

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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COMMISSION MEETING

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OPEN SESSION

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THURSDAY,
APRIL 2, 2026

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The meeting convened in the Commission Hearing Room at 401 9th Street NW, Washington, D.C., at 1:00 p.m., William Scharf, Chair, presiding.

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS
PRESENT:

WILLIAM SCHARF, Chair,
 Presidential Appointee (At-Large)
STUART LEVENBACH, Vice Chair, Presidential
 Appointee
MICHAEL BLAIR, 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*
PHIL MENDELSON, Office of the Chairman of the
 Council of the District of Columbia
ARRINGTON DIXON, Mayoral Appointee
RYAN GIACHETTI, U.S. House of Representatives
 Committee on Oversight and Accountability*
WILLIAM HENDERSON, U.S. Senate Committee on
 Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs*
ROBERT G. SALESSE, Department of Defense
TAMMY STIDHAM, Department of the Interior

1 EDWARD FORST, General Services Administration
2 KRISTI TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS, General Services
3 Administration

4 NCPC STAFF PRESENT:

5 MARCEL C. ACOSTA, Executive Director
6 MEGHAN HOTTEL-COX, General Counsel & Secretariat
7 LAURA SHIPMAN
8 KARIN SCHIERHOLD
9 MICHAEL WEIL
10 LEE WEBB
11 JAMIE HERR

12 *Present via video teleconference
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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 1:05 p.m.

3 CHAIR SCHARF: Good afternoon and
4 welcome to the National Capital Planning
5 Commission's April 2nd, 2026 open session.

6 COMMISSION ROLL CALL

7 CHAIR SCHARF: First, Madam Secretary,
8 can you please take the roll call?

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes.
10 Commissioner Cozart?

11 (No response.)

12 Commissioner Salesse?

13 (No response.)

14 Commissioner Stidham?

15 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Here.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

17 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Here.

18 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman
19 Levenbach?

20 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Here.

21 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

22 CHAIR SCHARF: Here.

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

2 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Here.

3 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Administrator Forst?

4 COMMISSIONER FORST: Here.

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

6 (No response.)

7 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Mendelson?

8 (No response.)

9 Commissioner Henderson?

10 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Present.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

12 Giachetti?

13 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Here.

14 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Marcel Acosta,

15 Executive Director, and Diane Sullivan, current

16 Planning Division Director, are also in the

17 meeting.

18 And with that, we have a quorum.

19 CHAIR SCHARF: Noting the presence of a

20 quorum, I'd like to call this meeting to order.

21 This meeting is livestreamed and will

22 be available, as is our custom, in a few days on

1 the NCPC's website.

2 If there are no objections from
3 Commissioners present, the agenda as posted is
4 adopted as the order of business.

5 And now, let's all stand for the Pledge
6 of Allegiance.

7 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

8 ELECT A VICE CHAIR

9 CHAIR SCHARF: At each April meeting,
10 we elect a Vice Chairman, and the Commission
11 also approves a third member of our Executive
12 Committee.

13 Let's start with the election of a Vice
14 Chairman.

15 Stuart Levenbach has been serving as
16 Vice Chairman since last year. I'd like to ask
17 Stuart if he's willing to continue serving as
18 Vice Chairman.

19 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: I'd be happy to
20 do it.

21 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Stuart.

22 With that, is there a motion to approve

1 Stuart Levenbach as the Vice?

2 COMMISSIONER DIXON: So moved.

3 CHAIR SCHARF: So moved.

4 Do we have a second on the floor?

5 COMMISSIONER FORST: Second.

6 CHAIR SCHARF: Is there anyone who
7 wishes to be heard on this item?

8 (No response.)

9 Hearing no one, can the secretary
10 please confirm the motion and the second, and
11 take a vote by roll call?

12 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes.

13 The motion was made by Commissioner
14 Dixon and seconded by Administrator Forst.

15 With that, Commissioner Salesse?

16 (No response.)

17 Commissioner Stidham?

18 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

19 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

20 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

21 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

22 Levenbach?

1 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

2 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

3 CHAIR SCHARF: Yes.

4 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

5 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Yes.

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Administrator Forst?

7 COMMISSIONER FORST: Yes.

8 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

9 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

10 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

11 Henderson?

12 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

14 Giachetti?

15 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Yes.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: The motion passes.

17 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you.

18 This motion is carried.

19 Congratulations, Vice Chairman Stuart

20 Levenbach.

21 Would you like to say anything?

22 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Well, I'd just

1 say it's been a pleasure already in the nine
2 months or so I've been working with other
3 Commissioners here. And especially being in
4 Maryland for the past now 20 years and going to
5 so many of these places personally, it's really
6 nice to be able to have a role in what it looks
7 like and how it's planned.

8 So, thank you very much.

9 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Vice Chairman
10 Levenbach.

11 APPROVE THIRD MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

12 CHAIR SCHARF: The next item on the
13 agenda is for the Commission to approve the
14 third member of our three-member Executive
15 Committee.

16 Commissioner Arrington Dixon, who I
17 believe is our longest-serving member on the
18 Commission, has been serving as the third member
19 of the Executive Committee for the last --
20 certainly, as long as I've been on the Executive
21 Committee.

22 Is there a motion to approve

1 Commissioner Arrington Dixon as the third member
2 of our Executive Committee?

3 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: So moved.

4 CHAIR SCHARF: Is there a second?

5 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I'll second.

6 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you.

7 Madam Secretary, could you please take
8 the vote by roll call?

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes.

10 The motion was made by Commissioner
11 Stidham and seconded by Commissioner Argo.

12 Commissioner Salesse?

13 (No response.)

14 Commissioner Stidham?

15 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

17 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

18 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

19 Levenbach?

20 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

21 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

22 CHAIR SCHARF: Yes.

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

2 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Yes.

3 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Administrator Forst?

4 COMMISSIONER FORST: Yes.

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

6 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Thank you very
7 much, and yes.

8 (Laughter.)

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner
10 Henderson?

11 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

12 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner
13 Giachetti?

14 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Yes.

15 CHAIR SCHARF: I believe this motion is
16 carried unanimously.

17 Congratulations, Commissioner Dixon.
18 It's been a pleasure serving with you and I'm
19 looking forward to continuing to serve with you
20 on the Executive Committee.

21 Are there any comments or statements
22 you would like to make?

1 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Not at this time.

2 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Commissioner.

3 Your brevity is appreciated in this matter.

4 Speaking of which, given the long
5 agenda -- sorry. The next item on the agenda is
6 the report of the Chairman. Given the long
7 agenda, I'll keep my report this month very --

8 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Mr. Chairman?

9 CHAIR SCHARF: Oh, sorry.

10 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Apologies. It seems
11 we're having technical difficulties.

12 CHAIR SCHARF: Okay.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: If we can pause for
14 just a moment while we get that sorted?

15 CHAIR SCHARF: Sure.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Thank you.

17 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
18 went off the record at 1:10 p.m. and resumed at
19 1:13 p.m.)

20 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN

21 CHAIR SCHARF: I'll keep my Chairman's
22 report short. I'll be discussing the East Wing

1 modernization issue on our agenda in more detail
2 when we get there on the agenda.

3 A couple of housekeeping notes.

4 I would like to welcome Bob Salesse
5 with the Department of War, serving in the
6 Department's ex officio seat here. He's joining
7 us for our first meeting. We are very, very
8 happy to have him.

9 Welcome, Bob. We're looking forward to
10 working with you.

11 I would also like to congratulate
12 Commissioner Blair on the birth of, I believe,
13 his fourth child on Monday. I think it really
14 shows his dedication to the NCPC that he has
15 abandoned his wife and large family to join us
16 for what promises to be a barnburner meeting.

17 I would also like to report on a
18 delegated item that I took action on this month.
19 Certain authorities were delegated to me by the
20 Commission on March 6th, 2025.

21 I approved the transfer of jurisdiction
22 of lands earlier this month from the National

1 Park Service to the District of Columbia,
2 Department of Transportation. The transferred
3 issue is for two areas of land currently under
4 the jurisdiction of NPS within Anacostia Park.
5 The transfers will allow DDOT to reconstruct the
6 existing Anacostia Avenue Bridge over the former
7 Pepco station cooling water inlet with two 12-
8 foot travel lanes and a new 10-foot-wide
9 sidewalk.

10 REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

11 CHAIR SCHARF: With that, we'll move on
12 to agenda item 5, which is the report of the
13 Executive Director Marcel Acosta.

14 MR. ACOSTA: Yeah, thank you, Chair
15 Scharf, and good afternoon.

16 I just have one item today, but we bid
17 farewell to Urban Planner Brittany Drakeford,
18 who joined NCPC in 2022 and served with us for
19 four years. Brittany served as NCPC's
20 representative to the D.C. Board of Zoning
21 Adjustment and contributed to the Make D.C. Safe
22 and Beautiful Initiative, the Comprehensive Plan

1 Update, Commemoration Planting, and our
2 Internship Program. We thank Brittany for her
3 many contributions to the agency and wish her
4 the best as she completes her doctoral
5 dissertation in urban and regional planning at
6 the University of Maryland. And I look forward
7 to calling her Dr. Brittany soon.

8 You have my written reports in your
9 packets, and I'm happy to answer any questions
10 that you might have.

11 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Marcel.

12 Do any Commissioners have any questions
13 for our Executive Director?

14 (No response.)

15 I will just echo Marcel's sentiments
16 wishing Brittany best of luck as she concludes -
17 - hopefully, concludes -- her doctorate, and
18 thank her for her service to this Commission.

19 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

20 CHAIR SCHARF: Agenda item 6 is our
21 legislative update from our secretary and
22 esteemed general counsel Meghan Hottel-Cox.

1 Meghan?

2 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Thank you, Mr.
3 Chairman.

4 While there has been some movement on
5 relevant legislation this month, none of it is
6 time-sensitive. So, given the length of today's
7 agenda, I will provide a detailed update on
8 pending legislation to the Commission next
9 month. But I'm happy to answer any questions,
10 if Commissioners have any.

11 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Meghan.

12 Do any Commissioners have questions or
13 comments for Meghan at this time?

14 (No response.)

15 UNFINISHED BUSINESS ITEM

16 CHAIR SCHARF: Seeing none, we'll
17 proceed to agenda item 7, which is our
18 unfinished business from our last meeting.

19 8733 EXECUTIVE RESIDENCE, WHITE HOUSE, 1600
20 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW, WASHINGTON, DC EAST

21 WING MODERNIZATION PROJECT

22 CHAIR SCHARF: You may recall that,

1 when we closed our last meeting in March, we had
2 a pending motion on the floor, which was a
3 motion to approve preliminary and final site and
4 building plans for the East Wing Modernization
5 Project. That motion was made by Commissioner
6 Dixon and seconded by Commissioner Schaefer, and
7 unanimously tabled for consideration at today's
8 meeting.

9 Before we get started, I do want to
10 address Judge Leon's preliminary injunction in
11 the lawsuit brought by the National Trust for
12 Historic Preservation regarding this project.
13 As I read that injunction -- which is, I should
14 say, stayed for the next two weeks -- which also
15 includes ample exclusions to allow for some
16 continued construction on the site, that order
17 really does not impact our action here today.
18 The NCPC is not a party to that lawsuit. The
19 injunction doesn't speak to the NCPC review
20 process. From my perspective, we have a project
21 before us. We've been asked to review it, and
22 that's really our job here today.

1 And if there's no further objection or
2 if there's no further desire to comment on Judge
3 Leon's order, we'll pass that and continue our
4 consideration of the East Wing Modernization
5 Project at this time.

6 The second note I would have before we
7 begin our deliberations on this subject, as the
8 Commission may be aware, or as the Commission is
9 aware, after our March meeting, there were a
10 number of updates to that project. Most
11 notably, the project applicants have now
12 eliminated the stairs adjacent to the South
13 Portico of the proposed ballroom, and have also
14 modified the southwest corner stair to include a
15 switchback.

16 NCPC staff provided a brief addendum
17 explaining the changes to the Commission
18 yesterday, which is also posted on our website.

19 Overall, the layout, other than those
20 two modifications, is not substantially
21 different than what we previously considered.
22 And I will say that the proposed revisions

1 actually do reflect a lot of the feedback that
2 the project applicants heard from NCPC at that
3 meeting.

4 NCPC staff is of the opinion that this
5 constitutes a significant improvement to the
6 project which will help preserve the hierarchy
7 of the south elevation of the Executive
8 Residence and just generally improve the
9 viewsheds, and I'd say symbolic -- I'm trying to
10 pick my words carefully here -- the symbolic
11 nature of the South Portico of the White House
12 as it currently stands.

13 Therefore, before we move into
14 deliberation on this project, I'd like to move
15 for an amendment to the original motion that we
16 currently have on the floor by suggesting that
17 we add the following to the Commission action
18 here, as suggested in the staff addendum, which
19 was previously circulated.

20 And that addition is that we note that
21 the applicant has updated the project design to
22 eliminate the stairs extending from the South

1 Portico and modify the stairs at the southwest
2 corner of the project to include a switchback,
3 and that the staff supports the proposed project
4 updates, particularly the removal of the South
5 Portico stair, which will help reinforce the
6 south elevation of the Executive Mansion as the
7 primary facade.

8 With that being my motion, I would ask
9 at this time for a second.

10 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Second.

11 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Vice Chairman
12 Levenbach.

13 Is there any discussion on this item or
14 questions on this item before we proceed to
15 voting on this amendment to the EDR?

16 This is, obviously, not the vote or
17 deliberations on the project as a whole, but
18 merely on this amendment to the EDR.

19 (No response.)

20 Seeing no questions or comments, Madam
21 Secretary, can you please confirm the amendment,
22 motion, and second, and take the vote by roll

1 call?

2 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes.

3 The amendment motion was made by
4 Chairman Scharf and seconded by Vice Chairman
5 Levenbach.

6 Commissioner Salesse?

7 (No response.)

8 Commissioner Stidham?

9 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

10 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

11 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

12 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman
13 Levenbach?

14 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

15 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

16 CHAIR SCHARF: Yes.

17 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

18 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Yes.

19 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Administrator Forst?

20 COMMISSIONER FORST: Yes.

21 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

22 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Mendelson?

2 (No response.)

3 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

4 Henderson?

5 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

7 Giachetti?

8 Commissioner Giachetti?

9 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Yes. Sorry.

10 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Thank you.

11 The amended motion carries.

12 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Madam

13 Secretary.

14 With that, I'll now open it up to the
15 Commission for discussion on the amended motion
16 to approve preliminary and final site and
17 building plans for the East Wing Modernization
18 Project with the language we just added
19 incorporated into the EDR.

20 I would actually like to start
21 discussion today.

22 And I would like to start off just by

1 reading some relevant press clippings.

2 First, from The Washington Post, "This
3 attempt to modernize the White House has
4 destroyed its historic value."

5 Second, from The New York Times, "A
6 sacrifice of history for convenience."

7 Also, from The Times, "Extravagance for
8 a public building."

9 And lastly, from The Telegraph, "A
10 prioritization of grandeur over the needs of
11 ordinary citizens."

12 Now, none of these quotes relate to the
13 ballroom project now before us.

14 The first of these was about Teddy
15 Roosevelt's construction of the West Wing.

16 The second was about the Nixon era
17 construction of the press room in the West
18 Colonnade.

19 The third was actually about Chester A.
20 Arthur's 1880s renovations of the Executive
21 Mansion.

22 And the fourth was about Andrew

1 Jackson's construction of the North Portico to
2 the Executive Mansion in 1830.

3 Criticism and "sky is falling"
4 pronouncements from so-called historic
5 preservationists and their allies in the press
6 are, therefore, nothing new to the history of
7 the White House. While some might wish for
8 history and the world to stand still, the fact
9 of the matter is that the White House complex
10 has constantly evolved to meet the programmatic
11 needs of the federal government and the Office
12 of the President which it houses.

13 And it is in that context in which I
14 believe we must now review the ballroom project
15 that is before this Commission. I believe that,
16 in time, this ballroom will be considered every
17 bit as much of a national treasure as the other
18 key components of the White House. And I
19 believe that, in time, the Nation and successive
20 Presidents of both parties and all political
21 stripes long into the future will be grateful to
22 President Trump for having initiated and brought

1 this project into being.

2 I would like to speak to our process on
3 this particular project. As Chairman of this
4 Commission, which has a lineage and history
5 dating back over a century, I feel very strongly
6 about the fact that the work that we do is
7 important, and I feel that we have been unfairly
8 slighted in the press and otherwise for the way
9 we've gone about reviewing this particular
10 project.

11 The NCPC has a professional staff that
12 I have come to know and recognize it's doing
13 consistently exceptional work, as they, and we
14 as a Commission, go about our job protecting and
15 preserving the aspects of the Capital Region
16 that make it a particular public treasure for
17 our great Nation.

18 And the notion that we have been less
19 than thorough, that we have not met our
20 obligations, is, frankly, insulting to the work
21 that our team has done on this project, and by
22 implication, on so many others as well. So, let

1 me lay out that process now.

2 We began formal consultations with the
3 White House's project team in December. I was
4 at one of those first meetings where we
5 discussed project goals, project timelines, and
6 where the core interests of this Commission were
7 advocated for quite vigorously. Our staff
8 engaged with the project team, as we do on so
9 many projects, and the overall project now
10 before us began to take shape.

11 In January, three months ago, the White
12 House team, represented by Office of
13 Administration Director Josh Fisher and lead
14 architect Shalom Baranes, gave an extensive
15 public presentation on the project and what they
16 were looking to build and achieve.

17 We gave substantial feedback. Members
18 of this Commission had the opportunity to
19 express the concerns and qualms that some of
20 them had, and I would note that many members of
21 this Commission were also fulsome with their
22 praise for the project's goals and ultimate

1 objective.

2 I thought Shalom Baranes was quite
3 compelling in addressing the concerns that were
4 raised and addressing questions about the design
5 choices made and the nature of the project at
6 issue.

7 After the January meeting, we set out
8 to devise a schedule that would allow for a full
9 and fair review of the ballroom project. I was
10 guided in setting out that schedule by the
11 professional staff of the NCPC, who obviously
12 have a lot of experience in these matters, as
13 well as by my fellow members of the Executive
14 Committee of this Commission, Vice Chairman
15 Stuart Levenbach and Commissioner Arrington
16 Dixon.

17 As our longest-serving member, I leaned
18 on Commissioner Dixon, in particular, for his
19 views on what was appropriate, and we, as a
20 team, ended up deferring to our staff's
21 recommended review timeline -- balancing the
22 need and our desire for comprehensive public

1 comment period with our reciprocal desire to not
2 unnecessarily hold up a priority project for our
3 partners at the White House.

4 Last month at our March meeting, the
5 White House team presented again. We saw in
6 many respects that our feedback had been heard
7 and had an impact.

8 The removal of the south pediment of
9 the proposed ballroom was, for example, in my
10 view, a great improvement on the original design
11 that we had seen, reducing the massing of the
12 proposed ballroom significantly and improving
13 the coherence of the architecture of the new
14 project with the Executive Mansion itself.

15 The White House team was also very
16 responsive to our stated concerns by showing,
17 for example, the taking into account of
18 plantings and the treeline from the south; that
19 the core public view of the iconic south facade
20 of the Executive Mansion, Portico, the Truman
21 Balcony, et cetera, would remain largely
22 unchanged and undiminished from crucial vantage

1 points, and that the prominence of the North
2 Portico of the Executive Mansion was being
3 preserved as well to the extent possible.

4 And prior to this meeting, amended
5 plans shown to us by the White House, and which
6 we have now incorporated with the motion before
7 us, further reflect the public comments and our
8 feedback.

9 The staff's ceremonial and largely non-
10 functional staircase has been removed, reducing
11 the footprint of the ballroom significantly and
12 markedly improving side lines.

13 I would also note that, since December,
14 our Commission staff has consistently emphasized
15 to the White House team the need for an improved
16 public pedestrian experience, when visiting the
17 area in and around the White House. It appears
18 that those concerns have also been heard, as we
19 now have plans submitted to us, which we will
20 hear more about later today, for a new visitors'
21 entrance to the White House.

22 Since 1994 and the aftermath of the

1 Oklahoma City bombing, the White House has
2 steadily become -- because of very real security
3 concerns -- more and more walled-off from the
4 general public by an expanded complex of
5 unsightly security barriers and fencing. With
6 the White House's visitor center submission, we
7 are seeing the most significant concerted real
8 efforts to restore public viewsheds and improve
9 the pedestrian experience around the White House
10 in three decades.

11 And I would like to think that the NCPC
12 has been part of the impetus for action on that
13 front. After the formal presentations in March,
14 Commissioners had the opportunity to ask
15 questions and comment, and we then heard public
16 testimony for many hours. I want to emphasize
17 that everyone who wanted to be heard on this
18 project was heard. We did not require in-person
19 testimony, as we could have.

20 We heard from folks all over the
21 country, and even a presentation from a couple
22 well-meaning and rather misguided engineers from

1 Venezuela, who proposed a massive geodesic
2 freedom dome on the South Lawn, which, for the
3 record, I do not support.

4 I commend so many members of this
5 Commission for sitting through the many hours of
6 testimony and thoughtfully considering the
7 testimony that we heard. I want to note that we
8 would have been within our rights as a
9 Commission to immediately vote on the ballroom
10 at that point. Indeed, we had a seconded motion
11 on the floor at that time. Instead, we held
12 that motion over to give us more time to
13 properly consider the matter before us, in light
14 of the testimony and the materials that we had
15 before us.

16 I have now personally read every single
17 comment submitted to this Commission. That has
18 not been a simple or a quick task, but, as
19 Chairman, I thought it was my duty. I heard
20 every minute of public testimony on this
21 project. I have reviewed our staff's
22 recommendations, and I have reviewed the project

1 materials submitted to us at great length.

2 I should note that many of the negative
3 comments that were submitted to us during this
4 process were, frankly, unresponsive. They dealt
5 with issues beyond the scope of this Commission
6 -- the private funding of the ballroom, for
7 instance, or interior decorations, or the
8 demolition process, or were simply opinions on
9 the President himself.

10 Considering issues of this sort is not
11 within our mandate. We are not some sort of
12 free-ranging ballroom justice commission.

13 A great many of the negative comments
14 we received were also copies or variations on a
15 number of what I found to be unhelpful form
16 letters circulated by groups that oppose the
17 ballroom. While I always commend members of the
18 public for engaging with civic processes, I
19 would have preferred to hear unvarnished views
20 as opposed to picked-over, uninformed language
21 repeated hundreds of thousands of times.

22 I took much more seriously the number

1 of serious architectural critiques that we
2 received. Some were from noted architects;
3 others from simply interested members of the
4 public who took the time to send us their
5 thoughts and comments. And to those members of
6 the public, I thank you and I want to assure you
7 that I considered your views before coming to my
8 decision today.

9 Today, I will be voting in favor of
10 this project and I want to explain why. In
11 doing so, I hope my fellow Commissioners will
12 indulge me. I think it would be instructive to
13 discuss the actual architectural history of the
14 White House and the White House complex, in
15 order to properly contextualize the project that
16 we have before us. And in doing so, I believe
17 that I will address many of the public and
18 architectural concerns that we have received
19 during this process.

20 In 1792, President George Washington
21 and then-Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson
22 launched a design competition to design what was

1 then called "the President's House." The
2 submission that won out was that of James Hoban.
3 It was inspired, many say, by Leinster House in
4 Dublin, one of the greatest examples of 18th
5 century Georgian architecture in Ireland with
6 Palladian elements particularly prominent.

7 Design and construction did not end
8 with Hoban, though, by a very long shot.
9 Indeed, if you look at the White House today, it
10 bears very little resemblance to the original
11 Hoban design.

12 Jefferson, who had criticized the White
13 House previously as big enough for, quote, "two
14 emperors, one pope, and the grand lama in the
15 bargain," on taking office, actually quickly saw
16 a need for expansion. He added colonnades to
17 house various service spaces that would
18 otherwise have been in outbuildings,
19 significantly expanding the original footprint
20 of the White House.

21 Shortly thereafter, of course, the
22 building was substantially burned to the ground

1 by the British during the War of 1812, for which
2 I have still not forgiven them, requiring total
3 reconstruction. And the building that was
4 rebuilt thereafter quickly departed from the
5 relatively simple original Hoban design.

6 James Monroe added the South Portico.
7 Andrew Jackson, very controversially, as I
8 alluded to before, added the North Portico in
9 1830. These two imposing classical design
10 elements were roundly criticized for their cost
11 and extravagance in their day, but are now
12 perhaps the defining architectural features of
13 the White House.

14 Sprouting up next to the White House,
15 of course, a short while later, was the imposing
16 edifice of the Treasury Building -- growing from
17 a relatively small classical structure begun in
18 1836 to the massive four wings that it
19 encompasses today by 1869. The Treasury grew to
20 dwarf in footprint and massing the White House
21 that it sat beside.

22 During the same time period, the

1 continued viability of the White House as the
2 presidential residence and seat of government
3 was repeatedly called into question -- for many
4 reasons -- but including the fact that it just
5 simply wasn't big enough.

6 Both before and after the Civil War,
7 there were numerous proposals to move or to
8 substantially rebuild the White House, but none
9 of these were pursued. What occurred, instead,
10 was simply sprawl.

11 The complex started growing in a
12 largely disorganized and ad hoc fashion. On the
13 west side of the White House, for instance,
14 connected to the West Colonnade, massive
15 greenhouses and conservatories grew -- and grew
16 and grew -- until, indeed, several decades
17 later, by the turn of the 20th century, their
18 footprint rivaled the Executive Mansion,
19 dwarfing any comparable structures on the east
20 side of the building short of the Treasury, and
21 were considered a vital and historic part of the
22 White House complex.

1 Indeed, as a side point, those who
2 speak today about the historical symmetry of the
3 White House as it relates to the ballroom
4 proposal are, essentially, speaking about a
5 fictional history of the building, not present
6 since the very earliest days of our Republic.
7 The White House complex as a whole has never
8 been symmetric since perhaps the 1830s, if even
9 then.

10 And then, whether it was the version in
11 Treasury Department to one side or the
12 greenhouse facilities on the other, the White
13 House complex in its first century grew in fits
14 and spurts, and it has continued to do so until
15 the present day.

16 Beginning in 1871, rising just to the
17 west of the conservatories and greenhouses was a
18 new massive addition to the complex, the State,
19 War, and Navy Building, now called the EEOB,
20 dwarfs the White House, overtopping and
21 literally overshadowing it.

