

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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COMMISSION MEETING

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OPEN SESSION

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THURSDAY,
JUNE 4, 2026

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The meeting convened via Videoconference, at
1:00 p.m. EDT, William Scharf, Chair, presiding.

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS
PRESENT:

WILLIAM SCHARF, Chair, Presidential Appointee
(At-Large)

STUART LEVENBACH, Vice Chair, Presidential
Appointee

LINDA ARGO, Mayoral Appointee

MICHAEL BLAIR, Presidential Appointee

JESSICA BOWRON, U.S. Department of the Interior

STEPHEN BRUCH, Department of War

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

ARRINGTON DIXON, Mayoral Appointee

PAUL INGRASSIA, General Services Administration

1 NCPC STAFF PRESENT:

2 MARCEL C. ACOSTA, Executive Director

JAMIE HERR, Urban Planner

3 MEGHAN HOTTEL-COX, General Counsel & Secretariat

LAURA SHIPMAN, Urban Planner

4 MICHAEL WEIL, Urban Planner

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

2 (12:29 p.m.)

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Good afternoon and
4 welcome to the National Capital Planning
5 Commission's June 4th, 2026 open session.
6 First, Madam Secretary, could you please take
7 the roll call?

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

10 COMMISSIONER COZART: Here.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Bruch?

12 COMMISSIONER BRUCH: Here.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Bowron?

14 COMMISSIONER BOWRON: Here.

15 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

16 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I'm here.

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

19 VICE CHAIRMAN LEVENBACH: Here.

20 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Here.

22 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

1 Ingrassia?

2 COMMISSIONER INGRASSIA: Here.

3 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

4 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Here.

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cash?

6 COMMISSIONER CASH: Present.

7 MS. HOTTEL-COX: With those present,
8 Mr. Chairman, we have a quorum.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Madam
10 Secretary. Noting the presence of a quorum, I'd
11 like to call this meeting to order.

12 Today's meeting is live streamed and
13 will be -- the video of it will be available on
14 our website within a few days, as is our custom.
15 If there's no objection, the agenda as posted is
16 adopted as the order of business.

17 And now let's all stand for the Pledge
18 of Allegiance.

19 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

20 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you all.

22 Agenda item number two is the Report of the

1 Chairman, which is me. I'd like to say a few
2 things before we get started.

3 First of all, this is the last meeting
4 that we will have before we celebrate the 250th
5 birthday of the United States of America.

6 As you all know, the United States of
7 America is the oldest currently operating
8 republic in the world. If anybody cites San
9 Marino in contrast to that, I will fight you on
10 the history of that point but I think it's
11 really a remarkable milestone that this republic
12 conceived in liberty has lasted as long as it
13 has and is going as strong as it is.

14 As I've said at a number of previous
15 meetings, Washington, D.C., as a city was
16 conceived and in fact functions as the way that
17 America holds itself out to the world.

18 And I think in light of that, the work
19 that this Commission does is incredibly
20 important, both to the city of Washington, D.C.,
21 and the region as it currently stands, and also
22 to the expression of this nation's history that

1 this city often encompasses.

2 It's been a tremendous honor to lead
3 this Commission over the last year. I was
4 appointed to this Commission and designated as
5 chairman almost exactly a year ago now. I guess
6 -- I may be about a month short. I think next
7 meeting will be over a year, but this is my last
8 meeting before we hit that year-long milestone.

9 And it's just truly been an honor to
10 get to work on the projects that we work on,
11 whether it's the big stuff, Southwest D.C.,
12 Pennsylvania Avenue, or the smaller features
13 that often pass unnoticed, 5G installations on
14 the roofs of buildings, renovations to various
15 park sites.

16 It's all important because this city is
17 important to our nation. And I think the 250th
18 anniversary of the Declaration of Independence
19 is a good milestone and a good opportunity to
20 reflect on what this city is and what this
21 Commission does.

22 I think it's particularly fitting in

1 light of that, that two of the projects we have
2 before us today are the Monumental Arch, which
3 is intended to commemorate 250 years of American
4 history, and also renovations to the Civil War
5 defenses around this city.

6 I think it's important to remember that
7 America has confronted great challenges over its
8 250 years; I think the Civil War probably
9 foremost in that set of challenges. And I think
10 there's a nice symmetry in a way, almost, for us
11 to be looking -- symmetry is probably the wrong
12 word, but some nice symbolism in that we're
13 looking at these two projects as we approach our
14 nation's 250th.

15 I'll also note, with respect to the
16 Arch project, there was a site visit today that
17 our staff arranged. I was very sorry to miss
18 that site visit down to Memorial Circle and
19 Arlington House. My other job pulled me out of
20 that this morning.

21 I did see pictures on Commissioner
22 Ingrassia's Instagram account, though. It

1 looked like y'all got some great views of the
2 relevant viewsheds, and I just wanted to express
3 my appreciation to NCPC staff for setting that
4 up for the benefit of the Commission.

5 I've been down to that site on my own a
6 number of times in the last few months, and
7 really understanding the viewsheds and
8 understanding the physical space, as with so
9 much that we do on this Commission, is vitally
10 important. So thank you for setting that up.

11 Today, we will be considering, or we
12 will be voting, on comments on the concept plans
13 for the Arch. I'll note for those present that
14 this is not our final review of the project.
15 That will come at a later meeting.

16 Looking forward, I'm excited to hear
17 the presentation today. We have a relatively
18 large number of individuals who've signed up to
19 testify publicly on this project. I'm excited
20 to hear that testimony as well.

21 One of those individuals even sent us
22 pretty detailed architectural plans of their own

1 vision of how the Arch could be constructed
2 differently, which I appreciated. We're going
3 to have, as we have with all projects that come
4 before us, a thorough process on this project,
5 and I'm excited to get to go through that
6 process with our Commission as we approach,
7 ultimately, a final decision on that issue, or
8 on that project.

9 I will say we've received media
10 outreach in the last few days, in particular on
11 an issue I'd like to speak about at a bit more
12 length, and that's the applicability of the
13 Height of Buildings Act to this project.

14 In the Executive Director's Report, or
15 in the comments that we'll be voting on to
16 approve today, we asked the applicant to address
17 the Height of Buildings Act in the context of
18 this project, and I'm excited to see the
19 applicant -- assuming we approve the proposed
20 comments, I'm excited to see the applicant do
21 so.

22 I will note that 40 U.S.C. 8222(D),

1 which is in our organic authorizing statute,
2 requires us to consider the height of projects
3 when we vote on them, the height of projects in
4 addition to a number of other features, and that
5 is an obligation of ours. I'd also note that
6 National Capital Planning Commission's
7 traditional position has been that the Height of
8 Buildings Act is enforceable against federal
9 projects.

10 Meghan, our General Counsel, flagged
11 this issue for me when we first received this
12 project submission, and I've thought deeply
13 about the issue of the Height of Buildings Act
14 and its applicability.

15 On reflection, I find that NCPC's
16 position is a little odd to me from a legal
17 perspective. The Height of Buildings Act is
18 codified as part of D.C.'s local zoning code.
19 Traditionally, federal projects are not subject
20 to local zoning requirements in that way, for
21 reasons of the Supremacy Clause and other
22 aspects of our system of ordered federalism

1 separation of powers, to be sort of blunt.

2 Applying the Height of Buildings Act as
3 mandatory would also raise serious issues of
4 sovereign immunity. The Height of Buildings Act
5 includes both civil and criminal penalties
6 enforceable in D.C. local courts against anyone
7 who builds a building in violation of the Height
8 of Buildings Act.

9 Typically, you would expect to see in a
10 statute waiving sovereign immunity, an explicit
11 waiver, which we don't have here.

12 Additionally, giving local D.C. courts
13 jurisdiction over the federal government in that
14 way, original jurisdiction over suits against
15 the federal government, would be a departure
16 from usual constitutional practice. Having
17 realized this, I went down a very weird rabbit
18 hole of studying every prior waiver granted by
19 Congress against the Height of Buildings Act and
20 the history of that act.

21 And I discovered an interesting
22 historical quirk, which is that in 1930, two

1 projects, both of which exceed the limits
2 prescribed by the Height of Buildings Act, were
3 constructed, or construction began on two
4 projects.

5 One was in addition to the Masonic
6 Temple here in Washington, D.C., for which a
7 congressional waiver was sought and which
8 Congress approved. The other was the
9 construction of the National Archives Building,
10 which at 166 feet tall, exceeds the Height of
11 Buildings Act, and no congressional waiver was
12 ever sought for that, and Congress didn't speak
13 to that.

14 I think that certainly raises the
15 question about whether NCPC's longstanding
16 position as to the mandatory nature of the
17 applicability of the Height of Buildings Act to
18 federal construction is in fact a correct
19 reading of the law, and I hope that the
20 applicant team will provide clarity to us as we
21 go forward in the form of some sort of legal
22 opinion or legal rationale or justification so

1 that when and if this project comes before us
2 for final approval, this Commission can vote
3 fully informed as to the legal issues that the
4 Height of Buildings Act and the Height of this
5 project implicate.

6 All that having been said, my view is
7 that while this Commission should certainly
8 consider the Height of Buildings Act in the
9 context of our statutorily required
10 consideration of the height of buildings that
11 come before us, I believe, speaking personally,
12 that the best reading of the law is that the
13 Height of Buildings Act is not applicable to
14 federal construction.

15 This is all a bit premature. I think
16 that there's nothing about the presentation
17 today or the action requested of this Commission
18 today that requires us to fully consider this
19 weighty issue at this time, but I did want to
20 preview that for the Commission and for the
21 project team who I know are present so that by
22 the time this project comes before us for prelim

1 or final or prelim and final, that we have more
2 guidance on this issue so that we can consider
3 it fully as a commission.

