 I don't see any, so we're going to move on. Our
3 next cohort is Mr. Raab, Ms. Marik, Ms. Hayes-
4 Allen, and Mr. Bednash.

5 So we will begin with Hunter Raab, or
6 Raab. Are you here?

7 MR. RAAB: Present, yes. And you got
8 it right the second time. That's correct. It's
9 Raab.

10 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you. Raab. I
11 apologize. Thank you. Please --

12 MR. RAAB: Thank you. No apology
13 needed. Yeah. So hello. My name is Hunter
14 Raab. And today I would like to do, briefly, my
15 favorite thing, which is talk about birds. So
16 let's take the American kestrel, for example.
17 The American kestrel is known to help prevent
18 against crop damage and help pest control and is
19 also known to return after migrating to the same
20 place year after year after year after year.

21 An American kestrel has also brought
22 economic benefit to DC that lives on the course

1 of the Rock Creek Golf Course by a photographer
2 who shot it and then won a photo contest that is
3 then bringing money into a small photography
4 community and is then bringing more money into a
5 Georgetown art gallery.

6 Now let's talk about woodpeckers.
7 Woodpeckers are -- use dead trees, as some other
8 people have noted. And they are also at the
9 forefront of a study to help against CTE for
10 football players. And birds of all kind or in
11 dire need. And so to reduce the home of
12 woodpeckers may also reduce some ecological
13 studies.

14 Tree swallows, which are also home at
15 the Rock Creek Golf Course, are among one of the
16 most studied and have brought some of the most
17 advanced -- or have brought some of the most
18 advancements in ecology as a field out of the
19 majority of most species.

20 And now to address someone's comment
21 earlier of, like, the Rock Creek Golf Course is,
22 perhaps a drop in the bucket of the whole Rock

1 Creek Park, the eastern whip-poor-will was
2 spotted just, like, last, just the last week or
3 week and a half ago, which is actually a fairly
4 rare sighting. And that was spotted on the
5 grounds of the golf course. To protect such a
6 rare sighting is not only just valuable to every
7 birder, but if it doesn't return and the silence
8 of one that is returned, is actually a very bad
9 omen in Native-American culture. And it is a
10 sign for death. That's just maybe a fun fact for
11 other people.

12 There's also a great horned owl that
13 lives on the Rock Creek Golf Course. And the
14 other night, around sunset, I actually got to
15 hear it do some hunting and feed its little
16 babies. But that was actually in the area that
17 the driving range would then be. So those are
18 some birds that live on the Rock Creek Golf
19 Course. And if you wish to take the time to go
20 and visit the golf course as a birder or as a
21 nature enthusiast, mull on the beautiful aspects
22 of it as you can.

1 I myself, I also enjoy golf. I don't
2 think that there needs to be -- there could be
3 cohabitation between birders and golfers. Many
4 birders are golfers. Many golfers are birders.

5 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

6 MR. RAAB: Thank you. And so to wrap,
7 to sum it up, forgive the bad pun, but I think
8 National Links Trust needs to take a mulligan and
9 rethink this plan over. Thank you.

10 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
11 Mr. Raab. We appreciate your input. Thanks for
12 coming today.

13 MR. RAAB: Yeah. I appreciate you.

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you. Next we
15 have Ms. Marik.

16 And you have three minutes to provide
17 testimony. I see you're there.

18 MS. MARIK: Yeah. Thank you so much.

19 Hello, everyone. My name is Elizabeth Marik.
20 And I am a concerned DC resident testifying
21 against the development plan for the Rock Creek
22 Golf Course. We are all aware that deaths and

1 illness caused by increased heat through climate
2 change are on the rise, that each summer is the
3 hottest we have ever experienced and the coldest
4 we will ever experience unless climate change
5 action is taken immediately.

6 We all know that trees and their large
7 capacity for carbon sequestration contributes to
8 mitigating climate change. Our local actions
9 have global effects. So why are we removing
10 approximately 1,200 trees in an urban heat island
11 for turf with increased resource needs? As
12 mentioned at the beginning of this meeting,
13 approximately of these trees are healthy, native,
14 and heritage trees.

15 NLT's website, under their
16 sustainability section, states that there will be
17 a 200 net gain in tree canopy with no mention of
18 the tree loss for this project. How long will
19 this replacement actually take? Also, the Rock
20 Creek Park Conservancy, which has been mentioned,
21 and the Weed Warriors put in hundreds of hours to
22 remove invasive species. NLT's plan to clear cut

1 trees and undergrowth is not the answer and will
2 release the invasive seed bank in the soil,
3 therefore spreading the invasive species.

4 NLT's website states that there will
5 be significant reduction in soil erosion and
6 sediment runoff into Rock Creek through rain
7 gardens, helping to recuperate meadow grasses and
8 other storm water management techniques. The
9 disruption from moving this vast amount of trees
10 will cause the loss of soil and large amounts of
11 sediment runoff into Rock Creek. Turf does not
12 hold onto water the same way deep-tapping tree
13 roots do. Having a forest is a storm water
14 management technique.

15 NLT's website also states that it will
16 create healthy native habitats created for
17 wildlife. There is already an established
18 habitat and home for native wildlife that will be
19 destroyed and diminished through this project.
20 It further states development of hiking and
21 running trails. Again, these already exist
22 throughout the golf course area and are protected

1 from harsh summer heat from the existing canopy
2 coverage.

3 This also does not have to be an
4 either/or situation. People can still golf while
5 allowing the trees to exist. The information
6 provided does not convince me the removal of the
7 trees is necessary for people to golf in the
8 course, nor that the updated plans suffices to
9 protect the environment.

10 I will end with a quote from
11 indigenous ethnobotanist and writer Robin Wall-
12 Kimmerer. "I am trying to understand what it
13 means to own a thing, especially a wild and
14 living being. To have exclusive rights to its
15 fate? Ownership seems a uniquely human behavior
16 in free people." Thank you.

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
18 Ms. Marik. We appreciate your comments.

19 And now we have, okay. Nicola Hayes-
20 Allen. Are you ready to speak?

21 MS. HAYES-ALLEN: Yes. Can you -- am
22 I in?

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes. Yes. We can
2 hear you and see you. Thank you much --

3 MS. HAYES-ALLEN: Oh, perfect. Okay.

4 Perfect. Yeah. Thank you. So I'm Nicola
5 Hayes-Allen. And I suppose I just want to repeat
6 some of the concerns you heard before. The fact
7 that repeatedly, there's been such a limited time
8 window allowed for stakeholders to respond with
9 their comments prior to the NCPC meetings, okay?

10 We want to hear from people on both sides.

11 And considering that the two million
12 visitors each year to Rock Creek mainly come to
13 enjoy the woods, to enjoy nature, their views do
14 matter. And I can't remember. A very large
15 number of people did respond back in November,
16 apparently, very concerned about protection of
17 trees. And they weren't invited. They weren't
18 informed of future meetings or invited to come
19 and testify again. That's really important, you
20 know?

21 So both sides need to be looked at.

22 And the fact that, I think, that probably what we

1 need to do is have some accommodation between the
2 two sides that. So yes, children obviously need
3 access to the outdoors and to an opportunity to
4 play sports, right, including golf and including
5 other things. And they need access, by the way,
6 to enjoy nature.

7 So it seems to me that also, we have
8 to -- the problem of global warming is extreme.
9 And I think we need to take that seriously. If
10 we lose half of 1 percent of the canopy in Rock
11 Creek, well, a change of half a degree Fahrenheit
12 in our temperature in DC matters. My own mother
13 died in a heat wave a few years ago, you know?
14 One of the heat waves that have been hitting
15 countries internationally.

16 Anyway, there's still no full
17 accounting of which trees have been removed.
18 There's actually no plan, no information as to
19 when new trees will be planted, who will make the
20 planting decisions, and especially what new
21 species are to be planted. The N -- is it called
22 the NLT? They actually want to plant,

1 apparently, they want to plant, what? Grow a
2 dogwood, cedar, hollies? And they do mention
3 some oaks. But where is the beech, the maple,
4 the black cherry, and other hardwoods?

5 This would involve a huge loss of
6 biodiversity. And it matters because bird
7 species and bat species are very specific about
8 the -- where they need to find food, what species
9 of tree they need to sustain them. And
10 especially it's true of migrating warblers. And
11 Rock Creek is a major north-south migration
12 corridor.

13 So anyway, I do think the removal and
14 planting decisions must not be left to NLT if you
15 do go ahead with this plan. They're not a
16 conservation organization, they don't have the
17 skills. An organization such as Casey Trees
18 should come in to revise, to monitor, to report
19 back to NCPC, and to ensure that any new saplings
20 are maintained and cared for. So often, trees
21 get planted, and they're just left to die. So
22 the existing plan was just a vague promise --

1 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

2 MS. HAYES-ALLEN: Oh, we'll plant new
3 trees 3 to 1. It's not enough, okay?

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you. Thank
5 you.

6 MS. HAYES-ALLEN: So anyway, did you
7 say I've done the three minutes?

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, ma'am, you have.
9 And I just want to thank you --

10 MS. HAYES-ALLEN: Okay. So anyway, I
11 just would request, then, that you defer your
12 final decision until all stakeholders on both
13 sides have an opportunity to bring their
14 concerns, okay?

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes. Thank you. And
16 thank you for your input, thoughtful input.

17 And now we'll move onto Mr. Isaiah
18 Bednash. You have three minutes for your
19 testimony, please.

20 MR. BEDNASH: Can you all hear me?

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes. We can hear you
22 and see you.

1 MR. BEDNASH: Great. So hi, my name
2 is Isaiah Bednash. I am an activist. I am also
3 a professional native ecologist. I study
4 diversity through DNA sequencing and taxonomic
5 analogist. I'd just like to start by saying
6 rehabilitation means restoration to full health.

7 Trees are keystone to our healthy ecosystems. A
8 single tree removed without just cause is going
9 to lower the health of the park, which is
10 opposite to rehabilitation.

11 Our DC green space is sacred. Trees
12 are critical for storm water mitigation, carbon
13 sequestration, and the promotion of biodiversity.

14 That's biological diversity. Their destruction
15 for profit, excuse me, exacerbates the crisis we
16 are currently facing due to climate change. As
17 DC is expanding more each day, prioritizing these
18 green spaces remains sacrosanct.

19 The irony of Rock Creek Park being
20 named an urban oasis and considering the felling
21 of 1,200 trees is palpable. We must protect the
22 essential foundations of our capital's community,

1 which is ecological diversity. This forest keeps
2 our water waste healthy. It promotes the
3 pollinators that feed us and all other organisms
4 that maintain our fragile natural balance.

5 I heard mention of turf grass. Turf
6 grass is indeed sustainable for water use, but
7 your lack of informed area on microplastic danger
8 are going to be, excuse me, in one of DC's key
9 waterways is utterly alarming.

10 NCPS can call this improvement a
11 target for an underserved community or removing
12 invasive plants all they want. But they won't
13 take a step for Black or Brown folks, weed
14 warrior programs, or new planting unless a
15 million dollar plan is going to line your pockets
16 first. Take a walk through Rock Creek Park. NPS
17 cannot currently maintain the invasive species
18 that are there. This is a pure protection for
19 status quo.

20 Keep selling out our community.
21 Please do. Soon there won't be anything left to
22 stand for. Please protect the golf course as it

1 is and protect our trees. And this is a call to
2 the rest of the folks on this meeting. Please,
3 become ungovernable before it's too late. I will
4 cede the rest of my time. Thank you very much.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.

6 We appreciate your comments, Mr. Bednash.
7 Thanks for joining us today.

8 And now I'm going to ask the
9 Commissioners. Do we have any questions for
10 these four, Mr. Raab, Ms. Marik, Ms. Hayes-Allen,
11 or Mr. Bednash? Any questions from Commissioners
12 at this time? No questions? Hearing no
13 questions, we'll move to the next cohort. And
14 that will be Judith Taylor, David Yardas,
15 Elizabeth Berry, and James Dougherty. So we'll
16 begin with Ms. Taylor.

17 Would you like to begin please? I see
18 you there. If you can unmute. Okay. Thank you.

19 MS. TAYLOR: Okay. Thank you,
20 Commissioners, for allowing me to testify today.

21 My name's Judy Taylor. I've been a DC resident
22 for over 30 years. I'll speak quickly because I

1 have a lot on here. I request that the
2 Commission postpone a decision until serious
3 issues with the project planning and public
4 participation process has been addressed.

5 Important information has not been
6 provided that both the public and the Commission
7 need to fully understand the project's impact.
8 I'm particularly concerned about climate change,
9 tree removal mitigation measures, and threatened
10 and endangered species.

11 Climate change impacts, such as
12 reduced carbon sequestration and cooling in the
13 area, are hardly addressed. The National Park
14 Service only says that the process of
15 investigating ways of preserving carbon on site
16 has not been completed. This is clearly
17 inadequate given the risk that climate change
18 poses today.

19 Tree removal was not given enough
20 attention in the FONSI. It gives little
21 information on the trees to be removed, including
22 heritage trees. On April 30, only 48 hours prior

1 to the upcoming meeting, the NPS posted
2 additional information regarding the removal of
3 trees. There seems to be new information, such
4 as the project would remove up to 1,368 of the
5 total 2,763 trees. The number did increase from
6 1,262 trees. It doesn't offer important
7 information such as the heritage trees to be
8 removed.

9 Regarding mitigation measures, several
10 are not final as of the time of the FONSI. For
11 example, final mitigation measures currently
12 include only planting 200 trees, while other
13 areas have not been finalized as of the
14 publication of this document. Tree replacement
15 is largely up in the air. This information is
16 needed to give a proper review of this project.

17 While NPS has generally committed to
18 replacing 7.1 acres of tree canopy to replace the
19 6.1 acres they're removing, they haven't given
20 the specific details on what they'll be
21 replanting. The NCPC has precise guidelines on
22 tree replacement but proposes to give the project

1 the go ahead without seeing this information in
2 advance. NCPS has said they will require a
3 briefing on tree replacement further down the
4 road but still proposes to give all approvals for
5 this project at today's meeting before knowing
6 this information.

7 Regarding threatened and endangered
8 species, NPS has acknowledged that the project
9 may impact several threatened and endangered
10 species, including the long-eared bat. NPS
11 admits in the FONSI that after it consulted with
12 US Fish and Wildlife Service, as is required by
13 the Endangered Species Act, its project planning
14 has been altered. This is a serious problem and
15 needs to be addressed to the satisfaction of the
16 Commission and the public.

17 NPS's NEPA process is also inadequate
18 in that the environmental assessment only
19 analyzed one alternative to the preferred action,
20 which is no action. There may be other
21 alternatives with fewer impacts, such as less
22 tree removal, avoidance of removing heritage

1 trees, or less nighttime lighting. NEPA requires
2 a reasonable range of alternatives, and these
3 should be provided.

4 Due to these significant concerns
5 regarding the inadequate and rushed process to
6 this project and remaining questions, I request
7 that the Commission postpone consideration of the
8 project until the NPS addresses these
9 shortcomings and makes all information available
10 to the public.

11 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

12 MS. TAYLOR: Thank you for your
13 consideration.

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
15 Ms. Taylor. We appreciate your comments and your
16 participation today.

17 Mr. Yardas, you will have three
18 minutes to provide your testimony. Is -- yes,
19 you're here. Thank you.

20 MR. YARDAS: Thank you, Madam Chair
21 and members of the Commission and all the
22 participants in today's session. This has been

1 quite interesting and informative. I'm speaking
2 to you today as a ten year resident of DC Ward 3
3 and a huge fan of Rock Creek Golf Course.

4 I started playing golf with my wife as
5 we all broke out of COVID restrictions in the
6 fall of 2020. And the three courses in DC are,
7 even as beat up as they are, they are gems. And
8 it's delightful that there's an opportunity to
9 try to improve them.

10 So I've been super excited around the
11 time we started. That was around when National
12 Links Trust came into, at least, my awareness.
13 And I've been, as we've tried to learn the game
14 of golf and learn how to be patient and all those
15 great things, I've been very hopeful about the
16 opportunities that their ambitions and resources
17 might present.

18 I learned through sort of public
19 information that there was a big controversy
20 about tree harvest last fall, I guess it was, and
21 was hopeful, at that point, that because of the
22 importance of the project at Rock Creek and

1 because of the opportunity, that this would
2 create an opportunity for folks to come together
3 and find some kind of a compromised path forward
4 that would address those concerns and result in
5 something that everybody could be happy with.

6 So it was disappointing yesterday,
7 only yesterday, to learn I haven't been as
8 plugged in as I should have been, that the
9 current plans are perhaps tweaked around the
10 edges. But there's really been no significant
11 change from the primary plan, including all of
12 the impacts, tree harvest, et cetera, that so
13 many folks have spoken to today.

14 And what really stood out to me was
15 that this whole idea of there was no alternative
16 other than a no action alternative. So it's kind
17 of like take it or leave it, all or nothing. And
18 that's not really -- that doesn't seem
19 appropriate as a matter of process, good
20 government, community relations, whatever.

21 So I honestly believe there's a better
22 path. I know time matters, particularly from an

1 investment perspective. And that makes it harder
2 the farther down you get and the closer you get
3 to thinking you're almost where you need to be.
4 But if there's any way at this point as part of
5 any approval or provisional approval or
6 preliminary approval, whatever, to also try to
7 look at what should have been done first, which
8 would be a plan that starts with the idea of
9 preservation of the heritage trees and --

10 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

11 MR. YARDAS: -- start from there,
12 build forward some kind of collaborative process
13 that everybody can kind of be a part of.

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you. Yes. And
15 thank you.

16 MR. YARDAS: Thank you for the
17 opportunity to talk.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you Mr. Yardas.
19 And we appreciate your comments and your
20 participation. Thank you very much.

21 We do have Ms. Elizabeth Berry at this
22 time.

1 MS. BERRY: Hi, thank you.
2 Commissioners, I am Elizabeth Berry. I grew up a
3 block from Rock Creek Park, and I was DC's first
4 environmental director. I worked for six years
5 during the Williams administration. And I set up
6 the District Department of Energy and the
7 Environment.

8 I urge you to visit the golf course in
9 person to see for yourself what hangs in the
10 balance. The proposed rehabilitation can be done
11 in a way that is far more sustainable and
12 protective of the natural resource than the one
13 alternative that is being considered. As many
14 people have said, the fact that there wasn't a
15 meaningful alternative, just a my way or the
16 highway, A or nothing, really is an issue that I
17 hope that you will recognize and take to heart.

18 Your decision today will be the most
19 consequential decision in the history of Rock
20 Creek Park since it was founded in 1890. And it
21 should not be rushed. It should not be based on
22 incomplete information.

1 The FONSI defies common sense and the
2 straight face test. There is obviously a
3 significant environmental impact and one that
4 hasn't even been quantified by the National Park
5 Service. In my opinion, they have abdicated
6 responsibility as stewards of Rock Creek Park and
7 are now pushing a reckless, unreasoned plan that
8 has not provided any data and is lacking in solid
9 analysis. The promised detailed information, or
10 any information in many cases, has not been
11 provided, at least not to the public.

12 Rock Creek Conservancy states, quote,
13 the environmental effects of the EA's preferred
14 alternative are not well documented or supported.

15 The more detailed analysis mentioned throughout
16 the document should be included in the FONSI and
17 should have quantitative goals and metrics for
18 evaluating ongoing implementation. We are
19 disappointed that the FONSI released by the NPS
20 did not include the detailed studies referenced
21 in the environmental assessment.

22 The NLT constantly asserts that all of

1 its decisions, big or small, are done through a
2 lens of sustainability. But that is false.
3 There are many golf course designers known to
4 focus on sustainability. Yet the NLT did not
5 select one. They have not meaningfully -- the
6 Park Service has not meaningfully considered
7 public input, both from knowledgeable subject
8 matter experts such as Casey Tree, City Wildlife,
9 and others, or the many members of the public. I
10 urge you to review, personally, at least some of
11 the 3,200 comments that were submitted on the
12 environmental assessment. They're very eloquent
13 and very heartfelt.

14 In addition to the fact that many
15 trees can and should be protected, the irrigation
16 pond is highly problematic and poorly conceived.

17 Like the high maintenance, difficult to
18 establish and maintain meadow proposal, the
19 irrigation pond is likely doomed to fail. It is
20 so high up that it won't capture storm water
21 runoff effectively. And is a massive disturbance.

22 MR. MORGAN: Three minutes.

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.

2 MS. BERRY: Thank you.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: We do appreciate your
4 input today. Thank you, Ms. Berry.

5 MS. BERRY: Thank you.

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

7 Mr. Dougherty. And you are
8 representing Dark Sky International, so you have
9 five minutes. And I do want to mention and hope
10 he's prepared, Mr. Gerry Andriole will be
11 speaking after you and that will be the final
12 speaker. But he was having technical
13 difficulties and is on with us now. So first,
14 we'll have Mr. Dougherty, please.