22 With little in the way of architectural

1 coherence with the White House and Treasury, its
2 Second Empire styling and design was roundly
3 criticized. Mark Twain called it "the ugliest
4 building in America." Henry Adams called it "an
5 architectural insane asylum."

6 Franklin Delano Roosevelt considered a
7 near total redesign of its facade, as it was
8 still reviled as an architectural atrocity in
9 his time.

10 Today, of course, views differ
11 significantly and most consider it to be quite
12 beautiful, if somewhat discordant with the White
13 House.

14 By 1892, the White House complex was
15 such a mess and so clearly underbuilt, given the
16 demands of the presidency at that time, that
17 Benjamin Harrison and his formidable wife
18 Caroline proposed a total redesign of the
19 complex, adding diagonal connectors on the east
20 and west of the Executive Mansion connecting the
21 two massive halls on either side, equal in size
22 to the Executive Mansion, that could contain

1 office space, entertaining space, galleries for
2 art and historical artifacts. This plan was
3 never implemented, but it shows that, certainly,
4 by 1892, the same arguments being made for the
5 ballroom, the same needs being identified, were
6 an issue for the presidency.

7 Proceeding into the 20th century, we
8 get Teddy Roosevelt, who demolished the half-
9 century-old greenhouses and conservatories --
10 drawing intense public ire in doing so, and
11 threw up office space to the west of the West
12 Colonnade, forming what is today the West Wing,
13 or at least the roots of the West Wing.

14 Roosevelt also built a small East Wing
15 to serve as an entrance and cloakroom, which was
16 later largely demolished in the 1940s before
17 being rebuilt. The West Wing grew under Hoover,
18 burned down, was rebuilt, and then, FDR,
19 effectively, tripled its size, adding two floors
20 and what is now the Oval and Cabinet Suite to
21 the south of the West Wing. FDR also added a
22 swimming pool under the West Colonnade.

1 Truman tore the entire White House
2 interior down to its studs, substantially
3 rebuilding it, and for good measure, added the
4 Truman Balcony to the south facade, for which he
5 was, of course, roundly condemned.

6 Kennedy added the Situation Room
7 complex, a large addition to the south of the
8 West Wing.

9 Nixon put a press room in where the
10 swimming pool was -- again, drawing public
11 condemnation.

12 I could go on and on and on. My core
13 point is that the White House is ever changing,
14 ever evolving, to meet the programmatic needs of
15 an ever-changing and evolving United States
16 presidency. Any argument that relies on the
17 idea that the White House is unchangeable, or
18 should be unchangeable, flies in the face of the
19 very history of the structure such critics claim
20 they are trying to protect.

21 And so, we arrive at the latest project
22 to be proposed as an addition to the White

1 House, the ballroom to be built on the side of
2 the old East Wing. Since at least the Harrison
3 Administration -- and you could make the
4 argument since the days of Andrew Jackson --
5 there has been a recognized need for a large
6 entertaining and event space on the White House
7 complex.

8 Modern Presidents have accommodated
9 this programmatic need for large events by
10 erecting unsightly tents on the oft-swampy land
11 of the South Lawn. Nobody can argue that this
12 is a good idea or that it befits the presidency
13 of the greatest and most powerful country that
14 has ever existed in history.

15 We have been told by the White House
16 project team and by architect Shalom Baranes
17 that they are looking to build a ballroom that
18 can seat 1,000, while also accommodating the
19 needs of the presidency -- security, ingress,
20 egress, room for various ceremonies, et cetera.

21 We, typically, defer to applicants when
22 they define their programmatic needs. That's as

1 true for this project as it is for a parking
2 garage or a cellular tower, or any number of
3 other projects that regularly come before this
4 Commission.

5 But I will note that the Washington
6 Hilton seats over twice as many in its ballroom.
7 One thousand is not an unreasonable number
8 programmatically and not an unreasonable amount
9 of space, especially given that, presumably,
10 many events to be held there might have fewer
11 people, but require space for entertainment, a
12 dias for speeches, room for displays, and
13 require substantial space for visiting
14 dignitaries.

15 The proposed ceiling is high, but I
16 would think that a ballroom for the President --
17 and indeed, for the United States -- for the
18 most important civic events in our country,
19 befits a high ceiling.

20 Some of the architectural critiques we
21 received have focused on the kitchen, which is
22 currently to be at ground level. Some have

1 suggested that, if the kitchen were moved
2 underground, the entire height of the structure
3 could be reduced significantly.

4 We have also been told, however, by the
5 project team that subterranean construction is
6 simply not possible -- owing to other
7 programmatic needs below grade. And I want to
8 speak very carefully here.

9 The President has spoken publicly to an
10 extent about what is being built below the
11 ballroom, and for obvious reasons, I will not go
12 further than he has on the subject. But I will
13 note that there are sealed entries on the docket
14 of the court case brought against the ballroom
15 project by the National Trust. And I think it
16 is, therefore, safe for the public and for this
17 Commission to assume that these subterranean
18 programmatic needs are serious and unmovable,
19 and as noted in public docket entries, related
20 to national security.

21 It is, of course, also public record
22 that FDR built an emergency bunker beneath the

1 old East Wing, for which he was actually
2 criticized at the time.

3 Other critiques that we have received
4 have emphasized personal animus towards
5 President Trump, that he is simply building a
6 ballroom for his own use. I will note, though,
7 that even if the current construction timeline
8 holds as I expect it will, President Trump will
9 get very limited use of this structure before
10 the end of his term, and that the real
11 beneficiaries will be future Presidents of all
12 political stripes and dispositions and their
13 administrations, as well as, of course, the
14 American people.

15 The ballroom that is proposed, while
16 large, fits neatly into the White House complex,
17 nestled as it is between the Executive Mansion
18 and the much larger Treasury Building. It does
19 not overtop and overshadow the Executive
20 Mansion, as does the Eisenhower Building. And
21 its neoclassical architecture matches and
22 complements the neoclassical elements of the

1 Executive Mansion, in contrast, again, to the
2 Eisenhower Building with its Second Empire
3 features.

4 I've spoken at length about the history
5 of the White House today. I've done so because
6 perhaps the only constant in the history of the
7 White House is that practically every change,
8 every modification, every addition, and indeed,
9 every feature that we now celebrate as an iconic
10 aspect of the White House, was roundly and
11 viciously condemned in its day.

12 The critiques of the ballroom today
13 are, therefore, oddly familiar to those of us
14 who have studied the White House and its
15 surroundings. Just as the North and South
16 Porticos, the West Wing, the Truman Balcony, and
17 every other aspect of the White House are now
18 celebrated, I believe, too, in time, the
19 ballroom will be celebrated as a crucial and
20 contributing aspect of the White House complex.
21 And as I said previously, I intend to support it
22 today.

1 Commissioner Blair?

2 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Thank you,
3 Chairman.

4 Well, how can I follow that? We now
5 have a good history of the White House.

6 (Laughter.)

7 I would just say, obviously, I think
8 the team has worked very hard to make this a
9 good and beautiful structure. I agree that the
10 President will get very limited use.

11 I think it's worth noting that the
12 architect of this structure, who I think is here
13 with us today, is a renown architect that has
14 contributed a lot to this city and region and
15 has won countless awards for his work.

16 I think his firm has received 250 or so
17 awards over his four decades, based on my
18 research -- and he can correct me if I'm wrong.
19 It's probably more, including some of the most
20 prestigious awards in architecture. He was one
21 of the youngest fellows at the American
22 Institute of Architects ever admitted, which is

1 a standout of his record. And I won't go
2 through all of the buildings in the area that
3 they have participated in. But all of the top-
4 level awards you can win in architecture, pretty
5 much he's won and his firm has won.

6 And I think to treat this project as
7 different or somehow not from the same lineage
8 of art and artistic design, simply because there
9 are some people who, I think for clearly
10 political reasons, don't like the project, is a
11 shame, and I think it is an unfair besmirching
12 of the architect.

13 Further, the President, who, obviously,
14 has had a hand in this design is a builder
15 himself, and he, too, has won numerous
16 architecture designs and architecture awards for
17 buildings he has built over the years, as well
18 as hospitality awards and many others.

19 So, I think that's worth noting because
20 the purpose of the ballroom really blends the
21 two things. It blends great architecture with
22 great hospitality, which is something the

1 President cares deeply about, because it
2 represents the American people. That's what the
3 White House does. It's not his house. He is
4 the current occupant, but it is the American
5 people's house, and he feels that way.

6 And as I've said in my comments
7 previously, the goal of this is to be able to
8 give the American people or our visitors -- the
9 King of England will be here at the end of the
10 month, and we will likely dine in tents. When
11 the President was recently in the United
12 Kingdom, they dined in Windsor Castle.

13 It's a little bit different, and, you
14 know, we would say that it is not fitting of the
15 presidency or the White House to have to invite
16 the King of our oldest ally, and, you know,
17 perhaps the most loyal ally, to come and eat in
18 tents on the White House lawn. They deserve a
19 better experience.

20 I think that the public comment was
21 well heard, despite the obvious campaigns that
22 were, I would say, unserious in their critiques

1 of the architecture of the project itself and
2 more political in nature.

3 I think all of the real feedback has
4 been well-considered. I think that perhaps
5 we'll hear some differences today, but I think
6 it's been well-considered.

7 I think it's clear that the team that
8 has been on this project cares about what this
9 Commission thinks and has worked hard with it,
10 as well as any project that, you know, has
11 happened certainly during my time here, as any
12 other team has.

13 And so, with that, I think we should
14 all support this project. I will certainly be
15 supporting this project.

16 And I will yield further comment.

17 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Commissioner
18 Blair.

19 Administrator Forst?

20 COMMISSIONER FORST: Thank you very
21 much, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and our
22 fellow Commissioners.

1 I think this project is absolutely
2 appropriate and logical. We're all familiar
3 with our President's constitutional roles, but a
4 President is also the Convener-in-Chief of the
5 United States and most powerful in the world.

6 Would we have done more with
7 appropriately sized and framed workspace over
8 the decades and centuries? I surely believe so.

9 Until now, we've convened as we can --
10 probably not convened as we should -- that's
11 world leaders, business leaders, athletic,
12 scientific, technical.

13 We've retained a notable, federally
14 accomplished architect. We've sourced the
15 capital 100 percent from private pay. The
16 attention to detail I think seems exquisite.

17 And we talk about an accelerated
18 process. We all know things take as long as we
19 let them.

20 Ninety-seven days ago when I was sworn
21 in as the Administrator of GSA, we launched
22 Project 410. It's our north star. It took 410

1 days to build the entirety of the Empire State
2 Building. Things do take as long as we let
3 them.

4 I have every confidence this is going
5 to be magnificent. We're going to wonder why we
6 didn't do it earlier.

7 So, Mr. Chairman, I'll also be
8 supporting this with a firm yes.

9 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Administrator
10 Forst.

11 Commissioner Dixon?

12 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Mr. Chairman, I
13 have no comments at this time. I'll pass.

14 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Commissioner.
15 Commissioner Mendelson?

16 COMMISSIONER MENDELSON: I thank you.

17 So, I'm going to start with a question,
18 which I think is to Mr. Acosta. I received a
19 note earlier today that some of the President's
20 statements and renderings regarding the ballroom
21 are not consistent with what we have before us
22 today. I don't know if that's correct. Do you

1 know? And is what we're voting on, is that what
2 is binding or what the President has been
3 speaking or describing?

4 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Sure. So, I can
5 answer that, Chairman Mendelson.

6 The motion that the Chairman gave at
7 the beginning regarding the addendum to the EDR
8 that was circulated to Commissioners and posted
9 on our website yesterday incorporates the
10 updated design that had been shared, and that we
11 received the information on that from the
12 project architect and applicant team.

13 And so, what is with the amended
14 motion, assuming the motion passes the
15 Commission today, it would be the updated plans
16 that have been circulated that the Commission is
17 approving.

18 COMMISSIONER MENDELSON: Regardless of
19 public statements that might be somewhat
20 different? The public statements by the
21 President?

22 MS. HOTTEL-COX: What is before the

1 Commission to be approved is the updated plans
2 that were shared.

3 COMMISSIONER MENDELSON: Okay.

4 CHAIR SCHARF: That includes the
5 removal of the southern staircase --

6 COMMISSIONER MENDELSON: Yeah, I
7 understand.

8 CHAIR SCHARF: -- which you previously
9 criticized, sir, and the addition of the
10 southwest switchback there, yes.

11 COMMISSIONER MENDELSON: No, I
12 understand. I looked at it.

13 I just wanted to understand clearly
14 what the Commission has before it.

15 So, I have a number of comments. I'm
16 going to see if I can have these somewhat
17 organized.

18 The issue to me is not whether there
19 should be a ballroom, and I think a lot of the
20 comments here have been about whether there
21 should be a ballroom. I don't think that's it.
22 It's the design.

1 And I don't think the issue is that,
2 while other changes to the White House have been
3 criticized; therefore, the critiques here are
4 not justified. I'm sure there have been a lot
5 of other proposals for the White House that
6 were, in fact, not adopted.

7 What we have before us is this proposal
8 and whether this proposal is acceptable or the
9 best it can be.

10 I have previously spoken to the issue
11 of time and consideration. I recognize that
12 spending two years on a fence is an awful long
13 time. And it does seem to me that it could
14 happen more quickly. I'm looking at
15 Administrator Forst.

16 On the other hand -- what? -- we've had
17 this for maybe three months? Our first
18 discussion I believe was at the January meeting.
19 And I think there's a lot of value to the
20 iterative process, and we've not had that.

21 I'm reminded of some testimony that was
22 submitted. I'm going to paraphrase it. We

1 don't have to choose between respecting our
2 history for the American people and
3 accommodating modern government's needs.

4 In the case of the East Wing
5 Modernization Project, we can do both. Doing
6 both, however, requires time, and that we move
7 deliberately; that we engage seriously with
8 ideas offered by the tens of thousands of
9 architects, planners, scholars, and patriot
10 citizens who have submitted comments.

11 It is possible to build a 1,000-person
12 ballroom that, unlike the plan currently under
13 review, truly honors the iconic status, the
14 primacy, and the historic significant of the
15 People's House. Comments submitted show how
16 this could be done. The resulting ballroom
17 would be smaller and it would hold a thousand
18 people for a seated dinner. It would be lower
19 in height and it would still accommodate the
20 functions proposed in the current plan.

21 It would respect the building's
22 original architectural style, and by retaining

1 the historic access along Pennsylvania Avenue
2 between the Capitol and the White House, it
3 would preserve the material representation of
4 the symbolic connection between the Legislative
5 and the Executive Branches in a Nation committed
6 to representative government and public
7 accountability.

8 This consultative process exists for a
9 reason. To borrow the words of U.S. Supreme
10 Court Justice Gorsuch, words that U.S. Supreme
11 Court Justice Gorsuch used to describe our
12 legislative process, "It enables us to tap the
13 combined wisdom of many, not just that of a
14 rushed process."

15 So, I had brought up -- I think it was
16 at the January or February meeting -- concern
17 about the demolition. It was pointed out that
18 NCPC's general counsel has said the NCPC does
19 not have jurisdiction over reviewing demolition.
20 I'm not going to argue that, but the fact that
21 it was demolished atypically before plans were
22 presented means that the process, the iterative

1 process, was more fixed.

2 I look at the EDR. I don't see any
3 analysis of the square footage needs. I don't
4 see any analysis of why the structure can't be
5 lowered. We're told for security reasons.
6 Perhaps that's correct, but there's just no
7 analysis.

8 I think that we can have a ballroom.
9 To me, that's not the issue. And I would also
10 just note, parenthetically, that I think much of
11 the criticism is because of who is the
12 President. I don't think that's what's before -
13 - or I'll say that is not what is before us.

14 But I do think that the height of the
15 ballroom, when I asked that of the architect at
16 the last meeting, I didn't get a persuasive
17 answer that the height needed to be 40 feet. It
18 could be 39, 38, 37, 36 feet. I didn't see the
19 analysis of that.

20 And to me, that's what is the issue
21 here, is that this addition is, when I looked at
22 what was circulated yesterday, the addendum, I

1 mean, it just -- I'm trying to be nice here --
2 it's just too large. It's just too large.

3 And if we can get the same program, but
4 not as tall, not competing in height with the
5 main structure, and a condensed footprint, we
6 are better for that.

7 I think of the visitors' center at the
8 Capitol. That's a huge addition. And when you
9 stand on East Capitol Street and you look west
10 at the Capitol, it's, to me, quite remarkable,
11 the vista, the view of the Capitol, because all
12 that was set. That huge program -- a lot of
13 rooms, a lot of conference rooms, a lot of
14 committee rooms, a lot of, a lot of, a lot of
15 stuff -- and it was done. And we've not,
16 because this has been such a rushed process, we
17 have not had the benefit of that iterative work.

18 I will note the EDR talks about how,
19 well, some of the impact of the scale and height
20 will be mitigated by landscaping. That may be
21 true, but, to me, that is not -- that's not the
22 solution; it just isn't. Landscaping is

1 important. Trees die, last I've checked. Trees
2 can be or plantings can be moved around. To me,
3 landscaping is great, but that is not a
4 solution.

5 I will add as well that I am concerned
6 that there have been comments at our proceedings
7 and in the public about other changes. And I've
8 said this; I think I've said this at our last
9 meeting: I don't think we should be looking at
10 the White House piecemeal.

11 Today, it's the ballroom; tomorrow, it
12 could be the -- there's some modifications to, I
13 guess it's the colonnade between the main
14 building and the West Wing; the day after that,
15 it could be some addition to the West Wing. We
16 should be looking at all of this at one time and
17 not piecemeal. So, that is a concern of mine as
18 well.

19 I think that the fact that this
20 addendum to the EDR exists speaks to the value
21 of the iterative process; that there have been
22 changes made. I don't think they're enough. I

1 think that, if we had more time -- and I can't
2 help but wonder, but that the court action, the
3 injunction, even though it's been stayed, would
4 give us more time; that we would be able to make
5 -- see even better improvements.

6 But still protect the program. That's
7 not the issue for me. But have an addition that
8 is more compatible.

9 Thank you.

10 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Commissioner
11 Mendelson.

12 Commissioner Henderson?

13 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: I have no
14 comments at this time.

15 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Commissioner.

16 Commissioner Giachetti?

17 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: I have no
18 comments at this time, either. Thank you.

19 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Commissioner.

20 Commissioner Cozart?

21 (No response.)

22 We don't have Commissioner Cozart with

1 us. Apologies.

2 Commissioner Salesse?

3 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Thank you, Mr.
4 Chairman.

5 With the federal work that NCPC staff
6 has done and the improvements to the project I
7 see today, and the important element that you've
8 made, Mr. Chairman, that the complex has to
9 evolve, it has to evolve to meet the functioning
10 of the Administration and the White House, it's
11 very important that it's able to do that and
12 meet the mission requirements of this President
13 and his staff. I think that's critical, the
14 time, too, to make sure that those things happen
15 quickly.

16 I think it will, as you point out also,
17 serve the leadership today and in the future.

18 So, with that, I support the project
19 moving ahead.

20 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Commissioner.
21 Commissioner Stidham?

22 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Thank you,

1 Chairman.

2 With that, I have a statement on behalf
3 of Secretary Burgum I would like to read.

4 "So, good afternoon. I am providing
5 the following statement on behalf of the
6 Secretary of Interior Doug Burgum regarding the
7 Commission's final vote on the East Wing
8 Modernization Project.

9 "The Secretary recognizes and
10 appreciates the substantial public testimony
11 received on this proposal. The record reflects
12 a wide range of perspectives, including comments
13 emphasizing historic preservation values and the
14 symbolic importance of the White House grounds;
15 concerns about scale, massing, and visibility
16 from key public viewpoints; concerns about
17 impacts to the historic landscape, composition,
18 and axial views; questions about process and
19 transparency, and from some commenters, support
20 for improvements framed as strengthening
21 national pride and the civic character of the
22 Capital.

1 "Today, the Secretary is voting in
2 support of the project. This vote reflects the
3 Secretary's judgment that the final design, as
4 presented for Commission action, advances an
5 operational need for a permanent secure venue to
6 support official state functions and other
7 responsibilities of the Administration, while
8 proceeding through the Commission's established
9 review framework that considers design, site
10 planning, and relationship to historic setting.

11 "As the project moves into
12 implementation, the Secretary emphasizes the
13 importance of continued coordination and
14 execution consistent with the approved final
15 design, particularly the integrated relationship
16 among architecture, landscape, lighting, access,
17 and circulation, as well as site-edge
18 conditions, so that the built-out compound is
19 coherent, durable, and appropriate to its
20 national significance and civic landscape."

21 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Commissioner.

22 Commissioner Argo?

1 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Thank you.

2 I think I will make this simple. I
3 would like to align myself with Phil --
4 (laughter) -- Commissioner Mendelson's comments,
5 which I thought were thoughtful, on point, and
6 raised issues we should be concerned about
7 before what may be a rush to approve something
8 this significant.

9 Thank you.

10 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Commissioner.
11 Vice Chairman Levenbach?

12 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Well, thank you.

13 First, I want to commend the Chairman
14 for the fascinating walk through history. And I
15 think it's important because, you know, we work
16 on public policy issues all the times, and a lot
17 of times, you evaluate it based on the
18 circumstances of the moment. And it's important
19 here to evaluate this through the arc of
20 history. And so, I thought that was a very
21 important context for us.

22 So, I want to say a couple of things.

1 One is that I appreciate the level of
2 public interest in this proposal. The White
3 House belongs to the American people and it's
4 appropriate the changes to the grounds receive
5 careful scrutiny, and careful scrutiny from this
6 Commission.

7 But before I turn to the proposal
8 itself, I want to briefly just note the
9 perspective that I bring to the discussion. So,
10 I started working the Executive Office of the
11 President in 2007, when I joined the White House
12 Office of Management and Budget. So, my office
13 was in the New Executive Office Building, which
14 is across the street from the White House. I
15 have now served in the Executive Office of the
16 President for three presidencies. And so, I
17 have a lot of familiarity with that corner of
18 town.

19 And during those years, I've attended
20 many events at the White House -- holiday
21 receptions, meetings. I've provided countless
22 tours of the friends and family. And most

1 recently, I attended the Hanukkah reception. I
2 discussed the crowding in my earlier remarks
3 before this Commission.

4 And that brings me to the proposal
5 before us. It's our responsibility to ensure
6 that the White House campus can support the
7 modern presidency while still respecting the
8 history of the place.

9 And it's clear from all my experiences
10 at the White House that it is not suited to
11 accommodate the large numbers of guests that are
12 indoors. The building is extraordinary, but its
13 ceremonial spaces were designed for a much
14 smaller scale of events that the presidency
15 hosts today.

16 The gatherings are often held, as many
17 people have discussed, under temporary
18 structures on the South Lawn. And those events
19 require generators, staging infrastructure,
20 catering operations, portable restroom
21 facilities for the guests. And these
22 installations must be assembled, secured,

1 removed repeatedly, often with damage to the
2 grounds.

3 The presidency has a ballroom. The
4 only question is whether we continue building it
5 temporarily each time, or do we do it once
6 properly?

7 I listened carefully to the public's
8 concerns about the size of the modernized East
9 Wing, and I think the critics failed to account
10 for two important aspects.

11 So, first, the White House complex sits
12 atop an extensive network of underground
13 infrastructure and secure facilities that
14 support the operations of the presidency. And
15 those constraints can significantly limit where
16 new construction can realistically occur and
17 shape both the placement and the ability to
18 develop below grade.

19 So, portions of the West Wing were able
20 to be constructed below grade. I believe it's
21 some parts are even one story below grade.

22 I appreciate the comment about the

1 Capitol visitors' center. Much of that is below
2 grade. That type of excavation just is not
3 capable -- cannot be done in this particular
4 location.

5 Second, although the project is
6 commonly referred as a "ballroom," it is
7 actually a multipurpose facility. The building
8 will include space for the Office of the First
9 Lady. It will include a theater; of course, the
10 staff for food preparation and other necessary
11 support for events. It also contains continuity
12 of operations for the President that were
13 recently highlighted.

14 And so, my reaction to the proposal is
15 the same today as when it was originally
16 briefed. It is that this structure will vastly
17 improve the utility of the White House compound.

18 So, I'm going to talk just a moment
19 about architecture. So, Thomas Jefferson was
20 not only a President, he was one of the most
21 thoughtful architectural minds of the Founding
22 Generation. And when he served as Minister of

1 France, he studied classical buildings and
2 concluded that the architecture of public
3 institutions should reflect the dignity of the
4 Republic.

5 So, when the State of Virginia built
6 its capital in Richmond, Jefferson rejected
7 ordinary government designs at the time. He,
8 instead, modeled the structure after Maison
9 Carree in Nimes, which is a Roman temple that he
10 admired.

11 And his belief was simple: the
12 institutions of a great Republic should be
13 housed in buildings that convey permanence,
14 beautiful, and civic confidence.

15 And this is not an expansion for its
16 own sake. It is a consolidation of functions
17 that are already occurring, but inefficiently.
18 And if we are going to add a building to the
19 White House grounds, it should not simply solve
20 a logistical problem. It should also be worthy
21 of the setting.

22 And this proposal does both. It

1 addresses a real operational need while
2 contributing a building that is dignified,
3 harmonious with its surroundings, and worthy of
4 the White House campus and the American people.

5 And for those reasons, I support moving
6 forward with it.

7 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Vice Chairman
8 Levenbach.

9 Madam Secretary, can you please confirm
10 the motion and the second, and then, take the
11 vote by roll call?

12 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Mr. Chairman?
13 Yes, Commissioner?

14 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I'd like to ask
15 one more --

16 CHAIR SCHARF: Yes, sir.

17 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I would like to
18 comment.

19 CHAIR SCHARF: Absolutely, sir.

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: First, I would
21 want to thank all the comments that were made.
22 Particularly, I want to focus on my Chairman

1 Mendelson's comments.

2 I also am impressed with what you
3 presented to us, also, Mr. Chairman. You and I
4 have had some dialog about this issue for
5 several weeks now, but I, like you, have taken
6 the time to look at it and try to review all the
7 comments -- as many as I could at least of the
8 39,000 we received. And clearly, they have a
9 meaning, and your evaluation was valid and I
10 appreciate that evaluation of them.