4 All that having been said, it's great
5 to be back with you again this month. I'm
6 looking forward to our open session agenda. And
7 with that agenda item, excuse me, number three
8 is the report of our Executive Director Marcel
9 Acosta.

10 REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COSTA: Thank you,
12 Chair Scharf. Good afternoon. I'm pleased to
13 introduce three student interns who have joined
14 this agency this summer.

15 First, we have Jay Bisser, who's a
16 senior undergraduate pursuing a bachelor's in
17 Environmental Policy and Planning at Virginia
18 Tech. Second, we have Sylvia Cabas, who's a
19 second-year master's candidate in Urban and
20 Regional Planning at Georgetown University.
21 Sylvia holds a master's in International
22 Relations from Johns Hopkins University and a

1 bachelor's in History from the University of
2 California at Berkeley.

3 Finally, we have Simon Handelman, who
4 is a second-year graduate student at Virginia
5 Tech pursuing a master's in Architecture with a
6 concentration in Urban Design. Simon earned a
7 bachelor's degree in Political Science from
8 George Washington University. Welcome,
9 everyone, and we're pleased that you've joined
10 us.

11 That concludes my report, and my full
12 report is in your packet, and I'm happy to
13 answer any questions that you might have.

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: That may be the most
15 well credentialed group of interns I've ever
16 heard of. Welcome. This Commission is an
17 incredible organization with an incredible
18 staff.

19 I hope you all have a great experience
20 here this summer. How long are you guys with us
21 for? The whole summer? Oh, great. So you'll
22 get at least one more meeting under your belt

1 before you leave us. Well, thank you for
2 joining us.

3 Thank you for the work that you'll
4 hopefully do in the forthcoming months, and
5 obviously, if there's anything any of us can do
6 for you all, please reach out and please let me
7 know.

8 With that, do any commissioners have
9 any questions or comments, either for Marcel or
10 for our three interns? When I was in law
11 school, it was called a cold call. I mean, this
12 is -- hearing and seeing none. Agenda item
13 number four will be the legislative update.
14 Meghan, do you want to proceed?

15 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: I don't have any
17 specific items to provide an update on this
18 month, but I'm happy to answer any questions
19 about pending legislation.

20 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Do any commissioners
21 have any questions about pending legislation?

22 CONSENT CALENDAR

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Hearing and seeing
2 none, we'll proceed to agenda item number five,
3 which is this month's consent calendar, for
4 which we have two items. The first is an
5 application from the D.C. Office of the Surveyor
6 for approval of comments to the D.C. Council for
7 the closing of a public alley in Square 571, and
8 the second item is an application from the
9 Department of the Navy for approval of a final
10 master plan for the Naval Support Facility
11 Suitland final area development plan and
12 transportation management plan updates.

13 Are there any questions or comments
14 from commissioners or matters of discussion from
15 commissioners on these items on our consent
16 calendar? Hearing and seeing none, is there a
17 motion to approve the consent calendar as
18 stated?

19 COMMISSIONER COZART: I motion to
20 approve the consent calendar as stated.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
22 Commissioner. Is there a second?

1 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yeah, I second it.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
3 Commissioner. Madam -- is there any discussion
4 on this item before we proceed to a vote, or on
5 this motion before we proceed to a vote?
6 Hearing and seeing none, Madam Secretary, could
7 you please confirm the motion and the second and
8 take the vote by roll call?

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes. The motion was
10 made by Commissioner Brooke and seconded by
11 Commissioner Argo. Commissioner Cozart?

12 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Bruch?

14 COMMISSIONER BRUCH: Yes.

15 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Bowron?

16 COMMISSIONER BOWRON: Yes.

17 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

18 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

19 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

20 Levenbach?

21 VICE CHAIRMAN LEVENBACH: Yes.

22 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

2 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

3 Ingrassia?

4 COMMISSIONER INGRASSIA: Yes.

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

6 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

7 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cash?

8 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: The motion carries.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Madam

11 Secretary.

12 ACTION ITEMS

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: With that, we'll move
14 on to our open session items for today. We have
15 three items scheduled.

16 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE

17 INTERIOR, MEMORIAL AVENUE, WASHINGTON, DC

18 - NEW MONUMENTAL ARCH

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Agenda Item 6A is a
20 request to approve comments on concept plans for
21 the new Monumental Arch, and we have Jamie Herr
22 from our team to present on that, and I believe

1 we have members of the project team present as
2 well. Is that correct? I think so. Great.
3 Jamie, whenever you're ready.

4 MS. HERR: All right. Good afternoon,
5 Chairman Scharf and members of the Commission.

6 The U.S. Department of the Interior has
7 submitted concept plans for a new Monumental
8 Arch and Memorial Circle in Washington, D.C. for
9 Commission comment.

10 At this concept review stage, the
11 Commission provides comments on the project and
12 requests additional information that will inform
13 the Commission's action at its future
14 preliminary and final review stages.

15 The project is proposed for Memorial
16 Circle, an existing traffic circle on Columbia
17 Island in Washington, D.C. The project site,
18 circled in green, connects the Arlington
19 Memorial Bridge to Memorial Avenue and the
20 George Washington Memorial Parkway.

21 The site on Columbia Island is in
22 between the Boundary Channel and the Potomac

1 River. To the southwest is the Arlington
2 National Cemetery and to the northeast is
3 Lincoln Memorial.

4 Now I'll give a brief overview of the
5 site history. The need for a bridge connecting
6 the northern and southern shores of the Potomac
7 River in the area of the Arlington Memorial
8 Bridge was documented as early as the mid-1800s.
9 The concept for the bridge and avenue first
10 emerged after the Civil War and gained momentum
11 when it was included within the McMillan Plan,
12 which proposed improvements to the Washington,
13 D.C., park system.

14 According to the Cultural Landscape
15 Report published by the National Park Service,
16 the Memorial Avenue corridor was designed as a
17 symbolic and physical link between the Lincoln
18 Memorial, a tribute to the 16th American
19 President, the entrance to Arlington National
20 Cemetery, and Arlington House, the former
21 plantation home of Confederate General Robert E.
22 Lee.

1 The design of the corridor took shape
2 amongst the City Beautiful movement, which
3 promoted formal and classical treatments for
4 architectural, engineering, sculptural, and
5 landscape features, all of which were
6 incorporated into the evolving designs for the
7 Arlington Memorial Bridge and the Memorial
8 Avenue corridor.

9 The corridor was built in phases. The
10 Arlington Memorial Bridge was constructed
11 between 1926 and 1932. The Boundary Channel
12 Bridge was built between 1929 and 1930.
13 Memorial Avenue was built beginning in 1930.
14 And finally, Memorial Circle was constructed on
15 Columbia Island in 1940.

16 Memorial Circle was designed as part of
17 the western terminus of the Arlington Memorial
18 Bridge as a means to connect to the George
19 Washington Memorial Parkway, Arlington
20 Boulevard, and Memorial Avenue.

21 The connections to and around Memorial
22 Circle have changed significantly over the

1 years, as shown here in this progression from
2 1940 to 1966 and to 1988, which leads us to the
3 current conditions with several connecting
4 roadways at and below grade around the circle
5 connecting to a variety of roadways.

6 Now I will review the existing site
7 conditions in more detail. Safety improvements
8 were completed at Memorial Circle in 2006 and
9 2007 that reduced the number of lanes around the
10 circle. Along the north and south sides of the
11 circle, the outermost travel lanes were replaced
12 with concrete shoulder lanes. These were later
13 replaced with pavers that remain today.

14 You can see in this 2016 image that the
15 park police were adding digital signage and
16 traffic cones to manage the traffic. Additional
17 work in 2020 reduced the travel lanes in the
18 circle to one, changed the paving materials,
19 modified connecting roadways, and changed the
20 pedestrian access and roadway efficiency by
21 splitting this traffic island shown here in this
22 image from 2025.

1 The most recent design changes I just
2 noted from 2020 were intended to improve
3 transportation safety at and near Memorial
4 Circle while maintaining the memorial character
5 of the area.

6 The goals were to reduce risks at key
7 locations within the corridor and to reduce
8 conflicts between trail, walkway, and roadway
9 users. These changes including splitting the
10 eastern traffic island to create continuous
11 vehicular movement as shown here.

12 The changes restricted pedestrian
13 access around the circle and currently there is
14 no pedestrian access across Memorial Avenue on
15 the east side of the circle or to the center of
16 the circle itself.

17 Now with that as background, I will
18 review the proposed design. The applicant is
19 proposing a 250-foot tall arch as shown here in
20 this rendering. According to the applicant, the
21 purpose of the arch is to celebrate the triumphs
22 of the American spirit, inspire patriotism and

1 love of country, and beautify our nation's
2 capital.

3 The proposed arch consists of an arch
4 structure with two legs at the height of 166
5 feet to the top of the mezzanine. The
6 observation deck and statuary plinth is 24 feet
7 above that and the larger central statue is 60
8 feet tall.

9 The exterior of the proposed arch will
10 be primarily clad in stone. The vertical faces
11 of the arch include several recessed or framed
12 spaces that would typically house statuary or
13 relief sculpture, though no specific details on
14 these spaces has been provided.

15 The top area of the arch includes gold
16 lettering quoting the American Pledge of
17 Allegiance on both east and west facing sides.
18 Above the primary arch structure and mezzanine
19 is a recessed area housing the observation deck
20 interior space and above that the proposed
21 statuary.

22 Proposed statues include the 60-foot

1 tall central gold statue flanked by smaller gold
2 eagles on each side. All the statuary is facing
3 east toward the Lincoln Memorial. There are
4 also additional gold decorative elements on the
5 underside of the arch and on each vertical face.