15 MR. DOUGHERTY: Thank you. Jim
16 Dougherty, DC chapter Dark Sky. I submitted an
17 eight page memo yesterday. I'm not going to read
18 it. But I will try and share a PowerPoint via
19 Zoom if I have that skill.

20 MS. KOSTER: Mr. Dougherty?

21 MR. DOUGHERTY: Yeah?

22 MS. KOSTER: We ask that you not do a

1 screen share and simply use your time as
2 allocated. We've not allowed anyone else to use
3 the screen sharing function. Thank you.

4 MR. DOUGHERTY: I thought you allowed
5 the presenter from the Links to do that, no? The
6 golf course fellow. All right.

7 Well, satellite photos of the District
8 will show you that there's a very special place
9 up in upper northwest in Rock Creek Park that's
10 largely dark. The Park Service has gone to great
11 lengths over the years to keep it dark. They
12 turned off all the street lights on Beach Drive
13 in 1980. All the streets around there, Ross
14 Drive, Ridge Road, Morrow, Bingham and the rest
15 are all dark. They're not lit.

16 And if you -- and I have photos of the
17 golf course at night. It's an incredibly dark
18 place. And the lighting scheme that they're
19 planning on introducing here will disrupt all of
20 that profoundly. The proponents have said that
21 they are going to install light fixtures that are
22 DarkSky approved. And that's ludicrous for at

1 least two reasons.

2 We have very exacting standards for
3 approving outdoor lighting fixtures, especially
4 sporting fixtures. They have to be shielded.
5 Just like the lights in your home, the lights
6 have to point down, and they need lampshades. We
7 require shields around all of our lights. And
8 the only outdoor lighting systems that we've
9 approved have -- send the light 100 percent down.

10 What they're proposing for this, and I
11 wish I could show you the diagram. It's in the
12 EA, page 19. They're going to put in flat panels
13 of LED lights and just point them to the sky.
14 We've never seen anything so crazy. And I guess
15 you have to do that if people are hitting golf
16 balls a hundred feet up in the air. There's some
17 reference to golfers hitting golf balls and then
18 watching them fly on television screens or
19 something. It's all kind of ludicrous.

20 And then let me add secondly, DarkSky
21 will not entertain an application to approve
22 sports lighting in a very dark locale or in an

1 environmentally sensitive locale like Rock Creek
2 Park. They won't take the application. They
3 won't take their money. This is a nonstarter.
4 The lighting is terrible and will never be
5 approved. And I really think it's duplicitous of
6 the proponents to make these claims. They're
7 utterly false.

8 The other point I would make is that
9 this proposal violates the comprehensive plan.
10 And since I can't refer to my slides, I'll have
11 to do it from memory. But element B25 in the
12 Federal Environmental element spends paragraphs
13 talking about light pollution and the need to
14 protect our dark skies. And it's a fairly recent
15 addition to the comp plan. I think it wasn't
16 around when they put the tennis center up at the
17 Fitzgerald site. But the plan has evolved, and
18 we now don't do these things. We don't put
19 sports lighting complexes in the middle of the
20 park.

21 The comprehensive plan, also in B14 of
22 the Parks and Open Space element, says no

1 lighting in parks unless it's necessary for
2 safety. In other words, no decorative lighting
3 and no sports lighting. And I think that means
4 if they're going to put in a facility at RFK,
5 which is in park land, they're going to have to
6 put a roof on it. You can't have lighting in a
7 park, according to the comp plan. And it's the
8 responsibility of this entity to enforce the comp
9 plan. So I urge you to read my testimony and see
10 those references. That concludes my remarks.

11 Thank you.

12 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
13 Mr. Dougherty. I just wanted to clarify, too,
14 that the presentation of the proposed golf
15 project was part of the applicant's presentation,
16 not part of someone testifying. So I just want
17 you to know we're being very fair here. And that
18 was part of the original application, the
19 presentation of the plan. So just FYI. But we
20 do appreciate your comments and thank you for the
21 reference to look at your testimony. Thank you
22 very much.

1 And then this last person we have is
2 Gerry Andriole. I'm not sure that's the correct
3 pronunciation. Are you here?

4 MR. ANDRIOLE: Yeah.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Great.

6 MR. ANDRIOLE: Thank you. I really
7 appreciate. Shout out to Stephen Morgan getting
8 me through and getting on the agenda. My name is
9 Gerald Andriole. I've been a permanent
10 Washington, DC, resident since 2011 and currently
11 reside in Ward 2.

12 During my time in DC, I've grown to
13 love spending weekends in Rock Creek Park. My
14 dog Charlie is a B.A.R.K. Ranger and loves to
15 hike the trails, on his leash, of course. I
16 enjoy cycling along Beach Drive all the way down
17 to the National Mall and Hains Point. I also
18 enjoy playing golf. As such, I've been closely
19 following the National Links Trust's work since
20 2019.

21 Five years later, I'm thrilled to see
22 the Trust's plans for Rock Creek Park, not only

1 as a golfer, but also a hiker and a biker. I
2 believe this plan will not only add critical
3 practice space for golfers in the region, restore
4 aspects of William Flynn's masterful original
5 design, but will also create spaces for community
6 use and gatherings of all kinds. This could
7 include hikers and bikers stopping to enjoy the
8 great scenery with a nice refreshment or food to
9 help them on their journey further into the park.

10 The National Links Trust has
11 established an all-star team intimately familiar
12 with the park's history, the park's importance to
13 this region, and is positioned to make a positive
14 impact in the region for decades to come. I look
15 forward to continuing to support the National
16 Links Trust's plans and watching their
17 collaboration with this Commission and the
18 National Park Service to honor the historical
19 significance of this space while making it more
20 accessible and engaging for everyone, not just
21 golfers. Thank you.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.

1 And now we have the last five
2 speakers, Mr. Andriole, thank you very much. And
3 Mr. Dougherty, Ms. Berry, Mr. Yardas, and Ms.
4 Taylor. Any questions for those presenters or
5 testifiers today from the Commission? Hearing
6 any questions from the Commission? No? No
7 questions? Then we will move on.

8 So the Commission also received 233
9 comment letters on this project as of Wednesday
10 afternoon deadline. And of those, a third were
11 in support and two thirds were against. So I do
12 want to thank all of the members of the public
13 who joined us today. And we're grateful for the
14 public input contributing to our conversation.
15 Now we'll move on. This concludes the public
16 testimony.

17 And is there a motion to approve the
18 preliminary and final site and building plans for
19 the Rock Creek Park Golf Course rehabilitation?
20 Understand we need a motion in order to discuss
21 this presentation and issue and content today.
22 So is there a motion?

1 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: I so move for
2 approval.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Commissioner
4 Tammy Stidham has moved for approval. Is there a
5 second? Is there a second? A third time, is
6 there a second to this motion? If not -- I'm
7 sorry?

8 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Seconded.

9 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Someone has
10 seconded. I'm looking for?

11 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Sorry.
12 Commissioner Giachetti.

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.
14 Commissioner Giachetti, thank you, seconded the
15 motion. So it has been moved and seconded and is
16 now open for discussion. Can everyone please
17 turn on your cameras? So we will begin the
18 discussion right now. And I would like to begin
19 then with comments in the round robin fashion
20 from Commissioner Stidham.

21 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Thank you,
22 Chair Goodman. And thank you to everyone who

1 not only testified here today, but who also took
2 the time to send in their comment letters.
3 Public engagement is greatly important, and we
4 appreciate it.

5 We, the National Park Service, does
6 not take tree removal lightly by any sense. As
7 many know, our mission is that of preservation.
8 This is not a new golf course. This is a golf
9 course that has existed in Rock Creek Park for a
10 long number of years that is suffering from a
11 lack of good golf course maintenance. Had this
12 had proper golf course maintenance over the year,
13 I don't think we would be having this discussion
14 today.

15 Much of the tree growth that has
16 occurred has disabled play or has further
17 affected the ability of the forest here to be
18 healthy and resilient. Forest health and
19 resilience is at the highest of our priorities,
20 especially in Rock Creek Park, which consists
21 about a little over 1,400 acres of forest canopy.

22 After much study, we had determined that there

1 was a need to remove the trees that we are
2 talking about here today in order to allow for
3 the rehabilitation of the golf course and for its
4 continued health.

5 There are a large number of trees. We
6 will be the first to admit that. And we have
7 been working with the stakeholders that we heard
8 here today, as well as many others, to discuss
9 trees. This was not, as was described, an
10 offhanded decision. I think we showed our GIS
11 information that showed our tree inventory. We
12 have shared that with the public. It shows
13 actual individual numbers of trees, their
14 condition, their species, and their size, all the
15 information that you need to make really good
16 decisions.

17 I think a lot of misinformation has
18 been shared during the course of this process,
19 that while 200 trees was initially what was being
20 considered as a minimum for replacement, we are
21 currently looking at a replacement of a 3 to 1.
22 And as the design process continues, we will

1 continue to re-evaluate and determine where more
2 trees are conveniently placed.

3 There were a number of alternatives in
4 the EA that were evaluated besides just what was
5 analyzed in the FONSI that seemed to be lost on a
6 number of people and that this is not a clear
7 cut. This is selective removal. This is
8 removing those who are dead or dying that propose
9 a safety issue to those using the golf course,
10 either as a golfer or as a visitor to the course,
11 as well as the removal of non-natives or
12 invasives that deter public health -- deter the
13 forest health and further degrade it from being
14 what it should be.

15 So I think that -- I'm not sure where
16 the 237 heritage trees came from. That is not
17 accurate. If you evaluate the definition of
18 heritage trees, then we have maybe 57 that would
19 qualify for that, 20 of which are either in poor
20 condition or an invasive. And I can further
21 break that down if anyone needs that.

22 So we -- as I said, trees are

1 extremely important to the Park Service. This is
2 not something we do on a regular basis. But this
3 is a golf course. This is a historic property.
4 And we often have to balance historic
5 preservation with natural resources. And we do
6 that in a very careful, disciplined manner in
7 evaluating and using the science in order to make
8 those decisions.

9 So I offer that up in the discussion,
10 as I think there's a lot of misinformation that
11 was presented today. We will and are continuing
12 to work with stakeholders, both that were here
13 and are not here, for the golf course, for the
14 overall health of the larger park itself. But
15 this is a golf course. And you can't play golf
16 if there's trees in the fairway. And this is
17 bringing back the golf course to the historic
18 resource that it was to be and was to be
19 maintained by us.

20 And in addition to increased forest, I
21 think the other things that this project brings
22 is getting lost as well. This is -- we are

1 working on storm water, we are adding meadows.
2 There's a lot of project here that I think has
3 gotten missed.

4 And as the design continues, we will
5 continue to work through both the trees and the
6 lighting. That is sort of another piece that did
7 not get accurately portrayed. The fixtures, it's
8 about down lighting. It is not about up casting
9 of light. We have been in consultation with Fish
10 and Wildlife related to bats and birds and other
11 animals that are affected by light. There is
12 existing light on the property today. We are
13 increasing that light, yes. But that light will
14 be turned off 90 minutes after dark. So I
15 welcome the discussion as we move forward.

16 MS. KOSTER: You're on mute, Chair
17 Goodmann.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: I apologize. Thank
19 you very much, Commissioner Stidham. That is
20 what I said, and I'll say it again. Thank you
21 for your input and your reflection on today's
22 comments.

1 Vice Chair Hewlett.

2 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Thank you. So
3 this has been a marathon. And I'm one of these
4 people who takes, like, copious, copious notes.
5 I've taken notes on pretty much every speaker.
6 And they're all over the place here. But I do
7 have a lot to say because I have very strong
8 feelings on this.

9 So first, I want to thank Ms. Herr and
10 staff for everyone who did so much work on this
11 presentation, to thank all the people who stayed
12 with us this entire time because that took some
13 perseverance. And we thank you for your
14 passionate, insightful, well reasoned statements
15 and testimony today. So we really appreciate
16 that.

17 Commissioner Stidham, I appreciate
18 your comments as well. And I have somewhat of a
19 background in parks and recreation, which I'll
20 explain momentarily. So I know you didn't take
21 any of this lightly. But I will tell you up-
22 front, I am about to respectfully not support

1 your motion to come up with a substitute motion.

2 I wanted to give you that in full transparency.

3 So I am the former chair of -- I heard
4 so many positive things. I'm the former chair of
5 the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning
6 Commission, which is Prince George's and
7 Montgomery County's, and which includes the
8 record holding National Recreation and Parks
9 Association gold medal awards for excellence in
10 parks and recreation services. And one of the
11 things that we do is we operate golf courses,
12 public golf courses, own and operate them. And
13 we know that they need to be renovated and
14 restored. Maintenance is critical for these golf
15 courses.

16 So this plan, on many, many, many
17 levels, is a very, very good plan. And I wanted
18 to talk about some of the testimony that I heard.

19 When I said what I chaired, I heard a lot of
20 testimony about leveling the playing field. And
21 it is important to level the playing field
22 because a lot of these decisions are made on --

1 business decisions are made on golf courses.

2 And the Maryland National Capital Park
3 and Planning Commission was founded in 1927. It
4 took until my appointment, in the 97 years, to be
5 the first woman and first African American to
6 ever chair that agency. So I know about leveling
7 the playing field, and I also had to run
8 hearings. And it's very challenging to balance
9 competing interests. This side makes a lot of
10 sense. This side makes a lot of sense. And
11 you've got to bring the two together some kind of
12 way and come out with the best outcome.

13 One of the things that we did, and I
14 want to support what Mr. Cosby said and Mr.
15 Sanchez said, with the Department of Parks and
16 Recreation, we partnered with the First Tee
17 program. And it was invaluable to expose people
18 who might not be able to afford it otherwise, to
19 expose young kids to the game of golf. The
20 Freeways to Leadership, vital program as well.
21 So it's very, very important.

22 I commend the Links Trust. And I like

1 the learning center. I think that's really
2 important as well. But I do also have to say --
3 oh, one of the speakers, Alex Stewart -- Adrian
4 Stewart, I'm sorry, was very, was a young kid who
5 started on our parks and recreation golf courses.

6 And he's just soared. Now he's teaching. Kudos
7 to him. But I do want to say at the outset, I do
8 not accept, condone, believe, or allege in any
9 way that there's been any kind of corruption
10 here. That, I have to put out on the table right
11 now.

12 But the thing I'm having a problem
13 with now is the constant testimony that I heard
14 about the public not having notice of the tree
15 removal. And one person I think it was Ms.
16 Bertelli, who said she got it two hours before
17 the deadline to submit comments in response. Now
18 I know -- I understand it went out yesterday.
19 That may or may not be accurate.

20 But the thing I have a problem with
21 is, if our public doesn't have an opportunity to
22 really review everything and to really to submit

1 their comments in response and to have the time
2 and the ability to digest it as well. So while I
3 support the golf course and the much needed
4 overhaul and renovations and improvements to this
5 golf course, it's a historic golf course at that.

6 I support that.

7 And maybe it does require the removal
8 of a lot, a lot of trees. And maybe -- and I do
9 support the 3 to 1 improvement ratio and the 6.2
10 to 7.1 improvement. That all of that is very,
11 very good. But can it be better? I don't know
12 the answer to that. But I think there needs to
13 be more communication between the stakeholders
14 and everyone in this matter.

15 I get the feeling that we would
16 benefit from a little more. And I see this as an
17 opportunity for a win-win. I think it's good,
18 but I think it's an opportunity. And I don't
19 understand or know or if anyone can tell me why
20 one month continuance of this matter wouldn't be
21 helpful. And when I say continuance, I'm ready
22 to perhaps go forward with a preliminary

1 approval, but charging everyone else to get
2 political, I mean, get more additional public
3 engagement on the tree inventory and the removal
4 and replacement plan because that's imperative.

5 There are many other environmental
6 issues that were raised as well. If we could
7 have more public engagement on that prior to
8 submitting a final review, that would be
9 beneficial to me. And so I don't know how this
10 motion is going to go. But I cannot support this
11 motion fully, although I can support a
12 preliminary motion, a preliminary approval with
13 that proviso, that there's additional public
14 engagement.

15 And I would ask, I don't know how this
16 motion is going to go. But in the event this one
17 fails and a substitute motion prevails, then I
18 would ask if our team, our staff, would have any
19 proposed amendments based on the concerns that we
20 heard today.

21 But I think that this is an
22 opportunity to get it right. And I just think

1 it's win-win. It's an opportunity to get it
2 right. And I think one month would be
3 beneficial. And that's where I'm headed, just so
4 you know. I cannot support this motion. Thank
5 you.

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Vice Chair
7 Hewlett. Thank you for that input here.

8 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Madam Chair?

9 CHAIR GOODMAN: And now -- oh, yes?

10 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Are you going
11 round robin?

12 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, I am. And --

13 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Okay. I'll wait.

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. And
15 Commissioner Argo, please.

16 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: I would add one
17 more thing. Is it too late for me?

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, it is.

19 COMMISSIONER ARGO: No, since I don't
20 have my act together, go ahead. Permission to
21 carry on.

22 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Oh, I wanted to

1 say, I know it was Mr. Lambert who talked about
2 his sons getting his sons exposed. But I wanted
3 to give a shout out to Mr. Jones, too, because he
4 said he wanted to get his daughters exposed to
5 the golf course. And we don't want the girls to
6 be left off, left out of the game, either. Left
7 out of that game of golf. Left out of the
8 business game, either. So thank you for that.

9 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Madam Chair?

10 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you. Yes?

11 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yeah, I would,
12 I'd like to get us on a -- I think we need to
13 take some kind of action. I'm going to recommend
14 -- I'm going to make a motion that we delay this
15 action until next month. I don't think the month
16 would matter. I, first of all, want to associate
17 myself with the Vice Chair's comments completely.

18 And also I want to make it clear, I'm
19 kind of troubled that there were comments made
20 about the Park Service because I believe that
21 they've been forthcoming and did a great job on
22 this. And the staff presented well.

1 But I think that if we delay it for
2 one month, it can clear the air of all the
3 speculation that folks haven't been engaged or
4 don't know or got things late. And hopefully,
5 they will come back and can even now begin to
6 honestly work on trying to address some of the
7 issues that have been presented, at least the
8 ones that are true and relevant.

9 So I'm a golfer, and I also -- and I
10 have been a golfer. And obviously we understand
11 the value of nature and trees. We all do. And
12 I've been on that course. But I think we need to
13 -- I'd like to -- I'm making a motion now. Will
14 I get a second? I don't know. But then they
15 give us something to debate up or down and move
16 forward.

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: And I appreciate
18 that, Commissioner Dixon. Unfortunately, I think
19 if we have a motion with a second on the floor,
20 we have to act on this motion first.

21 COMMISSIONER DIXON: But this is
22 substitute motion.

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: First.

2 COMMISSIONER DIXON: It would be a
3 substitute motion.

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: Well, I'll ask our
5 soon-to-be-ex-counselor, Ms. Schuyler, to rule on
6 that. But I think we have to -- I'm not sure
7 that we can do that. But, Commissioner Dixon,
8 you may know that, and I'd like to ask Anne
9 Schuyler her opinion on that.

10 We have a motion on the floor and a
11 second. So I think we have to act on this one
12 first before we go on. We can call a question,
13 and we can vote on this. Or we can continue with
14 comments from Commissioners. And then if this
15 motion fails for lack of a majority, then we
16 could have a second motion, unless we can do
17 something else. Anne?

18 MS. SCHUYLER: I agree with you, Madam
19 Chair.

20 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. So let's move
21 forward. And if you will hold that thought,
22 Commissioner Dixon. And we heard that and you'll

1 still have another chance to speak up. But we're
2 on this motion right now, which is to approve
3 preliminary and final design for this project.
4 And it's been seconded.

5 So, Commissioner Argo, your thoughts
6 on this?

7 COMMISSIONER ARGO: My thoughts are a
8 little jumbled right now and complicated. I'd
9 like to hear from -- I'm always hesitant to move
10 forward on something that I know has some of the
11 other Commissioners -- that has the kind of
12 issues that are coming up here today and has
13 other Commissioners concerned about taking
14 action, which may be not so much preliminary, but
15 may need additional consideration.

16 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Thank you,
17 Commissioner Argo. Commissioner Green.

18 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Thank you very
19 much. I wanted to just begin by saying, kind of
20 take the application in order, that I really
21 appreciate the improvements in the architecture.

22 On the architecture side, I think the siding,

1 massing, detailing is excellent. It picks up the
2 character of the site. It conveys the, sort of,
3 the best of the Mission 66 projects, conveys that
4 well.

5 And I like the future expansion of the
6 clubhouse design and appreciate the adjustments
7 to the siding of this. I think architecturally,
8 this is terrific. And I think that's, I think,
9 absolutely approvable, everything about the
10 architecture right now.