11 I also want to associate myself with
12 the comments of my other colleagues here.
13 Obviously, they were well-prepared, and the
14 words should go back to President Trump that
15 they represented him well and they made very
16 decisive presentations, as would be expected.

17 I've got three choices. I can vote no;
18 I can vote yes, or I may want to take another
19 position, which I have been encouraged to do and
20 thought about doing. It's to, basically, pass
21 it at this time, rather than, as you and I
22 discussed earlier, vote to maybe say, no, I told

1 you a long time ago and gave you a document to
2 support it, which I'm holding in my hand now,
3 which I will keep for reference, for later.

4 But at this point, I would like to just
5 suggest that I support a lot of the dialog here,
6 and we need to -- we're going to move forward, I
7 think. Whatever I do, it's going to go forward.

8 And hopefully, we will always tell
9 people: to the victors go the spoils. So, if
10 we are -- whoever is victorious in the future
11 will be able to enjoy this building, and maybe
12 some of us will be at the building enjoying it,
13 looking back and saying how it got to be what it
14 is.

15 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Commissioner.

17 Do any other Commissioners wish to be
18 heard at this time?

19 (No response.)

20 Hearing and seeing none, at this point,
21 Madam Secretary, could you please confirm the
22 motion and the second, and then, take the vote

1 by roll call?

2 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes.

3 The original motion was made by
4 Commissioner Dixon and amended by Chairman
5 Scharf. That motion, the original motion was
6 seconded by Commissioner Schaefer and seconded,
7 as amended, by Vice Chairman Levenbach.

8 With that, Commissioner Salesse?

9 (No response.)

10 Commissioner Stidham?

11 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

12 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

13 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Present.

14 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

15 Levenbach?

16 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

17 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

18 CHAIR SCHARF: Yes.

19 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

20 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Yes.

21 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Administrator Forst?

22 COMMISSIONER FORST: Yes.

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

2 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Present.

3 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Mendelson?

4 COMMISSIONER MENDELSON: No.

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner
6 Henderson?

7 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

8 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner
9 Giachetti?

10 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Yes.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Thank you.

12 The motion passes.

13 CHAIR SCHARF: Thank you, Madam
14 Secretary.

15 CONSENT CALENDAR ITEM

16 CHAIR SCHARF: With that, we'll move on
17 to agenda item 8, which is the Consent Calendar.

18 There is one item on this month's
19 Consent Calendar.

20 I see that our friends from the press
21 don't want to stick around for the Arabian
22 Leopard Exhibit. I'm very disappointed to see

1 that, but understand, obviously.

2 (Laughter.)

3 MP215 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE,
4 DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY 4251 SUITLAND ROAD,
5 SUITLAND, MARYLAND - NAVAL SUPPORT FACILITY
6 SUITLAND - DRAFT AREA DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND
7 TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATES

8 CHAIR SCHARF: The only Consent
9 Calendar item for approval is to approve
10 comments on the Draft Area Development Plan and
11 Transportation Management Plan Updates for the
12 Naval Support Facility, Suitland.

13 Are there any questions or discussions
14 on the Consent Calendar item from Commissioners?

15 (No response.)

16 COMMISSIONER DIXON: So moved.

17 CHAIR SCHARF: Hearing and seeing none,
18 we have a motion on the floor to approve the
19 Consent Calendar.

20 Do we have a second?

21 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Second.

22 CHAIR SCHARF: With a motion and a

1 second, is there any desire to discuss -- any
2 desire to discuss this item?

3 (No response.)

4 Hearing and seeing none, Madam
5 Secretary, can you please confirm the motion and
6 second, and then, take the vote by roll call?

7 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes, the motion was
8 made by Commissioner Dixon and seconded by
9 Commissioner Blair.

10 Commissioner Salesse?

11 COMMISSION SALESSE: Yes.

12 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commission Stidham?

13 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

14 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

15 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Present.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

17 Levenbach?

18 CIVE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

19 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

20 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

21 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

22 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Yes.

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Administrator Forst?

2 COMMISSIONER FORST: Yes.

3 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

4 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Mendelson?

6 COMMISSIONER MENDELSON: Yes.

7 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

8 Henderson?

9 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

10 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

11 Giachetti?

12 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Yes.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: The motion passes.

14 OPEN SESSION CALENDAR

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Madam

16 Secretary.

17 We have six items on our open session
18 calendar for today.

19 Agenda Item 9A is the request to
20 approve preliminary site and building plans for
21 the new stadium at RFK Campus.

22 And I believe we have Laura Shipman

1 who's going to be presenting for NCPC.

2 8721 MAYOR OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, 2400
3 EAST CAPITOL STREET, NE, WASHINGTON, DC - NEW
4 STADIUM AT RFK CAMPUS

5 MS. SHIPMAN: Good afternoon, Chairman
6 Scharf and Commissioners.

7 The District of Columbia's RFK Stadium
8 Project Management Office, in partnership with
9 the Washington Commanders, has submitted
10 preliminary plans for a proposed new stadium and
11 surrounding site improvements on the RFK Stadium
12 Campus located in Washington, D.C.

13 At the preliminary review stage, the
14 Commission is focused on whether Applicant
15 addressed comments made during concept review,
16 general consistency with the comprehensive plan,
17 and a range of building and site design topics,
18 including view sheds, massing, landscape
19 circulation, and programming.

20 As a reminder, the stadium site is in a
21 prominent location positioned on axis with the
22 U.S. Capitol and the East Capitol Street near

1 the banks of the Anacostia River.

2 We will begin with the stadium and site
3 design.

4 At concept review in February, the
5 Commission was generally supportive of the
6 conceptual design approach, providing several
7 recommendations and requests for additional
8 information to ensure the appropriateness of the
9 design for the site.

10 The Applicant has been quite responsive
11 to those comments.

12 At our last review, the Commission
13 requested an elevation and height comparison
14 with the U.S. Capitol and Washington Monument.

15 On this slide, the true height
16 comparison is diagramed on the top with the
17 height of the Capitol at 288 feet and the
18 stadium dome reaching 195 feet.

19 The elevation above sea level
20 comparison is on the bottom showing the
21 significant elevation change between the Capitol
22 Building and proposed stadium.

1 I will also note that the District
2 Zoning Administrator made the final
3 determination that the project conforms with the
4 Height of Buildings Act.

5 As requested by the Commission, the
6 Applicant provided a rendering confirming the
7 stadium roof form will maintain a view of the
8 U.S. Capitol Building dome and Washington
9 Monument beyond along the East Capitol Street
10 axis from the Anacostia Hills.

11 This is the previous west elevation
12 from the February concept submission.

13 And here is the current proposal.

14 In particular, the columns and entry
15 archway have been refined in the latest
16 iteration.

17 At concept review, the Commission
18 requested further information regarding the
19 proposed column spacing and recommended
20 refinements to the column design to reflect
21 historical precedence.

22 In reference to classical fluted

1 columns, eight flutes are articulated at the
2 base of each of the stadium's columns, blending
3 into a solid roof support, symbolizing the eight
4 Wards of the District, united into one.

5 The proposed column spacing, every 26
6 feet on center, is required structurally to
7 support the stadium roof.

8 The preliminary submission responds to
9 site design recommendations by the Commission
10 regarding formal design and landscape buffers.

11 The Festival Plaza, West and East
12 Plazas have a balanced and nearly symmetrical
13 design that integrates elements such as an allay
14 of trees, grand stairways, and an elevated
15 landscape podium to emphasize the axial
16 relationships along the East Capitol Street view
17 corridor and reference the formal landscapes of
18 the monumental core.

19 This aerial view of the stadium from
20 the west overlooking the Festival Plaza
21 illustrates the site design emphasis on
22 reinforcing the East/West axis.

1 Additionally, as recommended, the
2 landscape design introduces wide planted areas
3 to buffer from the adjacent high traffic
4 roadways to enhance the experience of the
5 vegetative plazas at the north, south, and east
6 entries to the stadium.

7 This is an aerial view showing the East
8 Plaza and landscape buffering from adjacent
9 roadways.

10 The Commission also requested the
11 Applicant provide information on related RFK
12 Campus project components outside the site
13 boundaries that will be implemented at the time
14 of stadium opening so that the project could be
15 evaluated as a whole.

16 The parking garages shown on this
17 overall axon will be developed independently
18 from the stadium and will be separate
19 submissions in the future.

20 However, their general massing is shown
21 in several of the following renderings of the
22 stadium.

1 The heights will be up to 110 feet.

2 Also, the primary truck loading entry,
3 a tunnel under the stadium grounds is shown to
4 the north of the stadium.

5 Now, I will walk through several of the
6 requested views of the stadium from eye level.

7 Here is a view of the approach from the
8 east along with Whitney Young Memorial Bridge.

9 A view from the northwest from the
10 Kingman Park neighborhood.

11 From the Anacostia River.

12 From the Hill East neighborhood with
13 the D.C. Armory in the foreground.

14 And a view of the north entry to the
15 stadium.

16 The monumental scale of the stadium is
17 appropriate for its location and use.

18 However, on the north and south
19 entries, the podium lowers to the ground and the
20 full and potentially imposing height of the
21 colonnades can be experienced at these
22 locations.

1 Staff recommends the Commission
2 encourage the Applicant to continue to refine
3 the north and south entries which open to the
4 surrounding neighborhoods to ensure they are
5 inviting and appropriately scaled within the
6 context of the monumental design.

7 And now, I will walk through the
8 requested views of the pedestrian arrival
9 experience on game day.

10 This shows the route from the Metro
11 through Festival Plaza.

12 Another through the north pedestrian
13 tunnel.

14 And west of the stadium near the Podium
15 Shops.

16 At concept review, the Commission
17 requested additional information on the proposed
18 building program at street level and how these
19 spaces will be designed to help activate the
20 public realm.

21 The Applicant notes the building
22 program may include a flagship retail team

1 store, a museum, and food and beverage
2 opportunities for year round use.

3 The open spaces around the stadium are
4 also intended to be used outside of game days.

5 This is a view of the Festival Plaza on
6 a normal nonevent day.

7 And the West Plaza entry on a normal
8 day showing the shaded and vegetated ramps,
9 seating, and stairs.

10 The Comprehensive Plan Visitors and
11 Commemoration element encourages projects to
12 ensure accessibility to visitor attractions for
13 all users, along with well designed and
14 coordinated signage and wayfinding tools.

15 Staff recommends the Commission request
16 the Applicant provide the universally accessible
17 circulation routes throughout the site as well
18 as the wayfinding and signage approach with the
19 final submission.

20 The Applicant notes the stadium
21 lighting will create a softly glowing lantern-
22 like appearance with appropriately dim lighting

1 to respect the hierarchy of memorials,
2 monuments, and the Capitol Building.

3 To confirm alignment with Comprehensive
4 Plan policies, staff recommends the Commission
5 request the Applicant submit the proposed
6 exterior lighting levels in comparison to the
7 U.S. Capitol Building and Washington Monument
8 and the type, locations, size, and design of
9 planned stadium exterior graphics, such as
10 significant signage, display screens, and
11 projections.

12 Perimeter security will include
13 temporary crowd control elements, such as
14 retractable bollards and fencing.

15 Permanent vehicle barriers and
16 pedestrian security barriers will also be
17 integrated into the site.

18 Staff recommends the Commission request
19 additional location information and design
20 details in the final submission for the
21 permanent perimeter security elements such as
22 bollards and barriers.

1 As the design is developed, the form
2 and materials of the permanent perimeter
3 security elements should complement the
4 architectural and landscape character of the
5 stadium grounds as guided by Urban Design
6 Element Policy.

7 The preliminary submission includes
8 additional information regarding tree
9 preservation and replacement.

10 According to the Applicant, most of the
11 existing trees on site are in poor or declining
12 condition and these compromised trees will be
13 removed with the exception of the allay of
14 healthy trees west of the stadium in the
15 Festival Plaza and north of the stadium along C
16 Street, Northeast.

17 Two large elm trees, which are heritage
18 trees, will be relocated within the Festival
19 Plaza.

20 The Applicant plans to meet the
21 District's project requirements regarding tree
22 preservation and replacement and to generally

1 conform with the intent of policies in the
2 Comprehensive Plan federal environment element.

3 As recommended by the Commission, the
4 general planting pallet includes species native
5 to the region and select species supportive of
6 pollinators in accordance with policies in the
7 federal environment element.

8 Remaining site design information
9 requested for final submission includes further
10 details on plant storm water management
11 facilities that will be visible to the public
12 and kiosks and pavilions proposed around the
13 stadium grounds.

14 And now, we will focus on the
15 additional information provided regarding
16 circulation and parking.

17 As noted in the last review, the
18 existing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure
19 surrounding the stadium will be improved and
20 expanded to encourage active modes.

21 Public transportation improvements,
22 either planned or currently being studied,

1 include improved access to and capacity at the
2 Stadium Armory Metro Rail Station and enhanced
3 bus services or bus rapid transit.

4 The Applicant notes that the site plan
5 does not preclude a second Metro Rail Station,
6 if provided by WMATA in the future, though the
7 plan is not dependent on this second station to
8 manage capacity.

9 Transportation demand management
10 measures are also being explored to encourage
11 staggered arrivals and departures and the use of
12 alternative modes of transportation.

13 In terms of street network at stadium
14 opening, the existing curve or linear high speed
15 roadway network is planned to be replaced with
16 an urban grid of two-way streets shown in green.

17 The aim is for roadways to have
18 sidewalks with buffers and planter zones to
19 improve pedestrian connectivity where feasible.

20 A secondary network of streets shown in
21 blue serves the parking garages and surface
22 parking lots to foster efficient ingress and

1 egress.

2 On game days, there will be special
3 traffic operations.

4 Closures around the Festival Plaza will
5 allow for pedestrians to walk straight from the
6 Metro into the stadium without crossing the
7 roadway.

8 Drivers will be routed to use high
9 capacity links to nearby highways.

10 And there will be barriers to cut
11 through traffic into the neighborhoods.

12 This slides shows the locations of the
13 proposed garages, mentioned earlier, and surface
14 parking, which are outside the stadium site
15 under current Commission review.

16 Overall, there will be up to 8,000
17 parking spaces, with 75 percent in garages and
18 25 percent in surface lots on opening day.

19 While the garages will be surrounded by
20 development at full build out, they will be
21 highly visible in the early phases of the campus
22 redevelopment project.

1 Therefore, as part of any future
2 parking garage submission, the Applicant should
3 evaluate alternative orientations for the G1 and
4 G2 garages to reduce visual impacts of views to
5 the stadium and from adjacent neighborhoods,
6 lower garage heights, particularly for the G2
7 garage near the Kingman Park neighborhood,
8 and/or phasing of garage upper floors as
9 surrounding surface lots are developed.

10 And active uses lining the ground
11 floors of the garages to improve the pedestrian
12 experience and create opportunities for
13 community serving uses.

14 This shows the proposed loading routes.

15 As noted at the Commission meeting,
16 loading and service areas often create a
17 utilitarian side to buildings, which would be
18 difficult to disguise in a prominent stadium
19 that is viewed from all angles.

20 The proposal aims to address this issue
21 by locating the primary loading dock, ingress
22 and egress, through a north tunnel under the

1 stadium grounds shown with the red arrow,
2 avoiding service entry impacts to the design of
3 the stadium building.

4 However, to also prevent visual impacts
5 of the loading entry on the experience of the
6 stadium landscape, staff recommends screening
7 the loading tunnel entry from pedestrian
8 pathways and seating areas with vegetation.

9 And finally, in terms of coordination,
10 the Applicant conducted additional community
11 open houses last week and is continuing ongoing
12 coordination with the federal stakeholders,
13 including NPS and the D.C. National Guard
14 Armory.

15 As the stadium project is developed,
16 staff supports the continuation of the
17 District's robust outreach efforts and
18 recommends further analysis and mitigation of
19 potential event noise and nuisance impacts on
20 surrounding neighborhoods.

21 With that, staff recommends the
22 Commission approve preliminary plans for

1 proposed new stadium and surrounding site
2 improvements on the RFK Memorial Stadium Campus
3 with the comments highlighted throughout my
4 presentation and listed on the following slides.

5 And that concludes my presentation.

6 Members of the Applicant team from the
7 District, Commanders, and design firm, HKS, are
8 also available to respond to any questions from
9 the Commission.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Laura.

12 Do members of the design team wish to
13 be heard or are they just --

14 MS. SHIPMAN: They're just available to
15 answer questions.

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay.

17 In that case, do any Commissions have
18 questions for Laura or for the Applicant team at
19 this time?

20 Yes, ma'am?

21 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Could you go
22 back to, I think it's Slide 33? And I think

1 this is more for the Applicant team, but you may
2 also be able to answer this.

3 So, I gather from this slide, this is
4 Day 1 operation, right? The stadium is
5 constructed, the surface parking -- are these
6 parking decks installed? Are they there on Day
7 1?

8 MS. SHIPMAN: Yes, that's what is
9 proposed here, but the Applicant has additional
10 information.

11 MR. HANLON: -- executive, and I'm
12 joined today by Mike Drye, HKS Architects,
13 they're the design architect. He may need to
14 come up to answer some of these questions.

15 Those two garages will be there on Day
16 1.

17 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: So, help me
18 understand why we're not seeing the development
19 of those with the stadium package?

20 Because they're -- they don't have
21 independent utility. They would not be there if
22 you were not building the stadium.

1 And I think I had asked this before and
2 recommended that, when you came back, that the
3 parking garages, some development of them be
4 shown.

5 MR. HANLON: Yes, Mike, are you able to
6 respond to that in terms of timing?

7 Thank you.

8 MR. DRYE: Sure.

9 As you may be aware, the master plan is
10 occurring around the District currently.

11 So, those parking garages, we've looked
12 at them from a sizing standpoint and where they
13 generally need to go.

14 We've studied them very closely in
15 terms of how to get in and get out of the
16 complex to be supportive of the overall master
17 plan process.

18 You know, we have not looked at the
19 design of those. They are preparing an RFP for
20 those to design the actual parking garages
21 currently.

22 One of the biggest things that we

1 looked at is where to put them to deconflict
2 them with people, try to keep them as away from
3 people as much as possible.

4 So, that's the level that we've looked
5 at it, you know, really just the fluidity of
6 getting cars in and out, keeping them away from
7 people, minimizing conflicts.

8 Worked with DDOT, you know, on that
9 development as much as we could.

10 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: I get the
11 locating and I get the master plan, but this is
12 really outside the master plan, because the
13 master plan's not going to be looking at the
14 stadium. Right?

15 So, I am a bit concerned that you're
16 moving forward.

17 I'm not quibbling about the location,
18 but it's part and parcel of the stadium. So, we
19 should be seeing it as a complex and
20 understanding how those frame the complex,
21 because they do frame it in their locations.

22 So, it would be great if, when you came

1 back, you gave us a bit more information on
2 those so that we could understand how they fit
3 into the overall design of the stadium.

4 Because it, you know, looking at it
5 from that 360 view, these two are in the way and
6 they're part of that view and understanding how
7 they affect that view and how their design
8 coordinates with the stadium is really important
9 in approval of the stadium.

10 MR. DRYE: Understood.

11 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I would just echo
13 what Commissioner Stidham said.

14 I think particularly the G1 parking
15 facility affects important view sheds.

16 And I mean, the stadium looks beautiful
17 right now, but as I've said previously at NCPC
18 meetings, I have rarely, if ever, seen a
19 beautiful parking facility.

20 So, I think understanding how that
21 affects the overall project plan and what the
22 stadium will actually look like to people once

1 it's complete, I think it's really important.

2 So, thanks for raising that, Tammy.

3 MR. DRYE: Understood, Chairman.

4 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Do we have any other
5 questions either for Laura or for the project
6 team at this time?

7 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: I have one.

8 So, everyone that I have shown the
9 renderings to loves it, even for Passover dinner
10 last night, everybody liked it.

11 But there was one question that came up
12 that I thought was interesting.

13 So, this -- I want to go back to the
14 parking again.

15 Because so, tell - walk me through your
16 thinking around the parking and specifically,
17 you have two surface lots right by a plaza.

18 So, I'm thinking that you had an
19 opportunity to do different things with that
20 space.

21 You have this great plaza where people
22 will be able to hang out.

1 Why did you decide to put surface
2 parking to the right of that?

3 MR. DRYE: Surface parking to the right
4 of --

5 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes, you have
6 two lots on the right side of that map.

7 Like sort of walk me through, because
8 you have public transport here, the roads are
9 more running by G1 and G2, tell me what you're
10 thinking about that?

11 MR. DRYE: Yes, ultimately, I believe
12 the master plan envisions a very active pathway
13 there.

14 So, that as people are coming off of
15 the Metro, we expect somewhere in the
16 neighborhood of 50 to 60 percent of patrons who
17 visit the stadium to come from that direction.

18 So, the goal, I believe, of the master
19 plan was to really enliven that direction by the
20 Festival Plaza to have active retail, things of
21 that nature from that direction.

22 When we look at the cars and how they

1 get into the site, really focusing on getting
2 the cars -- getting people into the parking
3 deck, out of their cars as fast as they can, and
4 get them onto their feet, so we're not
5 deconflicting.

6 That was the large kind of focus on
7 that.

8 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: But the two
9 surface lots you have right there, is that
10 supporting like retail and other things that we
11 don't necessarily see?

12 Or like what --

13 MR. DRYE: The surface lots there are -
14 -

15 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: -- other ways to
16 get to this place, you know, when you could have
17 something else like, you know, big -- expand the
18 plaza or do something else with the space.

19 Why did you put two surface lots there?
20 That's --

21 MR. DRYE: Yes, they're --

22 MR. VANHORN: Is it possible for me to

1 speak? Sorry, sorry, Commissioner, my camera is
2 not working.

3 But this is Andy VanHorn, head of real
4 estate for the Commanders.

5 Those two lots exist today and they are
6 being reused from previous RFK Stadium.

7 We will replace those with a mixed use
8 development environment, including live
9 entertainment, bars, restaurants, apartments,
10 and hotels.

11 So, those are temporary and having been
12 historically there, we were reusing them. And
13 then, we replace them with, you know, a very
14 active entertainment district.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: And so, after those
16 are redeveloped, the only real tailgating spot,
17 I'm just planning for myself in the future,
18 would be to the southwest, is that correct?

19 MR. VANHORN: It is envisioned that we
20 will also build housing and hotels there, but we
21 have heard very much from our fans and others
22 that we should continue to find surface parking

1 spaces for tailgating and other, you know, kind
2 of traditional uses like that.

3 So, we are exploring that as well as
4 the mixed use environment. That will wrap the
5 G1 garage.

6 And I apologize for my camera not
7 working.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: No, thank you,
9 regardless of the camera issue.

10 Are there any other Commissioners that
11 have questions either for Laura or for the
12 project team at this time?

13 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Mr. Chairman?

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, sir?

15 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: I appreciate,
16 as the defender of the Capitol here, the
17 Applicants coming back with the elevation views
18 that we asked for previously.

19 I think that slide was particularly
20 helpful.

21 And the additional column detail, I
22 appreciate that.

1 I think for future submissions, it
2 would also be useful, at least for me, to see
3 rendered views from probably the Lincoln
4 Memorial and potentially, Arlington Cemetery
5 viewpoints just to take the stadium in context.

6 It looks like it will probably be
7 predominantly hidden by the Capitol Building,
8 but I'd like to see what that looks like a
9 little more than my back of the envelope math.

10 MR. DRYE: Understood.

11 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
13 Commissioner.

14 Any other Commissioners at this time?

15 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE)

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We have two
17 individuals who have signed up to speak, two
18 members of the public.

19 The first is Frazer Walton, who's
20 representing the Kingman Park Civic Association.

21 Is Mr. Walton with us?

22 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Mr. Chairman, we don't

1 have Mr. Walton at this point, if we could start
2 with Mr. Flanagan?

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay.

4 MS. HOTTEL-COX: And we'll see if Mr.
5 Walton joins in time.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Neil Flanagan, who is
7 speaking in a personal capacity.

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

10 Please proceed when you are ready.

11 MR. FLANAGAN: Thank you, Commissioner.
12 Can you hear me?

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, sir.

14 MR. FLANAGAN: All right.

15 Commissioners, I encourage you to --
16 the Commission to approve the preliminary site
17 and buildings plans for this project because of
18 the important precedent it will set in regard to
19 the Height of Buildings Act of 1910.

20 In particular, since the law's
21 amendment in 2014, the Zoning Commission and the
22 Zoning Administrator have adhered to a literal

1 reading of Subsection H of the law at the
2 expense of architectural creativity.

3 In endorsing the colloquial definition
4 of the word dome, proffered by the Applicant,
5 this Commission will open the door to a new era
6 of rooftop variety and hopefully precipitate the
7 revision of this obsolete law.

8 I ask the Commissioners to refer to my
9 written comments for a significantly more in
10 depth and technical analysis than is possible in
11 three minutes.

12 To summarize, if the Zoning
13 Administrator's determination were challenged in
14 Court, I am skeptical that a Judge would find
15 their argument persuasive.

16 The striking light weight roof proposed
17 is not a dome in the structural sense, it is,
18 instead, a hyperbolic paraboloid, or hyper.

19 As the Applicant admits, a hyper's
20 mechanism of -- is one of balancing load --
21 balancing loads is fundamentally different from
22 a dome.

1 In a nutshell, a dome's way of spanning
2 space by balancing compression loads against
3 each other and the hyper is a way of balancing
4 tension loads against each other to cover a
5 space.

6 These lead to profoundly different
7 geometries, as you can see in the renderings,
8 particularly in -- with the -- where the high
9 point of the structure is located.

10 Historically, the Zoning Commission and
11 Zoning Administrator have rejected colloquial
12 interpretations of the word dome.

13 And I particularly point to Zoning Case
14 0813.

15 The Zoning Administrator invokes
16 Merriam-Webster's Dictionary to permit a loose
17 interpretation of the word dome.

18 But a Court may find this argument
19 unpersuasive.

20 The D.C. Zoning Regulations do refer
21 all undefined words to Webster's Unabridged
22 Dictionary for the purpose -- but for the

1 purposes of zoning decisions.

2 However, the question of conformance to
3 the Height Act of 1910 is not a zoning question
4 and the delegation to the Mayor is not through
5 the same law as the Zoning Regulations have
6 promulgated.

7 The Commission to any Courts may be
8 asked to review its decision making must
9 consider whether the text of the law treats the
10 word dome as a term of art within the
11 architectural and engineering fields.