6 The proposed interior of the arch
7 includes ticketing and security, back of house
8 space, stairwells, and elevators in the south
9 leg with an exit hall, back of house space,
10 stairwells, and elevators in the north leg at
11 the ground level.

12 The plans include a stair hall,
13 restrooms, program spaces, and stair and
14 elevator lobbies in the mezzanine. Two of these
15 staircases and one of the elevators in the
16 center of the mezzanine provide access to the
17 observation deck above.

18 Per the submission materials, the
19 proposed arch sits within a plaza that includes
20 granite pavers encircled by a seat wall and two
21 pedestrian access points aligned with bollards.
22 These two access points face east and west

1 aligned with the opening of the arch.

2 This enlarged detail of the proposed
3 site plan shows the proposed apron, planting
4 strip, stone barricade seat wall, granite
5 pavers, and bollards proposed.

6 The circle is shown with new pedestrian
7 crosswalks and post-mounted pedestrian actuated
8 signals connecting visitors via pedestrian
9 refuge islands next to the traffic circle.

10 Pictured here on the east side, two new
11 crosswalks will start at the landing of the
12 Memorial Bridge, crossing traffic onto a refuge
13 island before crossing the circle drive lane
14 into the arch plaza.

15 The applicant has stated the pedestrian
16 actuated signals, pictured to the right, will be
17 used to control vehicular traffic and allow
18 pedestrians to use the various crosswalks.

19 And now I will review the vehicular and
20 pedestrian accessibility topic and our
21 recommendations.

22 As previously stated, the National Park

1 Service updated the design for Memorial Circle
2 both in 2007 and 2020 to address efficiency and
3 safety. Currently there is no pedestrian access
4 via crosswalks to the circle or across Memorial
5 Avenue on the east side of the circle.

6 The circle also sees heavy volumes of
7 traffic, especially on the east side, from
8 northbound Washington Boulevard to eastbound
9 Memorial Bridge and from the bridge to
10 northbound Arlington Boulevard. Both of these
11 movements have continuous lanes around the east
12 side of the circle.

13 The applicant is showing a change to
14 the current design of the vehicular and
15 pedestrian access to and around Memorial Circle
16 as noted here.

17 As the arch is intended to be a visitor
18 destination, a memorial circle is an integral
19 part of the vehicular access between the
20 Arlington Bridge and the George Washington
21 Memorial Parkway with significant traffic
22 volume. It will be important to ensure the

1 continued safe operation of the traffic network
2 as well as the safe passage of visitors.

3 The applicant has indicated that they
4 are working with several agencies to evaluate
5 the transportation network to accommodate
6 visitor access and minimize impacts to the road
7 network.

8 Therefore, staff suggests the
9 Commission recommend the applicant work with the
10 Federal Highway Administration, District
11 Department of Transportation, Arlington County,
12 and other agencies as appropriate regarding any
13 proposed changes or impacts to the social
14 surface transportation network.

15 The plans do not provide details
16 regarding visitor parking, loading, unloading,
17 and ADA access. As the project introduces a
18 visitor attraction to Memorial Circle,
19 additional information is necessary to ensure
20 the safety of those accessing the site and the
21 minimizing impact of vehicular travel around the
22 site.

1 As such, staff recommends the
2 Commission request the applicant submit for the
3 next review a transportation or traffic study
4 that identifies any potential impacts of the
5 proposed project on the road network and level
6 of service and evaluates proposed pedestrian
7 access to ensure visitors can avoid pedestrian
8 and vehicular conflicts and information
9 regarding parking and loading and unloading for
10 visitors to the arch to ensure safe access for
11 those of all abilities and minimize disruption
12 to the traffic network.

13 Next, I will review visitor safety and
14 recommendations. The proposed arch is shown
15 with an at-grade plaza surrounded by a seat wall
16 with openings with bollards for pedestrian
17 access aligned with the openings of the arch.

18 The submission includes some security
19 elements including the seat wall, bollards, and
20 security in the ticketing space. The seat wall
21 as a security element is consistent with
22 integrated design elements that NCPC policies

1 support. The seat wall is a security element.

2 Additional information regarding the
3 overall risk and security approach will be
4 helpful as part of the next review. Therefore,
5 staff recommends the Commission support the use
6 of the seat wall as a design security element
7 around the arch plaza and requests a risk
8 assessment and evaluation of the project to
9 ensure the proposed design will address security
10 considerations.

11 Next, I will review aviation safety and
12 recommendations.

13 The location along the Potomac River is
14 3,000 feet from Ronald Reagan Washington
15 National Airport near landing approaches for two
16 runways. Part 77 of the Code of Federal
17 Regulations outlines requirements for any
18 construction that is more than 200 feet above
19 ground level to file notice with the FAA.

20 The purpose is to determine whether the
21 proposed construction would be a hazard to air
22 navigation. The applicant has indicated they

1 are currently working with the FAA to evaluate
2 whether the proposed project would impact air
3 navigation given its proximity to Ronald Reagan
4 Washington National Airport.

5 Any recommendations that are identified
6 by the FAA review process should be incorporated
7 into the design prior to the Commission's final
8 action. Therefore, staff suggests the
9 Commission recommend the applicant continue
10 consultation with the FAA to evaluate potential
11 impacts of the proposed project on air
12 navigation and provide an update to the
13 Commission as part of the next review and
14 advises that any design recommendations provided
15 by the FAA should be incorporated into the
16 proposed project prior to the Commission's final
17 action.

18 The next section will cover viewsheds
19 and related recommendations.

20 The proposed location of the arch is at
21 the center of Memorial Avenue and the sight
22 line, design, and landscape features of Memorial

1 Avenue, which includes Memorial Circle, are
2 contributing elements of the National Register-
3 listed Arlington National Cemetery Historic
4 District and Arlington Memorial Bridge.

5 The panoramic views from Arlington
6 House at Arlington National Cemetery to the west
7 and the Lincoln Memorial to the east have been
8 in place since the 1920s and reflect the visual
9 connectivity characteristic of the McMillan
10 Plan. This alignment from the Lincoln Memorial
11 to Arlington House was originally designed as a
12 memorial symbolizing reunification of the North
13 and South after the Civil War.

14 The bridge and Memorial Avenue serve as
15 the ceremonial entrance to Arlington National
16 Cemetery, the nation's most hallowed ground and
17 the final resting place for more than 400,000
18 service members, veterans, and family members.

19 The applicant has included several
20 before and after views of the proposed arch in
21 the submission. This first view on the left
22 shows the current view of the Arlington House

1 along the axis of Memorial Avenue toward the
2 Lincoln Memorial and beyond. The view on the
3 right shows the proposed arch in Memorial
4 Circle.

5 As noted, the rendering from the
6 submission indicates that the proposed arch will
7 block the view of the Lincoln Memorial from
8 Arlington House.

9 This is the existing view on the left
10 from the Lincoln Memorial Circle looking west
11 toward Arlington House. This is the rendered
12 view on the right of the proposed arch in
13 Memorial Circle. This proposed view alters the
14 view of Arlington House and Arlington National
15 Cemetery from the Lincoln Memorial.

16 This is the existing view from Parkway
17 Drive northwest along the edge of the Potomac
18 River looking southwest towards Arlington
19 Cemetery on the left. On the right, this is the
20 rendered view of the same location with the
21 proposed arch.

22 On the left is an existing view from

1 the Lincoln Memorial Terrace looking west and on
2 the right is the rendered view with the proposed
3 arch.

4 Given the importance of these views,
5 staff suggests the Commission encourage the
6 applicant to provide as part of the Section 106
7 process of the National Historic Preservation
8 Act any design options that were explored to
9 avoid or minimize impacts on the visual
10 connection between Arlington House and the
11 Lincoln Memorial.

12 In addition, staff suggests the
13 Commission request the applicant provide as part
14 of the next review updated photo visualizations
15 of existing and proposed pedestrian level views
16 from additional locations noted here. A view
17 from the north steps of the Jefferson Memorial
18 looking toward the Lincoln Memorial. Views from
19 the George Washington Memorial Parkway, one
20 looking south toward the circle from a point
21 immediately south of I-66 and one looking north
22 toward the circle from a point near the LBJ

1 Memorial Grove.

2 In this section, I will review
3 recommendations on design development.

4 Consistent with Comprehensive Plan
5 policy, the Commission has historically focused
6 on preserving Washington's picturesque
7 horizontal character and reinforcing the Height
8 of Buildings Act.

9 The Height of Buildings Act of 1910,
10 amended in 2014, is a federal law that limits
11 building height and NCPC has always applied the
12 Height of Buildings Act to federal projects.

13 The project appears to include a
14 combination of habitable space and architectural
15 embellishments at a height of 250 feet. As
16 such, further information will be necessary to
17 understand how the project comports with the
18 Height of Buildings Act. As such, staff
19 suggests the Commission request the applicant
20 provide as part of the next submission an
21 analysis and justification for the project's
22 height in light of the Height of Buildings Act.

1 This submission does not yet include
2 information on any proposed lighting, stormwater
3 management approach, and most of the site and
4 building materials. These are necessary
5 elements for the Commission to review as the
6 design advances.

7 Therefore, staff suggests the
8 Commission recommend the applicant work with the
9 District Department of Energy and Environment
10 regarding the proposed stormwater management
11 approach and requests the applicant provide as
12 part of the next submission information
13 regarding the following topics.

14 The proposed arch and site materials
15 palette, including cladding, paving, pedestrian
16 features, and security elements. The proposed
17 lighting strategy, including nighttime
18 renderings from key views demonstrating the
19 lighting concepts in context, and the proposed
20 stormwater management strategy.

21 Finally, our recommendations for the
22 applicant to consider in terms of project

1 coordination that were not previously mentioned.