11 My only concern is the gulf between
12 the applicant's stance and what we're hearing
13 from the public in terms of perception of
14 transparency. But I appreciate the motives of
15 this. I really enjoyed the applicant's
16 presentation of the goals I think are incredibly
17 laudable for this and would love to see this
18 project move forward.

19 But again, architecture is terrific.
20 I just have some concerns about the gulf between
21 perceptions on this. Thank you.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,

1 Commissioner Green.

2 Commissioner Tunstall-Williams.

3 Welcome to your first meeting.

4 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: If
5 only Mina could have held on for one more month.

6 This is a tough one. I feel woefully unprepared
7 because I had not seen the concept presentation
8 and how we have evolved here. As we bring, as a
9 federal group, this through process and
10 understand there can be a lot that happens.

11 So lots of great comments. I do, like
12 Commissioner Green, appreciate the architecture
13 and the overall plan and thinking but do have
14 some discomfort with the perception that maybe
15 all of the public consultation has not been
16 executed. Although as a federal agency, I know
17 that the Parks Service has probably done their
18 due diligence. But it is a challenge, as a
19 federal agency, to make sure that you're reaching
20 the public as deep as maybe you need to.

21 I wonder whether, and maybe this is
22 where the Vice Chair was going. The Commission

1 action is for preliminary and final approval.
2 And maybe it's that we start with the preliminary
3 approval and allow the discussion to continue
4 before we get to the final approval because just
5 a one month extension, I'm not sure what that
6 gets us. I don't know what the mechanism is for
7 that in terms of NEPA or how the public
8 consultation will continue.

9 So I'm a little at loose ends with
10 that and hope that some of the other
11 Commissioners can guide us there. But overall, I
12 think the design, the concept, the rehabilitation
13 of the golf course are all laudable. Obviously,
14 there is concern about the loss of the tree
15 canopy. And we want to make sure that that
16 happens in the most judicious and sort of right
17 minded way. And I look forward to hearing other
18 people's comments about how to bridge that gap.

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you for your
20 comments. And again, welcome, Commissioner
21 Tunstall-Williams. And Commissioner Dixon,
22 you're next. Did you have anything else? Okay.

1 COMMISSIONER DIXON: No, I think I
2 made my position clear. Thank you.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Thank you very
4 much, Commissioner Dixon. Commissioner Cash.

5 COMMISSIONER CASH: Thanks. I also,
6 like others have commented, I appreciate, I
7 think, some of the good changes that have been
8 put into this since our last review of this. I
9 understand that we had a lot of witnesses for an
10 NCPC hearing, at least, where providing public
11 testimony, and that there's 20 or so people that
12 seem very much against this.

13 But I do just want to say, I mean,
14 I've been looking online to see what kind of
15 notice is out there. I mean, NCPC, we looked at
16 this a year ago. The Park Service put up on
17 January 3rd last year that this was happening,
18 talking about all the public meetings that were
19 going to be happening.

20 So I do understand that there's what
21 seems to be a big gulf here between what folks
22 want and what's been put on the table. But the

1 counsel tomorrow, we have 313 people signed up
2 for witnesses to go over our budget. And there's
3 a lot of people are sometimes disappointed. But
4 that doesn't necessarily mean that we can't move
5 forward.

6 So while I very much appreciate all of
7 the public engagement that we've had here, and I
8 know a lot of people aren't that excited about
9 it, I also, working on the counsel, I understand
10 that when people don't like something, they're
11 much more willing to come out than if they do
12 like it. So I know we didn't have 25 people
13 coming out saying they love it, while 15 people
14 came out and said they don't like it.

15 So I think in this case, I'm going to
16 put my faith in the executive director's
17 recommendation. And if the body's willing to
18 move forward, I understand that the process can
19 be tough. But I don't know what we would gain
20 out of bringing this back next month because I
21 think, as was mentioned, at the end of the day,
22 as much as I always advocate for the trees, I

1 think that given the unique function of this golf
2 course in the middle of a public park, a national
3 park at that, is not just very common.

4 So while we might normally not put
5 lighting into a park, this is a golf course in
6 the middle of a national park. So while I very
7 much appreciate the concerns that have been
8 raised, I'm prepared to move forward with this
9 with the work that's been done by the Commission
10 and knowing that they'll continue to look at this
11 as further reviews are done.

12 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
13 Commissioner Cash.

14 Commissioner Davis.

15 COMMISSIONER DAVIS: Yeah, thanks. I
16 definitely appreciate hearing the diverse
17 viewpoints here and hearing from all the public
18 comments. No further comments from me. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
21 Commissioner Davis.

22 Commissioner Giachetti.

1 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Echoing the
2 sentiment from Commissioner Davis. No more
3 comments and concerns from me at this time.
4 Thank you.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
6 Commissioner Giachetti.

7 Commissioner Cozart.

8 COMMISSIONER COZART: Really want to
9 thank the staff for their work on this and really
10 thank everyone who came out to testify. And I'll
11 just associate myself with the comments of
12 Commissioner Cash. I don't have any additional
13 questions.

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
15 Commissioner Cozart.

16 Commissioner McMahon.

17 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Can you hear
18 me?

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes.

20 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Okay. Just
21 wanted to make sure. Yeah. Thanks. It's maybe
22 a longer presentation discussion than Union

1 Station, hard to believe. But it strikes me as
2 that, which kind of gets to the importance of the
3 project and the dedication, I think, of the
4 people, many people who spoke on both sides of
5 what we're trying to do here.

6 But what I've heard today is seen as
7 significant improvements since the concept in
8 terms of what they're doing on the site.
9 Reduction of the size of the golf course itself,
10 I think nine holes, par 3, nine hole is a
11 standard par 72 course. The meadow, the walkway,
12 all that. So and a lot of testimony talked about
13 the importance and goodness of this type of
14 facility to the District of Columbia and its
15 residents.

16 That being said, it appears that we've
17 had a lot of concern, even with the notice that
18 Commissioner Cash talked about. And I know
19 that's out there of this project, about what some
20 of the impacts are. I'm ready to vote either way
21 on the motion. One question I've got from a
22 process perspective is, and now we've got our

1 counsel here is the impacts of up and down
2 approve, disapprove, and the motion is to
3 disapprove, what that means moving forward,
4 versus a modification of the motion to approve
5 preliminary and what we want them to come back
6 with or just a delay in actually voting on this
7 so we can absorb ourselves and staff. I think
8 absorb themselves some of the discussion about
9 the trees and the, especially the heritage trees,
10 and the lighting issue to inform us that we make
11 a decision. So those are my comments. And
12 again, thanks to staff for putting this package
13 together today.

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
15 Commissioner McMahon. Thank you very much.

16 Anne Schuyler, I don't think there's
17 been a friendly amendment to this motion made.
18 And I don't think that's what's been suggested.
19 So unless there would be a friendly amendment to
20 support a preliminary approval --

21 MS. SCHUYLER: I was -- friendly
22 amendment, if that would be accepted, a

1 preliminary, Madam Chair, with proviso. I would
2 like to see if our staff has any recommendation
3 that would be of assistance here, given what
4 we've heard.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: And I think
6 Commissioner Stidham has something she wanted to
7 say.

8 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes. So I
9 would just ask, before we consider an amendment,
10 I don't think another month is going to change
11 the number of trees that need to be removed in
12 order for the golf course to be rehabilitated.
13 We have done our due diligence in investigating
14 each individual tree and determining what should
15 and could stay versus what needs to be removed.

16 So another month is not going to
17 change the number. And we have done a robust
18 engagement. Unfortunately, ahead of us was a lot
19 of misinformation that continues. And we will
20 continue -- and Commissioner Hewlett, just let me
21 finish. We will continue our engagement, as we
22 do with all projects and especially with projects

1 of this magnitude, where we will continue to
2 engage with the public. All the stakeholders
3 that were here today we had already been in
4 discussion with and will continue to work through
5 the design with.

6 So none of that is really going to
7 change, regardless of what happens here today,
8 other than, we would have to come back again
9 with, most likely, the same number of trees, only
10 having had more conversations about the same
11 number of trees. So I just put that out there.

12 I'm sorry. It's a golf course. Is it
13 against our nature to cut down this many trees?
14 It very much is. And this is not an easy
15 decision for the Park Service. But it's a
16 requirement of management of a golf course. You
17 can't manage a golf course if there are three
18 trees in the fairway. And that is what the
19 situation is. There are trees in the fairway
20 prohibiting the play of golf. And that is what
21 we're doing here.

22 This is part of Rock Creek Park, which

1 I mentioned is for over 14,000 acres of forest,
2 which we actively are managing for the forest
3 health and the revitalization of that and
4 continue to do so. We continue to plant trees
5 everywhere. So in this particular case, we are
6 looking at a 3 to 1 ratio of replacement. That
7 is, I would say, maybe that's the floor. And as
8 we move through the design, that would change,
9 can change, as will tree replacement throughout
10 the entire park for out the entire Park Service
11 spaces across the city.

12 We are concerned with climate change.

13 We are concerned with tree canopy. But in this
14 instance, this is a golf course. This is not
15 wilderness, this is not a forest. And it
16 requires different management. And that's coming
17 from the Park Service, who is here to preserve
18 and protect forever, not just today, but forever.

19 And this golf course is intended to be here
20 forever, and that is our mandate. So I just
21 throw that out there.

22 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Madam Chair?

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, Commissioner?

2 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: I have a question
3 of Commissioner Stidham. Here's the thing,
4 Commissioner Stidham. I respect you, and I
5 respect what the National Park Service does
6 tremendously. I have long time familiarity with
7 it, so I'm very, very respectful of that.

8 And in your comments and in
9 Commissioner Cash's comments, you both talked
10 about the extensive outreach with the
11 stakeholders and communication with the
12 stakeholders. And I don't doubt that for one
13 second. My question is that a couple of them
14 said that, while there has been communication,
15 they didn't find out about the tree removal, the
16 number of tree removals, until yesterday. And
17 that's the part when I had a question about, is -
18 -

19 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Well, we had
20 two public comment periods. We had one back in
21 January of 2023, January to February of 2023. We
22 have been to this Commission, we've been to CFA

1 and talking about this project. We had a public
2 meeting, a virtual public meeting that was well
3 attended in January, when the project kicked off.

4 We had a public comment period from
5 October something until November something when
6 the EA was released. We did get over 3,000
7 comments, which we went through, every single
8 one, and made adjustments and continue to make
9 adjustments. So I don't know what to say. We
10 have been out there talking about this project
11 and holding meetings. So I believe --

12 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: -- number of
13 trees.

14 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: -- this
15 particular meeting and the ability to speak at
16 this meeting.

17 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Exactly. Number
18 of trees.

19 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Yes, it's the
20 number of trees. It's not the outreach. It's
21 the number of -- they said they didn't know about
22 the number of trees until recently. So that's

1 what I'm asking you.

2 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Right.

3 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: It was part of
4 the EA. And so I'm sorry that it was missed, but
5 we are willing to continue the conversation.

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: Well, again, I
7 appreciate the robust conversation. And unless
8 there's something else, I'd like to close with
9 just my observations. And number one is, I too
10 am a person who doesn't believe it's either/or.
11 I think it's both/and. I think the --

12 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Madam Chair?

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes?

14 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I would like you
15 -- I know you, like, will summarize, but I want
16 to make this comment before.

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay.

18 COMMISSIONER DIXON: It's not just
19 about chairs, I mean trees. It's about a water
20 pump that they say the water will not be full or
21 go underwater. They got lighting issues. There
22 are a number of other things that people spoke to

1 more than the trees. And I just want to be --
2 hope the staff and how we move forward with the
3 Park Service will look at all those issues when
4 we, as we, obviously, want to move forward but
5 that there's more than just trees that are being
6 discussed here.

7 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
8 Commissioner Dixon. I just want to say that I
9 think it can both and I'm in support of a
10 preliminary approval today because I do think
11 there are some outlying questions that could be
12 answered for us as we move forward with the final
13 approval. That's just my opinion.

14 As I said, I think it can be both and
15 I think we know that the work that the National
16 Park Service has done and the work that NLT has
17 done is in the right direction. I think in some
18 ways in this discussion is climate change meets
19 equity in many ways From what we heard in
20 testimony and I think that's why it's
21 particularly challenging, but I do think we can
22 perhaps answer some of the questions that came up

1 today and give the National Park Service an
2 opportunity to respond in a month.

3 That would be my preference, but I
4 understand that we are a Commission and everyone
5 has one vote. I think this is an excellent plan.

6 I want it to go forward. I certainly do not
7 want to see it stopped. I want it to go forward,
8 I just would like to have some more clarity on
9 some of the issues raised today, particularly
10 trees, public engagement and some of the other
11 environmental impacts that were raised and hear
12 from NLT and perhaps from NPS. That's all and
13 with that, I'm just going to suggest that we move
14 to the vote because we're going to be here until
15 midnight.

16 (Simultaneous speaking.)

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: I'm sorry?

18 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: I made a friendly
19 amendment, I don't think it was accepted, but --

20 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: And I have a
21 question.

22 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: For the

1 preliminary.

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, I apologize. I
3 guess the question is you're offering a friendly
4 amendment to Commissioner Stidham.

5 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: I don't think
6 that it has been accepted. Now you have a
7 question.

8 COMMISSIONER DIXON: What are we
9 amending?

10 CHAIR GOODMAN: I'm sorry, I'll
11 restate it. Vice Chair Hewlett is offering a
12 friendly amendment to Commissioner Stidham to
13 change her motion from calling for a preliminary
14 and final approval to being just a preliminary
15 approval of the plan.

16 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: With the --
17 (Simultaneous speaking.)

18 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: -- new
19 stakeholder engagement and if our staff has any
20 input that they would like to add to this based
21 on what we heard. That was my friendly
22 amendment.

1 MS. SULLIVAN: I can suggest something

2 --

3 (Simultaneous speaking.)

4 MS. SULLIVAN: -- but maybe
5 Commissioner McMahon first.

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: I want to hear from
7 Commissioner McMahon.

8 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Thank you,
9 Chair. May I just again -- more of a process
10 issue here what we're discussing and listening
11 to where we're headed, we're talking about taking
12 a motion to approve or disapprove either, you
13 know, and then Commissioner Cash mentioned a
14 recommendation from the Executive Director. I
15 think there -- isn't there a third option we have
16 here of tabling further discussion on this motion
17 until next month rather than going through a
18 whole process of a new package so the staff can
19 work the questions and then come back to next
20 month and then conclude the conversation and take
21 the appropriate votes? Over.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, that's a

1 possibility and tabling is a possibility. We
2 have --

3 (Simultaneous speaking.)

4 COMMISSIONER CASH: I was just going
5 to ask in the same vein a parliamentary inquiry,
6 so tabling might be the wrong word. Ms.
7 Schuyler, maybe you can correct, but if we could
8 just move to postpone this until the next
9 meeting, because I'm afraid that if we split this
10 vote and have a preliminary now and come back for
11 a final, we're going to have 22 witnesses sign up
12 again. We're going to hear the exact same things
13 because the EDR is not going to change between
14 now and a month from now, if we do a preliminary
15 and then final.

16 I think just procedurally maybe we can
17 get through this if we continue this over to the
18 next meeting, so that we don't have to have the
19 entire discussion again because we've heard from
20 the public now. We can give the staff a month to
21 maybe come up with how they want to brief us in a
22 month. Bring this same EDR back up and hopefully

1 have those questions answered, but otherwise, I
2 think we're going to have paralysis by analysis
3 where if we bump this again, we're going to just
4 churn and have the same people and feel like
5 people's questions haven't been answered.

6 I think in the same time vein as what
7 Commissioner McMahon said, but I'd be comfortable
8 waiting on a vote, but I'd feel less comfortable
9 splitting this vote and having this come up as a
10 new agenda item anew because I think that
11 process-wise, we're going to be in the same vote
12 and feel that we're not going to be able to kick
13 it down again by having another vote on another
14 preliminary.

15 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: So I offer
16 maybe a twist to what has already been proposed.

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes?

18 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: I feel like
19 tabling it would -- there's got to be a better
20 word for that, tabling it is not quite the right
21 move. If there is the feeling from the
22 Commission that more is needed, then what about

1 preliminary approval with a requirement to come
2 back next month on certain items that are still
3 of question and we'll lay those out. That way
4 we're not back to what Commissioners Cash and
5 McMahon had concerns over.

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, that sounds
7 like that would be to accept the friendly
8 amendment and it would be amended and then we
9 would have those included in the friendly
10 amendment and we will, if you accept that, then
11 we would, I think, ask for a second on that.

12 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: I hereby accept
13 the friendly amendment offered by Commission
14 Hewlett with the addition of --

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: Is there a --

16 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Specific items
17 to come back with.

18 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Second it.

19 (Simultaneous speaking.)

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: With specific
21 items.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, it's been moved

1 and seconded. It's a friendly amendment so I'm
2 not sure if there's discussion.

3 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Well, yes, I'd
4 like to hear if Ms. Sullivan or Ms. Herr has any
5 comment on that.

6 (Simultaneous speaking.)

7 MS. SULLIVAN: Well, yes, I was just
8 going to say if we do preliminary review,
9 technically that NPS would be back at the July
10 Commission Meeting, which is fine with us. That
11 does allow us a little more time because I do
12 think that there's discussion with some of the
13 stakeholders and people that we heard here today.

14 The hard part for us is that there's, as Tammy
15 said, I think we feel like we have a lot of
16 information. The question is our we trying to
17 work again with the stakeholders and the people
18 that we heard today and having more public
19 engagement. I do have an amendment, maybe I
20 would ask Anne, Anne, do you have something that
21 I -- you're on mute, Anne.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: I think Commissioner

1 Green --

2 (Simultaneous speaking.)

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: -- excuse me, I think
4 Commissioner Green has something to say if we
5 could first, Anne?

6 MS. SCHUYLER: Sure, no problem.

7 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Oh no, no, my
8 question was I just wanted to know specifically
9 what is the content of the amendment? What are
10 those specific items that we're talking about now
11 as opposed to talking about next month. I don't
12 know what they are.

13 MS. SULLIVAN: Okay, so I'll read what
14 I had put together based on everything that I
15 heard from most Commissioners, which was to drop
16 it down just to preliminary review and then
17 request the applicant coordinate additional
18 public engagement on the tree inventory removal
19 and replacement plan and other environmental
20 issues raised in public testimony to allow time
21 to consider any potential improvements prior to
22 submitting for final review. That is what I had

1 put together.

2 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Chair Goodmann,
3 that sounds good to me.

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, then that is
5 the amendment. Does that answer your question,
6 Commissioner Green? Okay. Anne, Ms. Schuyler.

7 MS. SCHUYLER: I was just going to say
8 that you had been talking about postponement of
9 one month, I'm also hearing Commissioner Stidham
10 say that there is a considerable amount of
11 disinformation out there. Whether one month is
12 enough or not, I think, at least the preliminary
13 approach that Diane, Ms. Sullivan, has outlined
14 affords an opportunity for both of the parties,
15 stakeholders to get together, for the Park
16 Service to try to get the correct information out
17 there, not this information that's not correct
18 and for maybe the parties to come together a
19 little bit more.

20 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, so Commissioner
21 Stidham has accepted the friendly amendment. Is
22 there a second?

1 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I second.

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: Seconded by
3 Commissioner Dixon. Any further discussion?

4 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Friendly
5 amendment, yes.

6 COMMISSIONER COZART: Call the
7 question.

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: The question is
9 called. All those in favor? Would you like to
10 take the roll, please, Ms. Koster?

11 MS. KOSTER: Yes, I'd be delighted to.
12 This is a motion and second recognizing the
13 friendly amendment, so with that I would call
14 Commissioner Cozart.

15 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

16 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner McMahon.

17 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Yes.

18 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Stidham.

19 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

20 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Argo.

21 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

22 MS. KOSTER: Vice Chair Hewlett.

1 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Yes.

2 MS. KOSTER: Chair Goodmann.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes.

4 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Green.

5 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Yes.

6 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Tunstall-

7 Williams.

8 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yes.

9 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Dixon.

10 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

11 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Cash?

12 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

13 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Davis.

14 COMMISSIONER DAVIS: Abstain.

15 MS. KOSTER: And, Commissioner

16 Giachetti.

17 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Abstain.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, thank you very

19 much. That motion has -- somebody's device is

20 on. Okay, thank you. The motion has carried.

21 Thank you, I know it's been a long day so far,

22 but we have more work to do so, thank you for all

1 your patience and thoughts and input on that and
2 a special thank you to staff for the work on this
3 and to Commissioner Stidham for the excellent
4 work from NPS.

5 I'm going to move on now to agenda
6 item 6B, to request and approve the final master
7 plan for the Washington Navy Yard Southeast
8 Corner Master Plan. Mr. Flis, please.