12 Approval of this project, if it is not
13 overturned in Court, would dramatically widen
14 the range of what is permitted to be constructed
15 on the roofs of buildings, included structures
16 shaped like human heads or large pyramids, both
17 of which are definitions are provided for the
18 word dome inspire.

19 I think all of D.C. should welcome this
20 change and I believe this is a healthy
21 endorsement of D.C.'s autonomy in the face of
22 increasing federal intervention.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.
3 Flanagan.

4 Is Mr. Walton now with us?

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: No.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Do any members of the
7 Commission have any questions, I guess, then
8 just for Mr. Flanagan?

9 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE)

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: It looks like he may
11 have already left us.

12 Hearing none, that concludes public
13 testimony for today.

14 Thank you for being here, sir, that was
15 -- as a fan of the Height of Buildings Act and
16 its storied history, that was quite fascinating.

17 And with that, is there a motion to
18 approve the preliminary site and building plans
19 for the new stadium at RFK Campus?

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: So moved.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Hearing a motion, is
22 there a second?

1 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Second.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
3 Commissioners.

4 I'll now open it up to the Commission
5 for discussion and I will start deliberations
6 with Commissioner Cozart.

7 COMMISSIONER COZART: Good afternoon,
8 really appreciate, as always, the work of our
9 staff around this project.

10 It is continued to be a collaboration
11 with the District and our federal partners.

12 I really appreciate the movement
13 forward and all the efforts of the Parks Service
14 as we move forward with our work.

15 We've had some really good meetings
16 related to the master plan in the past couple of
17 weeks, a lot of great comments about the
18 integration of the surrounding campus with the
19 stadium and the plans for the stadium and
20 associated uses.

21 And so, a lot of good progress and
22 momentum moving forward.

1 The one thing that I would say about
2 the master plan is that the sets -- the kind of
3 ideas behind kind of boundaries are ones for us
4 to keep in mind, really understanding that,
5 while parts of the campus are going to move
6 forward more quickly than other parts, they are
7 all related to one another.

8 And we've enjoyed a collaborative
9 effort as Director Hanlon has shared with the
10 team and as we think about the master plan and
11 moving forward.

12 That collaborative effort certainly
13 extends to the broader community as well and
14 also District Agency partners.

15 So, just really pleased about the
16 milestone in moving forward that we have today
17 in front of us as a Commission and also
18 appreciate the comments of fellow Commissioners
19 to refine this work.

20 And note that we're taking notes on any
21 of the design ideas that come out of this that
22 can influence the broader master plan for the

1 entire campus.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Excuse me.

3 Thank you, Commissioner.

4 Commissioner Salesse?

5 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Getting ready
6 for the -- that was the first time I've seen it.
7 The presentation was great, really impressive.

8 I hope it brings more wins to the
9 Commanders.

10 (LAUGHTER)

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: A notion I'm sure
12 that is echoed by all the members of this
13 Commission.

14 Commissioner Stidham?

15 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: I truly second
16 that.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you.

18 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: I kind of wished
19 it for the hockey team in their improvements to
20 their structure. It's not seen fortune yet, but
21 maybe --

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: The Caps?

1 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes, maybe some.

2 So, minus the parking structures and my
3 comments there, I have to say, you've taken a
4 very thoughtful approach to the setting of the
5 stadium.

6 And you've thought about it more than
7 just on game day, which I think, in the city
8 where open space is very lacking and in great
9 need everywhere, that you are really considered
10 how that landscape can be used outside of a game
11 day.

12 And I think that's important to this
13 community.

14 I think it's important to the community
15 that uses the fields that will stay and everyone
16 on that side of the city and surrounding.

17 So, I commend you for thinking about it
18 holistically in that manner.

19 The design is exquisite and you have
20 taken into effect the necessary height, the
21 necessary scale, umbrage to the previous stadium
22 while making it larger, which has been, I think,

1 an idea since before the 1990s.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Quite a while.

3 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes, quite a
4 while.

5 So, I just, you know, you've done a
6 great job, you know, please roll in those
7 parking garages in a way that improves even more
8 than you already have.

9 And that's it.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
11 Commissioner.

12 Commissioner Argo?

13 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I don't have much
14 to add beyond that, than being with -- you know,
15 really impressed with where we are now.

16 And I'd like to align with my fellow
17 Commissioners' comments, forge on.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
20 Commissioner.

21 Vice Chair Levenbach?

22 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: I've shown the

1 renderings to so many people that I've been
2 talking to and every single person loves it.

3 So, to go from a project that did not
4 have unanimity to one that does causes a little
5 bit of whiplash.

6 But with that said, I, you know,
7 appreciate all the thought and I know you've
8 worked well with the staff and so, thank you for
9 your efforts.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr. Vice
11 Chairman.

12 Commissioner Blair?

13 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: I think I would
14 just say that everyone's very excited about this
15 project and I agree, it's very well done and
16 looking forward to seeing proceed into the next
17 phase.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
19 Commissioner.

20 Administrator Forst?

21 COMMISSIONER FORST: Yes, thank you
22 very much.

1 And I'm just so excited about the
2 evolution of the project and how people are
3 working together.

4 I have to say, I'll shout out
5 Commissioner Stidham and others who asked about
6 the parking and G1 and G2.

7 I would just say, had we not asked some
8 of those questions, we might not have learned
9 about some mixed use opportunities and what
10 you're looking to do.

11 And would just suggest in the fullness
12 of transparency, as you evolve the project, that
13 the -- that's just volunteered and brought to
14 our attention so we can share some of the
15 thoughts and the excitement behind that as well.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.
18 Administrator.

19 Commissioner Dixon?

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Well, first I want
21 to associate myself with the Planning Director's
22 comments.

1 But I would say that I'm going -- I'm
2 excited. I'll be more excited if I get a chance
3 to go into the stadium.

4 (LAUGHTER)

5 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I haven't been in
6 one in about 30 -- 20 years in any stadium. But
7 that's another discussion.

8 And I'm glad to see it coming forward
9 and hopefully, those who do go, will enjoy it.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
12 Commissioner.

13 Commissioner Cash?

14 COMMISSIONER CASH: I'm just going to
15 reiterate all the great design work on the
16 stadium itself.

17 But I also really want to underscore
18 the need to see these garages as a part of the
19 package.

20 So, I mean, I see these stadium
21 renderings and I'm loving them.

22 And then, all of a sudden, we see the

1 view from the East Capitol Bridge and Whitney
2 Bridge and you have that -- I'm reminded of when
3 we talked about Pennsylvania Avenue, it's this
4 wide vista and we don't want anything
5 obstructing anything, the view of the Capitol
6 and you have like this gray box on the side that
7 you just see there. And in the winter, it's
8 going to be more visible.

9 So, I really think that we need to see
10 what the box is going to look like, remember
11 that the Height of Buildings Act is a limit, not
12 a ceiling and see what we can do to make those
13 parking garages better.

14 So, I'll disagree, I think there are
15 some garages, if you look, you can be creative
16 enough, anyone that's been to National Airport,
17 if you have to have a garage that looks okay,
18 let's hang a bunch of plants on the side of it
19 and make it look like it's not just a big
20 utilitarian mess.

21 So, I think that we have an opportunity
22 here where we have a stadium that's really

1 panning out to be beautiful when a lot of people
2 didn't think we could do what we're doing there
3 on the site.

4 And let's see if we can make the
5 garages maybe do the same because there is going
6 to be a need for that. There's going to be a
7 lot of people, we don't have a new Metro Station
8 there, let's do what we can with the garages and
9 make it kind of a forethought instead of an
10 afterthought.

11 Because they're going to stay there and
12 let's make them look good if we can, since
13 they're going to be there for the life of the
14 project.

15 So, but again, thanks to the design
16 team on the stadium itself. I think that the
17 things are moving along great, so thanks.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
19 Commissioner.

20 Commissioner Henderson?

21 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Just echo the
22 same comments about the garages, particularly G1

1 and I have nothing else.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
4 Commissioner.

5 Commissioner Giachetti?

6 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: No comments
7 other than to say I am supportive of the plans
8 and I'm looking forward to this project moving
9 forward.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
12 Commissioner.

13 I prepared a 40-minute speech on the
14 history of RFK Stadium Campus, but fearing for
15 my chairmanship, I'll withhold that for now,
16 although I'm happy to provide it offline.

17 I think the thoughtfulness of this
18 project is apparent to all of us.

19 I share Commissioner Stidham's concerns
20 with what parking facilities are going to look
21 on Day 1.

22 At our last meeting, Commissioner Cash

1 also made some insightful comments about
2 particularly truck egress, what the service
3 entrance is going to look like.

4 We have what appears to be a pretty
5 good solution to that problem based on the card
6 renderings and design.

7 And I look forward to seeing how that
8 aspect of this develops as we move towards final
9 approval.

10 Overall, as I've said previously, I
11 think stadiums and arenas hold a very important
12 place in the urban landscape. I think that's
13 been true historically.

14 I think it's certainly true today.

15 And I'm looking forward to seeing this
16 stadium continue to come through to fruition.

17 I like the colonnade a lot. I'd like
18 to see more on the lighting plan, particularly
19 on when the stadium both is in use and not in
20 use.

21 But other than that, I enthusiastically
22 support bringing this through for preliminary

1 approval today.

2 And as always, I'd like to thank Laura,
3 our team here at NCPC, and also the project team
4 and HKS for their attention to this project and
5 that's really all I have to say.

6 Are there any further comments or
7 questions on this project?

8 MR. HOTTEL-COX: Mr. Chairman, the
9 witness who was not able to make it has joined,
10 if you are open to hearing from him.

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I think we should do
12 that.

13 Mr. Walton, can you hear me?

14 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE)

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: And to remind those
16 watching, Frazer Walton --

17 MR. WALTON: Yes, sir, can you hear me?

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We can hear you, sir.

19 And my understanding is that you're
20 representing the Kingman Park Civic Association.

21 And we will give you five minutes to
22 present your testimony.

1 Please proceed --

2 MR. WALTON: Yes, sir.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: -- whenever you're
4 ready.

5 Mr. Walton?

6 MR. WALTON: Thank you very much, yes,
7 sir.

8 My name is Frazer Walton and I'm with
9 the Kingman Park Civic Association which is
10 directly -- yes, can you hear me?

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We can hear you, sir.

12 MR. WALTON: Okay.

13 And can you still hear me?

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, yes.

15 MR. WALTON: Okay.

16 And I'm sorry, I've had a problem, I've
17 been here since the beginning, but I'm sorry
18 about that.

19 But just to briefly, yes, sir, just to
20 briefly --

21 But I just wanted to say that, as a
22 historic district, the neighborhood sits

1 adjacent to the stadium. We've been here for
2 the last 98 years.

3 And we are --

4 (OFF MICROPHONE COMMENTS)

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: So, we can hear you
6 loud and clear. I think you may have a YouTube
7 video playing or you may be watching the
8 Commission and there may be a few seconds delay.

9 If you could just mute that --

10 MR. WALTON: Oh, I see.

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: -- and talk, I
12 promise you, we can hear exactly what you're
13 saying.

14 I hope that was the right advice.

15 MR. WALTON: Okay, I'm trying to find
16 out what the problem is here.

17 But at any rate, just to quickly, I
18 don't want to hold you up, we clearly oppose --
19 we supported -- we strongly supported the
20 construction of the stadium.

21 However, we oppose the construction of
22 a parking garage.

1 And we oppose them because of the
2 proximity to the neighborhood.

3 Years ago, we had the highest rate of
4 cancer in the city and that was due to the fact
5 that -- of the parking at RFK Stadium.

6 And as -- and what we're suggesting is
7 that we have an alternative. And the
8 alternative would be that you not build these
9 massive parking garages, multilevel garages and
10 that we focus on increasing the size of the
11 Stadium Armory Metro site.

12 And we also suggest that we build a new
13 stop, a new subway stop at Oklahoma and Bennings
14 Road within the next five to seven years.

15 We are very concerned, and I've
16 submitted our statement and we have thousands of
17 children, schools nearby, the playground, the
18 golf course, you would -- the traffic would be
19 terrific along there with these games as they
20 were for the last 60 years.

21 So, 295 and 395 and the Wilson Bridge
22 would be overwhelmed with traffic.

1 So, for that reason -- I'm sorry about
2 the echo -- but so, but we will --

3 I thank you for allowing us to speak.
4 We will continue to participate in trying to
5 fight the construction.

6 We worked with the Navy for many years,
7 the U.S. Navy, the U.S. government, the District
8 government, and environmentalists like Earth
9 Justice, many of the organizations, the
10 Anacostia Watershed Society, to clean the
11 Anacostia River.

12 We just had a terrible problem with
13 water.

14 And so, for that reason, I would ask
15 you to think about it and I appreciate the
16 sincere interest each one of you all have shown
17 in this garage problem, because it is truly a
18 problem and it throws off the scale.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay, thank you, Mr.
20 Walton.

21 Do any Commissioner present have any
22 questions for Mr. Walton or further comments on

1 this project?

2 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE)

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Hearing none, can the
4 Secretary please confirm the motion and the
5 second?

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes, the motion was
7 made by Commissioner Dixon and seconded by
8 Commissioner Blair.

9 Commissioner Cozart?

10 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Salesse?

12 COMMISSION SALESSE: Yes.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commission Stidham?

14 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

15 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

16 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

17 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

18 Levenbach?

19 CIVE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

20 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

22 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

1 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Yes.

2 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Administrator Forst?

3 COMMISSIONER FORST: Yes.

4 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

5 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cash?

7 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

8 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

9 Henderson?

10 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

12 Giachetti?

13 COMMISSIONER GIACHETTI: Yes.

14 MS. HOTTEL-COX: The motion carries

15 unanimately. CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,

16 Madam Secretary.

17 We'll now move on to Agenda Item 9B

18 which is a request to approve comments on design

19 concept for the new plan for Pennsylvania

20 Avenue.

21 Pennsylvania Avenue's obviously one of

22 the most important connectors within this city.

1 It's bordered essentially on all sides by highly
2 relevant and historical structures.

3 Obviously, core elements of our
4 Capitol.

5 I think it's very important,
6 particularly as we move further into America 250
7 with all the events coming in the months and
8 years ahead, that we have a plan in place to
9 make Pennsylvania Avenue what it could be, which
10 is truly one of the iconic roads, iconic streets
11 in the entire United States.

12 At the February meeting, we looked at
13 this project, or I guess, the previous iteration
14 of this project.

15 The project partners leadership were
16 actively discussing a more efficient management
17 structure that will oversee construction, long-
18 term maintenance operation, and as -- and
19 funding as well to address the needs of the
20 avenue so that it will serve the American
21 people, hopefully, well into the future.

22 And with that, we have Karin Schierhold

1 from our team to present with us today.

2 Karin, would you like to proceed?

3 7509 NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION,
4 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE BETWEEN 3RD AND 15TH
5 STREETS, NW, WASHINGTON, DC - A NEW PLAN FOR
6 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

7 MS. SCHIERHOLD: Yes, thank you.

8 Good afternoon, Chairman Scharf and
9 Commissioners.

10 The National Capital Planning
11 Commission, on behalf of the Pennsylvania Avenue
12 Project Partners request the Commission's
13 comments on design concepts for a new plan for
14 Pennsylvania Avenue.

15 Commission and public feedback this
16 month will help refine the designs considered
17 for future analysis.

18 In February, as you mentioned, the
19 Commission heard an information presentation on
20 the project background.

21 I'll start by recapping some of the key
22 points.

1 NCPC is leading the Pennsylvania Avenue
2 Project Partnership, which I'll refer to as the
3 Partners or Partnership, that includes the six
4 federal and local agencies shown here, with U.S.
5 Commission of Fine Arts as an advisor.

6 The Partners are working together to
7 prepare a new plan for Pennsylvania Avenue.

8 The project area is shown in the solid
9 red outline. It focuses on the corridor, the
10 1.2 mile segment of Pennsylvania Avenue between
11 the White House and the U.S. Capitol, and the 40
12 acres of adjacent public space, and major
13 north/south connections between the National
14 Mall and downtown.

15 The Avenue and its immediate area are a
16 national historic site, home to many
17 historically significant buildings, statues,
18 memorials, parks, and landscape features.

19 The new plan will have two components,
20 each led by a consultant team.

21 The focus of today's meeting is on the
22 public space plan which will provide a design

1 frame working guidance for the corridor and
2 three main public space areas, and address
3 infrastructure modernization.

4 Today, we'll share design concepts that
5 will be further developed and included in the
6 public space plan.

7 Concurrent with the design work, the
8 project team is working with partner agency
9 leadership on implementation to identify an
10 efficient management structure, to address the
11 immediate and long-term needs of the Avenue.

12 The new plan will also advance making
13 the District of Columbia safe and beautiful by
14 improving public space, security, and
15 modernizing infrastructure.

16 When complete, the new plan will
17 replace and existing 1974 plan.

18 It will include an Executive Summary
19 and the four parts listed here.

20 The project team plans to submit the
21 detailed draft at preliminary review.

22 First, I'll walk through the vision

1 aspirations and the design approach.

2 Pennsylvania Avenue was designed to be
3 the physical and symbolic spine of the New
4 Republic, the people's promenade connecting two
5 branches of government as a primary thoroughfare
6 in the New Capitol City, a directivity to the
7 city center, and connected the two rivers at the
8 eastern and western borders.

9 Over time, it became a ceremonial stage
10 and iconic setting for presidential
11 inaugurations, national celebrations, First
12 Amendment activities, and local events.

13 While Pennsylvania Avenue extends west
14 to Rock Creek and east across the Anacostia
15 River, our work in this presentation focused on
16 the segment between the White House and the
17 Capitol.

18 Building off of its unique role in
19 history, a new vision will revitalize the Avenue
20 as the nation's most prominent civic boulevard,
21 with its framed view of the Capitol, classical
22 architecture, at federal triangle, and location

1 in the monumental core, the Avenue is a historic
2 outdoor venue for spectacular events like the
3 upcoming Indy Car 250 and the NFL draft.

4 This vision will also deliver a safe,
5 beautiful, and revitalized street in the city,
6 that the city and the nation can be proud of.

7 In so many ways, capital cities are
8 recognized by the grand ceremonial spaces that
9 are represented in our nation.

10 The new Pennsylvania Avenue will stand
11 among the great, on the same global stage of the
12 great capitol city boulevards in London and
13 Paris and Berlin.

14 At the same time, the Avenue will be a
15 joyful and engaging space for downtown
16 Washington with amenities and activities that
17 serve visitors, residence, and workers.

18 The new plan lays the foundation to
19 design and implement these aspirations
20 addressing the corridor and three main public
21 space areas shown here.

22 Pennsylvania Avenue is where Americans

1 unite and where we convene to act, live, and
2 gather.

3 The design concepts reflect key goals,
4 objectives, and themes built upon technical
5 analysis by subject matter experts, previous
6 Commissions, and public feedback, and ongoing
7 conversations with the Partner Agencies.

8 To set the stage for the design
9 discussion, I'll quickly address the
10 Commission's comments from the previous meeting
11 about some of the Avenue's issues and
12 opportunities.

13 This slide shows numerous physical
14 issues that the Avenue is facing today,
15 including flooding, broken pavers, dying trees
16 within an aging modernist design.

17 And underground is a complex mess of
18 below grade utilities and aging infrastructure,
19 some dating back to the 1870s that will need a
20 comprehensive modernization.

21 From the 1970s through the '90s, the
22 Avenue had a single steward, the Pennsylvania

1 Avenue Development Corporation, or PADC.

2 Its dissolution in 1996 caused
3 management and funding issues that the new plan
4 needs to address.

5 While not the focus of this meeting,
6 the project team is working with Partner Agency
7 leadership to identify a management structure as
8 the design concept is developed.

9 The federal triangle, just south of the
10 Avenue, will remain the symbolic core of the
11 nation's Capitol, defined by a strong federal
12 precedence and neoclassical headquarters.

13 Redevelopment potential and value at
14 nearby federal sites including the J. Edgar
15 Hoover Building and the Francis Perkins Building
16 will help drive economic growth and bring
17 vibrancy back downtown.

18 I'll note that this work is progressing
19 in coordination with local Partner Agencies,
20 aligning with and finding synergies among
21 complementary planning efforts.

22 Because events are a critical part of

1 the Avenue's current function and a new vision,
2 the project team is addressing ways the design
3 can improve efficiency and the cost
4 effectiveness for events of all types and sizes.

5 The team has been working with the
6 Military District of Washington and the Mayor's
7 Special Events Task Group to understand critical
8 dimensions, for example, the inaugural parade
9 that requires a set amount of clear path for the
10 parade, spectators, and multiple levels of
11 security.

12 There is consistently overwhelming
13 demand to host events on the National Mall,
14 which is often over programmed.

15 The team is working with the National
16 Park Service and event producers to ensure the
17 design accommodates the needs for First
18 Amendment activities, festivals, and other
19 special events to reduce that pressure.

20 The Avenue, as a venue, envisions a
21 plug-and-play experience for events, reducing
22 time for set up, tear down, and minimizing

1 disruption to the surrounding area.

2 The design will address multiple
3 operational and safety considerations, including
4 water and utility access, permanent and
5 temporary security, emergency and first aid
6 stations, telecommunications infrastructure,
7 stages, tents, trash removal, and more.

8 The design concepts are tested as they
9 evolve to ensure they can support and, ideally,
10 improve critical event needs.

11 So, now, we'll look at design.

12 For this concept to review, the design
13 team prepared design concept alternatives and
14 options.

15 We'll think of an alternative as a big
16 design move and an option as a detailed way to
17 achieve that alternative.

18 There is a lot more detail in the
19 project materials on our website and in the
20 Commission's packets, but for efficiency, this
21 presentation will summarize and focus on the big
22 design moves, which you can see on these sub-

1 bullets, where input is most critical at this
2 stage.

3 The Commission input and public
4 comments will inform design development in the
5 coming months.

6 So, I'll start with the corridor
7 between 3rd and 13th Streets, Northwest.

8 For the corridor, we are seeking input
9 on three major design moves, reallocation of the
10 roadway space, tree types, and flagpoles.

11 Aspirations for the corridor including
12 celebrating the view shed and architectural
13 character, beautifying the streetscape,
14 providing pedestrian amenities, and upgrading
15 security infrastructure.

16 Today, the Avenue has eight travel
17 lanes and a center running bike lane.

18 This slide shows the existing cross
19 section that hasn't changed since the 1970s when
20 it was designed as a primary cross town
21 thoroughfare.

22 For context, this is equivalent to the

1 width of some interstate highways.

2 The transportation study found that the
3 traffic volume has reduced since the '70s, and
4 it's now oversized for current demand.

5 The corridor based alternative
6 reallocates the space to four travel lanes, one
7 turn lane, and two curbside zones, while
8 shifting the center bike lane to the southside.

9 Today's transportation needs are
10 different than 50 years ago and need to account
11 for rideshare pick up and drop off, loading and
12 deliveries, while safely accommodating multiple
13 modes of transportation.

14 Moving the bike lane to the south
15 provides the additional advantage of increased
16 security standoff for the federal triangle.

17 Overall, this new configuration amounts
18 to just one travel lane reduction.

19 The second major design consideration
20 for the corridor is street trees.

21 Trees are an important and historic
22 framing device that accentuates the view of the

1 Capitol.

2 There are two options, canopy trees
3 shown on the left and then, an allay of columnar
4 trees, which we sometimes call fastigiate trees,
5 to the right.

6 Both options are laid out in a formal
7 pattern next to the curb with additional canopy
8 and under story trees near the building line.

9 The main difference here is in the
10 shape and the character of the trees closest to
11 the curb.

12 And then, the third consideration for
13 the corridor is flagpoles that enhance the
14 ceremonial role of the street.

15 Functionally, other vertical
16 infrastructure may be integrated to these poles
17 for every day and event use, such as permanent
18 lading or temporary speakers and video screens.

19 And I'll make two quick notes that we
20 are showing the poles at 60-feet tall, and for
21 comparison, other flagpoles along and adjacent
22 to the Avenue range from 40-feet to 100-feet.

1 And I also want to note that they are
2 not designed to accommodate telecommunications
3 infrastructure.

4 We understand that telecom is a
5 critical utility, but adding it to these poles
6 would compromise their function as a consistent
7 design feature and could become quickly
8 outdated.

9 So, the next few slides show the base
10 corridor configuration with tree -- with the
11 different tree and pole options.

12 This is showing the canopy trees
13 without poles.

14 The canopy trees are on one side of the
15 pedestrian promenade. They provide shade and
16 can accommodate a large event zone in the
17 street.

18 But the mainframe view is best
19 experienced from the street, as the trees may
20 limit visibility of the Capitol from the
21 sidewalk.

22 This shows the canopy trees with poles.

1 The flagpoles at a formal ceremonial
2 element that helps define canopy tree line and
3 frame the Capitol vista.

4 This shows the columnar trees without
5 poles.

6 The alley or columnar trees, one tree
7 on each side of the pedestrian promenade
8 provides a unique formal character and direct
9 train view of the Capitol.

10 It offers less shade along the
11 sidewalk, however, it may reduce the size of
12 event zones.

13 And this shows the columnar trees with
14 the poles.

15 The flagpoles compliment the upright
16 character of the columnar trees and enhance the
17 framed view from both the street and the
18 sidewalk.

19 So, here the things we had hoped to get
20 feedback on all on one slide.

21 The canopies with or without poles on
22 the left and the columnar trees with or without

1 poles on the right.

2 The design concepts will be -- continue
3 to be developed in further detail with the
4 recommendation for further study on if and how
5 functions can be integrated into the poles,
6 including understanding their structural needs
7 and considering ways to avoid impacting the
8 historic character views and overall visual
9 quality of the street.

10 Next, we will look at the western end,
11 which is near the existing Freedom Plaza.

12 With proximity to the White House and
13 the Wilson Building, this location is often used
14 for First Amendment activities and local events.

15 There are two main moves -- main design
16 moves of the western end.

17 The historic alignment alternative
18 restores the historic diagonal roadway
19 alignment, creating two smaller plazas on both
20 sides.

21 And the central plaza alternative keeps
22 the shape of the plaza and roadway circulation

1 as it is today, but brings it down to the street
2 level.

3 Issues at the western end include the
4 plaza's elevation, lack of shade and amenities,
5 and a poor relationship to the surrounding
6 buildings.

7 Aspirations for the western end include
8 enhancing comfort while maximizing flexibility
9 as an event space and improving traffic
10 circulation and access.