2 NCPC has an independent responsibility
3 to comply with the National Historic
4 Preservation Act and the National Environmental
5 Policy Act. NCPC intends to designate the
6 applicant as the lead federal agency for the
7 purposes of compliance. NCPC will not take a
8 final action until both these processes have
9 been completed.

10 As such, staff requests the Commission
11 recommend the applicant work with the District
12 of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office
13 and other consulting parties regarding the
14 National Historic Preservation Act Section 106
15 process and recommends the Commission request
16 that the applicant provide as part of the next
17 submission updates on the Section 106 process
18 and the NEPA evaluation process as completion of
19 both are required for NCPC final action.

20 This concludes the presentation. As
21 noted previously, at this concept review stage,
22 the Commission provides comments and requests

1 additional information from the applicant that
2 will inform subsequent Commission review. I've
3 incorporated these recommendations into the
4 presentations, so I will not read them again,
5 but they are included here for your reference.

6 In conclusion, staff recommends the
7 Commission approve the following concept
8 comments on the proposed monumental arch located
9 in Memorial Circle on Columbia Island in
10 Washington D.C.

11 Finally, I do want to acknowledge that
12 NCPC has received a substantial number of public
13 comments on the project. The vast majority of
14 the comments received were in opposition and the
15 most common concerns related to the impact to
16 the setting of Arlington National Cemetery,
17 views, height, and scale, and safety.

18 The applicant team and the architect
19 are here to answer any questions the Commission
20 may have and staff is available as well. Thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Jamie. Do

1 any commissioners have any questions either for
2 Jamie or for the project team? Yeah,
3 Commissioner.

4 COMMISSIONER CASH: I do want to ask,
5 so has this -- it's gone through CFA, it's now
6 coming through NCPC. Most projects like this
7 that I think of as memorials or commemoration go
8 through NCMAC, the Memorial Advisory Committee.
9 Has this gone through that process? Is this
10 considered a memorial? What is this -- like
11 what processes is it going through, other than
12 us and CFA?

13 MS. HERR: So, the question on the
14 Commemorative Works Act is one that NCPC has
15 historically deferred to the applicant agency on
16 complying with, and in this instance they have
17 advised that the Commemorative Works Act does
18 not apply, and so therefore the -- we're
19 deferring to their determination that the
20 Commemorative Works Act doesn't apply here.

21 COMMISSIONER CASH: Okay. That leads
22 me a bit to a follow-up question. So, in the

1 staff report I noted that it said the purpose of
2 the -- according to the applicant, the purpose
3 of the arch is to celebrate the triumphs of the
4 American people, inspire patriotism and love of
5 our country, and beautify our nation's capital.

6 Is that in some kind of congressional
7 finding, some kind of finding by a commission
8 set up to set up this non-memorial -- like where
9 does that finding come from, or is it just what
10 the applicant put onto the application?

11 MS. HERR: It's just what we've been
12 informed by the applicant.

13 COMMISSIONER CASH: So, this isn't any
14 kind of -- this is just the applicant saying
15 this is patriotic and it's not like -- this
16 didn't go through Congress or anything like
17 that?

18 MS. HERR: It did not.

19 COMMISSIONER CASH: Okay, thanks.

20 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, ma'am.

21 COMMISSIONER COZART: So, I think this
22 is for the project team. Wanted to know what

1 the timeline was for initiating Section 106.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yep.

3 PARTICIPANT: We don't have a timeline
4 set just yet. We're going through the
5 processes, and it'll be when we receive
6 approval. Then we'll be able --

7 COMMISSIONER COZART: I'm sorry, it's
8 when you receive approval? I don't think your
9 mic is working.

10 PARTICIPANT: Oh, sorry.

11 COMMISSIONER COZART: You said -- could
12 you repeat your response?

13 PARTICIPANT: Yeah, the -- we're going
14 to be going through the --

15 PARTICIPANT: We can't hear.

16 PARTICIPANT: I'm not a tech guy, I
17 apologize.

18 PARTICIPANT: (Unintelligible)

19 Department of the Interior. The Section 106
20 Initiation Consultation package will be given
21 out to consultative parties tomorrow.

22 COMMISSIONER COZART: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Any other questions
2 for -- yeah, Stuart.

3 VICE CHAIRMAN LEVENBACH: I have one.
4 So, what kind of data are generated in the
5 traffic study? Because one thing I noticed is
6 that cars don't necessarily use that circle to
7 that same extent as you go all the way around.
8 So, if you're trying to figure out how to route
9 pedestrians, what types of data are generated
10 and how would you use it in order to figure out
11 access to the monument?

12 PARTICIPANT: Yeah, and I'll speak
13 loudly so I can make sure if you guys don't hear
14 me back here, just lift up your hand.

15 So, we've been working with the
16 Department of Transportation in Volpe Center,
17 which is the leading governmental agency --

18 PARTICIPANT: We can't hear.

19 PARTICIPANT: All right. Thank you.
20 City is -- we're working with the Department of
21 Transportation in Volpe Center, which is the
22 leading governmental agency as relates to

1 traffic studies.

2 So, from the studies that have been
3 conducted in coordination with the Federal
4 Highway Administration, the south side of the
5 circle experiences the least amount of traffic.
6 There are several movements on the circle that
7 do experience the most amount of traffic,
8 particularly during peak hours.

9 That is when you're going northbound
10 from Washington Boulevard over the bridge and
11 then subsequently later in the day, you get the
12 westbound traffic over Arlington Memorial Bridge
13 and then northbound then onto Arlington
14 Boulevard.

15 So, that is one of the things that
16 we'll be addressing subsequently is those
17 traffic movements and making sure that has the
18 least amount of impact in coordination with the
19 signalization.

20 So, right now, coming north on
21 Arlington Boulevard, it's the Rapid Beacon. So,
22 if you get a lot of pedestrians, it's not

1 actuated right now, but it's constantly beeping.
2 Thank you.

3 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Is it on?

4 PARTICIPANT: Hello?

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: No, no difference.

6 PARTICIPANT: Okay. So, right now,
7 it's Rapid Beacon signalization. So, if you
8 don't actuate it, it automatically detects
9 pedestrian movement, which then results in the
10 flash that's going up and the traffic then comes
11 to a stop.

12 What we're contemplating for both the
13 construction phase as well as for the ultimate
14 completion of the arch, that would be pedestrian
15 actuated. So, one of the main considerations,
16 though, is you don't want traffic building up,
17 so there will be a minimum of run green time
18 (phonetic).

19 So, if there's multiple lines of people
20 coming up, you just can't keep up with the
21 signalization and have traffic come to a
22 complete stop. So, it would be a minimum of run

1 green time, traditionally, that's 80 seconds,
2 but after 80 seconds of one green time, if a
3 pedestrian comes up and pushes it, and the
4 traditional walk/stop, the walk time would come
5 up and then the pedestrian would be able to
6 cross.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Can I ask a total --
8 do you have a follow-up, Stuart? What's the
9 arch made out of? Like, what's the building
10 material?

11 PARTICIPANT: So, the structure will be
12 cast-in-place concrete.

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay.

14 PARTICIPANT: That will be the majority
15 of the structure, and then the cladding will be
16 granite. Now, we haven't selected the exact
17 type of granite yet, but those under
18 consideration are Sierra White, Mount Airy,
19 which is the composition mostly of the bridge,
20 and then also Bethel White, which would be Union
21 Station and Natural History Museum
22 (unintelligible).

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: And then the gold
2 ornamentation, I'm guessing that's something
3 plated with gold?

4 PARTICIPANT: Yes, it'll be a silicon
5 bronze, and then we'll have them go -- much like
6 the statues on the other end of the bridge that
7 (unintelligible).

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Is there a concern
9 with sort of tarnishing of the gold over time,
10 or what does that look like as the -- you know,
11 20 years from now, how different is it going to
12 look than it does in the --

13 PARTICIPANT: So the Arts of War were -
14 - they were recently renovated in, I think, the
15 1970s, so they're coming up and they're being
16 renovated now. So, the restoration is required
17 on gold plating over probably the course of 30
18 to 40, 50 years.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay. So that's a
20 pretty long run time as these things go. The
21 FAA study, what's the status of your guys'
22 consultations with FAA?

1 PARTICIPANT: That's ongoing.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay.

3 PARTICIPANT: So, FAA has already
4 compiled a preliminary finding for the arch at
5 250 feet. Those studies will be incorporated
6 into the environmental assessment as an appendix
7 for you all to see.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Great. And then, I
9 guess, last question, and this may be for the
10 architect, for Mr. Charbonneau, was any thought
11 given to making the arch taller and the statuary
12 shorter? Or, I guess, how did you all arrive at
13 the proportions? I know -- I like the goal of
14 reaching 250 feet total, but sort of how did
15 that kind of come together?

16 PARTICIPANT: There's some historic
17 precedent for monumental architecture on
18 Columbia Island. So, part of the proposal to
19 make it white for the bridge --

20 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Right.

21 PARTICIPANT: -- included columns with
22 sandstone on top of them. The height of those

1 columns were 166 feet, so we're referencing the
2 history of the site.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Gotcha.

4 PARTICIPANT: Having the arch proposed
5 at the same height. So, to answer your
6 question, no, we've looked at this
7 (unintelligible).

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Gotcha.

9 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Mr. Chairman?

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, Commissioner
11 Dixon.

12 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yeah, I have two
13 or maybe three questions. First, is there any
14 maintenance issues in terms of long-term
15 maintenance being dealt with or looked at?
16 Secondly, the bollards could be maybe replaced
17 with some more useful, like chairing that also
18 offers a similar protection, but give tourists a
19 place to relax rather than -- or be useful
20 devices.