9 WASHINGTON NAVY YARD SOUTHEAST CORNER

10 MASTER PLAN

11 MR. FLIS: Yes, thank you, Chair
12 Goodmann and good afternoon, Commissioners.

13 The Navy has submitted the final
14 Washington Navy Yard Southeast Corner Master Plan
15 for your review and approval. You'll remember
16 that back in November of last year, the
17 Commission commented favorably on the draft
18 master plan and requested additional information
19 for final review. That also included a request
20 for additional coordination with the 11th Street
21 Bridge Park regarding viewshed impacts.

22 As you may recall, we had significant

1 public comments at the last review and also a lot
2 of discussion about the project. As such, over
3 the last several months, we have been working
4 closely with the Navy, the Office of Planning and
5 others as well as the development team regarding
6 several aspects of the master plan.

7 As this is the final review of the
8 master plan, the Commission is primarily focused
9 on 1) determining if the applicant has address
10 the Commission's previous comments and then, 2)
11 identifying if there are any unresolved issues
12 for the final plan. In general, staff does find
13 that the applicant has responded to previous
14 comments.

15 Just as a reminder, here is the Navy
16 Yard located here in Southeast, Washington, DC.
17 The master plan focus area is the southeast
18 corner, which is located here just north of the
19 Anacostia River. Zooming in, here is the context
20 for the master plan. It is bounded here in red
21 so you can see the entire property area. The
22 site does include a number of existing buildings,

1 some historic here in the Marine Railway area as
2 well as Building 66, a parking garage as well as
3 some surface parking lots. The project also
4 includes the Riverwalk Trail, which is here as
5 well as two piers.

6 Just to refresh your memory, the O
7 Parcels, which are the southeast corner here will
8 remain federal land while leased to a private
9 developer. The agreement between the Navy and
10 the private developer is part of a larger
11 transaction, which allows the Navy to take
12 control of the E Parcels, which are located here
13 at the northwest corner of the Navy Yard.

14 The E Parcels are currently controlled
15 by GSA with development rights assigned by the
16 Southeast Federal Center Master Plan. The Navy
17 proposes to obtain the E Parcels as part of this
18 transaction to improve their overall security
19 posture and to accommodate a relocated naval
20 museum in the future.

21 For the O Parcels, as I mentioned
22 there are some existing buildings. Some will be

1 repurposed and reused while others will be
2 demolished. Portions of the Navy Yard are listed
3 as a National Historic Landmark District and the
4 mixed use development will be located outside the
5 modified secured perimeter of the Navy Yard. As
6 part of this project, that perimeter is secured.

7 It will be adjusted and this will become an
8 essentially accessible development with public
9 access to some of the historic buildings.

10 The Anacostia Riverwalk Trail also
11 located along the river here will remain open in
12 private and public use and the historic piers
13 will also be reinterpreted and reused.

14 In terms of the context, the master
15 plan does sit within an evolving riverfront area.

16 This, of course, includes the new Frederick
17 Douglass Bridge as well as mixed use development
18 on both sides of the river including the Capitol
19 Riverfront, Buzzard Point, the Bridge District
20 and also new development happening in Anacostia
21 River East.

22 The planned redevelopment of 11th

1 Street Bridge Park here will connect both sides
2 of the river and the southeast corner master plan
3 intends to contribute to the further activation
4 of the riverfront.

5 Now, we'll discuss the final master
6 plan. Up to 1.7 million square feet of mixed use
7 development is proposed. This is consistent with
8 what you reviewed at the draft master plan. The
9 applicant has defined four basis planning
10 principles for the master plan. This includes
11 increased public access to the historic elements,
12 providing a waterfront experience that enhances
13 the existing neighborhood, preserving and
14 strengthening historic viewsheds, including the
15 10th Street and Parsons Avenue corridors, which
16 were defined in the L'Enfant Plan and then also
17 extending the Historic Navy Yard building kind of
18 orientation, which is more south to these new
19 buildings so it kind of continues that existing
20 building fabric.

21 As shown in the draft master plan, the
22 final master plan also proposes a mix of uses

1 including residential and retail. It does
2 replace the surface parking lots with new
3 development. The development will also include
4 affordable housing, which I'll describe a little
5 bit later in the presentation and the developer
6 has also committed to rehabilitating several
7 historic buildings, improving and maintaining
8 portions of the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail and
9 also providing public access to this collection
10 of historic buildings in the historic Marine
11 Railway area.

12 In terms of process, just touching on
13 historic review, the Navy did evaluate design
14 options through the Section 106 Consulting
15 Parties Process beginning in 2019. This was
16 intended to accommodate the proposed development
17 program while balancing those impacts to historic
18 resources, including the landmark district as
19 well as the L'Enfant Plan. As a result of that
20 process, over several years, a programmatic
21 agreement, or PA, was prepared that provides
22 guidance for the height and massing of new

1 development and the treatment of historic
2 properties. This provided a foundation for the
3 master plan which you'll see today. This
4 document was signed by NCPC, the Advisory Council
5 as well as the Historic Preservation Officer
6 among others.

7 I'll note that this is a master plan
8 and that individual building designs will be
9 developed in the future. They will also be
10 subject to the process set forth in the
11 programmatic agreement and so, again, the master
12 plan is massing, future designs will be developed
13 and subject to consultation that's outlined in
14 the PA. You've received some testimony that
15 talks about further study for build and designs,
16 which we agree can and should happen through that
17 PA process as the individual projects are further
18 developed.

19 Based on discussion and evaluation
20 during the consultation process, the applicant
21 developed a preferred massing approach that
22 allowed building heights up to 130 feet, closer

1 to 11th Street, and then tapering down closer to
2 110 feet adjacent to the Historic District. The
3 intention with this is to minimize visual impacts
4 on historic resources. Building heights are
5 derived from a measuring point on 11th Street,
6 which the applicant coordinated with the zoning
7 administrator regarding that determination.

8 I'll note that there are several
9 existing structures in the Navy Yard that are
10 already five to six stories in height, so that
11 provides you just the sense of the context,
12 although there are some lower scale buildings as
13 well. Here is a section through a portion of the
14 master plan area that just shows the relationship
15 of new buildings, some of the existing buildings
16 as well as some of the newer, smaller structures
17 that are proposed to provide that public access
18 to the Historic District.

19 I'll just note that these heights that
20 are proposed are not too dissimilar from what's
21 occurring both existing and proposed in other
22 areas along the riverfront. Here you can see the

1 master plan area, there is a proposed development
2 that was approved by the Zoning Commission just
3 to the east and, of course, there's a significant
4 amount of new development occurring further to
5 the west as well that is of higher density and
6 starting to see the build out of the Riverwalk
7 Trail.

8 Moving on to the Bridge Park, as I
9 mentioned at the draft review, representatives of
10 the park had expressed concerns about impacts on
11 views from the bridge to the Capitol Dome as well
12 as some other sights. The park plans did
13 identify this overlook, which is close to the
14 master plan area located right here and they,
15 again, expressed concerns about views that would
16 be impacted as part of the development.

17 Here is just a rendering from the
18 approved plans showing you that overlook and then
19 here in context the master plan area. Again,
20 just to note that this project, the park, is not
21 yet built, however, it is in process. As I had
22 mentioned and was mentioned during the draft

1 review, the views from the overlook are not
2 identified as protected views in the National
3 Register, nor in the comprehensive plan.
4 However, given the concerns that were raised, the
5 Commission asked the Navy and the private
6 developer to work with the park team to identify
7 the existing and proposed viewsheds and evaluate
8 whether modifications to the master plan could
9 accommodate sight lines to the Capitol, the
10 Washington Monument or other landmarks without
11 compromising the density or impacting historic
12 resources and viewsheds. The Commission also
13 asked for the parties to develop a process for
14 ongoing coordination between the two projects.

15 Following the draft review, NCPC staff
16 and the Navy, the private developer and the
17 Bridge Park staff held several meetings,
18 including one on site. These included a review
19 of existing conditions. We went out on site to
20 look at some existing trees that actually are in
21 the viewshed. The Bridge Park staff also used a
22 lift to actually take some additional photos,

1 again, because the Bridge Park doesn't exist yet,
2 this was intended to provide some accurate photo
3 referenced locations. I'll note that there are
4 some limited views towards the Capitol Dome as
5 well as a portion of the top of the Washington
6 Monument today.

7 Just, again, one more image here.
8 Some views of the Capitol would be obscured by
9 the existing trees on site and, again, these were
10 used in terms of further evaluating potential
11 massings and expected views based on the new
12 master plan. Staff reviewed with the applicant
13 and the Bridge Park staff potential alternatives
14 and we agreed that there was no alternative
15 approach without impacting the project density or
16 the feasibility of the master plan or other
17 historic resources like the L'Enfant streets.

18 In summary, we do believe the
19 applicant has responded to the Commission's
20 requests, trying to adjust the massings while
21 meeting other projects' goals would render the
22 master plan infeasible. Although the views from

1 the future overlook would be impacted, we do
2 believe there is a general positive benefit in
3 terms of changes to the landing of the park.
4 Most notably, the proposed development will
5 create a much more functional and cohesive
6 landing and entrance to the park. So, in lieu of
7 what's there today, which is again a secure
8 military installation, there's surface parking
9 and so this will all be more open and inviting
10 and a better opportunity to connect to the Bridge
11 Park in the future.

12 The applicant and the developer are
13 also committed to continued coordination with the
14 Bridge Park team. They've identified several
15 opportunities for partnerships including further
16 defining background play in the public space,
17 developing interpretation and storytelling and
18 also identifying new programming and community
19 engagement opportunities.

20 I'll note that the 11th Street Bridge
21 Park did provide a letter of support for the
22 master plan.

1 Now, I'm going to shift to several
2 other topics of discussion that were raised
3 previously. These include transportation,
4 sustainability and affordable housing. Regarding
5 streets and streetscapes, several internal
6 streets will serve the development. These
7 streets will generally follow the historic
8 alignments of the L'Enfant corridors. As
9 requested by the Commission, the applicant
10 provided typical street sections for each of
11 these that provide the dimensions, material
12 palettes as well as the kind of general tree and
13 landscape plantings that would be included.
14 Again, these have been incorporated into the
15 final master plan. Here's just an example of
16 what is shown for O Street.

17 The applicant also provided further
18 details regarding commitments to the provision of
19 bicycle parking, electric vehicle charging,
20 bikeshare stations and other related
21 transportation measures. Again, because this is
22 the master plan at a general level, moving

1 forward the applicant and private developer will
2 work with DDOT as certain components of the plan,
3 like these, are implemented.

4 Moving on to the environment and
5 sustainability, the project will pursue enhanced
6 sustainability standards, such as net zero
7 certification, neighborhood wide renewable energy
8 production and climate resilience and flood plain
9 management. Buildings will be constructed to a
10 minimum standard of LEED Gold or a comparable
11 standard. In addition, buildings will also
12 pursue carbon net zero as well as pursuing
13 renewable energy credits under LEED and also
14 comply with the Energy Conservation Code.

15 At draft review, the Commission also
16 requested the applicant develop a storm water
17 management approach and a summary of potential
18 measures to be included. In response, the
19 applicant has provided details regarding storm
20 water management to include a variety of low
21 impact development standard approaches and these
22 will be, again, designed and coordinated with the

1 Department of Energy and Environment as the
2 projects move towards implementation.

3 I'll mention that the applicant has
4 also considered flooding and sea level rise and
5 the establishment of the base flood elevations
6 for the new construction. Again, this is
7 relatively consistent with much of the other
8 riverfront development that we see across the
9 District. In particular, the base flood
10 elevation for this project or this master plan is
11 placed at approximately 15 feet.

12 The Riverwalk Trail is also an
13 important transportation or multimodal component
14 of the project. This will benefit pedestrians
15 and bicyclists. The private developer has
16 committed to improvement and maintenance of the
17 trail and this just shows you a section through
18 the trail and how it will be integrated with the
19 new development.

20 The applicant also intends to
21 reinterpret and reuse the historic pier
22 footprints. We support this approach where

1 possible and also consider the integration of
2 sustainability measures including new wetlands
3 and river habitat so there's some potential
4 opportunity to integrate those as part of a
5 future design for this project. We would also
6 request that the applicant continue to coordinate
7 with all the applicable federal and District
8 agencies that have a responsibility and
9 jurisdiction in the river.

10 So, now regarding affordable housing,
11 this has been significantly updated since your
12 last review. The developer has committed to an
13 eight percent inclusionary zoning set aside for
14 rental units. They have also committed to eight
15 percent set aside of for-sale units for disabled
16 veterans. The developer will also pursue
17 financial support for an additional seven percent
18 affordable housing through tax credit or similar
19 financing programs. These commitments have been
20 coordinated with the District Office of Planning
21 and importantly, the inclusion of affordable
22 housing aligns with many administration goals.

1 At draft review, we noted that
2 additional details regarding affordable housing
3 and the program and other aspects would be
4 developed and worked out by final review. In
5 response, the applicant has coordinated with the
6 Office of Planning and NCPC and the preparation
7 of a Memorandum of Understanding, or an MOU, that
8 outlines the review process as well as the
9 affordable housing commitments.

10 In April of this year, we entered into
11 that MOU with the Navy and OP that outlines the
12 master planning and zoning process for this area
13 to ensure that all legal authorities are met and
14 that the Navy has a predictable process for
15 updating the master plan and implementing the
16 private development through zoning. So, per the
17 MOU and NCPC, we will review and approve the
18 master plan as a guide for District zoning and
19 properties identified for non-federal uses will
20 be zoned by the Zoning Commission of the District
21 of Columbia in accordance with the master plan.
22 Also they will be subject to the land use

1 controls and process per the District of Columbia
2 Office of Planning.

3 I'll mention and note that this is
4 very similar to the agreement that was prepared
5 for the Armed Forces Retirement Home Master Plan,
6 which many of you would be familiar with.

7 As such, staff notes that any proposal
8 to update or modify the approved master plan,
9 including changes proposed by the selected
10 developer, will require the Navy to submit a
11 master plan amendment for NCPC review and
12 approval. Overall, staff finds that the final
13 master plan is responsive to previous comments,
14 in particular, the commitments to affordable
15 housing and the process for future coordination
16 with the District, which have been addressed.

17 This master plan, much like the rest of the
18 Southeast Federal Center, we believe is an
19 example of the potential benefits of federal
20 public and private partnerships. Therefore,
21 staff does recommend the Commission approve the
22 final Washington Navy Yard Southeast Corner

1 Master Plan as a guide for future development and
2 also adopt a Record of Decision to conclude
3 NCPC's NEPA process.

4 That concludes my presentation. I
5 will be available for questions. In the
6 meantime, at this time, I'd like to introduce Mr.
7 Jeff Johnson, Naval District Washington Executive
8 Director, who would like to make some remarks.
9 He is also joined by Nik Tompkins-Flagg and other
10 representatives in the Navy as well as the
11 development team, who are here to assist and
12 answer any questions. Thank you.

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Mr. Flis.
14 Mr. Johnson, do you have comments coming
15 forward?

16 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am. Madam
17 Chair, members of the Commission and our
18 community neighbors, as previously briefed, the
19 land exchange will enable the Navy to address
20 serious encroachment concerns on the northwest
21 perimeter of the Washington Navy Yard by
22 acquiring the E Parcel and allowing the Navy to

1 relocate the National Museum of the United States
2 Navy into a world class facility on M Street
3 bringing over 1 million visitors to the area each
4 year.

5 Locating the museum on the E Parcels
6 outside of the secure perimeter will increase the
7 public access and provide great opportunities for
8 engagement, including spaces to host conferences,
9 veterans' reunions, promotion celebrations, Navy
10 educational series and research seminars, all of
11 which would draw tourism from around the country
12 and the world to DC and celebrate naval heritage
13 with a larger audience.

14 The Washington Navy Yard Southeast
15 Corner development provides a unique opportunity
16 to allow public access to portions of the
17 Washington Navy Yard Historic District, create a
18 mixed use development that will bring tens of
19 millions of dollars in new annual tax revenue to
20 the District and create a vibrant connection to
21 the existing and future development along and
22 adjacent to the Anacostia Watershed. We have

1 worked diligently with federal and local
2 organizations and stakeholders to engage them and
3 incorporate feedback received into the master
4 plan. This collaboration has led to a better
5 plan and we are committed to continued
6 collaboration as the project continues to evolve.

7 The Navy and Redbrick are excited for
8 the opportunity to coordinate with building
9 bridges across the river and the 11th Street
10 Bridge Park to create a seamless and enhanced
11 experience between the two projects to encourage
12 community gathering and engagement along the
13 Anacostia Riverfront. Likewise, the Navy is
14 looking forward to working with NCPC and other
15 stakeholders in the near future on the designs
16 for our new flagship National Museum of the
17 United States Navy.

18 We appreciate all the efforts of NCPC,
19 DC Office of Planning and other staff over the
20 several months in preparation for this meeting.
21 We look forward to a continued partnership and
22 the opportunity to bring this exciting

1 development to fruition. The Navy and the
2 Redbrick team are here to answer any questions
3 you may have and I would now like to turn the
4 floor over to Eric Crafton, who will make brief
5 remarks before we answer any of your questions.
6 Thank you.

7 MR. CRAFTON: Thank you so much, Jeff.

8 It's a real pleasure, Madam Chair and
9 Commissioners, to be here, but before I get
10 started, I'd be remiss if I didn't just take a
11 moment to thank the National Capital Planning
12 Commission staff and Diane, Matt, and team.
13 Thank you so much. We would not be here without
14 your help and guidance and support, so thank you
15 so much. I don't know that I've ever worked with
16 a more professional and responsive agency, so
17 thank you. Also, I'd like to thank the Office of
18 Planning for their cooperative and collaborative
19 approach that we used with the Navy, just thank
20 you so much for that. We just appreciate that.

21 I just want to remind everybody again,
22 Jeff Johnson said this, but the whole purpose of

1 this project for the Navy was to address serious
2 national security concerns at the highest levels,
3 but we were understanding working with NCPC and
4 the community and Office of Planning that we
5 wanted to be good neighbors and create a project
6 that would let us solve these security concerns,
7 but also create something beneficial to all the
8 stakeholders. Jeff outlined the National Museum
9 of the Navy, Matt outlined the new housing,
10 expanded and improved waterfront, so we think
11 we're there. We think we've done that and so
12 during several years of consultation, the Navy
13 worked diligently with all the consulting parties
14 to address some of the concerns that Matt lined
15 out and some of those concerns actually saw the
16 Navy work with OP and other consulting parties to
17 decrease the project density by 300,000 square
18 feet.

19 From the Navy's view, I fear and I'm
20 just being frank with the Commissioners, I fear
21 any further loss in density or delay in approvals
22 could actually jeopardize or place this project

1 at risk. Having said that, again, thanks to
2 everyone who helped the Navy get to this point.
3 We don't do this a lot so we had to rely on a lot
4 of help from the NCPC staff and OP and other
5 consulting parties, so we thank you for that and
6 the Navy is both delighted and proud to present
7 this Washington Navy Yard Southeast Corner
8 project for your consideration. Thank you so
9 much.

10 CHAIR GOODMAN: Well, thank you very
11 much. I want to thank Mr. Flis and Mr. Johnson
12 and also the Navy and Redbrick for all the work
13 you've done and want to recognize the hard work
14 that's gone on to address concerns ahead of time
15 with metro government and with other stakeholders
16 in the neighborhood to bring this project here to
17 us today.

18 We do have some public testimony. I
19 want to note that Scott Kratz with the
20 organization Building Bridges Across the River
21 has sent a letter of support for the project
22 noting their commitment to ongoing coordination

1 with the Navy and Redbrick as the 11th Street
2 Bridge project advances.

3 We also received a comment letter from
4 Darin Tuggle, a nearby resident and Pastor
5 Ricardo Payne, both in support of the proposal.

6 But we have four people signed up to
7 speak right now and I'd like to move to them as
8 they're ready and I think Zachary Burt, you're
9 representing the DC Preservation League and
10 you'll have five minutes to speak and provide
11 testimony. Please let us know when you're ready.

12 MR. BURT: Thank you so much. Good
13 afternoon --

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

15 MR. BURT: Chair Goodmann and members
16 of the Commission. My name is Zachary Burt and I
17 am the Community Outreach and Grants Manager for
18 the DC Preservation League. My comments today
19 are focused on historic Building 166, a
20 contributing property within the Historic
21 District and its replacement Building 5.

22 Based on the diagrams and renderings

1 in the project files, the proposed plan appears
2 to be an example of facadism at its worst, where
3 a shred of the historic feature is retained and
4 then crudely attached to modern construction. In
5 this particular case, only a portion of the
6 historic facade, the northern portion and its
7 porches, will be preserved and restored and a
8 towering modern addition will be added on, giving
9 the new Building 5 a top-heavy appearance. There
10 is no graceful transition between the historic
11 and the modern as there is no setback from the
12 historic facade. This allows the new
13 construction of Building 5 to overpower the
14 historic remnants of Building 166.