11 So, we'll start with the historic
12 alignment alternative which proposes a new
13 design for two street level plazas.

14 The big move here restores the Avenue's
15 historic diagonal alignment as the primary
16 vehicular route, shown in blue.

17 Secondary circulation, shown with the
18 blue hatch, provides access to adjacent
19 buildings.

20 And this option shows the shared street
21 connection between the World War I Memorial and
22 the White House Visitor's Center with driveway

1 access to the Wilson Building.

2 The diagonal roadway alignment creates
3 two triangular public spaces shown in pink.

4 Together, these two plazas add shade
5 and amenities, enhance the symbolic view, and
6 create a large, flexible event space.

7 There are different ways to connect the
8 public spaces to the adjacent buildings.

9 And this option shows a large plaza in
10 front of the Wilson Building.

11 The inaugural parade route, shown in
12 red, will follow the diagonal roadway which
13 helps to reduce the number of 90-degree turns
14 the parade must make.

15 The other alternative proposed is a
16 central street level plaza.

17 The big move here generally maintains
18 the current vehicular circulation as it is
19 today, but around a new street level plaza.

20 Secondary circulation, shown in the
21 blue hatch, provides access to adjacent
22 buildings.

1 And this option shows the shared street
2 connection -- condition between the National
3 Theater and the new plaza.

4 The central plaza and connected public
5 spaces shown in pink, shade and amenities,
6 strategic tree placement, and landscape frame
7 the symbolic view, and accommodate a range of
8 events.

9 There are different ways to connect the
10 public spaces with the adjacent buildings.

11 This option shows how temporary
12 closures could extend the plaza to the National
13 Theater.

14 And here, since the plaza is street
15 level, the inaugural parade, shown in red, can
16 still go diagonally through, again, helping to
17 reduce the number of 90-degree turns the parade
18 must make, just something we heard was
19 beneficial from the Military District of
20 Washington.

21 Again, to summarize, these are the big
22 moves for the western end that we hope to get

1 feedback on, aligning the main roadway
2 diagonally through on the left, or retaining a
3 central plaza configuration on the right.

4 Design options will continue to evolve
5 and be presented in greater detail at
6 preliminary review with a recommendation for
7 further study to refine the functional and
8 operational requirements for circulation, public
9 spaces, and access to adjacent buildings.

10 The next location we'll look at is
11 Market Square.

12 Market Square is one of the lively
13 areas along the Avenue due to its access to
14 transit, proximity to downtown and the National
15 Mall, and the mix of commercial and residential
16 uses.

17 There's only one design alternative for
18 this location.

19 Despite being well used, it suffers
20 from disconnected public spaces on the other
21 side of the street, gaps in retail, and empty
22 ground floors, and it can be confusing to find

1 ways to downtown, the National Mall, and other
2 area attractions.

3 The existing roadway alignment does not
4 change.

5 The options here address improvements
6 to the public spaces and pedestrian areas shown
7 in pink.

8 The aspiration is to strengthen the
9 Avenue's core identity by celebrating key axes,
10 enhancing connections to the National Mall and
11 downtown, embracing its historical commercial
12 character, and adding comfort amenities like
13 trees and seating.

14 Two options offer different ways to
15 meet the aspirations.

16 They both include a downtown gateway,
17 formal and intimate garden spaces to improve
18 Indiana Avenue, and enhanced pedestrian
19 experience on 8th Street and a covered
20 marketplace and galleria off of Indiana Plaza.

21 Design options will continue to evolve
22 and be presented in greater detail at

1 preliminary review with a recommendation for
2 further study to define and refine the
3 functional and operational requirements of the
4 public spaces, including their relationships to
5 adjacent buildings, broader public space
6 network, and the transition between downtown and
7 the National Mall.

8 And finally, the last location is the
9 eastern end, the John Marshall Park.

10 The eastern end is where most of the
11 larger events on the Avenue are staged,
12 including an area that supports all of the back
13 of house events, steps from the Capitol ground,
14 the National Mall, and the National Gallery of
15 Art.

16 There is only one design alternative
17 for this location.

18 Despite its size, John Marshall Park is
19 highly underutilized and has minimal visibility
20 with elevation changes that impact access.

21 The park is surrounded by a high
22 concentration of daytime uses such as

1 courthouses, law enforcement and embassy
2 buildings that don't generally enliven the space
3 and have robust layers of security requirements.

4 The existing roadway alignment does not
5 change.

6 The options here address improvements
7 to the public spaces and pedestrian areas shown
8 in pink.

9 Aspirations are to create a flexible
10 event space that supports daily use, enhances
11 comfort, preserves the 4th Street view shed, and
12 improves access and security.

13 Three design options offer different
14 ways to meet the aspirations.

15 They all include designs that address
16 the grade change, integrate amenities, and event
17 support infrastructure, use landscape to create
18 shade, and accommodate a range of event sizes,
19 and enhance views along the 4th Street axes.

20 Again, design options will continue to
21 evolve and be presented in greater detail at
22 preliminary review with the recommendation to

1 further study and define the functional
2 operational requirements of the public space,
3 relationship to adjacent buildings, broader
4 public space network and transition between
5 downtown and the National Mall.

6 As I mentioned, concurrent with concept
7 development, the project team is working with
8 Partner Agency leadership on implementation.

9 The goal is to identify an efficient
10 management structure that can address the
11 immediate and long-term needs of the Avenue.

12 Recognizing that a project of this
13 size, complexity, and ambition doesn't happen
14 overnight.

15 The design team is also thinking ahead
16 to factor how construction can be phased over
17 time so that the corridor, public spaces, and/or
18 a smaller focused interventions could be
19 implemented in phases in any combination or
20 order as funding is available.

21 Looking forward, we are looking forward
22 to coming back to the Commission this fall for

1 preliminary review and early next year for final
2 review.

3 As a reminder, our project deliverable
4 is a new plan which will include a schematic
5 design that addresses both physical design and
6 infrastructure modernization, and provides
7 guidance for detailed final design and
8 construction documents in the next phase of
9 work.

10 I've highlighted the key comments and
11 recommendations in the presentation.

12 As a reminder, today's presentation
13 focused on the big moves we hope to get feedback
14 on and design concepts will be further refined
15 and developed for preliminary review.

16 And before I wrap up, I'd like to give
17 an overview of our upcoming public engagement
18 opportunities.

19 We'll have many opportunities for the
20 public to take a closer look at the design
21 concepts this month and provide input.

22 We're hosting two online public

1 meetings on the 8th and the 22nd. This is also
2 an opportunity for the public to engage with the
3 design team and we'll have questions and
4 answers.

5 And we're also accepting comments
6 submitted to our website through April 30th.

7 And starting next week, there will be a
8 Pennsylvania Avenue display at the National
9 Building Museum showcasing a lot of the content
10 that we walked through today. That will also be
11 up until April 30th.

12 So, with that, thank you, Chairman
13 Scharf and Commissioners.

14 That concludes my presentation. I will
15 note that the NCPC team, David Rubin from David
16 Rubin Land Collective and Doug Davies and Lee
17 Farmer from VHB from the design team are here to
18 answer any questions.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Karin.

20 Do any Commissioners have any questions
21 at this time?

22 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE)

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Hearing none, is
2 there a motion to approve comments on design
3 concepts for the new plan for Pennsylvania
4 Avenue?

5 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: So moved.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
7 Commissioner.

8 Is there a second?

9 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Second.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: With that, I will now
11 open it up to the Commission for discussion.

12 And I'll start deliberations with
13 Commissioner Stidham.

14 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: So, it's hard to
15 speak about this project because I've been
16 working on for so long and it's just everyone.

17 And to be, I have to say, to be at this
18 point, is fabulous.

19 I think I've said for many years, we'll
20 never get to this point and here we are.

21 So, it's great to have some ideas, some
22 big ideas, some big moves before us for

1 consideration.

2 So, I don't think much of what I'm
3 going to say is going to be a surprise to those
4 who have been working on the project.

5 You know, feedback on the big moves, I
6 think, are the corridor configuration.

7 I think the canopy trees do the best
8 job at framing the Avenue and giving that sense
9 of space while providing pedestrian shade that
10 everyone needs so badly.

11 I'm not a fan of the poles. I get the
12 move that that makes and the symbology that
13 brings, but I also -- I'm concerned with its
14 introduction as an element on this very
15 important Avenue and what they may be used for
16 in the future.

17 Everyone sees a pole differently, so
18 from the Park Service's perspective, that pole
19 also can be lights, it can be a telecom feature,
20 it can be something no one has even dreamed of
21 yet.

22 And I think it provides management and

1 operational challenges that we can't even think
2 of today.

3 And I think there may be other
4 temporary ways to provide that same symbolic
5 feature as a permanent pole was in a way that is
6 more synthetic of this as a national historic
7 site.

8 So, keeping that in mind.

9 For the western end at Freedom Plaza, I
10 love the historic alignment. I think it puts
11 the White House Visitor's Center and I think it
12 puts the Wilson Building in a much better
13 setting that was more suitable for those two
14 structures.

15 It's more pedestrian friendly. I think
16 it's more welcoming. I think it does a better
17 job of dealing with the traffic and events.

18 So, I think it provides a lot of
19 opportunities that maybe the other option
20 doesn't.

21 Market Square, I don't think you can go
22 wrong with either of those moves.

1 John Marshall has to be one of my
2 favorite spots. I call it like the Secret
3 Garden. No one really knows it's there and when
4 you come upon it, you're like, wow, nobody uses
5 this space. This is a great space.

6 And we're doing great improvements to
7 it now, so go there after May 1st and you will
8 be just amazed at how beautiful it is with the
9 new paving and the fountains.

10 But beyond that, I don't think you can
11 go wrong with any of the options.

12 I think it tries to be an event space.
13 I think it's deserving of that.

14 I would look for ways to make it more
15 adaptable, so no stairs, no walls, or minimum
16 amounts to allow for that to be a very
17 accessible space and usable for a variety of
18 events.

19 And flexible, right, so they can handle
20 whatever, be it an upcoming memorial, a great
21 concert, barbeque, whatever.

22 I think that it has great

1 opportunities.

2 So, I think the -- thank you, again,
3 for the presentation. I think the staff and the
4 consultant team has done a great job of bringing
5 this all together and thinking about not just
6 the big events, but also the day-to-day
7 activities and how this all blends into the city
8 and used daily and those big events.

9 So, thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
11 Commissioner.

12 Commissioner Argo?

13 COMMISSIONER ARGO: No additional
14 comments.

15 I'm -- it's exciting. It's wonderful
16 to see this development, appreciate the work
17 that's been done here.

18 It's -- it'll be great to have also see
19 the -- some more opportunities for flexible
20 event spaces which I think we need.

21 And that's it, thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,

1 Commissioner.

2 Vice Chairman Levenbach?

3 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: So, I appreciate
4 all the thought that went into it with all the -
5 - with the multiple options.

6 Just to give you my -- some of my
7 thoughts initially, I like the canopy trees a
8 little more. I wasn't sure about the poles.

9 I hate those big planters which you
10 always have to walk around.

11 And I just thought the poles are
12 another thing that carves up some of the
13 walkways and it's something else to walk into
14 for clumsy people like me.

15 I like the central plaza quite a bit.
16 I thought that was a nice option.

17 I like the neighborhood garden with the
18 kind of sort of a soft lean.

19 I thought the pavilion was interesting,
20 I think like how it -- putting it in the context
21 of what other types of space there are in that
22 area and this one looks like it provides a

1 little bit of structure for an event. I thought
2 the pavilion was interesting.

3 So, I know I look forward to seeing how
4 it develops.

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr. Vice
6 Chairman.

7 Commissioner Blair?

8 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: No comments to
9 offer, thanks.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
11 Commissioner.

12 Administrator Forst?

13 COMMISSIONER FORST: Thank you very
14 much.

15 So, 30 years since PADC was sunsetted.
16 And I am just so energized by this presentation
17 and the hard work that you guys put into it. I
18 think it's awesome.

19 I am trees over poles every day, so I'm
20 with you on that.

21 And I would just say, Commissioner
22 Stidham's comments are a mic drop for me, so

1 thank you very much.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
3 Commissioner or Administrator, excuse me.

4 Commissioner Dixon?

5 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I like this mic
6 drop thing, I liked it.

7 (LAUGHTER)

8 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I think that
9 Commissioner Stidham's always a mic drop for me,
10 I think.

11 I would associate myself with the
12 comments.

13 I want to also make it clear that I was
14 enjoying the presentation from the room next
15 door where I could relax a little better.

16 I do that sometimes, move around.

17 I also wanted to say that I had a long,
18 great conversation with the consultants, the
19 folks that are doing this and am very moved by
20 their capacity and sensitivity.

21 I think the work they're doing is
22 exceptional and I hope they can move forward

1 with help.

2 I do agree about the poles. I mean,
3 it's something about them, if we have a
4 constraint on them, it could be misused maybe in
5 some ways and I think that may be something you
6 can look at. I don't know how you could replace
7 that or whatever.

8 I also think that the Freedom Plaza
9 concept of dividing that helps make that turn a
10 less sharp turn for those marching forces.

11 I marched in a lot of parades in many
12 different ways and I think that it makes it
13 easier when you have a unit moving. So, that's
14 great.

15 And the other places, the other
16 suggestions are great -- good ones as well.

17 I can only remember sometime when I was
18 a younger person, here we go, Mr. Chairman, and
19 I would go to parades, I had to stand -- I used
20 to climb up in the bushes at 7th and
21 Pennsylvania Avenue. You could perch yourself
22 on a bush and get perspective to see the

1 parades.

2 So, I still don't have a place to go
3 these days, but now, we'll at least have some
4 options that maybe I won't have to worry about
5 bushes and will be able to get up on it as a
6 kid.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Now a days, if you
8 tried to perch yourself on a bush, the National
9 Park Service would be on you in a second, sir.

10 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Absolutely.

11 So, I like what's going on and I
12 appreciate the support, particularly impressed
13 with the crew that is working on it and the
14 staff's efforts.

15 So, thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
17 Commissioner.

18 Commissioner Cash?

19 COMMISSIONER CASH: Nothing else to
20 add. I associate myself with everyone else's
21 comments.

22 Thanks for the work -- ongoing work on

1 this project. It's been a long time coming.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
3 Commissioner.

4 Oh, sure.

5 COMMISSIONER FORST: I'm sorry, just to
6 jump back in, I know there's a request for I
7 think \$3.9 million to go and take the next step.

8 I just want to let you know, we've
9 approved that.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
11 Administrator Forst.

12 Talk about mic drop.

13 I wish I had millions of dollars to
14 throw around on projects.

15 Commissioner Henderson?

16 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: If the -- if
17 there's a move to get away from the poles, I
18 think losing the ability to display flags along
19 the Avenue would be a loss.

20 So, I don't know how that would get
21 replaced if it weren't for poles. I'm sure
22 there's other good ideas, I would just still

1 argue for the flag here.

2 And that's it.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
4 Commissioner.

5 Commissioner Giachetti?

6 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE)

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Did we lose
8 Commissioner Giachetti?

9 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE)

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We can come back to
11 him.

12 Commissioner Cozart?

13 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes, I just want
14 to say, appreciation to the staff for this.

15 Not only do they report on this, but
16 it's also they put in a lot -- and a lot of work
17 and a lot of leadership around this effort and
18 that's greatly appreciated.

19 And we're happy to be in partnership
20 with them to really think about operationalizing
21 this.

22 The -- I associate myself with the

1 comments of other Commissioners.

2 And I just want to lift up the
3 importance of Market Square as a way to really
4 make the connection between the waterfront,
5 which has had a lot of both federal and local
6 investment to revitalize and making a way all
7 the way up 7th Street.

8 Market Square is an important kind of
9 gateway into the downtown of the District which
10 we're working really hard to revitalize with
11 sports and entertainment and other really
12 important things.

13 So, that's a great stopover and really
14 impressed with the evolution of the designs for
15 there.

16 Interested in seeing the continued
17 evolution for the other parts of the Avenue as
18 well because it's -- there's some -- definitely
19 some visual analysis and design challenges.

20 I look forward to seeing how we square
21 those up as the submission goes forward in the
22 fall.

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
2 Commissioner.

3 Commissioner Salesse?

4 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: So, as a new
5 participant, I'm just really impressed with the
6 presentation and the work that is done here.
7 It's really impressive.

8 As we get to the Avenue, the National
9 Avenue, I do think the canopy trees, having
10 walked that many times, especially in the
11 summer, it's nice to have that shade, so I think
12 that's important.

13 And I do think, at some point, how we
14 can display flags is also a very important
15 aspect of this.

16 I'm a little surprised in the 90-degree
17 turn thing from the Military.

18 Maybe we should just have Marines lead
19 all the parades. They have no problem with 90-
20 degree turns. I think they know how to march.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,

1 Commissioner.

2 Is Commissioner Giachetti back with us
3 now?

4 MS. HOTTEL-COX: No, I believe he
5 stepped away.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: He's stepped away?

7 I'll just say, for myself, this is a
8 really exciting project.

9 Thank you for that in depth
10 presentation today.

11 I'm agnostic on the trees and the
12 poles, but I'm sure that whatever design we end
13 up settling on, will be beautiful.

14 I think the bigger picture item,
15 though, really reclaiming this space to allow it
16 to serve as the civic center, as a public
17 gathering place, in the heart of Washington,
18 D.C. is incredibly important.

19 I think one thing that none of the
20 other Commissioners have highlighted, moving the
21 bike lanes from the middle of Pennsylvania
22 Avenue to the south I think is a -- could be a

1 tremendous improvement for a lot of different
2 reasons.

3 And just making sure that the
4 streetscape reflects the actual needs of the
5 people who currently use it I think is very
6 important as well.

7 But thank you, again, to our team. I
8 know how important a project this is to NCPC and
9 to so many others and I'm really excited to see
10 this come back around as we move towards this
11 project's ultimate conclusion, which as
12 Commissioner Stidham said quite well, we've been
13 working on this for a long time and it's
14 exciting to see the progress that's already been
15 made.

16 With that, are there any further
17 questions or comments?

18 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE)

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Hearing none, can the
20 Secretary please confirm the motion and second
21 and then, take the vote by roll call?

22 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes.

1 The motion was made by Commissioner
2 Stidham and seconded by Commissioner Salesse.

3 Commissioner Cozart?

4 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Salesse?

6 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Yes.

7 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Stidham?

8 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

10 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman
12 Levenbach?

13 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

14 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

17 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Yes.

18 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Administrator Forst?

19 COMMISSIONER FORST: Yes.

20 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

21 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

22 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cash?

1 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

2 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

3 Henderson?

4 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Thank you, the motion
6 carries.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, the motion
8 is passed.

9 And with that, we move on to Agenda
10 Item 9C which is a request to approve comments
11 on the George Washington Memorial Parkway Vista
12 Management Plan.

13 And we have Mike Weil with us to speak
14 about that.

15 8754 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
16 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA -
17 GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY VISTA
18 MANAGEMENT PLAN

19 MR. WEIL: Thank you very much.

20 Good afternoon, Chairman Scharf and
21 Members of the Commission.

22 The National Park Service is developing

1 a long-term management plan for 15 vistas along
2 a 2.65 mile stretch of the George Washington
3 Memorial Parkway which is located in Arlington,
4 Virginia.

5 As part of the Park Service's ongoing
6 environmental assessment study process, they are
7 requesting concept comments from our Commission
8 here today as part of their scoping phase under
9 NEPA, which is an opportunity for NCPC to
10 comment early in the plan's development process.

11 The project's 30-day scoping period
12 began on March 12th and extends through April
13 11th.

14 And as shown here on this timeline,
15 based on scoping feedback, the Park Service will
16 prepare a draft EA and then, return back to NCPC
17 for a review and comment this summer.

18 This map shows the 2.65 mile section of
19 the Parkway where the future vista management
20 plan would apply, extending between Chain Bridge
21 in the north and Spout Run in the south.

22 And the planned segment is part of the

1 larger 25-mile long George Washington Memorial
2 Parkway which honors the nation's first
3 President as a scenic roadway that protects the
4 cultural and natural resources along the Potomac
5 River.

6 The Parkway is part of a comprehensive
7 system of parks, parkways, and recreational
8 areas surrounding the nation's Capitol.

9 This vista management planning effort
10 was borne out of a larger rehabilitation project
11 for the northern portion of the Parkway which
12 NPS initiated in 2022 to improve safety,
13 drainage, and the user experience while also
14 preserving the Parkway's historic character.

15 And this rehabilitation project is now
16 virtually complete.

17 To prepare for this vista management
18 plan, NPS previously conducted a visual resource
19 inventory and assessment study to systematically
20 identify vista locations along the Parkway as
21 well as their type and quality.

22 The five different vista ratings

1 identified through the study, the vista
2 management plan considers the vistas that are
3 rated in the two highest category ratings.

4 The superior class vistas with striking
5 and dramatic views along the Parkway, typically
6 with manmade features in the distance.

7 And then, the high class vistas capture
8 the scenic beauty of the Palisades and gorges
9 area along the Potomac River.

10 And we commend the National Park
11 Service and our Executive Director's
12 recommendation and comments for developing their
13 vista management plan based on this previous
14 visual assessment study.

15 As background, the GW Parkway is
16 significant as it was the first comprehensively
17 designed modern roadway, built by the federal
18 government.

19 And the project preserved extensive
20 Potomac River shoreline habitat.

21 Congress established the Parkway on May
22 29th, 1930 with the federal -- with federal

1 funding appropriated under the Capper-Cramton
2 Act.

3 The Parkway protects the landscape
4 along the Potomac River, offers scenic views of
5 Washington, D.C. and the river, and also
6 functions as an important transportation link
7 between multiple historic sites, memorials, and
8 scenic and recreational areas within the
9 Washington Metropolitan region.

10 Previous to vista clearing and
11 restoration work was undertaken in 2024 with 10
12 of the 15 subject vista locations, either
13 partially or completely cleared along the
14 Parkway.

15 This clearance work has been paused
16 since then temporarily so the Park Service can
17 complete additional NEPA compliance work as part
18 of the future long-term plan to management these
19 vista areas.

20 The purpose of the plan is to manage
21 these Parkway vistas with recognition of the GW
22 Parkway as a scenic, historically significant,

1 and as part of our regional system of parks,
2 parkways, and recreational areas.

3 And we express our support for this
4 purpose as part of our Executive Director's
5 recommendation and comments.

6 So, here are the plans, 15 subject
7 vistas, shown here in blue, which were
8 established as part of the original Parkway
9 design.

10 And we have several Comprehensive Plan
11 policies that support their preservation as
12 shown here.

13 Based on the Parkway's higher elevation
14 above the river in the north, the superior class
15 vistas are concentrated there with long views
16 down the river.

17 While the high class vistas capture the
18 scenic beauty of the Potomac River in the south,
19 based on the Parkway's lower elevation there and
20 closer proximity to the river.

21 Five of the subject vistas are
22 southward facing, shaded here in red. And these

1 are meaningful since they allow Parkway users to
2 view elements of D.C.'s charismatic skyline as
3 they approach the city.

4 And then, the ten northbound vistas,
5 shown here in blue, are noteworthy in that they
6 have fewer visual obstructions such as passing
7 traffic, based on the northbound lanes riverside
8 position along the Parkway.

9 Most of the plan's views, 11 of 15, are
10 classified as open with unobstructed wide
11 panoramic views and without woody vegetation in
12 the foreground.

13 And then, here are the two vista
14 overlook locations identified in the plan with
15 parking areas, acceleration and deceleration
16 lanes so that people can stop and get out of
17 their vehicles to enjoy the scenery.

18 Currently, there are five different
19 potential vista management concept alternatives
20 ranging from maximum vista preservation to full
21 reforestation of these areas.

22 And I will now briefly walk you through

1 each of the potential management alternatives.

2 The first alternative is the NEPA-
3 required, no action baseline alternative.

4 And in this scenario, the Park Service
5 would allow the natural reforestation of all 15
6 vista areas, which would result in a continuous
7 natural forested landscape between the Parkway
8 and river.

9 Alternative 2 would restore and
10 maintain all 15 vistas, consisting of both
11 superior and high class vista categories, which
12 are important elements to the Parkway's original
13 design.

14 Under Alternative 3, the Park Service
15 would maintain 9 of the 15 vista locations, with
16 all 7 of the superior class vistas, plus 1
17 additional overlook vista location, which is
18 rated high class.

19 And then, one other high class vista
20 location, Number 8, which overlaps with Location
21 Number 29, which is one of the superior class
22 vistas.

1 And so, clearing one vista location
2 would also simultaneously clear the other.

3 Alternative 4 would maintain the two
4 overlook vistas in the future.

5 And then, finally, the Park Service
6 would actively replant and manage all 15 vista
7 locations under Alternative 5.

8 And this would result in the continuous
9 natural forested landscape between the Parkway
10 and the river, similar to Alternative 1.

11 And so, we highlight that plan
12 Alternatives 1 and 5 would result in a more
13 natural continuous forested landscape along the
14 river as one of our findings, which would not be
15 consistent with several Comprehensive Plan
16 policies that support Parkway vista
17 preservation.

18 We have a second finding that
19 summarizes the differences between Alternatives
20 2 through 4 with Alternative 2 fully restoring
21 and maintaining all 15 vista locations along the
22 Parkway while the other alternatives would only

1 preserve some of these vista locations.

2 Alternative 3 would maintain 9 of 15
3 vista locations.

4 And then, Alternative 4 would preserve
5 the 2 overlook vista locations in the future.

6 And since this is still early in the
7 Park Service's EA process, we find that
8 additional information and evaluation is needed
9 for the Commission to better understand the
10 tradeoffs between the different alternatives
11 within the context of historic preservation,
12 resource protection, maintenance, and funding.

13 We note the vista management plan is
14 still early in its EA process in the scoping
15 phase. And we recommend that the Park Service
16 continue its coordination with all appropriate
17 stakeholders, members of the public, and
18 consulting parties through their ongoing NEPA
19 and Section 106 processes.

20 So, with that, that concludes my
21 presentation. All of these comments are
22 included in our staff report to the Commission.

1 We have also incorporated many of our
2 comments into today's presentation.

3 And I would like to note that we have
4 five Park Service representatives here with us
5 today, one of whom is Jennifer Madello, who is
6 the Superintendent of the George Washington
7 Memorial Parkway who would like to provide a
8 brief statement in support of the Park Service
9 vista plan immediately following my
10 presentation.