21 The other thing, I was kind of curious
22 about how this arch compares with other arches

1 that are around the globe. You know, are we
2 unique enough or what it might compare, how it
3 would compare. Those three questions, Mr.
4 Chairman.

5 PARTICIPANT: So, the first one in
6 terms of maintenance, that's why we had selected
7 granite for the exterior cladding. Granite has
8 a compressive strength reaching 3,500 psi and a
9 very low water absorption rate. So, the
10 exterior materials are selected for the
11 longevity, including the silicon bronze.

12 The other question regarding a place
13 for the pedestrians and visitors to sit, there
14 is a seat that goes around the entire perimeter
15 on both legs of the arch, and then we have a
16 seat wall, which is on the perimeter of the
17 circle as well.

18 So, there'll be ample places for
19 pedestrians to have a rest.

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: But is there still
21 a need for the bollards if those devices are
22 there?

1 PARTICIPANTY: Yeah, the bollards, it
2 just didn't seem appropriate to have a seat wall
3 going around the entirety of the circle, and
4 that if there was ever to be a procession, that
5 the east and the west sides of the seat wall
6 would be open.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: And then the last
8 question was comparing the size of this arch to
9 other, sort of, other examples around the world.

10 PARTICIPANT: The size, it probably
11 most, the Arc de Triomphe is probably the
12 closest in terms of size and composition. It
13 lacks any kind of ornamental columns on it, and
14 that was specifically chosen because this arch
15 was to feature narrative sculpture on the
16 outside, so that the columns interrupted the
17 space for that. That's why we selected it
18 without any columns on it but historically,
19 triumphal arches would have ornamental columns
20 on the outside.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: And I would note that
22 this arch is less than half the height of the

1 Gateway Arch in my hometown of St. Louis,
2 Missouri.

3 PARTICIPANT: It's not even comparable.
4 It sits by the river.

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Are there any other
6 questions for either Jamie or the project team?
7 Paul, Commissioner Ingrassia?

8 COMMISSIONER INGRASSIA: Thank you,
9 Chair. Just a quick question about the inside
10 of the arch. If you could -- you know, we have
11 these great visuals, how it will look on the
12 exterior, but maybe you could talk a little bit
13 more about, you know, how large you expect the
14 inside to be, how visitors might navigate up to
15 the top, to the observatory deck. You know,
16 someone who's been to the Arc de Triomphe in
17 Paris, it could be a little tricky navigating to
18 the top, so maybe you could talk a little bit
19 about accessibility and how visitors plan to
20 enjoy their time there.

21 PARTICIPANT: I mean, I could talk
22 through it, but it's a little bit easier than

1 usual. So the arch is entered on one side. So
2 the idea is that visitors will circulate up one
3 leg, and then they could go to the observation
4 deck and then circulate back down on the other
5 leg.

6 So it's kind of a circuitous movement
7 through, and that will address security concerns
8 because, you know, we want to be able to screen
9 visitors as they enter.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: There we go.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: You need a mic.

12 PARTICIPANT: So on the south side, we
13 have the ticketing security. So this would be
14 the main entrance as folks enter into the arch.
15 They'll have the opportunity of either taking
16 this elevator or this one, or they could also
17 take a stair all the way up if they'd like to.

18 Once you're up, now you've got to cross
19 over to the center, and so that happens on an
20 upper level. So this is really just below the
21 observation deck, this floor plan here.

22 So you come in, you've got a space here

1 which you would enter into, and then there's a
2 stair hall. So there's two stairs on either
3 side and then an elevator in the center, which
4 would go up within the center of the statue base
5 on the upper floor on the observation deck.

6 So these stairs will lead out into a
7 stair hall as well as the elevator, and then the
8 observation deck that can be accessed either on
9 the east or the west, the doors leading out to
10 either side.

11 And then this area here in its entirety
12 is open for visitors to be able to observe
13 basically a 360-degree view of the surrounding
14 area.

15 Visitors, when they're leaving, would
16 come down on this set of stairs and these
17 elevators, and then they'd come out on the
18 ground level on the north side and then to an
19 exit hall and then come out.

20 So just want to make sure that there's
21 safety features in place for anybody coming in,
22 and then the traffic flow can go through.

1 The Park Services estimated that they'd
2 be able to accommodate probably about 80
3 occupants per hour, so similar to the Washington
4 Monument.

5 So that's the spaces, the public spaces
6 would have some level of ornamentation. There's
7 also opportunities for exhibit spaces,
8 particularly on the upper level.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: And have we seen
10 renderings of what the views will be like from
11 the observation deck? Have those been submitted
12 to us?

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: They were not
14 submitted to us.

15 PARTICIPANT: Those are not, but we now
16 have them, and we can include them in the next
17 submission package.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: My guess is that it's
19 a pretty stunning view, and I think that would
20 be helpful as we sort of -- as we consider this
21 project going forward. Are there any other
22 questions either for Jamie or -- yes,

1 Commissioner.

2 COMMISSIONER CASH: So a couple things.
3 Actually, Commissioner Dixon's question about
4 how this compares to other arches just kind of
5 got me back to some research I was doing
6 earlier, and my earlier question about what does
7 this commemorate.

8 And I was looking up, so for example,
9 the Arc de Triomphe commemorates Napoleon's
10 military victories. The India Gate recognizes
11 fallen soldiers. The Monumento de la Revolucion
12 is the Mexican Revolution, and Washington Square
13 Arch is Washington's inauguration centennial.

14 Again, we're kind of left without
15 anything. But I did want to take just a point
16 of privilege for D.C. laws, because you did
17 mention this during your opening, the Height of
18 Buildings Act. And I just wanted to ask through
19 the Chair to the General Counsel.

20 So the Height of Buildings Act, the
21 Chair mentioned this is essentially a local law,
22 but could you clarify whether the D.C. Council

1 or any of the local authorities have any ability
2 to change that law, or if it's purely
3 Congressional and that the Council is prohibited
4 from having any kind of review over that?

5 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Sure. So it is a
6 federal law. The Council does not have any
7 authority to amend the Height of Buildings Act,
8 and it is one that I believe Jamie said in the
9 presentation was amended as recently as 2014.

10 And as the Chair noted, NCPC has
11 historically taken the position that the Height
12 of Buildings Act does apply to federal projects.
13 I'm happy to share some of that background, but
14 I'm also happy to supplement that for the next
15 filing.

16 COMMISSIONER CASH: Sure. And the
17 Chair also mentioned enforcement of the Height
18 of Buildings Act would be by local authorities
19 or the local courts. Could you clarify whether
20 the local courts are appointed by the President
21 or the Council or have any local ties or
22 jurisdiction?

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: By the President.

2 COMMISSIONER CASH: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Anything further?

4 With that, we'll proceed to the public testimony
5 that we have on this item.

6 Thank you, Jamie, by the way. That was
7 comprehensive and informative as always. We
8 have 30 people signed up to speak on this
9 matter, a combination of in-person and virtual.

10 We're going to hear from witnesses in
11 groups of five, reserving any questions that the
12 Commission has for members of the public until
13 after we make it through those five witnesses,
14 just to keep things rolling.

15 Our first witnesses -- oh, as is our
16 custom here, individuals speaking on behalf of
17 themselves will be given three minutes.
18 Individuals speaking on behalf of an
19 organization will be given five. To keep things
20 moving, we will enforce those restrictions
21 pretty rigorously.

22 Our first five witnesses are, I'm going

1 to butcher some of these pronunciations and I
2 apologize in advance for that, are Edward
3 Stierli, Priya Jain, William Vaughn, Susan
4 Douglas, and Gary Langston.

5 Mr. Stierli, who I believe is here in
6 person, is representing the National Parks
7 Conservation Association.

8 Sir, if you want to take the podium,
9 you have five minutes and please proceed when
10 you're ready.

11 MR. STIERLI: Thank you. Good
12 afternoon. I'm Ed Stierli. I'm the Mid-
13 Atlantic Senior Regional Director for the
14 National Parks Conservation Association.

15 NPCA, we're a non-profit, non-partisan
16 organization. We have 1.9 million members and
17 supporters around the country and we've
18 advocated on behalf of the National Parks and
19 the National Capital Region for decades.

20 We submitted detailed written comments,
21 but I'm going to pretty much hit the high notes
22 and underscore what I think you should all hear

1 before you advance this proposal.

2 And just to be clear about something
3 up-front, I mean, NPCA, we support, strongly
4 support, commemorating America's 250th
5 anniversary of this country. We support
6 investments that honor American history and that
7 strengthen our national parks. But that is not
8 what is before you today. What's before you
9 today is a request to approve a 250-foot
10 monumental structure on National Park Service
11 land in what is the most significant
12 commemorative landscape in the United States.
13 And doing this without Commemorative Works Act
14 process that Congress requires, without a
15 completed environmental impact statement,
16 without a Section 106 consultation under the
17 National Historic Preservation Act.

18 And so this Commission, you know, as
19 you advance this, you have the authority and the
20 responsibility to say that that is not
21 acceptable, and we urge you to exercise that as
22 you advance this.

1 So, let me focus on three things. So,
2 first is the law, the law that was mentioned
3 earlier, the Commemorative Works Act, which is
4 not a suggestion. It was enacted by Congress in
5 1986, because, prior to that, you know, the ad
6 hoc monument placement that was happening
7 created the exact kind of conflict with what
8 we're seeing right now before this Commission.
9 The Area 1 requirements under that law require
10 preeminent significance determination,
11 consultation with the National Capital Memorial
12 Advisory Commission, and congressional action.
13 And, to our knowledge, none of those steps have
14 been completed.