15 Additionally, the building's
16 distinctive H-shape will be completely obliterated
17 as nothing will remain of the southern portion.
18 A thoughtful design is certainly possible as
19 Washington has numerous examples of new
20 construction that tastefully incorporates
21 historic fabric and character defining features.

22 The proposed Building 5 looms over the larger

1 Historic District with its height and massing
2 that is completely out of line with the
3 surrounding short buildings and structures, some
4 of which are only 25 to 55 feet and thus,
5 significantly shorter than the proposed 130 feet
6 and that's not even counting the proposed
7 penthouse level.

8 The height of Building 5 will further
9 diminish the views of the cityscape from the 11th
10 Street Bridge, Anacostia and potentially numerous
11 other vistas within Southeast Washington that
12 haven't even been mentioned today. DCPL asks the
13 development team to restudy its proposal for
14 Building 166 to include the retention of
15 significant portions of the historic structure
16 and compatibly integrate the new development into
17 the historic campus and the city as a whole.

18 Doing so is not only more sustainable, but it
19 will also lead to a better design for Building 5.

20 Like our colleagues at the Committee of 100, who
21 are also testifying today, we ask that the NCPC
22 require a higher standard of design on this

1 project as the Washington Navy Yard is one of the
2 most significant historic sites in the District,
3 as illustrated by its National Historic Landmark
4 District status, which has been referenced here
5 today.

6 We believe that a more compatible
7 design solution that is both forward looking yet
8 also respects the historic landscape can be
9 found. I also just want to add that we're really
10 disappointed with the lack of engagement with the
11 surrounding communities on this project,
12 particularly those within Ward 8. I believe
13 Greta Fuller, who is also testifying today with
14 the Historical Anacostia Society will be touching
15 on that. Also, the lack of engagement with us,
16 ourselves, the DCPL, the National Trust and the
17 Committee of 100, especially as it's been
18 mentioned by me and also by the presenter that
19 this is a National Historic Landmark District, so
20 you would think those parties would be involved
21 in the consultation process.

22 That concludes my remarks and thank

1 you for considering the views of the DC
2 Preservation League.

3 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
4 Mr. Burt, and I appreciate your comments. Now,
5 we'll hear from Carol Aten, who is representing
6 the Committee of 100 and you also have five
7 minutes to speak representing an organization.
8 Thank you.

9 MS. ATEN: Thank you. Good evening,
10 Chairman Goodman and members of the Commission.

11 I'm Carol Aten representing the Committee of 100
12 of the Federal City.

13 Over the years, the Committee of 100
14 has generally been aligned with the guidance and
15 decisions of NCPD, but we are frankly appalled by
16 the plan before you and shocked by the staff
17 recommendation that the Commission approve it.
18 Our objections to this plan fall into four
19 categories -- height, historic preservation,
20 treatment of the waterfront and affordable
21 housing.

22 The Height Act says that the height of

1 a building should not exceed the width of the
2 street in front of it plus 20 feet, not to exceed
3 130 feet, and allows a 20-foot penthouse on top.

4 The measuring point is the curb opposite the
5 middle of the building front. Eleventh Street is
6 apparently being used for height measurement for
7 the entire property; however, the buildings are
8 not all within a single square and each building
9 must be measured based on the street on which it
10 fronts.

11 In addition, there is no 11th Street
12 next to the property, it's a freeway ramp and the
13 11th Street part ends before the site and the
14 right of way is a paved path along a grassy strip
15 to the water. Given the circulation pattern
16 shown in the plan, it also seems quite unlikely
17 that any buildings will front on 11th Street, so
18 it would not be an appropriate measuring point in
19 any event.

20 There is no evidence that the fronts
21 of buildings were identified or any streets were
22 measured to calculate allowable heights in

1 accordance with the Height Act, a federal law
2 that the Navy is subject to and the NCPC should
3 be enforcing. The proposed building heights do
4 not appear to be in compliance with the Height
5 Act and should be revised.

6 Historic preservation: We have two
7 points to make about this issue. The first also
8 relates to the height of new buildings. The Navy
9 Yard District is not any old historic property as
10 has been noted. It is a National Historic
11 Landmark. All prior development within and
12 surrounding the Navy Yard have respected the
13 scale of the historic buildings. The buildings
14 to be preserved are 25 and 55 feet tall with the
15 lower buildings closest to the new construction.

16 Simply put, the proposed new buildings are
17 inappropriately tall regardless of the Height
18 Act.

19 The second point is the proposed
20 treatment of Building 166 which was previously
21 mentioned Building 5 in the plan, which is
22 frankly horrifying. As the worst example of

1 facadism since Red Lion Row, this plan sets a new
2 low bar. Building back some porches is a
3 ridiculous mitigation given the small portion of
4 the facade being saved. Building an additional
5 10 stories on top adds insult to injury. The
6 remnants of the historic building will look like
7 quaint decoration on part of a lower level. This
8 is not historic preservation.

9 Treatment of the waterfront: Much of
10 the new construction is in the flood plain. Yes,
11 it will be bermed up 15 feet using DC's band-aid
12 approach to this looming threat, but shouldn't
13 the federal government be setting an example by
14 not putting new buildings in flood-prone areas.
15 Aren't there federal resiliency and
16 sustainability policies on that? Also, haven't
17 we learned any lesson from past experience about
18 the desirability of keeping waterfront areas
19 open? There are no other tall buildings on the
20 waterfront on either side of the river in the
21 vicinity of the Navy Yard.

22 The proposed buildings are intrusive

1 and inappropriate and diminish the waterfront and
2 the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail. The plan shows
3 the trail right up against the new buildings with
4 the buildings actually overhanging it. The
5 waterfront should be treated as the environmental
6 and community asset it is and there should be
7 nothing but sky above the trail.

8 Affordable Housing: The zoning and
9 unzoned property triggers IZ-plus not just the
10 standard eight percent and requires 20 percent
11 affordable housing. The eight percent proposal
12 is inadequate and the commitment to do more if
13 the developer can get LIHTC or historic property
14 -- the HPTF funding is a hollow promise because
15 nothing is available except for already made
16 commitments.

17 We note that a recent MOU with the DC
18 Office of Planning includes proposed zoning
19 language that would exempt the new special Navy
20 Yard East zone from the 20 percent affordable
21 housing requirement. No explanation is given and
22 NCPC should not support such an exemption.

1 We note that many similar concerns
2 about height, the waterfront and affordable
3 housing were raised by the Commission on Fine
4 Arts in November. Why have they been ignored?
5 We urge the Commission to send this project back
6 to drawing the board and direct staff to work
7 with the applicant to develop an alternative plan
8 that is compliant, appropriate and worthy of a
9 Navy Yard National Historic Landmark District,
10 our waterfront and our nation's capital. Thank
11 you for the opportunity to comment.

12 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much
13 for your comments and for being here today, Ms.
14 Aten. I'd like to go to number three speaker.
15 Emeka Moneme is not here. He had a 3:00 stop and
16 that's long since gone, but he did leave his
17 testimony and I believe, Ms. Koster, you have
18 that?

19 MS. KOSTER: Yes and that was sent to
20 the Commission. It is in favor of the project.

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.
22 Number four, Ms. Greta Fuller with the Historic

1 Anacostia Preservation Society, and representing
2 an organization, you too will have five minutes.

3 MS. FULLER: Thank you.

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.

5 MS. FULLER: My name is Greta Fuller
6 and good evening, NCPC Committee members. I'm
7 testifying today on short notice to express my
8 strong opposition to the proposed construction of
9 a 120- to 130-foot building at the foot of the
10 now existing 11th Street Bridge and the Ward 8
11 community.

12 This development not only threatens to
13 obstruct the cherished views of Historic
14 Anacostia, but also possesses significant risk to
15 the visibility integrity of the iconic Frederick
16 Douglass House. Furthermore, the lack of
17 meaningful engagement with the community and the
18 absence of genuine effort to obtain community
19 buy-in and understanding are deeply concerning.
20 The lack of community engagement is more than
21 just a missed opportunity. It's a disservice to
22 the very people whose lives are affected by these

1 decisions.

2 By neglecting to seek out and consider
3 community perspectives, decision makers like
4 yourselves risk making choices that are
5 disconnected from the realities and needs of the
6 people who are directly affected. It is my firm
7 belief that true community engagement requires
8 more than just token gestures; as you are
9 allowing me to speak today with no time to
10 prepare and no real knowledge of this project.

11 Community engagement necessitates genuine
12 dialogue and a steadfast commitment to addressing
13 the concerns and aspirations of all stakeholders
14 involved. Being a Ward 8 and Historic Anacostia
15 resident, I feel duped, no such word, but I feel
16 duped. I have reached out to several
17 stakeholders in the community once I got this
18 information last night at 6:00 p.m., and I
19 reached out to businesses, social organizations,
20 civic clubs, ANC Commissioners and individual
21 residents asking if they knew about this project,
22 the height of the building and if they felt

1 comfortable with this building being at the west
2 end of the 11st Street Bridge Park. Ninety-nine
3 percent of the people I talked to asked me what
4 was I talking about and the other one percent was
5 asking me does it have something to do with
6 Redbrick again. When is this happening and what
7 is happening?

8 I feel like we haven't had adequate
9 seats at the table and we do not understand every
10 aspect of this project. The apparent disregard
11 for the voices of the people most affected by
12 this development, as I said, is alarming. It is
13 unacceptable that those who call this community
14 home were not included in the conversation
15 regarding a project that will undoubtedly have a
16 profound impact on our lives. I admit I am not
17 familiar with all of NCPC guidelines, laws and
18 what legislation the organization abides by, but
19 you can imagine, I was taken aback when I heard
20 through several avenues that NCPC already decided
21 on this project and talking today is a waste of
22 my time, but I said I had to go on the record. I

1 thought this can't be true. Why didn't we get to
2 testify? I saw 44 people at Rock Creek Park, but
3 I only see four people here and I don't see that
4 Ward 8 or ANC 8A community speaking about this.

5 I would like to hear from the
6 Committee once I have completed my testimony is
7 this true that I'm wasting my time, that you've
8 already ruled in favor of this development. Have
9 you already approved the construction of a 120-,
10 130-foot building at the foot of the 11th Street
11 Bridge on the grounds of the Navy Yard? Are you
12 in favor of the wall, as we're calling it? Is
13 this true? Why are we here today to testify?
14 Oh, but you didn't invite me, you didn't invite
15 me to any meetings, nor did you expect me today.

16 This entire project has moved forward without
17 the voice of 70,000 residents in Ward 8 and
18 14,000 residents in ANC 8A. I received a flyer
19 also last night, just like the information about
20 the meeting, very late, addressing partners and
21 stakeholders of the project and I didn't see one
22 organization or person from Ward 8 or Historic

1 Anacostia as a partner.

2 There seems to be a lack of awareness
3 and caring about the impact this project will
4 bring to Ward 8 residents. The construction of
5 this 120-foot building at the foot of the 11th
6 Street Bridge in the Navy Yard will significantly
7 obstruct our views, including the long-promised
8 11th Street Bridge Park. This building threatens
9 to become a barrier rather than a bridge
10 disrupting the connectivity and bridges that the
11 community has been anticipating for years.

12 It's essential that the voices and the
13 concerns of Ward 8 residents are heard and
14 considered before any irreversible decisions are
15 made. It feels as if there's an attempt to build
16 a wall, to block off Ward 8 from the rest of the
17 city. Redbrick has significantly high buildings
18 on the east bank of the Anacostia River along
19 Howard Road that are blocking views of the
20 Capital City and now they are building this
21 monstrosity on the west bank of the Anacostia. I
22 would urge the Committee to heed the shortcomings

1 of the current approach to community engagement
2 and I urge you to reject this project and allow
3 Ward 8 to speak. Thank you for letting me speak
4 today.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
6 Ms. Fuller. We appreciate your comments and your
7 participation today. This concludes public
8 testimony, but we do have the ability for
9 Commissioners to ask any of our presenters today
10 questions. Are there any questions for Mr. Burt,
11 Ms. Aten or for Ms. Fuller?

12 COMMISSIONER CASH: Madam Chair, I
13 have a couple of questions.

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, sir,
15 Commissioner Cash.

16 COMMISSIONER CASH: I know these are
17 best directed at Mr. Flis or at Redbrick, but I
18 did have a question. We are talking just about
19 the master plan at this point. All of this stuff
20 is very conceptual, but is it anticipated that
21 the private development is going to go on? I
22 know it was mentioned in the presentation it's

1 going to through zoning. Do we know if this is
2 going to through as a by-rights case or if it's
3 planned to be a PUD or has that not been
4 determined yet?

5 MR. FLIS: Can the applicant team
6 respond to that?

7 MR. CHOWFLA: Good afternoon, my name
8 is Sohael Chowfla with Redbrick. Commissioner
9 Cash, the project will be going through a text
10 and map amendment process with the Office of
11 Planning as the proponent.

12 COMMISSIONER CASH: Okay and also,
13 because this is an historic district, will the
14 eventual project have to go before HPRB for final
15 approvals?

16 MR. CHOWFLA: Historic reviews for
17 this project will be completed under the
18 programmatic agreement, given the federal
19 ownership of the property.

20 COMMISSIONER CASH: Okay. I think
21 that answers my questions for the moment. Thank
22 you.

1 MR. CHOWFLA: And I can add on to
2 that, also I mentioned the programmatic agreement
3 actually outlines the process for involving
4 consulting parties as well as others who are
5 interested as the project designs develop. We
6 would work with the Navy to ensure that all the
7 consulting parties participate in that process.

8 COMMISSIONER CASH: Oh and actually I
9 did have one more question. This is a little bit
10 different because of the consulting parties here.

11 Will NCPC have any design review of anything
12 that goes on on the site or is this the last step
13 for NCPC for you?

14 MR. CHOWFLA: We, at the staff level
15 through the PA, we would participate on that.

16 COMMISSIONER CASH: Okay.

17 MR. CHOWFLA: Yep. And then the rest
18 will go through the zoning process.

19 COMMISSIONER CASH: Okay, but the
20 private sections will be subject to the DC zoning
21 process?

22 MR. CHOWFLA: Yes. Correct.

1 COMMISSIONER CASH: Okay.

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you. Good
3 questions. Appreciate that, Commissioner Cash
4 and Mr. Flis, thank you very much. Are there any
5 other questions before we move to a motion? No
6 other questions? Hearing no further questions
7 then I will start with a motion to approve the
8 final master plan for the Washington Navy Yard
9 Southeast Corner. Is there a motion?

10 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: So moved, Madam
11 Chair.

12 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
13 Commissioner McMahon. Is there a second?

14 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: So
15 moved.

16 CHAIR GOODMAN: It's been moved and
17 seconded by, I'm sorry?

18 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: It
19 was Kristi, Commission Tunstall-Williams.

20 CHAIR GOODMAN: Oh okay, by
21 Commissioner Tunstall-Williams. Thank you very
22 much. So it's been moved and seconded, so could

1 we have the roll call please?

2 (Simultaneous speaking.)

3 MS. KOSTER: I think we still are
4 doing the deliberations, Chair Goodmann.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, all right. So,
6 that's very good, okay. We'll have our
7 conversations. I will go back and find one of
8 the seating charts. Thank you very much. If we
9 could begin with comments. I'm going to start
10 with Commissioner Hewlett.

11 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Another tough one
12 kind of. I think I'm going to support the -- I
13 don't have any additional comments at this point
14 in time. Thank you.

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, thank you, Vice
16 Chair Hewlett. Commissioner Green.

17 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Thank you, oh,
18 Mr. Flis, did you need to jump in here?

19 MR. FLIS: Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't
20 mean to interrupt.

21 COMMISSIONER GREEN: I'm sorry.

22 MR. FLIS: You can go ahead. I did

1 want to offer, if it's helpful for the
2 Commission, for the applicant to kind of walk
3 through the public engagement process, both
4 what's happened in the past as well as what
5 potentially could happen in the future. I know
6 that that discussion happened at draft review as
7 well, but I just wanted to offer that if it is
8 helpful. Sorry for the interruption.

9 COMMISSIONER CASH: Chair Goodmann, if
10 you'd like to do that now, I'm happy to wait.

11 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay, well then,
12 would we like to have the presenters talk about
13 community engagement?

14 MS. TOMPKINS-FLAGG: So, we did for
15 this project, over a couple of year process, we
16 did an environmental impact statement to reflect
17 both the acquisition of the E Parcels by the Navy
18 and the mechanism to make that possible, which is
19 the land exchange and then, therefore, we also
20 analyzed the impacts of the development that
21 would occur on the southeast corner.

22 Throughout that process, we did have

1 community engagement. We completed public
2 scoping where we mailed out over 150 different
3 letters. All of the ANCs for Ward 8 were
4 contacted at that time. We had public meetings
5 during the public scoping period. Then, moving
6 on to the draft EIS stage, it was released for
7 public review for 45 days. We had another public
8 meeting during that time. Our list of
9 stakeholders had grown between scoping and the
10 draft EIS, so we mailed closer to 200 letters
11 during that period of time. The ANCs for all of
12 Ward 8 were contacted again during that time and
13 then running simultaneously to the EIS which
14 concluded in September of last year with a Record
15 of Decision for this action.

16 We had a process with the consulting
17 parties throughout the Section 106 process that
18 fed into the EIS and that consultation process
19 resulted, as Matt said previously, in a
20 programmatic agreement which included the process
21 for the continued consultations for the
22 individual building designs as those are

1 developed. Then Julie Darsie is our Cultural
2 Resources Program Manager, so she was the lead on
3 that entire Section 106 process, which was highly
4 involved over a period of a couple of years with
5 our consulting parties and so, we'll let Julie
6 talk about that process.

7 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Madam Chair.

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes?

9 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Could the people
10 from Redbrick identify who they are when they
11 speak. The gentleman in the middle, we don't
12 know what their names are.

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, could you please
14 identify yourselves?

15 MR. SKINNER: Sure. Running across,
16 we have Sohael Chowfla, Senior Vice President of
17 Development. Tom Skinner, Managing Partner at
18 Redbrick, and then the other three people sitting
19 here to my right are all from the Navy.

20 MR. CRAFTON: I'm Eric Crafton,
21 Director of Real Estate for NAVFAC Washington.

22 MS. TOMPKINS-FLAGG: I'm Nik Tompkins-

1 Flagg. I'm the NEPA Program Manager at NAVFAC
2 Washington and I was also the Project Manager for
3 the EIS and I'm also the Navy's liaison to NCPC
4 and CFA.

5 MS. DARSIE: And, I'm Julie Darsie.
6 I'm the Cultural Resources Program Manager for
7 NAVFAC Washington.

8 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Thank you.

9 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.
10 Okay. Are there any other questions for the
11 team on their community --

12 MR. CRAFTON: Madam Chair, we just had
13 a couple more comments if you would be so
14 inclined.

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, go right ahead.
16 Thank you.

17 MS. DARSIE: Regarding the Section 106
18 consultation, we did an extensive evaluation of
19 the area for potential effects, identification of
20 historic resources and assessment of effects. We
21 did a visual survey using the maximum height
22 allowable under the Height of Buildings Act,

1 which is 130 feet and we reviewed historic
2 properties with the District of Columbia Historic
3 Preservation Office, our records and the records
4 of the GSA.

5 The District of Columbia Historic
6 Preservation Office provided us with several
7 historic properties that we were not aware of.
8 Eleven of the properties we evaluated were on the
9 Anacostia side of the river and included the
10 Anacostia Historic District, Frederick Douglass
11 National Historic Site, St. Elizabeth's Hospital,
12 Anacostia High School and Kramer Middle School.
13 Nine of those we determined there would be no
14 adverse effect on those historic resources. The
15 two that potentially would have adverse effects
16 for the Anacostia Park and the L'Enfant Plan for
17 the City of Washington.

18 Based on a field visit to the
19 Frederick Douglass National Historic Site during
20 the winter when the leaves were off the trees, we
21 determined that the building heights of 130 feet
22 would have a minimum impact on the viewshed from

1 the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site due
2 to its location off to the east of that historic
3 site.

4 We included the Historic Anacostia
5 Preservation Society in the consultation process
6 at the opening of the Section 106 process and
7 throughout the evaluation of the area of
8 potential effects, identification of historic
9 properties and preliminary determinations of
10 effect. The programmatic agreement also allows
11 for the addition of consulting parties if any
12 further parties would like to participate.