11 And then, we also have four other Park
12 Service members here today who are available for
13 any questions that you may have as well.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thanks a lot, Mike.

16 Superintendent Madello, if you'd like
17 to, yes, please, whenever you're ready.

18 MS. MADELLO: I'm Jen Madello. I'm the
19 Superintendent of the George Washington Memorial
20 Parkway.

21 I'm joined by members of our park
22 leadership team here.

1 I have our Deputy Superintendent, Vince
2 Vaise, our Chief of Resource Management, Maureen
3 Joseph, and our Coastal Resource Manager, Megan
4 Bailey.

5 So, I really thank you very much for
6 your time and your consideration as we are early
7 in this process.

8 I'm very much looking forward to
9 getting your feedback on this.

10 As part of our ongoing commitment to
11 the North Parkway section rehabilitation
12 project, this is a major undertaking, the first
13 time the road has been rehabilitated since it
14 was originally completed, this section, in the
15 1960s.

16 This project is nearing completion.

17 As we were going through this
18 rehabilitation, we also wanted to look at the
19 historic vistas and take care of those.

20 As you know, we started that work as
21 described by the staff here.

22 And as we were undertaking that work,

1 we determined that the scope and scale of
2 removal of native plants was much bigger than we
3 originally thought.

4 And we paused it and we decided to go
5 through a public process with this.

6 We have completed the NHPA compliance
7 on this and the vista rehabilitation is part of
8 the programmatic agreement that we have.

9 But we decided we have to go through
10 NEPA and the public process.

11 So, here we are accounting for that
12 work that was already done plus our ultimate
13 goal to restore the vistas that are in our vista
14 rehabilitation guide.

15 That being said, we are really
16 committed to this full review. We believe it
17 brings transparency to the process and to what
18 we are doing and will help us weigh the impacts
19 on cultural resources and natural resources with
20 the visitor experience.

21 We started with public scoping without
22 a preferred alternative in hand because we want

1 to understand what the public values as users of
2 the Parkway.

3 We also want to evaluate through this
4 process the funding and staffing resources that
5 it will take to actually maintain these vistas
6 for the long-term.

7 So, that will be part of our process.

8 And our goal is to establish this long-
9 term vista management plan, that's a part that
10 supports our mission for the Parkway to balance
11 that visitor experience and our resource
12 preservation.

13 I don't have much else to say there on
14 that, so I'm here if you all have any questions
15 and other members of the team.

16 Thank you, again, for your time.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
18 Superintendent and thank you, again, Mike.

19 Do any Commissioners have any questions
20 either for our team or for the Park Service?

21 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I do, Mr.
22 Chairman.

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, sir?

2 COMMISSIONER DIXON: The Parkway, does
3 it have bike access?

4 MS. MADELLO: Not on this section.

5 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Not on this
6 section? Right.

7 MS. MADELLO: The Mount Vernon Trail
8 that goes from Mount Vernon --

9 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Right.

10 MS. MADELLO: -- to essentially the
11 Theodore Roosevelt Island, this section does not
12 have that bike access.

13 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Right, I mean, I
14 think it would be awkward to make that happen,
15 right?

16 MS. MADELLO: Yes.

17 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Okay.

18 MS. MADELLO: We have 26 million
19 drivers a year on that section of the Parkway.

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

21 MS. MADELLO: No shoulders.

22 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes, I learned

1 about -- I'm learning about the hard way. I
2 used to be Senior Vice President at PRC and the
3 systems and my chair, I was in charge of.

4 And then, one day, I decided, I lived
5 in Dupont Circle, to ride my bike to PRC. And I
6 discovered I shouldn't be the Parkway with my
7 bike.

8 I managed to make it without being
9 stopped by anybody, but I realized then it
10 didn't go all the way up the Parkway.

11 Right, okay.

12 MS. MADELLO: We have the Potomac
13 Heritage Trail --

14 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I know, I know
15 that, I've used that.

16 MS. MADELLO: -- that's accessible to
17 bicyclists.

18 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes, I know it
19 terminates now. I got the message.

20 Thank you.

21 MS. MADELLO: Sorry.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I think I expressed

1 the sense of the Commission and our professional
2 staff when I say that I'm very happy that
3 Commissioner Dixon survived this interaction,
4 but it could have gone very differently, but
5 we're glad that you're here, sir.

6 Are there any other questions for the
7 presentation team?

8 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: I have one.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes?

10 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: So, one of the
11 things that's not really clear in the different
12 alternatives is the level of effort.

13 And pretty much, you have to -- you
14 come away with the conclusion that the level of
15 effort is the same across the alternatives.

16 And you mentioned funding.

17 So, I think it's helpful to understand,
18 in reality, are we looking at 2 really well
19 maintained vistas, trading off against 15 lesser
20 maintained vistas?

21 You know, because we know how budgets
22 can be constrained and there are a lot of things

1 that the Park Service is trying to do with its
2 maintenance backlog.

3 And so, that's one thought is just,
4 okay, let, you know, understanding if we really
5 are looking at, say, an alternative where all 15
6 vistas are going to be maintained at the level
7 that you aspire to, just knowing the other
8 competing demands on the budget.

9 MS. MADELLO: So, I know you're aware
10 with your background that we rely on the annual
11 appropriations process.

12 So, I cannot guarantee funding is
13 available for many of the things we want to do.
14 And vista management is one of those.

15 I do think there is a varying level of
16 effort in terms of staff, contracts, financial
17 resources, for the different scenarios here.

18 And we're going to have to look at that
19 closely once we get the feedback from the
20 public, feedback that you all have, to take into
21 consideration our ultimate goal.

22 And then, what can we realistically do

1 in the long-term with the funding that we may
2 have available to us.

3 And what's the tradeoff for other
4 things that we have to accomplish.

5 So, we've structured this with the
6 multiple alternatives, one being looking at
7 those overlooks that have the pull outs where
8 people can stop and take that view in.

9 And then, one being all 15 of them,
10 which would be a much more significant effort
11 than just the 2.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
13 Superintendent.

14 Do any other Commissioners have
15 questions at this time?

16 We do have --

17 Oh, sorry, sir.

18 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: How much did you
19 say goes through there?

20 MS. MADELLO: Twenty-six million
21 drivers a year.

22 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Yes, I mean,

1 it's a pretty busy place and pulling off to use
2 the vistas, have you looked at that from a
3 safety and security perspective?

4 I know that's probably not part of this
5 discussion.

6 MS. MADELLO: Well, so, that will be
7 one of the factors that we consider in our
8 evaluation and we're looking forward to hearing
9 from the public to see if they have any safety
10 concerns around this.

11 But we'll definitely look at that, top
12 priority for me is safety.

13 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Yes.

14 Do you know how much those vistas are
15 used? Any traffic?

16 MS. MADELLO: The overlooks, in
17 particular, I don't have that answer of the top
18 of my head.

19 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Any other questions?

21 (NO AUDIBLE RESPONSE)

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We do have a member

1 of the public who signed up to testify on this
2 project.

3 We have a Mr. Glenn Tobin.

4 MR. TOBIN: Can you hear me?

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We can hear you
6 clear, sir. If you want to continue whenever
7 you're ready to proceed.

8 MR. TOBIN: Absolutely. Thank you for
9 the opportunity to comment today and I'd like to
10 also commend Superintendent Madello and her team
11 for creating such an open process. Chairman
12 Scharf and other commissioners, as I said, my
13 name is Glenn Tobin. I would say I love the GW
14 Parkway. I'm an active user of the park. I've
15 also volunteered for thousands of hours to help
16 improve it. Like many of you, I love a good
17 view and spectacular scenery.

18 I urge the Commission to consider
19 adding four points to its feedback to the NPS
20 regarding the upcoming EA. First, I urge that
21 you request that the EA consider the impact of
22 both the trees that were improperly removed in

1 2024 and any trees that could still be removed.
2 The Park Service is describing the as-is
3 situation as one in which the trees and forest
4 have already been partially removed. As a
5 citizen, this just doesn't seem right to me.
6 Actions were taken without authority and now the
7 Park Service seeks to avoid accounting for those
8 actions.

9 Second, I urge the Commission to be
10 cautious in concluding there is clear historical
11 evidence supporting the actual vistas being
12 proposed. There are no documents contemporary
13 to the creation of the parkway that describe the
14 15 proposed vistas other than the two overlooks
15 of course. What does exist are historical
16 photographs, some of which you can see in the
17 presentation today, which I'd argue don't prove
18 intent. The photographs document large scale
19 earth moving during which hills were lowered and
20 valleys were filled. Vegetation necessarily was
21 removed in that process. The absence of trees
22 in the beautiful photos reflects construction

1 disturbance, not an enduring design vision.

2 Third, I urge the Commission, and it's
3 already been discussed a little bit, to request
4 the Park Service demonstrate they can and are
5 committing the budget to maintain any
6 recommended vista over the long term. The
7 challenge with open vistas is that they will be
8 nearly impossible to maintain over time and
9 creating open space will threaten the nearby
10 beautiful and valuable natural areas. Fasting
11 moving invasive plants were not problematic in
12 the 1960s. Today, they cause huge problems in
13 the park which you can see driving on the
14 parkway. If more open land is created, the
15 problem will be worse as invasives thrive on
16 open land and disturbed soil. If invasives are
17 not successfully managed, the beautiful
18 surrounding forest will be overrun and
19 destroyed.

20 If you want proof, look below the two
21 existing overlooks and you will see acres of
22 ravaged natural lands from the invasive kudzu

1 plant and the devastation is expanding every
2 year. Managing invasives in and around the new
3 vista areas would be complicated and expensive.
4 No vista will remain open without substantial
5 cost into perpetuity; even if there were budget
6 to manage this today and there's not, we have no
7 guarantee for the long term.

8 Finally, I urge the Commission to
9 request that all users of the park are
10 considered in the evaluation of the
11 alternatives. Drivers on the parkway are not
12 the only users who benefit from the scenery of
13 the park. Hikers on the Congressionally
14 established Potomac Heritage National Scenic
15 Trail, kayakers and boaters on the river, people
16 across the Potomac all enjoy the scenery of the
17 park and can be affected by the vista project.
18 Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr. Tobin.
20 Are there any questions for Mr. Tobin before we
21 proceed? Thank you for commenting and being
22 with us today, sir. With that, that concludes

1 public testimony. Is there a motion to approve
2 comments on the George Washington Memorial
3 Parkway Vista Management Plan?

4 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: So moved.

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Is there a second?

6 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Second.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Hearing a motion and
8 a second, let's open it up to the Commission for
9 discussion and I'll start the deliberations
10 again with Commissioner Stidham.

11 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Thank you and
12 thank you, staff, for the presentation. I just
13 really have to say that we're in the middle of a
14 public comment period. We want to hear from all
15 users, whether you drive a car, ride a bike,
16 hike a trail, whatever you do in the park, we
17 want to hear from you and we want you to weigh
18 in on the alternatives as presented. It's open
19 to the public and we look forward to hearing
20 from the public.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
22 Commissioner. Commissioner Argo?

1 COMMISSIONER ARGO: No additional
2 comments or questions. I appreciate the
3 presentation. There was some good information
4 that we need to have and I felt like I needed to
5 have and that's it.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
7 Commissioner.

8 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Vice Chairman
10 Levenbach?

11 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: It sounds like
12 the process you're going through is very
13 deliberative and you're thinking about your
14 budget, which is going to be important when you
15 evaluate the alternatives. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank You, Vice
17 Chairman. Commissioner Blair?

18 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: No comment.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
20 Commissioner Blair. Commissioner Tunstall-
21 Williams?

22 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Thank

1 you. First, I'd like to thank the Park Service
2 for the thoughtful approach to this project.
3 One of the beauties of coming along the parkway
4 and I typically mostly use it coming to and from
5 either airport and I'm always welcomed home by
6 the beautiful views and so that's something I
7 really appreciate about the parkway, so I'm glad
8 to see that you guys are thinking about it.
9 But, I also as a fellow federal agency,
10 recognize what can you maintain, what does that
11 look like, what is the budget and so I think as
12 the Commission continues, as well as the general
13 public, it would be great to see additional
14 information. Some more imagery from each of the
15 viewpoints so we can kind of prioritize the
16 understanding that there might be a limited
17 number that you can restore. We can figure out
18 what might make sense. I think also a matrix,
19 either a pro/con or looking at what is
20 achievable within low, medium, high budget that
21 kind of stuff so that it allows us to better
22 make informed decisions about the alternative

1 that you guys might consider. Otherwise, thank
2 you for the work.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
4 Commissioner. Commissioner Dixon?

5 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Mr. Chairman, I
6 think there's a record being set here today.
7 The record is the number of Smokey the Bears we
8 have in the room here, but that's fine.

9 My comment is this, I do think that in
10 moving forward it would be nice if they had some
11 record, a record of the number of people who use
12 the vistas. I'm surprised you don't. I mean
13 it's probably not a hard thing to get a meter
14 on, but you might also put some questionnaires
15 in those that people might be willing to pick up
16 and fill out for you, when they use them, just
17 notes about how they use them, why they use
18 them. Just something very simple that could be
19 collected that will give you feedback. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
22 Commissioner.

1 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS:

2 Chairman, if I could.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, ma'am.

4 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS:

5 Commissioner Dixon, Smokey the Bear is the
6 Forest Service by the way.

7 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Oh, my gosh.

8 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: So, I
9 can't resist to not point that out since it is
10 sort of a pet peeve of my own.

11 COMMISSIONER DIXON: These are just --

12 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: He's
13 our park ranger.

14 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I'm sorry,
15 Rangers.

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I would also like to
17 note that there is, in fact, a federal criminal
18 statute that makes it a crime to commercially
19 misappropriate the likeness of Smokey the Bear,
20 Woodsy Owl or any of their accompanying woodland
21 creatures, so for those of you who throw the
22 name of Smokey the Bear around all willy nilly

1 be warned.

2 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I got it, Mr.
3 Chairman.

4 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: With that having been
5 said, Commissioner Cash?

6 COMMISSIONER CASH: Okay, steal my
7 thunder, but I just want to say so long as the
8 overlook that has the best view of the Three
9 Sisters Formation out there can have a great
10 interpretive signage element that talks about
11 the perils of poor federal planning, I think
12 that I would be all in favor of it. Thank you
13 for that.

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
15 Commissioner. Commissioner Henderson?

16 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: As a user of
17 the parkway, I guess a driver on the parkway, I
18 would just encourage as a consideration of part
19 of this process, we had a fatality on the
20 parkway a couple of weeks ago where a tree fell
21 on a car during rush hour. If we're going to be
22 dealing with vegetation here, what do we need to

1 do to address any trees that could pose dangers
2 to the commuters on the parkway as well?

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
4 Commissioner. Commissioner Cozart?

5 COMMISSIONER COZART: Appreciate the
6 work of the Park Service and the work of the
7 staff on this project. No additional comments.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
9 Commissioner. Commissioner Salesse?

10 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Again, I'd echo
11 those last comments, just appreciate everything
12 you do. The parkway is beautiful. The
13 overlooks are just tremendous and thank God,
14 we're preserving some of that, but how you
15 sustain it at that level is probably the key to
16 this, so thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
18 Commissioner. I'll just say for myself I'd like
19 to thank the National Park Service for seeking
20 comments on this whole plan, for the obvious
21 attention to detail that what we've received
22 from them reveals. I'd like to thank the

1 superintendent and her team for being here
2 today. It's great to see you all and thank you
3 for what you do for the Park Service and for the
4 community. As always, I'd like to thank our
5 team for their customary attention to detail and
6 the presentation we have before us.

7 I think it's a very interesting plan.
8 Invasive kudzu, I think that's the first time
9 we've had as explicit a reference to that, since
10 I joined the Commission, but it's a real issue
11 in a lot of nature areas. I think it's
12 something worth considering, so I thank, Mr.
13 Tobin, as well for joining us. I would just say
14 I look forward to seeing how this project
15 resolves. I think balancing the needs of the
16 various populations implicated here is going to
17 be interesting as well as, as Stuart is always
18 quick to remind us, the budgetary demands of the
19 federal government. We look forward to seeing
20 how this project develops and hopefully bringing
21 it in, in one way or another, for a successful
22 planning approval conclusion.

1 With that, are there any other further
2 questions or comments? Hearing none, Madam
3 Secretary, could you please confirm the motion
4 in the second and then take the vote by roll
5 call?

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes. The motion was
7 made by Commissioner Stidham and seconded by
8 Commissioner Dixon. Commissioner Cozart?

9 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

10 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Salesse?

11 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Yes.

12 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Stidham?

13 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

14 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

15 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman
17 Levenbach?

18 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

19 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

20 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

21 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

22 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Yes.

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Tunstall-
2 Williams?

3 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yes.

4 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

5 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cash?

7 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

8 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner
9 Henderson?

10 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: The motion carries.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you.

13 8763 EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, 472 15TH

14 STREET, NW, WASHINGTON, DC - WHITE HOUSE

15 VISITOR SCREENING FACILITY

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: With that, we move on
17 to Agenda Item 9D, which as I referenced earlier
18 is a request to approve comments on concept
19 plans for a new White House visitor screening
20 facility.

21 With us today, we have Lee Webb from
22 our team, who is going to be presenting that

1 matter. Are we going to the park? Did I mess
2 this up?

3 UNKNOWN MALE: No.

4 MR. WEBB: Mr. Chair, we're bringing up
5 the right one.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay. Got scared
7 there for a second.

8 (Off record comments.)

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I love the leopards,
10 but the screening facility is really exciting as
11 well.

12 MR. WEBB: All right, I think we've got
13 the right one up, so we will start. Good
14 afternoon, Chairman Scarf and Commissioners.
15 The Executive Office of the President in
16 conjunction with the Unites States Secret
17 Service and with the National Park Service has
18 submitted concept plans for the construction of
19 a new permanent security screening facility for
20 visitors to the White House Complex and downtown
21 Washington, D.C.

22 The project will be located within the

1 White House grounds, in President's Park, north
2 of the National Mall. As you can see on this
3 image, the new visitor screening facility
4 consists of two components; a below grade
5 facility with an entrance plaza on the south
6 side of Sherman Park at the corner of E and 15th
7 Streets and a ground level facility on East
8 Executive Avenue between the proposed White
9 House Ballroom and the Treasury Building.

10 The facility will be used for visitors
11 and arriving for tours and events. Staff notes
12 that the existing White House and President's
13 Park Master Plan from the year 2000, envisioned
14 the creation of an underground screening
15 facility located at the nearby Department of
16 Commerce on 15th Street.

17 As this is a concept review, the focus
18 of today's presentation and analysis is to
19 receive Commission comments and feedback prior
20 to the preparation of a more detailed
21 preliminary submission. In this case, the focus
22 of the review is understanding the

1 appropriateness of the project for the site and
2 context, understanding any particularly unique
3 or complex issues that need to be addressed and
4 identifying any stakeholders that may need to be
5 further involved.

6 As such, in today's presentation, staff
7 will identify comments for the Commission to
8 adopt as guidance for further project
9 development. The applicant has indicated that
10 the proposed location for the visitor screening
11 facility was strategically selected with
12 consideration to multiple factors including
13 security, functionality, visitor flow,
14 aesthetics and cost. Siting the facility was
15 performed in a manner to mitigate the permanent
16 to the surrounding areas as much as possible.
17 Alternate locations around the White House
18 Complex were considered extensively before
19 selecting the preferred location. Therefore,
20 staff recommends that the Commission find the
21 applicant considered an adequate number of other
22 locations for the new screening facility, but

1 these were dismissed due to impacts and
2 functional challenges.

3 President's Park is an 82-acre park
4 that services the setting for the White House
5 and other federal buildings as well as memorials
6 and monuments. It is a nationally significant
7 cultural landscape in the monumental core of
8 Washington, D.C. and is listed in the National
9 Register of Historic Places. As I mentioned
10 earlier, the below grade component of the
11 facility will be located under Sherman Park,
12 which contains a statue of General William T.
13 Sherman.

14 Here are a few images and views of
15 Sherman Park as it looks today. Currently, no
16 trespass signs and layers of bike racks are
17 being used to prevent pedestrian access to
18 Sherman Park because the previous temporary
19 fencing on the west side has been removed due to
20 the East Wing Modernization construction. The
21 Secret Service intends to reopen access to the
22 Sherman statue and the park via the existing

1 stairways off 15th Street, but needs to
2 determine a permanent security solution in
3 between the park and the White House.

4 As these images show, today the Secret
5 Service uses temporary trailers on East
6 Executive Avenue to screen visitors following an
7 initial identification screening on Hamilton
8 Place in temporary tents. Now, let's look at
9 the concept design for the new visitor screening
10 facility.

11 Here is a rendering that shows the new
12 screening facility with the entrance plaza at
13 the corner of E and 15th Streets on the south
14 side of Sherman Park leading to the below grade
15 facility and the ground level facility on East
16 Executive Avenue between the proposed White
17 House Ballroom and the Treasury Building. The
18 below grade portion of the facility is
19 approximately 33,000 square feet. The depth of
20 the building accounts for 12 feet clear floor to
21 underside of structure, 2 feet allocated for
22 concrete structure and the minimum of 3 feet

1 ground cover above. Most of the proposed
2 structure is intentionally positioned below
3 grade within the park's west quadrant to reduce
4 visual impact and to avoid a large existing
5 sewer tunnel that passes through the southeast
6 corner of the park.

7 The project will require removal of the
8 vegetation and ground within Sherman Park to
9 create the below ground facility. The applicant
10 has indicated that landscape restoration,
11 including new tree plantings, will be provided
12 within all impacted zones to reinstate and
13 enhance the park's character.

14 The ground level facility on East
15 Executive Avenue will be 4,000 square feet and
16 where visitors will exit once they are screened
17 in the below ground facility. Badged White
18 House workers and contractors will be able to
19 enter the White House grounds once they go
20 through the new ground level facility.

21 In terms of use, visitor queuing would
22 begin outside in the lower plaza at the

1 southeast corner of 15th and E Streets where
2 visitors form entry lanes for the initial ID
3 check at the vestibule. Visitors then proceed
4 through the lobby to a second ID check point
5 followed by the prescreened sequence. The
6 primary screening area is sized in an open floor
7 plan to accommodate the equipment and spatial
8 requirements necessary to achieve the throughput
9 capacities established by the Secret Service for
10 large events, including those anticipated in the
11 new ballroom.

12 Upon successfully clearing primary
13 screening, visitors proceed to escalators that
14 return them to grade level north of the secure
15 fence line along East Executive Avenue. For the
16 new ground level facility, the applicant is
17 proposing an initial architectural form and
18 materiality based upon existing security booth
19 vocabulary used throughout the campus. The
20 building composition incorporates a sloped,
21 standing-seam metal roof with extended overhangs
22 supported by columns along with stone cladding

1 and a granite base. However, materials for the
2 project will be refined as the new design is
3 developed.

4 For the next review, staff recommends
5 that the Commission requests the applicant
6 provide additional views from the Treasury
7 Building's south elevation towards the new
8 ground level facility. In addition, staff
9 recommends that the Commission encourage the
10 applicant to explore opportunities to refine the
11 design of the ground level facility to be more
12 compatible with its setting next to high style
13 classical buildings, such as the Treasury
14 Building.

15 Also, for the next review, staff
16 recommends that the Commission request
17 information on the location of the mature trees
18 to be removed to construct the below ground
19 facility, as well as landscape plan showing
20 proposed new tree and landscape plantings,
21 consistent with NCPC policies. In addition, we
22 request the applicant provide the proposed

1 materials for the entrance and plaza areas into
2 the below ground screening facility.

3 While the proposed White House visitor
4 screening facility provides a permanent solution
5 to ensure the safety of visitors and workers to
6 the White House Complex, by removing temporary
7 trailers and tents currently used, this is only
8 in a relatively small section of President's
9 Park along 15th Street, NW. As such, a similar
10 holistic and comprehensive approach to perimeter
11 security and public space is needed for all of
12 President's and Lafayette Parks, which currently
13 have layers of temporary fencing and racks.

14 We want to share with you images of the
15 conditions around these parts that you see
16 today, starting with these images at Lafayette
17 Park showing the temporary fencing that is
18 currently up. Next, are images of 15th Street
19 and Pennsylvania Avenue showing layers of racks
20 that are currently used as security barriers.
21 Moving south to 15th and E Streets just below
22 Sherman Park where you can see additional racks

1 and other temporary barriers, these images are
2 on Constitution Avenue looking north towards the
3 White House. Now, moving to the west, is 17th
4 and E Street showing the current conditions of
5 the temporary perimeter security and then
6 finally, moving to 17th Street and Pennsylvania
7 Avenue.

8 Staff recommends the Commission finds
9 the existing use of temporary security elements
10 around President's Park and the White House,
11 particularly along Pennsylvania Avenue and E
12 Street continue to detract from the visitor
13 experience and should be improved to help
14 beautify President's Park once the East Wing
15 Modernization project and the White House
16 visitors screening facility are completed.

17 A permanent plan for a well-designed
18 perimeter security system will require
19 coordination among a number of agencies to be
20 successful. The applicant has indicated it will
21 submit individual security projects, both
22 temporary and permanent throughout the White

1 House Complex and surrounding areas to the
2 Commission in the near future.

3 Understanding how all of these projects
4 work together to both beautify and protect the
5 area will be important. As such, staff
6 recommends the Commission request the applicant
7 work with the National Park Service, the General
8 Services Administration, the Secret Service and
9 others to brief the Commission on a
10 comprehensive security and beautification plan
11 for the White House Complex, President's Park
12 and the vicinity that will replace the temporary
13 security measures with an attractive, unified,
14 permanent design solution without further
15 limiting public access.

16 To conclude my presentation, staff
17 recommends that the Commission approve these
18 comments on the concept plan supporting the
19 project goals to provide a permanent White House
20 visitor screening facility for the United States
21 Secret Service that can support security
22 screening needs for visitor tours, large scale

1 events, White House staff and contractors.

2 As I have covered the Executive
3 Director's recommendations in my presentation, I
4 will not repeat them, but they are here for your
5 reference.

6 At this time, I would like to introduce
7 Andy Stohs with the applicant team, who would
8 like to say a few words to the Commission and
9 he's also joined with Jeff Harner, who is with
10 the design team and they are here to help answer
11 any questions the Commission may have.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thanks a lot, Lee.