15 The Administration's argument, thus
16 far, has rested on a 1920s bridge authorization
17 for columns that were never built. But that
18 authorization was directed to a now-dissolved
19 commission to undertake a long-completed
20 project, subject to a spending limit that's also
21 been exhausted. So to treat that statute as the
22 authorizing a massive and costly new project a

1 century later, really defies any reasonable
2 reading of congressional intent. If a single
3 authorization for one commemorative structure
4 conferred perpetual authority to build limitless
5 future monuments within the same vicinity, the
6 monumental core of Washington would be chaos.

7 This Commission should require a
8 legally supported demonstration that Area 1
9 process had been completed before taking any
10 action to advance this proposal, because that's
11 what the law requires.

12 Second, I want to talk about the
13 physical reality of what this arch would do.
14 You know, 30 funeral services are conducted at
15 Arlington National Cemetery every single day;
16 400,000 veterans and their families are interred
17 there. The landscape between the Lincoln
18 Memorial and Arlington were deliberately
19 designed to honor that relationship, as was
20 discussed earlier.

21 The Arlington Memorial Bridge was built
22 low, with classical restraint, precisely so the

1 view between the memorial and the cemetery would
2 remain unbroken. That was not an accident. It
3 was a civic act of design that took decades of
4 planning.

5 A 250-foot arch at Memorial Circle,
6 topped with the gilded statues and an
7 observation deck, would be placed at the exact
8 point where visitors transition from the Lincoln
9 Memorial to the cemetery. Visitors approaching
10 Arlington from Washington would no longer
11 experience that measured, solemn procession
12 across the bridge. They would instead pass
13 through a structure that's at fundamental odds
14 with the character of the ground beneath it.

15 You'll likely hear from a lot of
16 veterans saying that this would dishonor their
17 service, and their concerns deserve real weight
18 here today.

19 Third, the viewshed. The western axis
20 of the National Mall represents more than 120
21 years of very deliberate planning and legal
22 protection, much of which has occurred through

1 this commission, if not all of it.

2 The McMillan Plan of 1902 established a
3 compositional logic that every generation has
4 built upon since. You know, long, uninterrupted
5 viewsheds, which we enjoyed wonderful photos of.
6 I know through the progression throughout
7 history, I was more astounded at how little it
8 has changed over time, and how remarkable that
9 would be for any city in the world.

10 The Washington Monument was designed as
11 a singular, vertical punctuation of this entire
12 composition, and nothing of comparable scale has
13 ever been introduced into the Mall in this
14 corridor, except this arch now. That impact
15 would be irreversible.

16 So, you know, I've heard it said, I'm
17 still comparably to many -- I've only lived in
18 this area for about a dozen years, and
19 Washington is not a static city. There's been a
20 lot of change. That's true. Washington has
21 grown thoughtfully, deliberately, and through a
22 lawful process that's protected its most

1 significant commemorative landscape, while
2 making room for new expression. That's the
3 framework that Congress built for the city, and,
4 unfortunately, that's what is at risk of being
5 bypassed here.

6 So, you know, we urge the National
7 Capital Planning Commission, you all, to take --
8 to decline to advance this project until
9 Congress has authorized this memorial through a
10 joint resolution, because they deserve the
11 protection, and you have an obligation to
12 provide it. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.
14 Stierli. Next up, we have Priya Jain, who's
15 representing the Society of Architectural
16 Historians, and who will similarly have five
17 minutes to provide your testimony. I believe
18 Ms. Jain is with us virtually. You can proceed
19 whenever you're ready.

20 MS. JAIN: Okay. Good afternoon,
21 Commissioners, and thank you again for the
22 opportunity to speak. My name is Priya Jain,

1 and I'm a licensed architect in the State of
2 Texas.

3 I offer these comments as a private
4 citizen and as chair of the Heritage
5 Conservation Committee of the Society of
6 Architectural Historians. These views do not
7 represent those of my employer, Texas A&M
8 University.

9 The Society of Architectural Historians
10 is a non-profit, founded in 1940, and is the
11 leading organization for architectural history
12 in North America. The proposal before you to
13 build a new 250-foot monumental arch is in one
14 of the country's most significant historical and
15 urban ensembles.

16 After reviewing the submission made by
17 the Department of the Interior, we feel that it
18 negatively impacts the architectural context of
19 its setting, disrupts views to existing historic
20 monuments, and runs counter to decades of design
21 and preservation guidance for this area prepared
22 by none other than the applicant itself.

1 We want to begin by countering the
2 claim that the architectural history of the site
3 supports construction of tall, triumphal arches,
4 or that the proposal respects the legacy of the
5 1901 McMillan Plan for Washington, D.C.

6 At the last Commission of Fine Arts
7 meeting, the Department of the Interior
8 presented various images of historic unbuilt
9 bridges and monuments from 1877 to 1934, leading
10 the Commissioners to note that the site has a
11 history of heroic designs and this proposal
12 builds on the McMillan Plan.

13 In fact, the architectural history of
14 this area reveals the exact opposite. Many of
15 the unbuilt proposals that were presented
16 predate the 1901 McMillan Plan and the
17 subsequent siting and construction of Lincoln
18 Memorial, completed in 1922.

19 In fact, many of the early 19th century
20 unbuilt designs were not even in the same
21 location as the present Arlington Memorial
22 Bridge, which was designed in 1923 specifically

1 to be a low-profile structure to not disrupt the
2 sight lines between Arlington House and Lincoln
3 Memorial.

4 Where the current Memorial Circle now
5 sits, the McMillan Plan and its subsequent
6 development in the 1920s and '30s showed an
7 elliptical plaza with two 166-foot tall columns
8 that are now being used as some sort of
9 justification for the monumental arch, but
10 historic renderings and descriptions show
11 clearly how materially different they are.

12 The proposed 1920s slender columns were
13 situated not in the center but one on either
14 side of the bridge. The Washington Post in 1928
15 noted, and I quote, Two stately columns would be
16 framing in but not interfering with the view of
17 the Lincoln Memorial from the direction of Lee
18 Mansion, end quote.

19 Simply put, they were completely
20 different in design, size, height, proportion,
21 and location to the current arch. For the past
22 century, all federal planning and design studies

1 have only reinforced the importance of
2 maintaining low profiles and avoiding any tall
3 or permanent structures in this area.

4 NCPC's own Memorials and Museums Master
5 Plan from 2001 noted, and I quote, that The
6 existing circle at the west end of Memorial
7 Bridge is not seen as an appropriate location of
8 a future memorial, end quote.

9 The most recent 2024 Cultural Landscape
10 Report for Memorial Avenue Corridor,
11 commissioned by the Department of the Interior
12 and meant to serve as a guide for future
13 planning, calls to preserve the corridor's axis
14 viewshed connections, and significant vistas
15 that were foundational to its design and ongoing
16 function.

17 It goes on to note that within Memorial
18 Circle, protection of views is key.

19 Even though the applicant did not make
20 substantive changes to the proposed arch as
21 requested by the CFA in their April review, like
22 removing the statues on top to reduce height or

1 introducing open archways to facilitate views,
2 the CFA voted to fast-track the project by
3 granting their final approval --

4 We urge the NCPC not to replicate this
5 pattern. Instead, we implore you to take
6 seriously the comments included here and in the
7 NCPC's own Executive Director's recommendation
8 and insist that the applicant provides the
9 requested information, addresses concerns, and
10 complies with applicable laws and regulations
11 before advancing this design to preliminary and
12 final approval. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Ms. Jain.
14 Next up, we have Mr. William Vaughan, who I
15 believe is here with us in person.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Mr. Vaughan wasn't
17 able to make it, so we can move on to Susan
18 Douglas.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Mr. Vaughan is not
20 here, so we will move on as suggested by our
21 General Counsel to Susan Douglas. Ms. Douglas,
22 you have three minutes to provide your

1 testimony. Please proceed when you're ready.

2 MS. DOUGLAS: Chairman Scharf and
3 Commissioners, I am horrified by how quickly the
4 Arch project is moving through the approval
5 process in spite of strong public opposition and
6 compelling reasons for halting this plan.

7 My concerns about the Arch are as
8 follows. There's a law that bars all
9 construction on federal parkland in the nation's
10 capital without the express authority of
11 Congress. The administration said it would not
12 seek congressional approval and will instead
13 rely on an authorization from 1925 related to a
14 project never built.

15 Using a 100-year-old loophole to avoid
16 congressional approval is specious. The Arch is
17 a vanity project for Trump. Ostensibly meant to
18 honor America's 250th anniversary, Trump
19 admitted at a dinner last year that the Arch was
20 being built for him. Video of those comments is
21 widely available online.

22 Presidents should not build their own

1 memorials; rather, leave that for others after
2 their legacy has been established.

3 Building the Arch on Memorial Circle is
4 a desecration of the sacred space where 400,000
5 soldiers and family members are buried. The
6 grotesque size of the Arch would block the
7 historic sight line between the Lee Mansion at
8 Arlington National Cemetery and the Lincoln
9 Memorial.

10 This view was intended to symbolize
11 north-south reunification after the Civil War.

12 At 250 feet, the Arch will dwarf
13 everything in its midst and ruin the vista for
14 the 70,000-some drivers who cross D.C.'s Grand
15 Entrance each day. Construction of this Arch
16 will create a traffic nightmare in an already
17 busy corridor.

18 The FAA has launched a study of the
19 possible flight safety risks given the Arch's
20 proximity to Washington National Airport and its
21 complex flight patterns. This is standard
22 procedure and could take up to nine months.

1 Memorial Circle is already under permit
2 for testing and boring in preparation for
3 construction work because the soil in this area
4 is predominantly dredged alluvial soil and is
5 considered a poor choice for a massive stone
6 monument.