13 Regarding Building 166, it was
14 constructed in 1918 and doubled in 1940. It is
15 not within the Washington Navy Yard National
16 Historic Landmark. It has experienced
17 significant settlement over the years due to
18 improperly compacted soils at the time of
19 construction and the footers of the building have
20 become displaced and the west end of the building
21 is now off limits to staff. Returning Building
22 166 to habitable condition would be prohibitively

1 expensive given its relatively small square
2 footage. The Navy and the consulting parties,
3 which included the District of Columbia
4 Preservation League, consulted on the conditions
5 of and the design for Building 166. The
6 programmatic agreement acknowledges that the
7 demolition and so-called facade-ectomy of
8 Building 166 would be an adverse effect and it
9 includes further design, review milestones and
10 compliance with design guidelines as well as
11 mitigation for that adverse effect.

12 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much
13 for that additional information. That is
14 helpful. Are there any other questions from the
15 Commissioners for the team from the Navy and
16 Redbrick? I do see Commissioner Green has a
17 question.

18 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
19 went off the record at 6:05 p.m. and resumed at
20 6:05 p.m.)

21 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Thank you.
22 Perhaps I misunderstood when you were reading the

1 two items, the two resources, that had adverse
2 effects. Did you say one of the -- did I hear
3 correctly that one of the adverse effects was
4 upon the L'Enfant Plan of the District of
5 Columbia. Did I misunderstand what you said?

6 MS. DARSIE: Sorry, it's the potential
7 for adverse effects and we agreed that we would
8 continue consultation regarding the effect on the
9 views for it, or is it the L'Enfant Plan.

10 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Okay. So it was
11 yes, I just wanted to make sure I was hearing you
12 correctly.

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes. Okay. Any
14 further questions for the team, or the staff?
15 Okay. Hearing no further questions from our
16 panel, then I'm going to go back to Commissioner
17 Green and have you finish your comments and a
18 round robin format for this motion.

19 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Thank you very
20 much. I just, two specific items that I wanted
21 to raise is I just, I understand the here now for
22 the first time. The description of the reasoning

1 on Building 166. I would have preferred to have
2 seen that in the app, that level of detail in the
3 application and not just be raised after someone
4 pointed out that the insufficiency of that
5 response.

6 And the second was, I am struggling to
7 understand the heights of the building. And
8 using that section of 11th Street to determine
9 the height. I'm not yet convinced by that
10 selection. This is being appropriate, but those
11 are the two issues I'd like to raise. Thank you.

12 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
13 Commissioner Green. Commissioner McMahon?

14 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Thank you. I
15 thank the staff for the work they've done. It's
16 been a long working project as the Navy and
17 Redbrick but if I might, going back to our
18 November 24 Commission meeting where we took a
19 look at the preliminaries and about the amount of
20 public comment we had even back then details of
21 work there. So I'm comfortable with what the
22 Navy and NCPC has done to carry this project

1 forward. It still looks to me like a good
2 project.

3 There's some details, maybe to be
4 worked on. It sounded like they would be worked
5 at in the design phases. I'm listening to it,
6 that Commissioner Green has brought up. And so,
7 I support this project going forward and I intend
8 to vote for it. Thank you.

9 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
10 Commissioner McMahon. Commissioner Stidham?

11 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: I don't have
12 any questions or comments at this time. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you.
15 Commissioner Argo?

16 COMMISSIONER ARGO: No additional --

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: I think you froze
18 there.

19 COMMISSIONER ARGO: -- questions or
20 comments from me.

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER ARGO: And thank you very

1 much for your presentation, and am I good?

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Okay. Thank you.

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
5 Commissioner Argo. Commissioner Tunstall-
6 Williams.

7 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yeah,
8 I have just a couple of quick comments
9 recognizing this is a master plan. And there's a
10 lot that happens between the master plan and the
11 design. I would encourage Redbrick. I mean,
12 looking at what's happened at Yards Park and
13 think a little bit more about green space. And
14 right now the access between the river and the
15 development feels rather meager. I know it's 75
16 feet, but it feels quite small compared to what's
17 happening on the other side of the Navy Yard.

18 So to the extent possible, I encourage
19 you to look at expanding that as well as sort of
20 adding some more green spaces. This is pretty, I
21 mean, what you're doing is a huge improvement
22 over surface parking, of course. But to the

1 extent that you can do that. The other thing,
2 the heights have been mentioned, particularly the
3 buildings on the front. I think, again, over at
4 the Yards, they've done a great job of at least
5 stepping the height of those buildings back from
6 the river.

7 There's an overhang that I saw in the
8 massing concept that seems kind of looming and
9 you might want to rethink that. And I really
10 appreciate the clarifications about the impacts
11 to Building 166. As I was going to say, as you
12 design that building, if you could find ways to
13 be more respectful to the historic elements, that
14 would be great. But understanding that that may
15 not be feasible given the current conditions.

16 So again, I think the master plan is
17 an improvement over what's there, but I do think
18 that the team could go much further as they
19 design each of these buildings to make it to more
20 place-making as opposed to building to the
21 maximum. And that's the end of my comment.

22 Thank you.

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
2 Commissioner Tunstall-Williams. Commissioner
3 Dixon?

4 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes. I have
5 concerns about the height issue, and I also was
6 attentive to the fact that the Navy did reach out
7 to ANC Commissioners in 8. But Commissioner
8 Fuller, who I know is pretty vigilant, based on
9 her comments, I'm not comfortable that they got
10 enough engagement in the process for whatever
11 reason. So that's my view at this point. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
14 Commissioner Dixon. Commissioner Cash?

15 COMMISSIONER CASH: Thanks. I don't
16 want to prolong this too much, but I do want to
17 make a few points, especially in light of the
18 public comment. So I do want to reiterate, this
19 is a master plan. We are essentially saying we
20 think this is where the boxes can go and how big
21 the boxes should be. I mean, that's really
22 simplistic.

1 I am heartened that there will be some
2 zoning interaction so that maybe people can come
3 and have some comments on it. But I do want to
4 say that I think that it's really important for
5 the development team, even though, because you
6 get out of some of these other review approval
7 processes as a technicality, because this is
8 another unique federal project. This isn't like
9 when we're looking at Armed Forces, which is kind
10 of a little bit more of an island farther out in
11 the city. This is like a pretty dense part of
12 town, a politically active part of town.

13 So to the extent that you can engage
14 the ANC, I would suggest you go out to ANC 8F,
15 which is on the west side of the river, and 8A,
16 which is on the east side of the river, and treat
17 this like it was a contested case at zoning.
18 Treat it like it's going out for HPRB approval.
19 Try and get that buy-in, because D.C. is really
20 used to, on these development projects, going to
21 the Zoning Commission, going to HPRB, going to
22 ANC meetings and sharing their views. So to the

1 extent that you can make this feel like and
2 actually engage with folks like this is a
3 contested case with all these different approvals
4 that need to happen.

5 I mean, you've gotten the Bridge Park,
6 who was against this a few months ago, and
7 they've turned it around and they're in favor of
8 it because I think there was some engagement with
9 them and listening to their concerns. Maybe you
10 can get 8A and 8F on board if you sit down with
11 them, listen to them in the process when you're
12 making these building designs. And you can go to
13 DCPL to make sure that they are satisfied that
14 you've done some building design that's not just
15 slapping a facade on it, which I think was the
16 testimony and just checking the box.

17 So just a long way of saying you got
18 out of a lot of engagement, which this is a
19 federal project, so it doesn't necessarily go
20 through the same steps. I'm glad that it sounds
21 like there's a strong MOU that's been negotiated,
22 and I trust that Commissioner Cozart will make

1 sure that as much engagement from the city's
2 perspective can go on. But I would really, to
3 the extent that you can moving forward, treat
4 this like you were developing it on a non-federal
5 property, get that buy-in, and I think that it
6 will make this whole process move a lot more
7 smoothly. So that's kind of my comments and
8 recommendations. So thanks.

9 CHAIR GOODMANN: Thank you,
10 Commissioner Cash. Commissioner Davis?

11 MS. KOSTER: I believe Commissioner
12 Davis and Commissioner Giachetti both had a hard
13 stop at six.

14 CHAIR GOODMANN: Okay. Thank you.
15 Commissioner Cozart?

16 COMMISSIONER COZART: Thank you to the
17 staff for all your work on this. I want to thank
18 the Navy and Redbrick for really responding to
19 the Commission's concerns from last time, and I
20 want to associate myself with Commissioner Cash's
21 comments. Thank you.

22 CHAIR GOODMANN: Thank you,

1 Commissioner Cozart. And I believe that
2 everyone, I will keep my remarks short and say
3 that I would like to associate my position with
4 Commissioner Cash and Commissioner Tunstall-
5 Williams. So we're very grateful for the time
6 here today presented by the staff and their team,
7 and it's wonderful to see the collaboration that
8 did happen with the 11th Street Park Bridge team.

9 So let's go forward, and we look forward to the
10 next phase. But in the meantime, if there are no
11 other comments or questions, we're going to call
12 on Ms. Koster to please confirm the motion, then
13 second and take the vote.

14 MS. KOSTER: Sure. The motion was
15 made by Commissioner McMahon and Commissioner
16 Tunstall-Williams seconded. With that,
17 Commissioner Cozart?

18 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

19 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner McMahon?

20 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Yes.

21 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Commissioner
22 Stidham?

1 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

2 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Commissioner

3 Argo?

4 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

5 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Hewlett?

6 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Yes.

7 MS. KOSTER: Chair Goodman?

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes.

9 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Green?

10 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Yes.

11 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Tunstall-

12 Williams?

13 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yes.

14 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Dixon?

15 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

16 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Cash?

17 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

18 MS. KOSTER: And just double-checking,

19 I believe Commissioners Davis and Giachetti are

20 no longer in the meeting.

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Thank you, Ms.

22 Koster. The motion has carried, and we still

1 have a quorum. I do note in my notes from staff
2 that we can take a five-minute break right now.
3 If you wish, or if you would like, we can just
4 continue. Any preference here? I do also know
5 that the agenda is being changed, and we will be
6 moving the informational presentation that was
7 scheduled for today to the next month's meeting.

8 Do you want to continue, or do you want a five-
9 minute break?

10 COMMISSIONER COZART: Well, I have a
11 quick question. If we're moving the item to next
12 month?

13 MS. KOSTER: There are still two other
14 items by the Smithsonian.

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, there'll be two
16 more items.

17 MS. KOSTER: The Bezos Learning Center
18 and the South Mall Campus Plan, but we will take
19 a vote to move the information presentation to
20 the next meeting. But our hope is to get through
21 these two other action items.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Two other action

1 items. I apologize, Ms. Cozart. It was just
2 that it was proposed because it was going to be a
3 long meeting that we take a five-minute break
4 right now, and I'm just asking sort of a show of
5 hands if people are ready to keep moving forward
6 with these last two action items, or do you want
7 a break for five minutes?

8 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Madam Chair,
9 you're the one who is the constant here. How do
10 you feel?

11 CHAIR GOODMAN: I say keep going.
12 I'm a keep going kind of person, but I'm trying
13 to be courteous to the team. Keep going? All
14 right. Let's go then. Okay. Welcome back.

15 COMMISSIONER DIXON: And I also make a
16 motion that we change the agenda as was
17 suggested.

18 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Second.

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. There's a
20 motion that has been made by Commissioner Dixon
21 and seconded by Vice Chair Hewlett that we move
22 the informational presentation to the next

1 Commission meeting, and that is on our agenda.
2 That information presentation, let's see here, is
3 the Little Falls Parkway improvements in
4 Montgomery County, Maryland. So all those in
5 favor of moving that to the next meeting, please
6 signify by saying aye.

7 PARTICIPANTS: Aye.

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. And opposed?
9 Motion passes. Now, welcome back, and let's move
10 on to the next agenda item which is the concept
11 plans for the National Air and Space Museum
12 construction of the Integrated Bezos Learning
13 Center, and Ms. Free is making the presentation.
14 Ms. Free?

15 MS. FREE: Yes, hi. Good evening.
16 Can you hear me and see my screen?

17 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, both.

18 MS. FREE: Great. Well, thank you,
19 and good evening, Chair Goodman and
20 Commissioners. The Smithsonian Institution has
21 requested comments on concept plans for the
22 Construct Integrated Bezos Learning Center, or

1 BLC, which is a proposed addition to the east end
2 of the National Air and Space Museum on the
3 National Mall. The impetus for this project is a
4 \$200 million philanthropic gift from Jeff Bezos
5 in support of exhibition and construction within
6 the revitalization of the museum and the
7 construction of the BLC.

8 I'll begin the presentation with a
9 brief overview of the site conditions and
10 proposed project information, followed by a
11 review of the design inspiration, architectural
12 approach, and program elements, then the
13 conceptual building and landscape designs, and
14 conclude by summarizing the status of the NEPA
15 and Section 106 processes. So as I mentioned,
16 the BLC will be an addition to the east end of
17 the National Air and Space Museum, or NASM,
18 located on the National Mall. It is bound by
19 Jefferson Drive to the north, Independence Avenue
20 to the south, and 4th Street to the east.

21 NASM's 1988 east end restaurant
22 addition was demolished in 2022, and the

1 remaining 2.5-acre site will be home to the
2 Integrated Bezos Learning Center. The proposed
3 BLC is a three-story, approximately 80,000-
4 square-foot addition. The first level will
5 contain a 600- to 700-seat restaurant, with BLC
6 programming on Levels 1 and 2. The addition will
7 connect to the museum via a new vestibule,
8 provide two new outdoor gathering spaces, and a
9 permanent location for the Phoebe Waterman Haas
10 Observatory.

11 The project is also targeting LEED
12 Gold certification, and staff requests that in
13 the next submission that the applicant detail how
14 the project will meet green building performance
15 targets, and encourages the project to achieve
16 the highest level of LEED certification feasible.

17 The submission includes a preferred concept
18 design and an appendix with alternative options
19 considered for the building composition and
20 design, the connection to NASM, the facade
21 materials, and the overall landscape approach,
22 which were reviewed in consultation with

1 stakeholders.

2 While I will provide an overview of
3 the concept alternatives that were submitted, I
4 will note that staff comments favorably on the
5 applicant's preferred concept design for the BLC
6 and associated site improvements, and also
7 commend the applicant team for the extent of the
8 consultation with agency stakeholders and their
9 responsiveness to the feedback that was received.

10 The conceptual parti for the BLC
11 addition uses the spiral galaxy as inspiration.
12 The building's spiral form is meant to
13 metaphorically place the individual at the core
14 of the galaxy, and overall staff finds that the
15 spiral galaxy design inspiration is a strong
16 thematic element that reflects the BLC's program
17 and NASM's mission, and is elegantly expressed in
18 the proposed concept.

19 Certain aspects of the former 1988
20 restaurant addition have also inspired the
21 development of the BLC concept and its
22 relationship to NASM, including setting the

1 addition as a pavilion within a garden, minimally
2 connecting to NASM and using the building
3 geometry and massing in deference to the museum.

4 In addition, a programmatic agreement
5 prepared for the demolition of NASM's east end
6 restaurant addition stipulated a design framework
7 for the BLC, which included respecting the formal
8 setting of the National Mall, responding to
9 NASM's architecture and massing, considering the
10 physical connection to NASM and the exterior
11 materials, and respecting the contributing vistas
12 of the National Mall Historic District.

13 So in the next few slides, I will
14 review how staff finds that the BLC concept plan
15 successfully integrate this design framework.
16 The project utilizes several aspects of the
17 contextual framework to define the physical
18 building parameters. First, the site is defined
19 on the north side by the face of the National Air
20 and Space Museum, which respects the 445-foot
21 setback from the McMillan Line, which is the
22 center line of the U.S. Capitol here. The

1 project also maintains the formal reflection of
2 open space opposite the site at the National
3 Gallery of Art's West Building.

4 To the south, the site is fronted by
5 an urban environment and the Dwight D. Eisenhower
6 Memorial. The project utilizes open space on
7 both the north and the south sides of the BLC
8 addition as a connection between the project
9 site, the Eisenhower Memorial, and the National
10 Mall. And to the east, the edge of the site is
11 defined by the reflection of the additional 30-
12 foot setback from the 4th Street corridor that
13 was established by the National Museum of the
14 American Indian. And the maximum vertical
15 constraint is based on the top height of NASM,
16 which measures approximately 102 feet above sea
17 level.

18 The proposed BLC will measure
19 approximately 72 feet in height. And as such,
20 staff finds that the project limits the
21 addition's overall massing and height in
22 deference to NASM as the primary building. The

1 proposed spiral organization of the BLC
2 originates from the central spine of the museum,
3 creating a symbolic destination for the study of
4 the universe.

5 Together, the site and building design
6 purposefully use the building geometry to
7 distinguish the BLC addition from NASM, with
8 sweeping patterns that reinforce the spiral
9 energy. The BLC also draws inspiration from the
10 museum's existing solid-to-void pattern without
11 replicating it by locating a courtyard between
12 the museum and the addition on the north side.

13 In terms of program, the BLC
14 activities will occupy the majority of the top
15 two floors. All mechanical equipment on the roof
16 will be recessed to reduce visibility, and the
17 ground floor will house the new restaurant and a
18 vestibule connection to NASM. Here, we have a
19 look at circulation on all three levels.

20 On Level 1, the new vestibule includes
21 a dedicated entrance for student groups on the
22 south side. The ground floor restaurant will

1 also be accessible to museum visitors through
2 this vestibule. Another dedicated entrance for
3 BLC program participants and special events is
4 also proposed at the northeast end of the
5 building. And as there are multiple entrances
6 dedicated for different purposes, staff is
7 recommending the applicant develop a
8 comprehensive wayfinding strategy for the site
9 that directs BLC program participants, museum and
10 restaurant visitors, and the public to the
11 appropriate spaces and entrances.

12 And here, we have an illustrative plan
13 view of the BLC in context of NASM, and in the
14 next series of slides we'll discuss the proposed
15 building and landscape designs in more detail.
16 Here, we have the north and south elevations.
17 You can see here the spiral form starting to take
18 shape, with the glass concourse as the main
19 feature from the north. You'll also begin to see
20 how the fenestration and materiality of the
21 addition's solid volume is articulated above the
22 ground floor restaurant on the south side.

1 The BLC exterior skin is inspired by
2 the linear movement and energy of stars streaking
3 across the night sky, with aluminum plating
4 cladding the upper two floors of the solid
5 volume. A dynamic texture of light and shadow is
6 created by thin tapered fins in the aluminum
7 facade material. This is the preferred
8 alternative because it allows the skin to capture
9 the sense of energy and reflectivity in the
10 spiral galaxy.

11 By day, the fin provides texture and
12 dimensionality by modulating natural light and
13 shadow. And by night, artificial lighting gently
14 uplights each fin, resulting in a streaking
15 effect reminiscent of the stars streaking across
16 the night sky. And as with all lighting on the
17 National Mall, staff requests that the proposed
18 building and exterior lighting should respect the
19 hierarchy of memorials and monuments and other
20 important civic buildings and spaces within the
21 Monumental Core, with the U.S. Capitol and the
22 Washington Monument as the most prominent

1 features in the night sky.

2 Here, we have a close-up detail of the
3 tapered fin extending between zero and eight
4 inches from the facade, with a two-inch reveal to
5 incorporate the lighting. Other material
6 alternatives considered aluminum plating with a
7 dense fin and a tube fin. Agency stakeholders
8 agreed with the applicant's preferred tapered fin
9 option as it best captures the streaking effect
10 of the night sky. The color of the aluminum
11 plating will continue to be studied.

12 An eye-level view here of the
13 concourse shows three-dimensional radial lines
14 expressed in the fully glazed canted walls. And
15 staff requests the applicant provide as part of
16 the next submission details regarding the size,
17 placement, and spacing of the horizontal fin
18 system used in the spiral concourse to better
19 understand the design approach and the visual
20 effects. Both the spiral concourse and the solid
21 mass of levels two and three sweep upwards
22 towards the National Mall, as you see here on the

1 left. However, the applicant also studied
2 slipping the concourse roof up towards NASM,
3 which you can see here in option two on the
4 right.

5 And here, we have a rendering of the
6 BLC addition from the north. You can see a
7 proposed outdoor terrace here on the third level,
8 and the upward slope of the concourse in the
9 solid mass. And the next few images here walk
10 around the site. Viewing the building from the
11 northeast, here you can see the viewing terrace
12 extending over the existing loading dock on 4th
13 Street, and also begin to see the fenestration
14 detailed on the east facade. And a view here
15 from the south, where you can see a green roof
16 proposed on the new vestibule connection to NASM,
17 and the Phoebe Waterman Haas Observatory located
18 at the southeast corner.

19 Overall, staff finds that the BLC
20 addition equally engages its frontage on both the
21 National Mall and Independence Avenue, with an
22 appropriate balance of facade materials and

1 fenestration, thoughtful placement of the
2 building entrances, and ground floor activation
3 from the restaurant use. The applicant studied
4 two options for the BLC's connection to NASM, and
5 option one seen here.