13 MR. STOHS: Good afternoon,
14 Commissioners, Chairman, staff. I appreciate
15 the opportunity to present this project for
16 submission with our other partners, Park
17 Service, Treasury, Executive Office of the
18 President.

19 Screening facilities at the White House
20 Complex are not a new effort for us. The
21 service has worked with Commissions over the
22 decades on several temporary solutions, some

1 permanent solutions that have yet to be built or
2 funded. We've worked with our stakeholders to
3 develop a solution here that we think is very
4 thoughtful, appropriate and permanent and
5 effective.

6 The White House Complex is unique.
7 It's a 24/7, 365 high security facility. It
8 also operates a museum to the public. It also
9 operates as the Office for the Executive Office
10 of the President and the living quarters for the
11 President's family. Those present unique
12 challenges and we need to be able to screen
13 appropriately for all situations. We've
14 operated out of temporary structures since 2005
15 and so we bring this to you to work with you and
16 the other Commissions at the CFA to come up with
17 an appropriate solution that we'd like to build
18 on the complex.

19 We're here to answer any of your
20 questions and look forward to those. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thanks a lot for
22 that. Do any commissioners have any questions

1 either for Lee or for the Secret Service team?

2 Yes, sir?

3 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I'd like to know
4 how much outside closure will people have?
5 Sheltered, will they be sheltered for most of
6 this area or is it I'm thinking of queues out in
7 the weather and so forth?

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: That would be a good
9 question for the Secret Service.

10 MR. HARNER: Yes, so the queuing
11 currently happens on the sidewalk. We're
12 bringing them down into a plaza area.

13 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Good.

14 MR. HARNER: And then we have a lobby
15 for extended queuing once you get inside, so
16 it'll be a faster first ID check.

17 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Good.

18 MR. HARNER: And then the entire
19 process that you're going through, there's
20 queuing within the underground piece where it
21 can be completely covered, but the actual plaza
22 area is not covered for that portion that you're

1 ramping down.

2 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yeah, but it is
3 likely the large groups will be inside --

4 MR. HARNER: Correct, yes.

5 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Under shelter for
6 the most part?

7 MR. HARNER: Correct.

8 COMMISSIONER DIXON: That's fine, I
9 just wondered because it's pretty bad to be
10 outside like this queuing outside. Thank you.
11 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
13 Commissioner. Do any other commissioners have
14 questions?

15 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Yes, I have a
16 question. As you point out Secret Service, Park
17 Service, a number of federal partners having a
18 comprehensive plan. Is that under development
19 or is there -- how are you working together to
20 make sure that that can be done? And that may
21 be beyond the scope of this, but I'm just --

22 MR. HARNER: I will address it. Again,

1 this facility primarily underground
2 incorporating within our existing perimeters and
3 we're focusing this presentation on that, but we
4 have started a project that is again, we have
5 had a couple of projects that are temporary that
6 have come across (inaudible). We're taking a
7 holistic master plan approach on the fencing
8 barriers around the White House Complex. I know
9 when we came for the White House fence, we
10 discussed that.

11 Things have evolved through the threats
12 and our operational procedures, but we are
13 capturing all of that, again, Lafayette Park
14 first revision, Sherman Park the larger ellipse
15 is a little more challenging. We're looking at
16 that holistically so that we can talk about what
17 the appearance of those barriers are and their
18 function and when they're used and how they're
19 used so we will do that under another project.
20 Any fence in Sherman Park doesn't really
21 coordinate with this project as much.

22 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Stuart?

2 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Gentlemen, to
3 that point, when you are looking at barriers,
4 like bollards, if they're needed, I want to
5 encourage you to look at some of the security
6 architecture we looked at once we -- a long time
7 ago, we developed a kit of things you could use
8 in replacing bollards. Things that could be
9 useful for tourists to sit on or use, otherwise,
10 it's just all these bollards all over which are
11 not functional.

12 MR. STOHS: Understood. We're very
13 familiar with the product that's put out by NCPC
14 years ago on all the different avenues and
15 things, benches, telephone poles and everything
16 where you incorporate where it blends into the
17 surroundings, but still defines a hard vehicle
18 perimeter.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Stuart?

20 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Sorry, but as
21 someone who has queued a lot, for the White
22 House, I'm very excited about the project. So,

1 I wanted to share a couple of thoughts. One is
2 I'm glad Commissioner Dixon raised the point
3 about the throughput and how people queue. I
4 had a couple of questions in advance and I
5 appreciate a little bit of the back and forth.
6 That for me as a very important aspect is does
7 it solve all the problems we saw here with
8 screening people? So, thanks for asking that
9 and if we still have long lines that are exposed
10 to the street, it's not really solving, I think,
11 a key problem.

12 MR. STOHS: I think we're taking people
13 off the public street as much as possible.
14 Again, depending on the size of the event. We
15 like staggered arrivals because the facility can
16 only accommodate so many. Also, where they're
17 going can only accommodate. The House actually
18 has a limit on how many people you can actually
19 have in there for tours.

20 As the event planners develop, they
21 will be pre-function spaces, so we'll have
22 people showing up at 15-minute intervals that

1 maximizes seven lanes of screening equipment and
2 five lanes of ID checks, so it will be more than
3 you've ever seen. There are going to be events,
4 like the Easter Egg Roll and large 5,000-6,000
5 person events that we're not going to build this
6 facility to main -- that's well above what we
7 need to be pushing people down and then come
8 back up to go to the south grounds. Those have
9 been taken off, but all the major events that
10 are interior, we will be able, with a staggered
11 arrival, you'll have 1,000 people flowing
12 through this rather quickly, but it's still
13 going to take more than 10-15 minutes.

14 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yeah, yeah,
15 great. Okay, a couple of more things. I think
16 it would be helpful to see all the temporary
17 infrastructure that comes down as a result of
18 this. I think there was a little bit there in
19 the materials, but just having seen how much the
20 security footprint has expanded over the years.
21 Like, I remember, not that I'm old, but -- at
22 least I don't think I am, but I mean you can

1 walk right into the Eisenhower Executive Office
2 Building, right up the front steps and go in and
3 now there are so many parts that are
4 inaccessible now and it's an inaccessible due to
5 temporary barriers. I think it would be helpful
6 to see all the temporary barriers that come down
7 if that's possible.

8 MR. STOHS: Understood, again, the
9 goals are to limit people to get into the proper
10 of the White House, Treasury and so forth like
11 that. We will take that into consideration as
12 much as we can. I also remember where the park
13 was completely open over Lafayette. Those
14 pictures are showing there's a construction
15 project that's in Lafayette. There's the East
16 Wing Modernization project, so there's an awful
17 lot of temporary fencing that is in those photos
18 that's not normally there, but there is still
19 more there post 2021-2023 events.

20 So, we're going to balance that again
21 with our efforts in designing a holistic
22 approach. Maybe some things that are more

1 permanent, but that are open and only closed as
2 needed. We do close the parks on a regular
3 basis throughout the day for security events and
4 for just other reasons. So, having that
5 infrastructure in place to facilitate that
6 easier and doesn't look as junky is our goal
7 also.

8 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes, and the
9 last thing I had, is this the final, like the
10 materials, have they been decided or are these
11 still in flux?

12 MR. HARNER: At this concept level, we
13 started with what the campus standard is for
14 these type of pop up facilities. In the last
15 three weeks, this has evolved a lot in terms of
16 materiality and architecture and looking at the
17 Executive Order of the President. The design
18 has elevated quite a bit since this
19 presentation.

20 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Any other questions?

22 Yes, sir.

1 COMMISSIONER CASH: What's the total
2 square footage underground there --

3 (Simultaneous speaking.)

4 MR. HARNER: It's 33,000 underground
5 plus 4,000 for the top piece and then about
6 5,000 in the plaza.

7 COMMISSIONER CASH: Okay, thanks.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Any other questions?
9 Hearing none, is there a motion to approve
10 comments on concept plans for the White House
11 visitors screening facility?

12 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: So
13 moved.

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
15 Commissioner. Is there a second?

16 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Second.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I'll open it now to
18 the Commission for discussion and we'll start
19 with Commissioner Tunstall-Williams.

20 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Okay.
21 So, I know that this is a huge need. I've
22 queued through there as well. I've come from

1 the EEOB side, from this side. I appreciate
2 that you're trying to put it underground, that
3 is great. I think in the comments on the
4 earlier study, the Capitol Visitor screening was
5 raised and it can be done elegantly. I happened
6 to be in Quebec City over the holidays and the
7 entry to their Parliament, they've done a
8 similar thing that does not detract from the
9 building inside of it, like the Treasury.

10 I'm confident that you guys can do
11 that, but I would -- a couple of things I'd like
12 in the future presentations is a little bit more
13 about the context, particularly for the above
14 grade screening. What really struck me was the
15 long view down Pennsylvania Avenue. It almost
16 seems like the new building is going to block
17 the view of what would have gone through to the
18 White House. I know the ballroom is changing
19 that as well, but it would be nice to understand
20 that context.

21 I also, one thing that I encourage you
22 to look at is that entrance right there at the

1 Sherman Park. The pedestrians and the vehicles
2 coming out of the ellipse in the parking there,
3 there might be some conflicts there, so I would
4 encourage you, particularly for large events, to
5 think about where that it's sited and try to de-
6 conflict vehicles. I don't know if there is a
7 way to do some of the prescreening at the White
8 House Visitor Center that exists in the
9 Department of Commerce, then they come over.
10 Maybe it's multi-stakes, obviously it doesn't
11 work for people who have limited mobility, but
12 it might be another way to address for really
13 large groups how to do that.

14 Lastly, I really, I know that's not the
15 purpose of the presentation, but I really can't
16 express enough how much this area would benefit
17 from a Master Plan, a Security Master Plan. On
18 slide 23, there was an outline, I think that's
19 what it needs to be. Even coming from GSA over
20 here, every time I walk over I'm like okay,
21 which way do I go? Do I go up to H Street? Do
22 I go to Constitution? (audio interference.)

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I don't think your
2 mic is on.

3 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: -- I
4 guess my comments got (inaudible). Is there a
5 way to know where you can cross and so providing
6 a little bit more surety while trying to cross,
7 it really needs barriers so I think that's a big
8 thing for that parking lot that is essentially
9 developed so that it serves people's
10 (inaudible).

11 Just trying to be thoughtful about how
12 we can address that in the broader context, so
13 understand that's outside of the realm of this
14 particular scope, but I would encourage all the
15 players that have a stake here to get together
16 on a Master Plan that will facilitate the review
17 of each project.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
19 Commissioner. Commissioner Dixon?

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Nothing. Thank
21 you, Mr. Chairman.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,

1 Commissioner. Commissioner Cash?

2 COMMISSIONER CASH: Maybe part of me
3 feels like it's a little bit too soon, but I
4 will say I think that it's dwarfed by the other
5 stuff that's going on around there, so I don't
6 think I have as much concern there anymore, but
7 I do appreciate that we're kind of thinking --
8 hopefully thinking more holistically about the
9 security around the White House.

10 One of the things that came to mind is
11 are we looking at something similar on the 17th
12 Street side? Because 15th Street, I mean, I
13 walk along there all the time and I mean there's
14 so much pick up/drop off going on there, but I
15 imagine it's happening on the other side. I
16 think that things are actually a little bit more
17 congested on the 17th Street side. I don't know
18 where the -- with the business that goes in and
19 out of the White House or the visitors coming in
20 and out, but it seems to me that we might be
21 directing people over to the 15th Street side.
22 I think that just speaks to the need for kind of

1 the planning around it. Like is that where the
2 people really are coming from because there's no
3 parking or anything over there.

4 I just think that all that speaks a lot
5 to the need for looking at this holistically to
6 make sure we're not just plopping a visitors
7 screening facility in because we had a little
8 bit of space at 15th and Pennsylvania to do it.
9 So, if you want to mention anything about the
10 17th Street side and about future
11 accommodations, but that's the big thing that
12 popped for me.

13 MR. STOHS: Actually, NCPC approved a
14 GSA project in 2011, I believe, and it was
15 funded -- well, it lost funding in 2012. It was
16 a below the plaza, the EEOB. So, there is a
17 screening solution there, it just has not been
18 funded and it needs to be updated from the
19 design, because it's a bit stale, it's 15 years
20 old. But the service in that is for the support
21 of the EEOB and everybody for day-to-day work
22 and visitors on that side.

1 Part of our napkin Master Plan is
2 actually north and south, east and west
3 facilities. That would have three to four lanes
4 to be able to accommodate everything. We have a
5 temporary building on the southwest that's our
6 pop up right there. That was put in as part of
7 a project that was going on and has remained
8 until we get that north going there. There are
9 thoughtful solutions on how we screen people and
10 we look which populations are coming and going.

11 Once you enter the White House Complex,
12 you aren't allowed to go everywhere, so there
13 are pockets of populations between Treasury and
14 EEOB and the White House and so forth, so the
15 screening of those individuals is very key as to
16 where that occurs.

17 COMMISSIONER CASH: I think to
18 piggyback off of what you said, I mean I've been
19 there for some of the -- I know what you call it
20 when you go and look at all the plants and stuff
21 there and --

22 MR. STOHS: Garden tours.

1 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yeah, so I mean one
2 of the things that you notice is and those are
3 those big events like you're talking about, but
4 you still you get onto the grounds and it seems
5 like you're just ushered out wherever you can
6 go. Whatever happens to be open that day. I
7 think that anything to kind of just make it all
8 more coherent and make it all more predictable
9 is to the good for anyone visiting the White
10 House. Again, on this side, it just happens to
11 be there's a lot going on, on this side of the
12 White House, but I think that it is a good
13 solution and looking underground can work in
14 some of these situations, so if 17th Street can
15 eventually be reimagined or refunded, I think
16 that would be to the good of things. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
18 Commissioner. Commissioner Henderson?

19 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: No comments.

20 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
21 Commissioner. Commissioner Cozart?

22 COMMISSIONER COZART: No additional

1 comments. Thanks to the staff for their work on
2 this project.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
4 Commissioner. Commissioner Salesse?

5 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Staff already
6 mentioned the things I wanted to say. Thank you
7 all for what you do. You pointed out what the
8 pictures didn't showed, pictures are worth 1,000
9 words, doesn't look too great, right and
10 certainly the high security issues that you have
11 to deal with on a daily basis, I do think we
12 need a Master Plan. There has to be a sense of
13 urgency to this kind of activity, especially
14 around the White House. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
16 Commissioner. Commissioner Stidham?

17 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Just to echo
18 what Mr. Salesse already said and we're working
19 together on this project. I think a picture
20 speaks millions of rights in this case. When
21 you look at that facility, the temporary nature
22 of it and how rough it looks, for screening that

1 many people over that period of time is just not
2 meant for a temporary facility. We really need
3 a facility that is appropriate for an entrance
4 to this area. I think that we are in the
5 beginning stages of getting there, so thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
7 Commissioner. Commissioner Argo?

8 COMMISSIONER ARGO: No additional
9 comments. You did all the work on this and I
10 look forward to seeing the next iteration.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
13 Commissioner. Vice Chairman Levenbach?

14 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: No further
15 comments.

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Vice
17 Chairman Levenbach. Commissioner Blair, I think
18 is left. I'll just say a couple of things very
19 quickly. First of all and I think this is
20 echoed by our staff's recommendations here, I
21 wouldn't worry too much about architectural
22 congruence with existing security huts. I would

1 worry much more about how this looks in the
2 context of the Treasury Building and the new
3 ballroom and the other buildings that this is
4 going to be in the middle of.

5 Overall, this is a really complicated
6 problem. I mean I take my hat off to you all
7 for finding what I think is an elegant solution
8 to a big part of that problem, which is entrance
9 from the 15th Street side. I think
10 undergrounding it is great. I was worried that
11 if this actually went under the Sherman statue,
12 the whole thing could collapse which would be
13 very bad for any people queuing, but it appears
14 that you're skirting around it, which is
15 positive.

16 Overall, I think it's just a very well
17 designed solution to the problem and I look
18 forward to seeing it when it comes back around.
19 Thank you, as always, to the men and women of
20 the Secret Service for what they do and thank
21 you to you, Lee, for a detailed presentation on
22 a complicated and exciting new project.

1 With that, we have a motion and a
2 second on the floor. Madam Secretary, would you
3 like to confirm the motion and second and then
4 proceed to a vote by roll call?

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes. The motion was
6 made by Commissioner Stidham and seconded by
7 Commissioner Dixon. Commissioner Cozart?

8 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Salesse?

10 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Yes.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Stidham?

12 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

14 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

15 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

16 Levenbach?

17 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

18 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

20 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Tunstall-
21 Williams?

22 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yes.

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

2 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

3 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cash?

4 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

6 Henderson?

7 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

8 MS. HOTTEL-COX: The motion carries
9 and, Mr. Chairman, if we could pause momentarily
10 to refresh the recording feed and then we can
11 get to the last two items.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Like a water stop
13 towards the end of a marathon, so.

14 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
15 went off the record at 4:26 p.m. and resumed at
16 4:27 p.m.)

17 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Live streaming has
18 resumed.

19 8732 SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, 3001 CONNECTICUT
20 AVENUE, NW, WASHINGTON, DC - NATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL
21 PARK CONSTRUCT NEW ARABIAN LEOPARD HABITAT

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Next on the agenda is

1 to approve preliminary site and building plans
2 for the National Zoological Park Construct New
3 Arabian Leopard Habitat, which we are extremely
4 excited about. As we heard last time this came
5 before us, we have with us Jamie Herr. Jamie,
6 would you like to proceed?

7 MS. HERR: I would, thank you. Good
8 afternoon, Chairman Scharf and Members of the
9 Commission. The Smithsonian Institution has
10 submitted preliminary site and building plans to
11 construct an Arabian Leopard Habitat at the
12 National Zoological Park in Northwest
13 Washington, D.C. for Commission approval. The
14 Commission previously provided comments on the
15 concept plan at the January Commission meeting.

16 As a reminder for the preliminary
17 review stage, the Commission should be focused
18 on topics such as the project's consistency with
19 the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan,
20 the architectural and landscape strategy, the
21 appropriateness of the site for the given
22 context and how the project will affect views

1 and view sheds. Since the Commission just
2 reviewed the project in January, I will focus on
3 the key updates.

4 The project site is approximately 3/4
5 of an acre and is prominently located at a north
6 bend in the Olmsted Walk situated between the
7 Panda Habitat and the Elephant House Exhibit.
8 It is close to the Connecticut Avenue entrance
9 and across from the bus group entry, a restroom
10 facility and the Panda Plaza Concessions area.
11 All of which are heavily used by visitors.

12 Two existing exhibits previously
13 occupied the site. The former Bison Habitat
14 which closed in 2024 and the Zoo in Your
15 Backyard Exhibit, which featured plants native
16 to the Washington, D.C. area. A quick reminder
17 that the goals of the project include creating a
18 large habitat designed with the flexibility to
19 accommodate future species and with
20 opportunities for the cats to display their
21 natural climbing behaviors, a new animal care
22 facility with day room, dens and staff support

1 space, accessible public viewing areas including
2 a VIP viewing area designed within the context
3 of the existing site and will reuse the bison
4 structures if possible.

5 In addition, the habitat needs to be
6 designed with the influence of the arid, rocky
7 mountains of the Arabian Peninsula, while taking
8 into consideration, the historic environment of
9 the National Zoological Park, Historic District
10 and Olmsted Walk.

11 The applicant has updated the design
12 since the concept review and staff recommends
13 the Commission support the increased natural
14 space for the animals with unique viewing
15 experiences for visitors in the refined oasis
16 Saudi hybrid habitat design. The applicant
17 provided updated details about the habitat with
18 visitor experiences, screen enclosure details, a
19 new landscape plan, an updated animal care
20 building and signage, shade and fencing details.

21 The applicant has spent extensive time
22 coordinating with zoo horticultural experts to

1 create a landscape plan that meets both the
2 existing context of the zoo, the historic
3 Olmsted Walk Planting Guidance and other
4 planting themes, but that also creates a habitat
5 that will be welcoming and familiar to the
6 animals. The applicant has received comments
7 about the planting plan, specifically that there
8 are not enough pollinators, including common
9 milkweed. There are too many non-native species
10 and there is bamboo included, which is
11 considered invasive.

12 The applicant has responded that each
13 plant was selected with thought and purpose
14 given the needs of the animals and the context
15 within the zoo. Staff concurs with the
16 applicant's response and notes that the NCPC
17 Pollinator Best Practices Resource Guide
18 encourages applicants to include pollinators
19 where appropriate and recognizes that there are
20 other plant species that may be more appropriate
21 to meet a project's goals and objectives. As
22 such, staff recommends the Commission support

1 the updated landscape plan that blends plant
2 species native to the Arabian Peninsula with the
3 landscape palette of the Historic Olmsted Walk.

4 This is the updated view of the habitat
5 with the care building in the foreground and the
6 screened enclosure behind. Staff recommends the
7 Commission support the reduced slope of the
8 lifted roof line over the day room of the animal
9 care building, which maintains the pitched roof
10 typologies elsewhere in the park and softens the
11 upturned roof line. The additional natural
12 stone and a green-colored roof on the animal
13 care building that better coordinate with the
14 existing architecture and simplify the visual
15 expression of the materials.

16 This view shows the west entry into the
17 habitat and the proposed arched mesh. The
18 applicant studied a variety of options and is
19 proposing a charcoal gray enclosure structure
20 with black mesh. Staff recommends the
21 Commission support the applicant's preferred
22 charcoal gray arch enclosure supports and black

1 mesh which is less visually intrusive than other
2 enclosure color combinations considered. Staff
3 recommends the applicant continue to refine the
4 designs of the proposed shade structures, screen
5 enclosure, planting plan and tree replacement
6 plan as they work towards the final design.

7 The applicant has been responsive to
8 the Commission's previous comments and staff
9 recommends the Commission approves the
10 preliminary site and building plans the
11 Smithsonian Institution's Construct Arabian
12 Leopard Habitat at the National Zoological Park
13 in Northwest Washington, D.C.

14 The other recommendations have been
15 noted in the presentation, but they are included
16 here for your reference.

17 This concludes my presentation. The
18 applicant and the design team are here to answer
19 any questions the Commission may have. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Jamie. Do
22 any commissioners have any questions for Jamie

1 at this time? Yes, ma'am.

2 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: What
3 is the material of the day room, that roof? The
4 green or blue, it looks very discordant and it
5 may just be the rendering. It's very
6 descriptive.

7 MS. HERR: It probably is the
8 rendering. The application has it as like a
9 faux slate, it actually matches color-wise some
10 of the historic slate roofs across the Olmsted
11 Walk.

12 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Okay,
13 so it's a rendering issue?

14 MS. HERR: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Thank
16 you.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Interesting. Do we
18 have any other questions for Jamie at this time?
19 Hearing none, I believe we have Mr. Bernard
20 Berne, who would like to provide some testimony
21 on this project. Is he with us? Mr. Berne, can
22 you hear us?

1 MR. BERNE: Yes, can you hear me?

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We can hear you, sir.

3 MR. BERNE: Thank you. This project
4 does not adequately conform to the
5 recommendation in the NCPC's Pollinators Best
6 Practices Guide.

7 In response to my comments, Michael
8 Beglinger, the Director of Facility Operations
9 for the National Zoo, told Jamie Herr in writing
10 that, "Historic aesthetic traditions at the zoo
11 are responsible for this non-conformance." The
12 NCPC Guide states that it is acceptable to use
13 some non-native plants in design landscapes as
14 long as they are not considered invasive;
15 however, this project will add bamboo to the
16 zoo's population of non-native plants. In
17 accordance with one such, "The historical
18 aesthetic tradition."

19 Several bamboo species are on the
20 invasive plant list of the National Park
21 Service, Arlington County and the City of
22 Alexandria among many others. One, within the

1 same genus that this project will install, has
2 been reported outside of cultivation in nearly
3 400 U.S. cities and counties including 51 in
4 Fairfax County and 21 locations in Washington,
5 D.C. Some such locations of this and other
6 species are Rocky Creek National Park, right
7 next to the zoo.

8 As the plant spreads by seed, the zoo's
9 bamboo population has supported its local
10 invasiveness for a long time. That's tradition?
11 The Identity Guide states that Common Milkweed
12 is -- is clearly an important species that is
13 critical to the survival of the Monarch
14 butterflies. The Guide further states that
15 Common Milkweed should be planted on federal
16 landscapes to the fullest extent possible and as
17 appropriate for site conditions. However, Mr.
18 Beglinger stated that the zoo nutrition experts
19 do not permit several pollinator friendly plants
20 I named to be acceptable plantings in and around
21 the zoo exhibits.

22 These plantings were Common Milkweed,

1 Arrowwood Viburnum, Black Cherry and Buttonbush.
2 Mr. Beglinger claimed that these plants have
3 primary plant offenses or contain toxins that
4 could harm many zoo animals. Mr. Beglinger's
5 claim makes no sense and is absurd. The planned
6 project will not add any plants to the zoo
7 animals' enclosures, but will only install
8 plants near pathways outside of those
9 enclosures.

10 The zoo animals would not be able to
11 eat or touch the plants. Zookeepers remove
12 unwanted plants from the animals' enclosures.
13 Further, Arrowwood Viburnum has no known
14 toxicity or harmful primary plant offense.
15 Please therefore reject Mr. Beglinger's claims.
16 Please vote to ask the zoo to follow the NCPC
17 Guide's recommendations and above all, to start
18 planting Common Milkweed and to stop planting
19 bamboo. This is really helping to destroy Rock
20 Creek National Park, that's a federal facility.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr. Berne.

1 Are there any questions for our witness today?
2 Hearing none, thank you, sir. Thank you for
3 joining us as always and, as I've told you
4 before, I truly do admire your dedication to the
5 NCPC's Pollinators policy and to the issues that
6 clearly motivate you and in which you're clearly
7 expert. We always appreciate you joining us.
8 That concludes the public testimony on this
9 issue for today.

10 With that, is there a motion to approve
11 preliminary site and building plans for the
12 National Zoological Park Construct New Arabian
13 Leopard Habitat?

14 COMMISSIONER DIXON: So moved.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
16 Commissioner. Is there a second?

17 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Second.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
19 Commissioner. I'll now open it up to the
20 Commission for discussion and I will start the
21 deliberations with Commissioner Argo.

22 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I think this is a

1 great plan. I'd like to see those leopards in
2 an appropriate habitat. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
4 Commissioner. Vice Chairman Levenbach?