7 Extensive and expensive foundational
8 supports will be required to support the Arch.

9 Congressman Don Beyer is so concerned
10 about the project that he recently co-sponsored
11 a bill to block the Arch, stating the project is
12 tasteless and disrespects those buried at the
13 cemetery, including his family members.

14 Public Citizen has filed a lawsuit on
15 behalf of several Vietnam veterans and an
16 architectural historian to block the
17 construction of the Arch. Any discussion of the
18 Arch is premature at most pending resolution of
19 all these studies and lawsuits.

20 That aside, this Arch must be stopped.
21 Democracies do not construct memorials to living
22 presidents. Disrupting the historically

1 significant view is an affront to our history,
2 to the men and women at Arlington National
3 Cemetery who gave their lives in service to our
4 country and to those who remember them --

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Ma'am.

6 MS. DOUGLAS: It is Arch insanity.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, ma'am.

8 Thank you, Ms. Douglas. Next up, we have Gary
9 Langston. Mr. Langston, you have three minutes
10 to provide your testimony. Please proceed when
11 you're ready.

12 MR. LANGSTON: Thank you. I'm a
13 veteran. I'm a resident of Washington, D.C. My
14 parents are interred in Section 66 of Arlington
15 Cemetery. My dad was himself a Vietnam veteran,
16 two tours there flying helicopters. My mom was
17 kind of a traditional Army wife, also a nurse
18 who served in Army hospitals at times. My wife
19 -- my wife -- my personal wife is a veteran of
20 the Persian Gulf War, and we have several
21 ancestors who served in the military going back
22 in history. These are my personal comments.

1 Any memorial -- and we're mixing the
2 terms memorial and monument in this discussion,
3 and I think that's an important distinction,
4 must respect those interred there, their
5 descendants, current and the future generations.

6 I think what does this arch look like
7 in another 250 years. The linkage of the
8 memorial, it's more than Arlington House and the
9 Lincoln. It's the avenue, it's the hemicycle,
10 the women's memorial behind it, Kennedy's grave
11 site, the eternal flame -- the eternal flame,
12 all of that.

13 The vistas are wonderful from there.
14 You don't need another structure to provide
15 those vistas around Washington.

16 So that said, what's required here is a
17 solemn memorial, if anything, rather than a
18 monument. Now, the way to do that, of course,
19 in my opinion, is to follow the law, gather
20 input from appropriate stakeholders. That
21 includes those where the viewshed is impacted
22 from grave sites, not just those that are

1 existing today, but those that will exist in the
2 future.

3 All that said, I've got six specific
4 comments on the content, some of which you've
5 partially addressed in input.

6 The multiple views of the viewshed,
7 very important. I would add two -- I would add
8 get views that simulate winter, get views that
9 simulate night, and get views that simulate not
10 just a view from the other major monuments,
11 Jefferson, et cetera, but from other locations
12 within the cemetery and elsewhere.

13 The second thing about viewshed that I
14 would emphasize is the night views of the
15 skyline of Washington and the memorials are,
16 it's breathtaking.

17 Today, and in my statement, there are a
18 couple of photos, the lighting is subdued. The
19 Air Force Memorial, Arlington House, the
20 flagpole over Fort Myer, and the Iwo Jima
21 Memorial. Anything that would -- there needs to
22 be a lighting plan, and it needs to respect that

1 view scape.

2 Lastly, I think the most important
3 piece of this is whatever is done there should
4 be a unifying factor for the country. And at
5 present, there are elements of the design of the
6 arch that I fear won't stand the test of time,
7 and I've included those as well.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you for your
9 comments, sir. So --

10 MR. LANGSTON: And if I may, I offer to
11 anyone -- I'm glad to hear that folks have
12 walked Memorial Avenue in the circle, but walk
13 with veterans inside the cemetery. You'll learn
14 a lot.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, sir. And
16 thank you for your and your family's service to
17 our country, sir.

18 We're going to move on now to our next
19 group of five witnesses who are Laura Downey,
20 Danilo Feliciano, Carol Quillen, Susan Madden,
21 and Brian Green. Laura Downey, who I believe is
22 with us virtually, Ms. Downey, can you hear us?

1 MS. HOTTEL-COX: It seems Ms. Downey
2 has not joined the meeting, so we can move on to
3 Mr. Feliciano.

4 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Mr. Feliciano, who I
5 believe joined us at our last meeting as well.
6 Good to have you, sir. You'll have three
7 minutes to provide your testimony, and please
8 proceed when you're ready.

9 MR. FELICIANO: Thank you very much,
10 and thank you very much to all the members of
11 the NCPC. One nation under God, indivisible,
12 with liberty and justice for all. On this arch,
13 the word indivisible is missing.

14 February 7th, 2025, the current
15 president established the White House Faith
16 Office. April 21st, 2026, the current president
17 released a video for America Reads the Bible
18 event, where he reads 2 Chronicles 7:11-22,
19 where the Lord God says, seek my face.

20 One nation under God, Exodus 34:17,
21 Thou shalt not make to thyself any molten gods.

22 One nation under God. Deuteronomy

1 4:15, Keep therefore your souls carefully. You
2 saw not any similitude in the day that the Lord
3 God spoke to you in Horeb in the midst of the
4 fire.

5 One nation under God. Ezekiel 14:6,
6 Therefore say to the house of Israel, thus saith
7 the Lord God, be converted and depart from your
8 idols and turn your faces away from all your
9 abominations.

10 One nation under God, Jeremiah 51:17,
11 Every man has become foolish by his knowledge,
12 every founder is confounded by his idol, for
13 what he hath cast is a lie and there's no breath
14 --

15 One nation under God. Habakkuk 2:18,
16 What doth the gravest thing avail, because the
17 maker thereof hath graven it. A molten and a
18 false image, because the forger thereof hath
19 trusted in a thing of his own forging to make
20 dumb idols.

21 One nation under God. Psalm 113:12-16,
22 this is in the Vulgate, by the way. The idols of

1 the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of
2 the hands of men, they have mouths and speak
3 not, they have eyes and see not, they have ears
4 and hear not, they have noses and smell not,
5 they have hands and feel not, they have feet and
6 walk not, neither shall they cry out through
7 their throat, but them that make them become
8 like unto them and all such as that trust in
9 them.

10 One nation under God. Isaiah 42:17-23,
11 They are turned back, let them be greatly
12 confounded, that trust in a graven thing, that
13 say some molten thing, you are our God, hear ye
14 deaf and ye blind, and behold that you may see,
15 who is blind but my servant, nor deaf but he to
16 whom I have sent my messengers, who is blind but
17 he that is sold, or who is blind but the servant
18 of the Lord. Thou mayest see as many things,
19 wilt thou not observe them. Thou hast ears
20 open, wilt thou not hear. And the Lord was
21 willing to sanctify them and to magnify the law
22 and exalt it, but this is a people that is

1 robbed and wasted, they are all the snare of
2 young men and they are hid in the houses of
3 prisons, they are made a prey and there is none
4 to deliver them, a spoil and there is none that
5 saith restore. Who is there among you that will
6 give ear to this, that will attend and hearken
7 for times to come.

8 One nation under God. Romans 1:22-23,
9 For professing themselves to be wise, they
10 became fools and they changed the glory of the
11 incorruptible God into the likeness of the image
12 of a corruptible man and of birds and of four-
13 footed beasts and of creeping things.

14 One nation under God. Acts 17:29,
15 Being therefore the offspring of God, we must
16 not suppose the divinity to be like unto gold or
17 silver or stone in the graving of art and device
18 of man.

19 So when our government has a golden
20 statue crafted and places the words one nation
21 under God beneath it, I have to wonder, to what
22 God are they attempting to place the United

1 States of America underneath?

2 With humility, I thank you for
3 receiving this testimony. Respectfully, my name
4 is Danilo Augusto Feliciano and I am a veteran.
5 God bless you all.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.
7 Feliciano, and thank you for your service to our
8 country as well. Carol Quillen, who I believe
9 is here with us, is going to be speaking on
10 behalf of the National Trust for Historic
11 Preservation. Ms. Quillen, you have five
12 minutes. Please proceed whenever you're ready.

13 MS. QUILLEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
14 Mr. Chairman and members of the National Capital
15 Planning Commission, my name is Carol Quillen
16 and I serve as President and CEO of the National
17 Trust for Historic Preservation. Thank you for
18 the opportunity to be here and to share these
19 comments with you.

20 This Commission works on behalf of the
21 American people. You play a critical role,
22 questioning, reviewing, and -- embody both our

1 founding ideals and our ongoing commitment to
2 build a more perfect union.

3 The value you bring was clear during
4 this Commission's review of the National World
5 War I Memorial. Over a series of meetings, this
6 Commission helped modify the original submission
7 to respect the iconic water basin that defined
8 the site and improved pedestrian access.

9 The result was a substantially improved
10 design that created a more fitting memorial to
11 our nation's heroic service members.

12 Since our founding, we Americans have
13 understood the symbolic power of Washington,
14 D.C. Our capital is a planned city. In their
15 design, context, and relationship to each other,
16 our most meaningful buildings and monuments
17 communicate our system of government and the
18 principles on which it is based.

19 Achieving this has required deliberate
20 planning, humility, and respect for what has
21 gone before. Each generation has left its mark
22 by proceeding in carefully calibrated steps that

1 recognize our complex history and our
2 aspirations.

3 It's our responsibility to remember
4 this two-century-long tradition of design
5 discipline, to strive to be worthy of this
6 inheritance, so that we may in turn pass it on.

7 From this perspective, the Arch poses
8 significant risks. It flouts centuries of
9 planning. It would diminish some of our
10 nation's most powerful landmarks, and its hasty
11 design, lack of consultation, and rush to
12 construction undermine the ideal of government
13 by and for the people.