6 This is preferred because it allows
7 the required east egress door from the museum to
8 exit through an integrated vestibule and provide
9 a physical gap between the museum and the
10 addition. The roof connection at this point will
11 be glazed as it touches NASM, and you can see
12 here in the rendering on the right, allowing
13 visibility to the museum's full existing exterior
14 wall from the interior of the BLC.

15 Alternatively, the applicant studied a
16 physical gap between the vestibule and the museum
17 facade. This would allow the existing wall of
18 NASM to remain largely untouched. However, this
19 may create security and maintenance concerns.
20 The applicant also studied sloping the upper
21 portion of the BLC facade, as seen here on the
22 left, to relate more to the other sloping

1 elements on the BLC. However, the straight
2 option seen here on the right is preferred for
3 simplicity and its relationship to the glazing
4 below.

5 So I will now discuss the conceptual
6 landscape design in the next series of slides.
7 For background, the original 1972 Obata site plan
8 shows the strongly axial and nearly symmetrical
9 organization of the NASM landscape, which was
10 comprised of terraced planters and sloped turf
11 areas. As I mentioned before, the restaurant
12 pavilion was added in 1988 and demolished in
13 2022. The perimeter east end planter walls were
14 retained as part of the revitalization plans and
15 remain the historical context for the BLC site.

16 The NASM revitalization reconceived
17 the landscape design with diversified plantings,
18 additional native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous
19 understory and pollinator species within the
20 refurbished planters. The proposed BLC landscape
21 derives its organizational structure from the
22 original 1970 site plan.

1 However, the original plan predated
2 the Americans with Disabilities Act and did not
3 consider the need for universal accessibility.
4 And the preferred landscape alternative for the
5 BLC, a galactic spiral introduces an outwardly
6 expanding landscape scheme with two program
7 areas, the north-facing Learning Courtyard, which
8 fronts the National Mall, and the south-facing
9 Astronomy Park, fronting Independence Avenue.

10 The Learning Courtyard will include a
11 gathering space for VLC programming, offer views
12 of the National Mall, and provide an elevated
13 seating viewing platform over the loading dock
14 ramp. The Astronomy Park will provide a
15 permanent location for the Phoebe Waterman Haas
16 Observatory, a queuing area for school groups,
17 space for small group-facilitated programming and
18 seating, and views, and a visual connection to
19 the Eisenhower Memorial.

20 The applicant also considered an
21 orthogonal layout that maintains the
22 revitalization plan's orthogonal organization

1 with ramp access for visitors from Jefferson
2 Drive, retention of the stairs on 4th Street, and
3 refurbishment of the ramp on Independence Avenue.

4 The spiral concept shapes the paving design,
5 ramps, new plantings, and program elements. The
6 planting concept builds upon the revitalization
7 palette to recall the American landscapes for
8 stargazing and space exploration are prominent
9 interests.

10 And overall, staff supports the
11 approach to use mostly native plants and fine
12 grading to integrate the BLC's planting palette
13 with the NASM revitalization project's planting
14 concept and evoke the broader national prairie
15 landscape. Staff also recommends the applicant
16 evaluate opportunities to specify origin plant
17 species rather than cultivars to best support
18 pollinators as the planting palette is refined.

19 In the Astronomy Park, a new permanent
20 observatory will replace the previous temporary
21 structure located on the south terrace. The
22 proposed location for the observatory here was

1 located to offer the best views of the night sky.

2 The design of the observatory is an extension of
3 the Spiral Galaxy Part T of the landscape, and
4 the architecture of the BLC.

5 The Astronomy Park educational
6 installations will occupy the terrace to the west
7 and to north of the observatory, integrated with
8 space for small group-facilitated programming and
9 seating. And staff recommends incorporating low-
10 planting beds into the Astronomy Park to reduce
11 the amount of paving and define circulation and
12 seating areas without interfering with visibility
13 from the observatory.

14 And here, we have an eye-level view of
15 the Learning Courtyard. Staff requests
16 additional detail on how the design and program
17 of the central space in the Learning Courtyard
18 will incorporate shade, be unique to the BLC, and
19 differentiated from other gathering spaces on the
20 National Mall. And a view here from the
21 observation deck or viewing terrace that's over
22 the 4th Street loading dock, looking west towards

1 the museum's east façade, which may be used to
2 view program-related imagery projected on the
3 building.

4 So now before I conclude, I'll briefly
5 touch on the status of the NEPA and 106
6 processes. NCPC is the lead agency responsible
7 for compliance with NEPA for this project and
8 will work with the Smithsonian Institution in
9 preparing an environmental assessment. A 45-day
10 public scoping period was held last fall, and the
11 draft EA will be released for public comment in
12 the fall of this year. It is anticipated that a
13 Finding of No Significant Impact will be issued
14 in the spring of 2025.

15 Now, the Smithsonian Institution is
16 the lead agency responsible for compliance with
17 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation
18 Act, and as such has hosted three consulting
19 parties' meetings to date to consider the effects
20 of the BLC on historic properties, including the
21 National Mall Historic District. These effects
22 will be analyzed as part of the NEPA process, and

1 it is anticipated that the consulting parties
2 will execute a Section 106 agreement, also in the
3 spring of 2025.

4 So this concludes my presentation.
5 I've incorporated the Executive Director's
6 recommendations into the presentation, so I will
7 not repeat them here. And I would like to now
8 introduce Mr. Ron Cortez, Smithsonian
9 Undersecretary for Finance and Administration,
10 who would like to say a few remarks, followed by
11 Ms. Marisa Scalera, Landscape Architect with
12 Smithsonian Gardens, and myself and several
13 representatives from the applicant team are also
14 available for your questions. Thank you.

15 MR. CORTEZ: Thank you, Ms. Free,
16 Chair Goodmann, and members of the Commission.
17 We are excited to hear your comments and address
18 your questions about our concept design for the
19 Integrated Bezos Learning Center project. This
20 project will allow us to realize the vision set
21 out in the 2013 National Air and Space Museum's
22 master plan to replace the former restaurant

1 pavilion with a new educational facility, a new
2 restaurant, a permanent home for the Phoebe
3 Waterman Haas Observatory, and improvements to
4 the existing basement level, loading, and back of
5 office spaces.

6 The project will complement the major
7 revitalization of the main museum building
8 previously approved by the Commission and now in
9 its second phase of construction, following
10 opening of the west portion of the site and
11 building in fall of 2022. The Bezos Learning
12 Center will feature programs and activities that
13 inspire students to pursue innovation and explore
14 careers in STEAM, science, technology,
15 engineering, arts, and mathematics fields, and it
16 will help teachers better utilize the Smithsonian
17 collections.

18 The center will be located at the
19 National Air and Space Museum. It will both
20 focus on the work of NASM and connect all
21 Smithsonian museums with particular engagement in
22 under-resourced communities in Washington, D.C.

1 and across the nation, both at the National Mall
2 site of the new facility and virtually through
3 remote capabilities. The project will begin
4 construction next year and would be completed
5 after the 2026 reopening of the east side of the
6 museum building and exhibits now undergoing
7 revitalization.

8 NCPC have shared comments from the
9 coordinating meeting and from the public with us.

10 We intend to meet with DDOT prior to returning
11 for preliminary design review in the fall.
12 Specifically, we have received Mr. Berne's
13 thoughtful written testimony with respect to the
14 inclusion of pollinator species in the landscape
15 design for this project as well as the
16 revitalization historic core castle project.
17 Smithsonian Garden staff and landscape
18 architects, Marisa Scalera and Lauren Brandes,
19 have submitted written testimony in response.

20 Finally, we wish to thank the
21 Commission staff for their contributions to our
22 projects through their participation in the

1 Historic Preservation Section 106, consulting
2 parties, and the National Environmental Policy
3 Act, NEPA process as well as additional meetings
4 with the Smithsonian's project team and other
5 external staff. And I now turn it back.

6 CHAIR GOODMAN: Well, let me thank
7 Ms. Free. Thank you very much and all the staff
8 involved in preparing this presentation, and also
9 thank you Undersecretary Cortez and Ms. Scalera.

10 We're very grateful. This is an exciting
11 project. Do Commissioners have any questions at
12 this time? Any questions?

13 MS. TROWBRIDGE: Ms. Scalera has not
14 spoken.

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: My apologies. Ms.
16 Scalera?

17 MS. SCALERA: Good evening
18 Commissioners. In reviewing both the original
19 and the revised written testimonies provided by
20 Mr. Bernard Berne, the Smithsonian Institution
21 knows that our goals for this project are very
22 much aligned with Mr. Berne's regarding support

1 for pollinator habitat. Quoting from the
2 submission package, the planting concept is
3 mostly native perennials as well as trees that
4 serve to foster biodiversity and support a
5 diverse array of pollinators.

6 On the National Air and Space Museum
7 major revitalization project, which is the
8 partially completed phased renovation of the main
9 museum building, which has already received final
10 approval by NCPC and which is under construction
11 currently, the plant palette includes 80 percent
12 native species for the shrub and perennial layer
13 and 100 percent native species for the tree
14 layer, and we anticipate a similar percentage of
15 native plants in the final planting plans for
16 this project. 80 percent native species for the
17 shrub and the perennial layer and 100 percent
18 native species for the tree layer, with an
19 emphasis on a diversity of plants that are native
20 to our ecoregion.

21 For the tree selections at the
22 National Air and Space Museum major

1 revitalization project, biodiversity and
2 ecological services were primary considerations.
3 The project landscape architect for that project
4 prepared a pollinator and wildlife phenological
5 calendar that tracked ecological services for
6 each of the proposed trees, including forage
7 value, does the tree have fruit and seeds that
8 are used by birds and mammals for forage?
9 Pollinator habitat value, does it have canopy,
10 leaves, or bowl cavities used as either habitat
11 or larval hosts by pollinators? And pollinator
12 forage value, does it have nectar or pollen that
13 are used by pollinators?

14 As the National Air and Space Museum's
15 Bezos Learning Center project develops, we
16 anticipate a similar effort and focus on
17 biodiversity and ecological services provided by
18 the trees, including benefits to pollinators.
19 Because the design must weigh several factors in
20 addition to ecological sustainability goals,
21 including respecting the cultural and historic
22 landscape, the specific trees suggested by Mr.

1 Berne in his original testimony, black cherry
2 tree, sassafras, and buttonbush, have not been
3 included in this particular design, though they
4 are included elsewhere on the Smithsonian campus
5 on the National Mall.

6 For this project, the design team
7 adopted an architectonic approach to the tree
8 layout to respond to the Gyo Obata-designed
9 building and landscape, and black cherry,
10 sassafras, and buttonbush are not well suited to
11 an architectonic tree planting. However, a
12 diversity of oak trees are included on both the
13 National Air and Space Museum projects, and that
14 genus, *Quercus*, supports more life forms than any
15 other North American tree genus, including
16 insects, birds, and mammals, and over 400 species
17 of caterpillars. Oak trees are a fabulous host
18 plant for butterflies.

19 Similarly, the ground plane plantings
20 at the Bezos Learning Center are focused on
21 pollinators, pollinator-focused. They're
22 organized into three thematic garden exhibits,

1 and the selections of plants in each of those
2 areas are guided by their contributions to their
3 interpretation, which again is pollinator-
4 focused. There are three thematic gardens.

5 We've got the pollinator garden, which
6 is an interpreted garden exhibit that explores
7 habitats of flight, and how plants and their
8 pollinators have co-evolved, how plants have
9 adapted to attract things that fly for the
10 purposes of pollination and seed dispersal, and
11 how the two form an interconnected system.
12 Plants and their pollinators are dependent on
13 each other for survival.

14 We've got the night-blooming garden,
15 which is interpreted as a moon garden surrounding
16 the observatory with nocturnally flowering and
17 nocturnally-scented plants, where we are talking
18 about attracting nocturnal pollinators. Plants
19 with strong fragrance at dusk that attract
20 nocturnal and crepuscular pollinators. And
21 lastly, the NASM revitalization perennials are
22 interpreted as a wind garden. Stories of how

1 plants have adapted to utilize wind for dispersal
2 of seeds and pollen, and how seeds and pollen
3 dispersal strategies have inspired humans in
4 flight innovation.

5 Moving into the project's design
6 development phase, the Smithsonian Institution
7 will continue to work with the design team to
8 refine the project plant palette and will
9 continue to consider pollinator contributions,
10 including additional incorporation of milkweed
11 and a diversity of keystone plants native to our
12 ecoregion as one of several critical goals in
13 plant selection of these garden exhibits. Thank
14 you.

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you. That was
16 a don't-miss presentation and closing. Thank you
17 very much and thank you Ms. Trowbridge for
18 pointing out that I missed Ms. Scalera. So now
19 do any of our Commissioners have questions for
20 Ms. Free, Undersecretary Cortez, or Ms. Scalera?

21 Any questions?

22 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: I do.

1 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, Commissioner
2 Tunstall-Williams.

3 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: And
4 this is for Ms. Scalera. Currently on the site
5 that surrounds sort of the platform that the
6 Bezos Learning Center will be on, there's a
7 pretty mature plant palette and trees,
8 particularly in the northeast corner of the site.

9 Will those remain or is the site going to be
10 cleared and replanted? Just curious.

11 MS. SCALERA: The intent is for the
12 site to be cleared and replanted and that ties in
13 with the need to re-waterproof the structure that
14 is below. We are retaining four of the mature
15 oak trees that are present on campus.

16 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Okay.
17 Thank you.

18 MS. SCALERA: Yeah.

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you. Any other
20 questions? Hearing none, once again what a great
21 presentation, one exciting project. We do have
22 one person signed up to speak, Mr. Berne, and I

1 do know they have your testimony and there was
2 some response to your prior input, but if you are
3 there, you have three minutes to speak. And
4 please, begin.

5 MR. BERNE: Okay. Thank you. I have
6 read the letter that Ms. Scalera sent to you for
7 this project in response to our original
8 comments. Most of these are quite good. My
9 testimony will therefore discuss my remaining
10 concerns. Several inches and omissions of the
11 project's planting plan are not consistent with
12 the NCPC's Pollinator Best Practices Research
13 Guide. For example, the present planting plan
14 will contain butterfly weed, *Asclepias tuberosa*.

15 However, the NCPC Guide states on page 5,
16 studies have shown that monarch butterflies have
17 laid fewer eggs on some milkweed species, such as
18 *Asclepias tuberosa*, than on others. This has
19 been confirmed by observations and by a
20 publication.

21 Plantings of *A. tuberosa* would
22 therefore have little or no benefit to monarchs.

1 Please, instead add common milkweed, *Asclepias*
2 *syriaca*, which is really the most important
3 milkweed for monarchs. It grows everywhere and
4 the monarchs need that. As the NCPC Guide
5 strongly recommends the planting of *A. syriaca*,
6 and also add that to the sunny areas. Add poke
7 milkweed, *Asclepias exaltata* to the shadier
8 areas. These are important things.

9 As I informed Ms. Scalera and you, the
10 planting plan contains 21 trees, shrubs, and
11 perennials that are not native to the National
12 Capital Region. Twelve of these are not native
13 to North America. Some may not provide forage
14 for native plants or food for the caterpillars,
15 native butterflies, and moths. Some are invasive
16 or may become so in the future. For example,
17 Japanese zelkova, which is on that list, has been
18 reported as growing outside of cultivation in six
19 states, and is on the list of non-native invasive
20 plants in the city of Alexandria, Virginia.

21 Please, therefore, replace Zelkova
22 with native trees that benefit many colonies and

1 native wildlife. You should also replace all
2 plants that are not native to the National
3 Capital Region with species that are native to
4 the region. That is all species, not just most
5 species.

6 The planting plan contains 14
7 cultivars. Some of these may be sterile or have
8 deformed flowers that do not benefit pollinators.

9 As I said in the staff's presentation, the staff
10 report recommends the applicant evaluate
11 opportunities to specify origin plant species,
12 rather than cultivars, to best support
13 pollinators as the planting palette is refined.

14 Please, therefore direct the Smithsonian to
15 follow this recommendation so we don't have these
16 cultivars. In addition, I noticed that there
17 will be a green roof on the top of the lower
18 building on the west side of the building --

19 MS. KOSTER: That's three minutes, Mr.
20 Berne. Thank you.

21 CHAIR GOODMAN: Mr. Berne, thank you
22 very much for your testimony. Are there any

1 questions for Mr. Berne? Hearing none, that
2 concludes public testimony. Now, is there a
3 motion to approve the comments on concept plans
4 for the National Air and Space Museum
5 construction of the Integrated Bezos Learning
6 Center? Do I have a motion?

7 COMMISSIONER DIXON: So moved.

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: It's been moved by
9 Commissioner Dixon. Is there a second?

10 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Second.

11 CHAIR GOODMAN: Seconded by
12 Commissioner McMahon. We are now open for
13 discussion, so if you can turn on your cameras.
14 And I'm going to begin with Commissioner Green.

15 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Thank you very
16 much. No, I think this is a really interesting
17 project, and I like very many things about the
18 design. One detail I just would hope that would
19 be further refined is, I think it could be quite
20 lovely, but that step recess with the lighting in
21 it in the fin panel, just to be really careful to
22 make sure it's not creating a drip situation

1 where you get staining down those angled curtain
2 walls. Others have tried, and some have failed
3 to do that, and it's such a prominent part of
4 this building, and it's such a lovely detail
5 that. Just be really careful with that.

6 And I do prefer, and I think that the
7 option for the fin, I think that exterior fin
8 system, the tapered is a much better option, as
9 the applicant preferred, as well as the
10 connection option one, I thought was a much more
11 elegant connection to the building. But lovely.

12 And I look forward to this, and thank you for
13 your patience in remaining with us this evening.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
16 Commissioner Green. Commissioner Tunstall-
17 Williams?

18 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yeah,
19 and I apologize. I do have some comments here,
20 and I know everyone is anxious to go. Overall, I
21 think it's terrific. The parti and the concept
22 are very, very strong. However, I think there's

1 this tension, right? You want it to
2 differentiate itself from NASM, but you also want
3 it to be related. And right now, it feels a
4 little bit divorced. It's deferential to NASM
5 only in scale, and there was actually -- and I
6 wonder whether that's successful.

7 Previously, I participated in some of
8 the consulting party meetings. There was a
9 little bit more dynamism in the roof line and how
10 it broke away from NASM. I would encourage you
11 to go back and look at that. I think it was a
12 little stronger. Now, it's kind of diminutive.

13 The other things that I will say is
14 that the way that the form and the striation and
15 textural facade has evolved, it actually relates
16 much more to Native American Museum right next
17 door than to the NASM Museum. And so, I
18 encourage you to go back and look a little bit at
19 ways to tie the two together. I think the
20 tension and differentiation is great. It should
21 be forward looking. However, I think make sure
22 like color palette, not material necessarily, but

1 color palette is a way to tie the two together.

2 Also, on the southern side, there's
3 those deep recessed window bands on the NASM
4 building that may be the way you've got the
5 recess on the southern side also of the Bezos
6 Center, maybe there's a way to make those better
7 to try to build or follow a datum or something to
8 try to connect them so they seem like they are as
9 a whole, even though they're differentiated.

10 I agree with Commissioner Green that
11 the option one, you know, is a much better option
12 for how it connects to the building. And I
13 believe the spiral landscape approach versus the
14 orthogonal is much more successful in terms of
15 the broader parti. Overall, I think it's great.

16 And I think, you know, this is a concept. So
17 these are just comments for refinement. So good
18 work.

19 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
20 Commissioner Tunstall-Williams. And now we will
21 hear from Commissioner Dixon.

22 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I think it's

1 great. Very exciting. Thank you.

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
3 Commissioner Dixon. Commissioner Cash?

4 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yeah, I don't want
5 to prolong things, but just a couple of
6 observations. So I did notice in the EDR that it
7 mentioned that there's still some discussion over
8 the exact coloration of the fins. I think that's
9 something really important to look at because I
10 agree with Commissioner Tunstall-Williams. It
11 does feel very divorced. And from the renderings
12 that we have, everything just looks very bright
13 and white and silver. And I don't think that's
14 necessary. I think that may be a little too
15 modern next to an otherwise even modern building.

16 We all went out when we were choosing
17 the new material to put the new stone on the
18 facade of NASM. We spent a couple of hours out
19 there looking at like five pieces of stone and
20 throwing water on it to see what color it would
21 look like. So I think this is an opportunity to
22 make sure like maybe you'd have something a

1 little bit more muted or closer to the color of
2 the building. You still want to differentiate,
3 but it's going to differentiate based on the
4 design. So that's the one big point I wanted to
5 make.

6 The other point, now that Commissioner
7 Wright is gone, I did want to bring up something
8 before this comes back to us. I noticed that
9 every single rendering that we saw of the
10 building, I kept looking where the sidewalk meets
11 the entryways. And there's always a tree
12 covering it or just a very interesting angle so
13 we couldn't see the eventual bollards that I know
14 are going to come back next time we review this.