5 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: I have nothing
6 further on top of those remarks. A lot of
7 people are very excited about the exhibit.

8 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr. Vice
10 Chairman. Commissioner Tunstall-Williams?

11 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Well,
12 you may guess by my question, for the most part
13 I think it's a great project, but I would like
14 to see a little bit more about the materiality
15 of the day care building and the context that
16 it's relating to. I spend a fair amount of time
17 in the zoo because it's not -- not because I
18 live there, but because I live close and it's
19 striking me as kind of out of context. So, I'm
20 just curious to see how it fits, but great
21 project. I think it's exciting to have
22 something new come.

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
2 Commissioner. Commissioner Dixon?

3 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I associate myself
4 with Commissioner Argo's comment.

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
6 Commissioner. Commissioner Cash?

7 COMMISSIONER CASH: Well, just because
8 I had so much time on my hands, when I didn't
9 have to deal with all the White House stuff, I
10 did kind of read through this EDR pretty closely
11 just because it's interesting. I will note I
12 saw steel mesh 316, I'm like where else have I
13 seen that before and actually it's very similar
14 material to what the Eisenhower Tapestry is made
15 out of, which led me down a whole rabbit or a
16 leopard hole, whatever you want to call it about
17 patina and all that stuff.

18 Actually, one of the things that I do
19 kind of like -- it seems like it's not
20 completely settled, but the color of it right
21 now, is proposed to be a black mesh or like a
22 charcoal mesh or very dark because even though

1 it sounds counterintuitive, when it's very dark,
2 it actually makes it easier to through; if you
3 remember back from when we were talking about
4 the White House or a chicken coop or something
5 like that. But the other side of that is pollen
6 this time of year, bird droppings in a park, all
7 that stuff unless it's kind of religiously
8 cleaned, you're going to have a big black dome
9 that you can normally see through, only if it's
10 kept clean.

11 So, just in looking at the materiality
12 and if you're going to decide to oxidize and
13 turn it back or keep it a natural, I would hope
14 that stuff stays in mind because I want this to
15 be a good experience for people and not to --
16 because we don't have something like this I
17 think in the zoo, like this kind of enclosure.
18 So, just making sure that it stays how it is
19 supposed to and it's well maintained in the
20 future. That was my only comment that I
21 thought of bringing it right back around to our
22 other mesh structures we've looked at. So,

1 thanks.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
3 Commissioner. Commissioner Henderson?

4 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Nothing
5 further. Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
7 Commissioner. Commissioner Cozart?

8 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cozart
9 had to step away.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Oh, sorry.
11 Commissioner Salesse?

12 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: I support the
13 staff recommendation. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
15 Commissioner and Commissioner Stidham?

16 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: I associate
17 myself with comments already made. I sort of
18 wondered if it was a rendering issue too because
19 the paving looked really weird too, so
20 understanding a bit more about the materiality
21 and how it sort of fits would be great. Thank
22 you.

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
2 Commissioner. Speaking for myself, I remain
3 extraordinarily excited about the Leopard
4 Habitat. I am excited to see the leopards in
5 the habitat most of all. I think we've seen
6 real progress from when this first came before
7 the Commission, which is always gratifying and
8 good to see. I look forward to seeing how it
9 continues to evolve and develop. I think some
10 of the comments we've had from commissioners
11 today are quite insightful and I think that our
12 staff's overall comments and recommendations
13 have been great and I hope that they are
14 listened to. The National Zoo is actually one
15 of my favorite places in Washington, D.C. and as
16 previous commissioners have said, this may be
17 the most exciting new exhibit to get there in a
18 very long time.

19 I think the location is particularly
20 prominent if you think of the walking plan
21 through the zoo and I hope that we are able to
22 get to a place where we have a truly beautiful

1 exhibit that will highlight these truly
2 beautiful animals here in our nation's capital.
3 Thank you, as always, to Jamie, to our entire
4 staff and team for their customary outstanding
5 work.

6 With that, if there are no further
7 questions or comments, Madam Secretary, can you
8 please confirm the motion and second and take
9 the vote by roll call?

10 MS. HOTTEL-COX: The motion was made by
11 Commissioner Dixon and seconded by Commissioner
12 Argo. Commissioner Salesse?

13 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Yes.

14 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Committee Stidham?

15 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

17 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

18 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

19 Levenbach?

20 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

21 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Tunstall-
2 Williams?

3 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yes.

4 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

5 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cash?

7 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

8 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner
9 Henderson?

10 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: The motion carries.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you.

13 8753 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE,
14 DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY, MAGAZINE ROAD, SW,
15 WASHINGTON, DC NAVAL RESEARCH LABORATORY P-250
16 BIOMOLECULAR SCIENCE AND SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY
17 LABORATORY

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: With that motion
19 having carried, we now move on to Agenda Item 9F
20 which is a request to approve comments on
21 concept plans for the Naval Research Laboratory
22 P-250 Biomolecular Science and Synthetic Biology

1 Laboratory.

2 We have Laura Shipman, who will be
3 presenting again today. Thank you for being
4 with us again, Laura, and you may proceed when
5 ready.

6 MS. SHIPMAN: Great.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Fire when ready as
8 our friends in the Navy might say.

9 MS. SHIPMAN: The Department of the
10 Navy has submitted concept plans for a new
11 Biomolecular Science and Synthetic Biology
12 Laboratory on the Naval Research Laboratory in
13 Washington, D.C.

14 As a reminder, at the concept review
15 stage, the Commission is focused on topics such
16 as general consistency with NCPC policies,
17 appropriateness of the project for the site and
18 identification of any complex issues. The
19 proposed P-250 lab building will be constructed
20 on an existing parking lot located on the
21 western side of the NRL along the Potomac River.

22 The applicant evaluated five sites for

1 the project and selected Alternative B circled
2 in green because it provides the necessary space
3 for the project and has appropriate standoff
4 distances from the perimeter fence line.

5 The selected development site aligns
6 with guidance in the 2014 NRL Installation
7 Master Plan approved by the Commission, which
8 encourages infill development on surface
9 parking when feasible. The project site is also
10 included in the plan as a parcel with potential
11 for future development to meet mission
12 requirements.

13 The applicant notes that the project
14 will not adversely impact the NRL parking ratio.
15 Existing employees will be relocated resulting
16 in no change in the overall number of personnel
17 as well as net loss of parking spaces on the
18 installation.

19 Zooming in, the project site includes
20 two small storage buildings, 205 and 206, which
21 will be relocated south as part of the project.
22 The site is also adjacent to an open space to

1 the east that will be preserved with two small
2 historic structures, labeled A20 and A21. The
3 Master Plan recommends creating a complete
4 network of walkways that connect people to
5 facilities and outdoor spaces. As such, staff
6 recommends that the site design incorporate
7 improved pedestrian pathways and sidewalks to
8 enhance connectivity between the facility, the
9 adjacent open space area to the east and the
10 river front.

11 The NRL is one of many significant
12 shoreline properties along the Potomac River
13 noted in the Comprehensive Planned Federal
14 Environment Element where efforts to reduce the
15 amount of storm water runoff are critical to
16 protect the region's waterways and water
17 resources. This is the proposed site and
18 landscape plan which shows the building to the
19 east of the site with a reconfigured parking
20 area at its front on Smith Street which runs
21 along the river.

22 The applicant states that the project

1 will meet unified facilities criteria and
2 District storm water management requirements.
3 However, the proposed reconfigured parking lot
4 with impervious surfaces is not a preferred use
5 adjacent to a major regional waterway. To
6 mitigate this placement, staff recommends the
7 applicant consider permeable paving in the
8 parking lot that fronts on the Potomac River
9 along with additional trees and vegetative
10 screening in accordance with Comprehensive Plan
11 Policy FE-C5.

12 Additionally, the applicant is
13 currently analyzing the flooding risk to
14 calculate the proper elevation above grade for
15 the building. Staff recommends the Commission
16 request further information in the next
17 submission on the proposed flooding resilience
18 strategies that will be incorporated into the
19 site and building design.

20 Here are perspectives of the proposed
21 building which will be four floors and
22 approximately 89,00 square feet with a

1 laboratory, associated support and office areas
2 as well as an equipment penthouse. Each story
3 will be 18 feet with a total building height of
4 approximately 92 feet. Exterior materials will
5 be primarily white and light gray metal panels,
6 dark gray pre-cast concrete and curtain wall and
7 storefront window systems.

8 The varied designs of the facade shown
9 in the submission respond to solar orientation
10 and interior functions. However, there is a
11 lack of cohesion in the building design overall.
12 While the laboratory is immediately surrounded
13 by disparate uses and architectural styles, the
14 NRL is generally characterized by predominantly
15 low and mid rise buildings with functional
16 design and minimal ornamentation as shown in
17 this slide. As the project is developed, staff
18 recommends the applicant consider exploring a
19 more simplified and cohesive building design
20 compatible with and reflective of the
21 architecture throughout the campus, particularly
22 the nearby historic laboratory structures

1 surrounding the central mall.

2 Staff also recommends the Commission
3 requests renderings including surrounding
4 buildings to illustrate the massing and height
5 of the proposed development in context. The
6 submission indicates that 36 trees will be
7 removed for the proposed development and 133
8 will be replaced. In accordance with
9 comprehensive plan policies, including 34 on the
10 project site and the remaining 99 across the
11 campus. Staff recommends the Commission request
12 the general locations of off site tree
13 replacement to be provided with the next
14 submission.

15 The applicant has indicated that
16 plantings across the project site will include a
17 range of native species in accordance with the
18 NCPC's Pollinators Best Practices Resource Guide
19 where feasible. In particular, areas outside of
20 required security stand off set backs are being
21 added to the landscape scope as pollinator
22 gardens to improve habitat adjacent to the shore

1 of the Potomac.

2 With that, staff recommends the
3 Commission approve the comments on the P-250 Lab
4 concept plans highlighted throughout my
5 presentation and listed on the following slides.
6 That concludes my presentation.

7 Representatives from the Department of
8 the Navy and the design team are also available
9 to respond to any questions from the Commission.
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you. Do any
12 commissioners have any questions for Laura or, I
13 guess, for members of the Navy design team while
14 we're here? Yes, Commissioner?

15 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: The functions of
16 this building, do they exist -- is this a new
17 function coming to the campus or does it exist -
18 - or does it exist outside the campus? I'm not
19 saying this very well. Obviously, it doesn't
20 currently exist on the campus. Where does it
21 exist today or is this a new feature?

22 MS. WISE: Currently, this research is

1 being done on the campus, but in old buildings
2 that are not really able to maintain some of the
3 HVAC cooling, humidity and other utility
4 constraints that are required for the research.
5 We can't also bring in some new equipment due to
6 the existing facility's height limitations,
7 existing columns because the current facility
8 was retrofitted as a laboratory. This would
9 enable a purpose built laboratory for the
10 research that we're currently doing and the
11 research that is anticipated to be needed to be
12 field.

13 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Great, that is
14 great to know. Just a couple more questions.
15 This is behind the levee, right, but you saw
16 flooding issues? Do you anticipate more
17 flooding issues?

18 MS. WISE: We have not had flooding
19 issues in this area, but it is within the 500
20 year flood plain. Because of DoW requirements
21 we have to look at the DoD sea level risk and
22 the FEMA flood plain and determine which one is

1 more adverse and then plan for that. So, we're
2 in the middle of that analysis.

3 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Is the levee a
4 project that the campus was previously looking
5 at still underway or being considered?

6 MS. WISE: There is a levee project at
7 the north installation which is Joint Base
8 Anacostia Bolling, which is a separate
9 installation than ours. We currently don't have
10 a levee project. We have an existing flood wall
11 that was recently repaired to the same elevation
12 that it already existed at.

13 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Okay, that's
14 helpful. One last question, the design of this
15 building is so very different than the rest of
16 the structures that currently exist on the
17 campus. Can you sort of walk me through the
18 intent of such a modern structure amongst these
19 facilities?

20 MS. WISE: I am going to have to rely
21 on our design team and the AE who should be on
22 the line are who are able to answer those

1 questions.

2 MR. MILCHECK: Hi, my name is Daniel
3 Milcheck, I'm the architect with the design
4 team. The intent with the way the building
5 looks, the facades, they are wanting to bring in
6 an attract new folks, so they want to bring in -
7 - and they want the building to look more -- and
8 kind of transition to a new era into something
9 that's more contemporary. Not necessarily
10 leaving things in the past, still pulling from
11 materials and stuff that are nearby and on base,
12 but wanting to kind of take that next jump into
13 kind of a new era for the base and new
14 facilities.

15 I think this is going to be one of the
16 new construction in the last 15 or 20 years, so
17 they're wanting to revamp that and be able to
18 bring in new folks and be able to retain new
19 folks. The way we have it positioned and set up
20 is based on some solar orientation. We have the
21 large panes of glass on the north side there, so
22 you get that nice natural light and that's where

1 we have a lot of the office spaces.

2 The west side of the facility also has
3 a lot of glass and that gives nice panoramic
4 views of the river and then the south and kind
5 of the east sides of the facility are where the
6 majority of lab functions are that don't
7 necessarily warrant a lot of glazing. That's
8 how we set it up. Material wise, going for
9 metal panels, precast panels, so Building 28 to
10 the north of us is precast, A59 to the south of
11 us is a large metal building, so pulling that
12 metal panel materials from the adjacent
13 facilities.

14 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Okay, thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Mr. Vice Chairman?

16 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: The biologist in
17 me likes it. It looks like a nice place to do
18 research, but I do want to touch on those
19 comments about the design. I noticed in the
20 comments from the Commission of Fine Arts that
21 they also talked about the Executive Order
22 making federal architecture beautiful again.

1 The comments said that the design is
2 inappropriate for this important research
3 institution. I wanted to get your reactions to
4 that and see what kind of thinking you've done
5 since these comments. I know they were recently
6 submitted, but to what extent have they prompted
7 you to go back and take a look at the design?

8 MR. BROWN: Thank you, Chairman, I'll
9 take that question. Yes, we are actively having
10 conversations internally about the comments we
11 received from the CFA and the design of the
12 building. We're not prepared to discuss about
13 the way we're moving forward following those
14 comments today because we're still having those
15 conversations internally, but we are considering
16 them and we're trying to determine the best path
17 forward.

18 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: So, just for
19 process, do we see if there is a redesign or
20 even if there is not a redesign it comes back
21 one more time before? Okay.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yeah, this is

1 concept, so presumably we'd see prelim and then
2 final. So, we have runway. That was my concern
3 too. I was just going to say, similar question,
4 we've got an EO that requires classical
5 architecture where possible. I don't think
6 we've applied directly to the military yet, but
7 at least this Commission has not considered that
8 in the military context before, but I also that
9 CFA had dinged you all on that. If there's a
10 way that we can get this design more in
11 conformity with current federal building
12 standards and the preferred architecture
13 nomenclature, I think that would be helpful.

14 MR. BROWN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Are there any other
16 questions for the project team or our team?

17 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: I have
18 a question and, Laura, you may have mentioned it
19 and I missed it. Is the facility historic? Has
20 it been evaluated? I saw there was something
21 about NHTF, I just didn't know what the --

22

1 MS. SHIPMAN: Right, so while NCPC does
2 not have a Section 106 responsibility, the
3 project will go through a 106 process and I
4 think Richard can add more information on how
5 that process is progressing.

6 MR. BROWN: Yes, we are preparing to
7 submit to the DC SHPO currently.

8 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Okay,
9 has it been determined eligible or listed or
10 you're doing that process right now?

11 MR. BROWN: Sorry, just to confirm, has
12 what been?

13 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Has
14 the facility, the whole research laboratory, is
15 it a Historic District?

16 MR. BROWN: Yeah, so we have our
17 cultural resources program manager on the line,
18 I'm going to have to defer to her on that.
19 Julia, are you there and can you field that
20 question? She might not --

21 MALE PARTICIPANT: Richard, I don't see
22 Julia on the line.

1 MR. BROWN: Oh, okay. Jen, do you have
2 any insight into this?

3 MS. WISE: The laboratory as a whole is
4 eligible from the National Register of Historic
5 Places, I believe it's called the Bellevue Annex
6 Naval Research Laboratory District.

7 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Okay, thank you.

8 MS. WISE: So, they'll pull up as a
9 whole.

10 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Okay, great.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Awesome, are there
13 any other questions for the project team?

14 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Mr. Chair?

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, sir?

16 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Given that this is
17 about 10 blocks from my house, I want to know
18 what do you do over there. Can you answer that
19 here or this appropriate? I mean I Googled it,
20 this is serious stuff.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Actually, I'm
22 curious, what's the highest biosafety level you

1 guys are planning to contain here if that's not
2 classified and that's something you can say in
3 an open setting?

4 MS. WISE: It's not classified, but I'm
5 not sure, but I know we're not allowed, the
6 whole lab, we're not allowed to work with, I
7 think, anything above 2.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay.

9 MS. WISE: I'm not sure which direction
10 it goes, but not serious stuff.

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: So, no gain of
12 function research on corona -- I'm kidding.

13 MS. WISE: No, absolutely not. We do
14 have a description of the type of biomolecular
15 we do on our website, which is publicly
16 releasable.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Awesome.

18 MS. WISE: I could read that for you if
19 you'd like.

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Maybe you should
21 share it with me off record. I don't want to
22 hold the staff up over that.

1 MS. WISE: Sure. Let me get to the --

2 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I just Googled it
3 and read it. It's amazing. This is like making
4 things from bio cells and stuff.

5 MS. WISE: This group studies complex
6 biomolecular systems to understand how biology
7 solves difficult structural, functional and
8 sensing problems. Technological areas currently
9 being studied include molecular and micro
10 structure design, molecular biology, imaging of
11 cells using nano particles, sensor design and
12 prototype development for bio surveillance or
13 underwater chemical detection and energy
14 harvesting.

15 They conduct cross disciplinary
16 research in the areas of immunology,
17 biochemistry, systems biology, electrochemistry,
18 synthetic chemistry, microbiology, micro
19 lithography, photochemistry, biophysics,
20 spectroscopy, advanced diagnostics, organic
21 synthesis and electro-optical engineering.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you for that --

1 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Just curious.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thorough review.

3 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I want you to note
4 that this is all happening in Anacostia River
5 East.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I'm very happy you
7 all are on our side. Any other questions for
8 the project team or for our team?

9 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Mr. Chairman?

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes?

11 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: I think we
12 could just say if we could get an answer on the
13 BSL level if the team wants to get back to us on
14 that, I think that would be useful to know.
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Of course,
17 Commissioner. With that, is there a motion to
18 approve comments on concept plans for the Naval
19 Research Laboratory P-250 Biomolecular Science
20 and Synthetic Biology Laboratory?

21 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: With that motion on

1 the floor, is there a second?

2 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Second.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Second. I'll now
4 open it up to the Commission for discussion and
5 we will start with Commissioner Dixon.

6 COMMISSIONER DIXON: No further
7 comments.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay. Commissioner
9 Cash?

10 COMMISSIONER CASH: All that's going
11 through my mind was creating a non-nutritive
12 cereal varnish or something like that from
13 National Lampoon's Vacation.

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: That's the important
15 research that's going on in our time over there.

16 COMMISSIONER CASH: But actually, I
17 will say I mean I know that there's a difference
18 of opinion on like the classical architecture
19 versus not classical architecture. Regardless
20 of that, I will say that this is a building that
21 strikes me as the first federal building that
22 I've seen that looks more like a DCDGS Building

1 than I'm used to. A whole side of windows and a
2 whole side of randomly placed, staggered
3 windows, it's kind of jarring from even a
4 perspective we saw a few years back here, so I'm
5 interested in that evolution and would be
6 interested in seeing it when it comes back, just
7 because I think on an installation like this,
8 it's so jarring to the other side not to make an
9 opinion on the underlying Executive Order, but
10 it's a big change from what we've got going on
11 there and most other federal places. I'll be
12 interested to see how the design evolves.

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
14 Commissioner. Commissioner Henderson?

15 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Nothing
16 further. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
18 Commissioner. Commissioner Cozart left us.
19 Commissioner Salesse?

20 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Love the Navy.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Anchors away.
22 Commissioner Stidham?

1 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: I think it's a
2 great project. Coming from a science background
3 myself, I know being fitted into a building that
4 doesn't fit those needs is very impossible, so
5 the need is clear. I think the architecture
6 needs to catch up. You're on a -- I must be
7 getting tired, you are on a historic campus and
8 you really need to be able to blend this
9 building with those character defining features
10 of the others. Finding a balance between the
11 historic and the new in a way that accentuates
12 the historic, but shows that this is a new
13 structure, an inviting structure that meets the
14 needs of the facility are going to be extremely
15 important. We'll look for that when you come
16 back.

17 I think that a lot of times, the
18 landscaping plan is an afterthought and I think
19 in this case it is an afterthought. I think you
20 need to think a little bit more about the
21 landscaping of this structure. That campus
22 needs a lot of love on the ground. Spaces with

1 shade. Spaces that consider the setting of the
2 building and the appropriateness of the space.
3 It is a parking lot though, but there are a lot
4 of ways that you can really be considerate of
5 the landscaping for the setting of the building
6 beyond the domain. I'll look for those two
7 pieces when you come back.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
9 Commissioner. Commissioner Argo?

10 COMMISSIONER ARGO: No additional
11 comments. I'll associate myself with
12 Commissioner Stidham's comments as well,
13 especially with regard to opportunities to green
14 it up. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
16 Commissioner. Vice Chairman Levenbach?

17 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: I'd say ditto
18 and look forward to the next round of review.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Vice
20 Chairman Levenbach. Commissioner Tunstall-
21 Williams?

22 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yes, I

1 align myself with Commissioner Stidham's
2 comments. I really was struck particularly the
3 image where we saw the whole campus. There's
4 quite a context there and it's very consistent
5 and this -- all of it's horizontal and this
6 building is very vertical. I encourage you to
7 look at that, that may come out as you move into
8 your Section 106 process, but right now, it
9 feels a little bit incongruous, some of that is
10 probably driven by the height requirements of
11 the labs. The architectural expression, I
12 think, should be more consistent with the
13 Historic District, which will be a little bit at
14 odds with the Executive Order, which is
15 something that we've struggled with at GSA
16 because if you're trying to build within the
17 context of what is what looks like 1940s campus
18 that sort of neo-classical design doesn't really
19 fit there. We're kind of trying to thread that
20 needle, but I think there's a lot of room.

21 The other thought that I had is this is
22 very prominent site on the river front and so

1 thinking about that to putting a parking lot
2 there seemed an interesting move, although with
3 the flood plain, it made sense. Going to
4 Commissioner Stidham's comments about how we
5 green it up and think about the landscape, I
6 think that that is worthwhile.

7 Lastly, selfishly, I don't know this
8 facility at all other than from the other side
9 of the river. It might be really helpful for a
10 commission to take a tour of the campus.

11 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Just
13 to better understand as the design evolves.
14 That's it.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
16 Commissioner. Speaking for myself, first of
17 all, as always, thank you to our team for their
18 detailed review of the plans that have been
19 submitted. Thank you to the project team for
20 the hard work they've obviously done here. I'm
21 glad we're still at the concept stage here. I
22 think if this were in for prelim, I'd probably

1 vote no.

2 I think the architecture is congruent
3 with nothing. It's not congruent with the base
4 around it. It's not congruent with the design
5 language. We're trying to get the federal
6 government to be working with. I understand the
7 need to have bright shiny buildings to attract
8 bright shiny young people, but this thing is
9 just -- it just looks totally out of place given
10 what we're dealing with here.

11 If there's a programmatic need for
12 that, then I think that's a very different
13 conversation and there are obviously things that
14 are going to be going on here that we don't need
15 to know about, but if there's a programmatic
16 need for this particular architecture, I'd be
17 very interested to know that. That would
18 obviously color and shape our discussions, but
19 the same way the Commission on Fine Arts found
20 this building objectionable, I don't think we're
21 there yet and I hope that by the time it comes
22 back in for prelim, we get it to a better place.

1 All that having been said, at this
2 early stage in our review, I think our staff's
3 comments are well done, well constructed. I
4 certainly support them so I will be voting to
5 move this project along, but I hope that by the
6 next time this thing comes back that we're in a
7 better place with it.

8 With that, are there any further
9 comments or questions? Hearing none, can the
10 Secretary please confirm the motion and second
11 and then take the vote by roll call?

12 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes, the motion was
13 made by Commissioner Dixon and seconded by
14 Commissioner Salesse. Commissioner Salesse?

15 COMMISSIONER SALESSE: Yes.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Stidham?

17 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

18 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

19 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

20 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman
21 Levenbach?

22 VICE CHAIR LEVENBACH: Yes.

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

3 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Tunstall-
4 Williams?

5 COMMISSIONER TUNSTALL-WILLIAMS: Yes.

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

7 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

8 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cash?

9 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

10 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner
11 Henderson?

12 COMMISSIONER HENDERSON: Yes.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: The motion carries.

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay, this concludes
15 our open session agenda for the day. Our next
16 regular Commission meeting will be on Thursday,
17 May 9th at 1:00. To those of you on the
18 Commission that have made it all the way through
19 today, I very much appreciate you being here.
20 Those of our colleagues that departed early, I
21 know who you are and we will see you soon, but
22 really, thank you all for your close attention

1 to the many important projects we had before us
2 today.

3 With that, we'll see you next month.

4 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Chair?

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, sir?

6 COMMISSIONER DIXON: May 7th?

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I believe that's
8 correct. May 7th. Oh, did I miss that? I
9 apologize.

10 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Maybe not.

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: May 7th, Thursday,
12 May 7th at 1:00 p.m. Be there or be square.
13 Have a great evening. To those of you who are
14 currently celebrating Passover, have a very
15 happy Passover. To those of you celebrating
16 Holy Week, have a blessed Good Friday and a very
17 happy Easter. We will see you all in a month.
18 Thank you.

19 This meeting is adjourned.

20 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
21 went off the record at 5:06 p.m.)
22

1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2 This is to certify that the foregoing transcript
3 was duly recorded and accurately transcribed
4 under my direction; further, that said
5 transcript is a true and accurate record of the
6 proceedings; and that I am neither counsel for,
7 related to, nor employed by any of the parties
8 to this action in which this matter was taken;
9 and further that I am not a relative nor an
10 employee of any of the parties nor counsel
11 employed by the parties, and I am not
12 financially or otherwise interested in the
13 outcome of the action.

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20 James Cordes

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