15 So I'm urging you to think about this
16 so you won't be surprised when you come back to
17 us. And when you're looking at whatever security
18 treatments you're going to do to connect this to
19 the street and the sidewalk, to make sure that we
20 aren't just doing a last-minute bollard or
21 something. Start thinking about that now so when
22 you come back to us, we don't have to yell at you

1 because, I mean, at least there's not antennas on
2 here, but bollards, I know, are a big concern.

3 So I'm just hoping that the next time
4 this comes to us, we kind of have that open and
5 frank conversation at the outset so that security
6 is not kind of just like a last-minute throw-in
7 that we do on something that's not designed very
8 well because there are bollards all along there
9 now. So I just wanted to throw that out there as
10 an idea before you come back to us to discuss
11 what the security needs are going to be and that
12 they're well-designed and not an afterthought.
13 So that's my comments. Thanks.

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
15 Commissioner Cash. And Commissioner Davis,
16 Giachetti are gone. So, Commissioner Cozart.

17 COMMISSIONER COZART: Thanks to the
18 staff for their work and analysis on this. It's
19 a very exciting project. I'll associate myself
20 with the comments of Commissioners Tunstall-
21 Williams and Cash. And that's all I've got.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,

1 Commissioner Cozart. Commissioner McMahon?

2 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Thanks. Yeah,
3 I'll also associate myself with the comments of
4 the other Commissioners. An exciting looking
5 project. Looking forward to see its development
6 and construction. Thanks.

7 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
8 Commissioner McMahon. Commissioner Argo?

9 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I would like to
10 also associate myself with the prior comments.
11 It's not because we're all getting tired. It's
12 because they were on point and observant. And
13 it's just --

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Oh, dear.
15 Commissioner Argo?

16 COMMISSIONER ARGO: One last point. I
17 really --

18 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Argo, can I
19 suggest that you turn your video off? Perhaps
20 that won't cut your sound.

21 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes. What?

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: You were breaking.

1 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Oh. Okay.

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yeah. Here we go.

3 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Oh. Well, I was
4 kind of done, so --

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Did you want
6 to say something else?

7 COMMISSIONER ARGO: So --

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: I think, Commissioner
9 Argo, you're breaking up a lot. So I'm going to
10 move to Commissioner Hewlett, and I'll come back
11 to you. Vice Chair Hewlett?

12 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Thank you, Madam
13 Chair. Like everyone else, I think this is
14 tremendously exciting. It's just going to be a
15 wonderful addition, and I am pleased to support
16 this. And I echo the sentiments of the previous
17 Commissioners.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you, Vice Chair
19 Hewlett.

20 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I appreciate the
21 attention. Oh, you can't hear me?

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: We can hear you now.

1 Go ahead, Commissioner Argo. Thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I was just very
3 supportive. And I wanted to say that I really do
4 think it's -- this seems almost superfluous, but
5 paying attention to the things, those horrible
6 things that we have to live within the District
7 of Columbia, the bollards everywhere we go, and
8 paying attention to that in any way that can be
9 integral to the design of what we're trying to do
10 is really important. I don't mean that to be a
11 throwaway comment. I really think it's
12 important.

13 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
14 Commissioner Argo. I just want to, again,
15 briefly, but I do want to say that this is such
16 an important structure. I know that it's
17 probably amongst the most popular tourist
18 destinations in the Capital and Capital region.
19 And the mission for, and programming that,
20 directs itself at youth, and the STEAM emphasis
21 is just fabulous. I was at the site yesterday
22 and I was really impressed by the new siding on

1 the new facade on Air and Space. And frankly, I
2 think it's going to go great with this new white
3 and silver. I mean, I was surprised. I think
4 it's going to complement it actually, when I was
5 actually in the space looking at that and then at
6 the design.

7 I also asked about the oak trees, and
8 I'm really happy they're going to stay. I think
9 the presentation by Ms. Scalera on the
10 landscaping was phenomenal, and I just am very
11 excited about this project. And I think it was a
12 great presentation, and I want to compliment
13 staff and team for that. It was very, very good.

14 Now, are there any further comments or
15 questions? I see a hand raised. I see Ms.
16 Trowbridge. Yes?

17 MS. TROWBRIDGE: Yes, I just wanted to
18 respond to all your kind comments. Thank you.
19 But also say that with respect to the materials,
20 our Director of Historic Preservation, Carly
21 Bond, will be scheduling a future consulting
22 parties meeting to specifically look at materials

1 against the building. So we will let
2 Commissioner Cash and the staff know about that
3 as consulting parties. And secondly, with
4 respect to perimeter security, the existing
5 terrace walls and new terrace walls do most of
6 that work. We will have a few bollards in the
7 middle of the paths that are widened up for a
8 vehicle, but relatively few on this project.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much,
11 Ms. Trowbridge. Ms. Koster, can you confirm the
12 motion and the second and take the vote, please?

13 MS. KOSTER: I would be delighted to.
14 The motion to approve comments on concept plans
15 for the National Air and Space Museum
16 construction of the Integrated Bezos Learning
17 Center was made by Commissioner Dixon.
18 Commissioner McMahon seconded. And with that,
19 Commissioner Cozart?

20 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

21 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner McMahon?

22 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Yes.

1 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Argo?

2 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

3 MS. KOSTER: Great. Vice Chair

4 Hewlett?

5 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Yes.

6 MS. KOSTER: Chair Goodmann?

7 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes.

8 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Green?

9 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Yes.

10 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Tunstall-

11 Williams?

12 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yes.

13 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Dixon?

14 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

15 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. And

16 Commissioner Cash?

17 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

18 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. I believe,

19 Chair Goodmann, the motion is carried.

20 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes, it has. Thank
21 you very much, Ms. Koster. Agenda item, and this
22 is our final agenda item based on our prior vote,

1 6D is to approve final site and building plans
2 for the South Mall Campus Historic Core
3 Revitalization-Phase 2 as submitted by the
4 Smithsonian Institution. Mr. Flis, please.

5 MR. FLIS: Thank you, and I promise
6 this will be a short presentation. This is the
7 final review of Phase 2 of the South Mall Campus
8 Historic Core Revitalization submitted by the
9 Smithsonian Institution. You've reviewed this
10 several times before, various phases, and now,
11 again, this is back for just final approval.

12 So, very quickly, I think everybody is
13 familiar with the location of the Smithsonian
14 Castle on the National Mall. This project
15 includes many components that are intended to
16 rehabilitate the castle and also the surrounding
17 grounds, essentially, to make this facility more
18 accessible to the public. Here's a summary of
19 the components that were included in Phase 1.
20 You will recall this included new areaways,
21 critically the seismic protection for the castle,
22 and other excavation around the castle, which

1 does have an impact on the existing landscape.

2 Phase 2 builds on that, includes more
3 details, a series of finishes, the final
4 perimeter security, which, as you remember, was
5 much scaled back, the replacement and restoration
6 of their building envelope components. So we're
7 talking about the roof, towers, elevator towers,
8 things like that, throughout this Phase 2. And I
9 will mention all of these were consistent with
10 the Commission's previous reviews.

11 So in the interest of time, just
12 focusing on the landscape, again, as mentioned,
13 due to the proposed land construction, the
14 landscape will need to be removed to allow that
15 to happen, and the landscape will be restored to
16 meet the mission of the Smithsonian, as well as
17 to be compatible and consistent with the existing
18 landscape.

19 So the Smithsonian Gardens, as you
20 know, is responsible for curating and maintaining
21 the landscape. It's important to also note that
22 this is a cultural landscape, it is a living

1 landscape that the Smithsonian does curate, much
2 like an exhibition space, and as such, the
3 applicant has selected a variety of trees that
4 are compatible with the setting, but also meet
5 the Smithsonian's mission. This does include a
6 number of native species, but also non-native
7 species that are non-invasive.

8 Likewise, the understory plantings
9 will be compatible with the cultural landscape.
10 The palette is general, but we recognize that
11 there will be a variety of native and pollinator
12 species. And as I mentioned, because these are
13 heavily curated, they can rotate throughout the
14 year, therefore the planning approach is general,
15 but it does meet the intent of the cultural
16 landscape.

17 So in this particular case, the
18 applicant has indicated that milkweed would not
19 be appropriate to the setting. This is not a
20 meadow. But other plant pollinators will be
21 provided, and this is consistent with our
22 Pollinator Resource Guide, which acknowledges

1 that cultural landscapes can sometimes have a
2 different approach. So therefore, given the
3 unique setting of the Castle, the cultural
4 landscape, and the role of gardens within the
5 Smithsonian's mission, we do find that the
6 landscape is consistent with NCPC policies, and
7 we do recommend approval of the project.

8 So that concludes my presentation.
9 I'm now going to turn it over to Lauren Brandes,
10 who is a landscape architect with the Smithsonian
11 Gardens, who will provide some brief remarks.
12 Thank you.

13 MS. BRANDES: Thank you, Mr. Flis.
14 Regarding Mr. Berne's comments on the tree
15 selection for the South Mall Campus Historic Core
16 Revitalization-Phase 2 planting, it is important
17 to note that Smithsonian Gardens is a living
18 museum accredited by the American Alliance of
19 Museums. We extend the Smithsonian's museum
20 experience in a public garden setting with over
21 180 acres of outdoor gardens, including 14 public
22 exhibition gardens. As such, our living

1 collections, including our tree collection, our
2 museum collection items managed with stewardship
3 and collection guidelines.

4 The primary goal of selecting trees
5 for our collection is to grow a diversity of
6 trees with a priority on rare, interesting,
7 unique, or underutilized taxa not commonly used
8 in the D.C. region that are horticulturally
9 appropriate. This includes cultivated selections
10 chosen for outstanding horticultural
11 characteristics, such as flowering attributes,
12 interesting foliage and tree structure, disease
13 resistance, and beneficial fruiting attributes.
14 This diversity of trees, including cultivars,
15 expands the cultural and scientific stories that
16 the Smithsonian Institution can share.

17 A well-documented, intensively managed
18 collection of woody plants has the potential to
19 answer research questions posed by Smithsonian
20 researchers and make other contributions to the
21 Smithsonian's legacy of scholarship. Our tree
22 list for this project balances selections that

1 are native to the region with ones that are not
2 native to meet these tree collection goals.

3 Please note that none of the trees
4 selected for this project are considered
5 invasive. Furthermore, 21 of the 30 total trees
6 to be planted are native. The current planting
7 design for the gardens surrounding the Castle
8 achieves a 62 percent native plant coverage. The
9 design, however, must also balance this with the
10 goal to maintain the character of the cultural
11 landscape around the castle. The planting plans
12 provide a framework for re-establishing the
13 gardens after the construction of this project
14 with a mostly native palette.

15 After an initial period of
16 establishment, it is the intent of the
17 Smithsonian Gardens horticulture team to continue
18 to curate the castle gardens with additional
19 plantings focusing on perennials, and we will
20 commit to having a minimum of 65 percent of those
21 being native. I would like to note that we
22 curate all of our garden exhibits across the

1 National Mall to tell different stories.

2 Milkweed is an element in some of
3 those stories. For example, at the Pollinator
4 Garden at the National Museum of Natural History,
5 the landscape at the National Museum of the
6 American Indian, and the gardens currently being
7 installed at the National Air and Space Museum.
8 However, we do not support the inclusion of
9 common milkweed or poke milkweed for this project
10 since it does not meet our curatorial objectives
11 for this specific garden.

12 We would like to thank Mr. Berne for
13 his commitment to promoting pollinator plants.
14 The Smithsonian Gardens team endeavors to provide
15 habitat to support pollinator species within the
16 cultural landscapes that we steward. While this
17 project will include small portions of lawn in
18 keeping with the cultural characteristics of the
19 landscape, the lawn is designed as a pollinator
20 lawn, which will be overseeded with a low-
21 growing, flowering plant mix, which has been
22 shown to support more than 60 species of bees.

1 Additionally, the woody layer of
2 plantings includes native species such as
3 American holly, box huckleberry, flame azalea,
4 and honeycup, all of which are native plants that
5 support pollinators. Furthermore, they provide
6 an important food source and habitat for birds
7 and small mammals. It is our intent to provide a
8 garden to support pollinators and wildlife with
9 woody plants, as well as the understory
10 plantings. Thank you.

11 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you both very
12 much. Thank you, Mr. Flis and Ms. Brandes. We
13 really appreciate the presentation. Do
14 Commissioners have any questions? Any questions?
15 Hearing none, and I don't see any hands raised,
16 we do have one person signed up to speak. Mr.
17 Berne, you'll have three minutes to provide
18 testimony. Please let us know when you're ready.

19 MR. BERNE: Yes, I'm ready. I read
20 the letter that the architects folks sent to you
21 in response to my original comments on this
22 subject. My testimony will therefore discuss my

1 remaining concerns. The project does not
2 adequately follow the recommendations of the
3 pollinators and the NCPC's Pollinator Best
4 Practices Research Guide, except perhaps the one
5 that says plantings may be individualized. For
6 example, as I stated, and as the landscape
7 architect stated, the proposed project does not
8 contain any milkweeds.

9 The NCPC Guide supports the planting
10 of milkweeds to help restore the National Capital
11 Region's declining monarch butterfly populations.

12 There's a reason for this, and you just don't do
13 it because you have an aesthetic reason or
14 purpose.

15 I submitted my comments. I suggested
16 that the Smithsonian add either common milkweed
17 or poke milkweed to the project. However, the
18 architect does not support the addition of either
19 of these two plants, stating in the letter, its
20 form would feel out of place with the overall
21 character of the garden. Many people would
22 disagree with this subjective opinion, which is

1 only subjective, and it's something that needs to
2 be justified in a position that was already
3 taken.

4 The architect also wrote, we extend
5 the Smithsonian's Museum experience in a public
6 garden setting with over 180 acres of outdoor
7 gardens, including 14 public exhibition gardens.

8 As the architect stated, two of those, the
9 Native Landscape Architect at the American Indian
10 Museum and the Pollinator Garden, contain
11 milkweed. This is really too small to do
12 anything to help the District's monarch
13 population.

14 And more importantly, they also have a
15 sign that is titled, "How can you help
16 pollinators?" In the Natural History Museum's
17 pollinator garden states, you can help
18 pollination by containing a pollinator-friendly
19 garden without sacrificing aesthetics. Add
20 diversity to your landscape with a beautiful
21 tapestry of native plants that have evolved with
22 local pollinators and thrive under the condition

1 of your region. That includes milkweeds.
2 Nothing prevents the Smithsonian from adding
3 milkweeds to this project without sacrificing
4 aesthetics, as it advises the public to do in
5 another area.

6 The Smithsonian wrote that the project
7 -- the architect wrote, the project includes
8 cultivated selections for outstanding
9 horticultural characteristics such as flowering
10 attributes, et cetera. However, the NCPC Guide
11 states, take care when selecting plant cultivars.
12 Some plants are selected for traits attractive to
13 humans but not pollinators. Size, color, and
14 shape.

15 Therefore, the architect is ignoring
16 the fact that many of his pollinators may be, as
17 the NCPC Guide states, attractive to humans but
18 not pollinators. That's an important point,
19 really. You're trying to help pollinators, even
20 in gardens like this that are carefully curated -
21 -

22 MS. KOSTER: Thank you, Mr. Berne.

1 MR. BERNE: Okay --

2 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you very much.

3 We appreciate your input. Thank you very much.

4 Any questions for Mr. Berne? Hearing none,
5 seeing no hands up, then we are going to conclude
6 public testimony. And is there a motion to
7 approve the final site and building plans for the
8 South Mall Campus Historic Core Revitalization-
9 Phase 2? Commissioner Green raised his hand. I
10 saw that. And Vice Chair Hewlett has seconded
11 that motion. Would you please turn on your
12 cameras and we will all start deliberating right
13 now. And I'll begin with Commissioner Cash,
14 please. Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER CASH: For the first
16 time, no comments. But I'm sure I will associate
17 myself with everyone else.

18 CHAIR GOODMAN: Okay. Thank you,
19 Commissioner Cash. Commissioner Davis and
20 Giachetti have moved on. Cozart? Mr. Cozart,
21 please.

22 COMMISSIONER COZART: So I want to

1 thank the staff for their presentation and
2 appreciate the updates that have been made since
3 the last time I took a look at this.

4 CHAIR GOODMANN: Thank you,
5 Commissioner Cozart. Commissioner McMahon?

6 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Yeah, no
7 comments. Great presentation. Thanks to the
8 staff. Appreciate it.

9 CHAIR GOODMANN: Commissioner Stidham?
10 Commissioner Argo?

11 COMMISSIONER ARGO: No additional
12 comments.

13 CHAIR GOODMANN: Okay. Thank you,
14 Commissioner Argo. Vice Chair Hewlett?

15 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Wonderful
16 presentation.

17 CHAIR GOODMANN: Okay.

18 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Thank you. Just
19 here to thank the staff for the presentation. It
20 is a wonderful presentation and this is exciting
21 as well. And no additional comments. Thank you.

22 CHAIR GOODMANN: Thank you very much,

1 Vice Chair Hewlett. Commissioner Green?

2 COMMISSIONER GREEN: I just want to
3 thank both the architectural and landscape
4 architectural teams for the thoughtful detail
5 they put into this project. I know folks are
6 tired and we've been here a long time. I hate to
7 rush through this, but I just want to say how
8 much I appreciate the level of detail that went
9 into this and I think it'll be a fine thing when
10 it's built. Thank you.

11 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
12 Commissioner Green. Commissioner Tunstall-
13 Williams?

14 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yeah,
15 I associate my comments with Commissioner Green.
16 It's a lovely space and I always enjoy visiting
17 the garden, and I have great confidence that it
18 will continue to be as such. So nice work.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you,
21 Commissioner Tunstall-Williams. And Commissioner
22 Dixon?

1 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I associate my
2 comments with Commissioner Cash. That's it.
3 Thank you very much. Everybody is ending up very
4 strong. Everybody.

5 CHAIR GOODMAN: Amen, Commissioner
6 Dixon. Betcha. And I do want to thank the
7 Smithsonian and staff for this presentation. I
8 too associate my comments with Commissioner
9 Tunstall-Williams. It's such a beautiful garden.

10 It is so beautiful. And I appreciate Mr.
11 Berne's thoughtful input at every meeting and I
12 really appreciate the Smithsonian in both of
13 these last presentations responding to him and to
14 his concerns. It's a learning experience for all
15 of us and I appreciate that very much.

16 So are there any further comments or
17 questions? Thank you to our friends and partners
18 at the Smithsonian. That was exciting. We did
19 finish a long day. Ms. Koster, would you please
20 confirm the motion and the second and take the
21 vote, please?

22 MS. KOSTER: Of course. The motion

1 was made by Commissioner Green and the second was
2 by Vice Chair Hewlett. With that, Commissioner
3 Cozart?

4 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

5 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner McMahon?

6 COMMISSIONER McMAHON: Yes.

7 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Argo?

8 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

9 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Vice Chair
10 Hewlett?

11 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: Yes.

12 MS. KOSTER: Thank you. Chair
13 Goodmann?

14 CHAIR GOODMAN: Yes.

15 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Green?

16 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Yes.

17 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Tunstall-
18 Williams?

19 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yes.

20 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Tunstall-
21 Williams?

22 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Oh,

1 sorry. Yes. I was on mute.

2 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Dixon?

3 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

4 MS. KOSTER: Commissioner Cash?

5 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

6 MS. KOSTER: And I believe the motion
7 has carried, Chair Goodmann.

8 CHAIR GOODMAN: The motion has
9 carried and I want to thank everyone for their
10 tenacity, endurance, and thoughtfulness through
11 this day and appreciate the fact that, as
12 Commissioner Dixon said, we're all together
13 finishing this up with a few who had to drop off.

14 But thank you very much. This concludes our
15 open session, and our next regular Commission
16 meeting will be Thursday, June 6th at 1:00 p.m.
17 And unless there's any further business, Vice
18 Chair Hewlett?

19 VICE CHAIR HEWLETT: I just want to
20 say a heartfelt congratulations to our General
21 Counsel, Anne Schuyler, again. Thank you.

22 CHAIR GOODMAN: Amen. A little bit

1 of a round of applause. There you go.

2 MS. SCHUYLER: Thank you. You guys
3 are the best.

4 CHAIR GOODMAN: Thank you. After
5 today, you're going to enjoy retirement, I think.

6 MS. SCHUYLER: Marcel's afraid that if
7 any of our applicants watch the meeting, they
8 might be scared off.

9 CHAIR GOODMAN: I suspect that's the
10 case. But anyway, I think we're just fine. It
11 was a good, long meeting. Thanks to the staff,
12 too. They put in long days here in preparation
13 for this, and today was a long day. Thank you
14 all very much.

15 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
16 went off the record at 7:17 p.m.)

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A

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In the matter of: Commission Meeting

Before: NCPC

Date: 05-02-24

Place: teleconference

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