14 And, finally, to highlight these risks,
15 we respectfully offer specific comments on the
16 project's proposed location, height, scale, and
17 design.

18 First, the proposed location. The
19 center of Memorial Circle is not an appropriate
20 place to construct a monument equivalent in
21 height to a 20-story building. The colossal
22 bulk of the proposed arch would block the

1 hallowed vista from the Lincoln Memorial, across
2 Arlington Memorial Bridge, to Arlington National
3 Cemetery, and Arlington House.

4 One of the American people's most
5 sacred landscapes, this visual link communicates
6 the magnitude of the Civil War, the obligation
7 its unimaginable cost imposes on all Americans,
8 and the aspirations of a post-Civil War
9 reconciliation in a new birth of freedom.

10 Although there have been earlier
11 proposals to place structures here, including
12 one for two memorial columns, these were modest.
13 The proposed columns would have framed the view
14 of Arlington House and the Lincoln Memorial, not
15 interrupted it. And after reflection, none of
16 these earlier proposals were built.

17 Second, with its height and scale, the
18 proposed arch would overwhelm neighboring
19 landmarks. It's double the size of the Lincoln
20 Memorial. It's also inconsistent with the
21 Height of Buildings Act that protects the plan
22 of the city.

1 Third, constructing this mammoth arch
2 at the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery
3 would brazenly disrespect the cemetery's solemn
4 character.

5 As the hallowed resting place of
6 400,000 veterans and their families, Arlington
7 Cemetery is a powerful reminder of American
8 military sacrifice, selfless service, and
9 national unity. The triumphal arch would
10 communicate a jarring indifference to the
11 sacrifice of our veterans, and mar the outward
12 view for military families and visitors.

13 Finally, the applicant has not yet
14 initiated review under Section 106 of the
15 National Historic Preservation Act.

16 This law clearly mandates that this
17 review be completed prior to approval.
18 Submitting these plans for collaborative review
19 would signal respect for the rule of law; it
20 would improve the project, and honestly, it
21 would help protect the President's legacy.

22 Our concerns are serious. We

1 respectfully urge you to withhold your approval
2 for this project until the legally required
3 Section 106 process has been completed, and so
4 that it has the benefit of the careful scrutiny
5 that our capital city, the American people, and
6 the President deserve.

7 The National Trust has decades of
8 experience collaborating with the NCPC, and we
9 remain ready to help. Thank you very much for
10 the opportunity to speak.

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Ms.
12 Quillen. Thank you, Ms. Quillen. Next, we have
13 Susan Madden, who I believe is joining us
14 virtually. Ms. Madden, are you with us?

15 MS. HOTTEL-COX: It seems Ms. Madden
16 has not joined, so we can move on to Brian
17 Green.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Brian Green. Mr.
19 Green, are you with us?

20 MR. GREEN: I am. Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr. Green.
22 You have three minutes to provide your

1 testimony. Please proceed whenever you're
2 ready.

3 MR. GREEN: Thank you. My name is
4 Brian Green. I'm an architectural historian in
5 Richmond, Virginia.

6 The Commission of Fine Arts has already
7 granted final approval for this proposal. This
8 Commission is reviewing it for the first time.

9 I want to spend my three minutes
10 explaining why that sequence is not a reason to
11 defer to CFA's judgment, but to exercise your
12 own.

13 The CFA voted on May 21 to approve the
14 proposed arch, despite receiving approximately
15 600 public letters, of which 99.5 percent were
16 in opposition, and without requiring full
17 schematic designs.

18 An FAA aerial hazard review required
19 for any structure exceeding 200 feet remains
20 unresolved. A federal lawsuit filed by Vietnam
21 War veterans under the Commemorative Works Act
22 of 1986 is actively pending.

1 This Commission is being asked to
2 provide concept approval within that same
3 incomplete legal and regulatory framework. The
4 CFA's vote does not discharge this commission's
5 independent responsibility.

6 The site is the problem that no design
7 adjustment can solve. Memorial Circle occupies
8 the midpoint of the commemorative axis of
9 McMillan Commission design to carry the symbolic
10 weight of National Reunion, the line from the
11 Lincoln Memorial across Arlington Memorial
12 Bridge to Arlington House above the National
13 Cemetery. The circle's openness was not a
14 vacancy awaiting a monument. It was a spatial
15 release the axis required.

16 The Women in Military Service for
17 America Memorial inscribes that axis in physical
18 form and achieves its presence without imposing
19 scale, and holds the sequence open for the
20 cemetery beyond.

21 A 250-foot arch, more than twice the
22 height of the Lincoln Memorial, would not enter

1 that sequence. It would end it. Consider what
2 250 feet means. It is the equivalent of an 18-
3 to 19-story commercial building, or a 25- to 27-
4 story residential tower.

5 At that height, this would be the
6 tallest classical triumphal arch in the world,
7 86 feet taller than the Arc de Triomphe in
8 Paris, and 53 feet taller than the closest
9 example, which has gone unmentioned today, the
10 Arch of Triumph in Pyongyang, North Korea.

11 These dimensions were not achieved by
12 analyzing the site. They were chosen to
13 correlate with America's 250th anniversary, and
14 to produce the largest triumphal arch ever
15 built. And this Commission is being asked to
16 place it at the entrance to Arlington National
17 Cemetery.

18 The revised design, made at the
19 President's request, retained the winged eagle
20 and golden eagles, while only removing the
21 ground level golden lions. The project
22 architect described the arch as not primarily a

1 monument dedicated to the dead, but to the
2 living.

3 Arlington Cemetery hosts hundreds of
4 funeral services every month. It is, by any
5 measure, dedicated primarily to the dead. This
6 approach to it from the bridge has seen, for
7 nearly a century, a deliberately restrained
8 approach. A price tag of at least \$100 million
9 does not change that.

10 The Commemorative Works Act requires
11 congressional authorization, an environmental
12 assessment, and a finding that the site is
13 appropriate. None of these conditions has been
14 met. The administration's claim that 1920s
15 legislation connected to Arlington Memorial
16 Bridge already provides the necessary authority
17 is not a serious substitute for that process.

18 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Time.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Mr. Green, I'm sorry,
20 your time's expired.

21 MR. GREEN: Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We appreciate you

1 joining us. Do any commissioners have any
2 questions for these five witnesses? Hearing and
3 seeing none, we'll proceed to our next five
4 witnesses, who are Jimi Shaughnessy, James
5 Lardner, Ralph Nix, David Parker, and Teresa
6 Lucas.

7 Jimi Shaughnessy, I believe, is with us
8 in person. I may be butchering the
9 pronunciation of your name. If I am, I
10 apologize, sir. You have three --

11 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Mr. Chairman?

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: You have -- yes,
13 Commissioner Dixon?

14 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yeah, I would just
15 -- I wanted to get Professor Green to -- if he
16 had another comment about particularly his
17 historical review of other arches.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay. Mr. Green, do
19 you want to address Commissioner Dixon's
20 question?

21 MR. GREEN: There we go. Can you hear
22 me, please?

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, we can hear you,
2 sir.

3 MR. GREEN: Wonderful. I'm sorry, Mr.
4 Dixon, I did not hear the question. I was
5 transitioning over from the other room.

6 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yeah, I just
7 wanted you to complete what you were saying,
8 more or less, and share some of your more views
9 about the other arches globally.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Mr. Green, can you
11 hear us? Did we lose him?

12 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Seems like he's
13 dropped. He's back.

14 MR. GREEN: I apologize, sir.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay. Commissioner
16 Dixon wanted you to finish your comments about
17 the relationship between this arch and other
18 historical arches. Is that correct,
19 Commissioner Dixon?

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: That's correct.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: The point I was

1 trying to make is that this is -- this would be
2 the tallest in the world. And the closest one
3 is the Triumphal Arch in Pyongyang, North Korea.
4 And my assertion is that it didn't -- we didn't
5 get to the height of this monument by studying
6 the site to determine what would be best, what
7 would be most appropriate, what would be most
8 honorific, but simply matching the number 250,
9 and -- which had the added benefit of being
10 taller than the one in North Korea.

11 Did that answer your question, sir?

12 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes. Was that
13 also part of your testimony that you wanted to
14 give when you were stopped?

15 MR. GREEN: Oh, no, no. I was -- I had
16 one line left, which was to say thank you very
17 much for the opportunity to speak here.

18 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Well, that's an
19 important line. Thank you very much for your
20 work, Professor --

21 MR. GREEN: Thank you, sir.

22 COMMISSIONER DIXON: -- and also for

1 your service with me on the NCPC as a
2 commissioner. Thank you.

3 MR. GREEN: Oh, you're welcome, sir.
4 It was a privilege.

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Professor, you're
6 very welcome, and thank you for joining us and
7 for clarifying that.

8 MR. GREEN: Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: If there's nothing
10 further for Mr. Green or the other witnesses we
11 just heard from, we'll proceed on to the next
12 group, starting with Mr. Shaughnessy.

13 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Thank you. The
14 pronunciation is correct, probably the first one
15 to do that.

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Oh. Oh, wow.

17 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Appreciate it. Thank
18 you.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Of course.

20 MR. SHAUGHNESSY: Good afternoon,
21 Chairman, Commissioners. My name is Jimi
22 Shaughnessy, and I'm here to voice my opposition

1 to the planned construction of the Memorial
2 Arch.

3 I speak as a private citizen, a Marine
4 Corps combat veteran, son of a veteran, grandson
5 of generations of combat veterans spanning
6 nearly 200 years.

7 Buried in Section 60 are my great-
8 grandfather and great-grandmother. He, a combat
9 veteran who led the charge on horseback against
10 Pancho Villa and would go on to serve in both
11 World Wars. She, a combat nurse who tended to
12 wounded young men during World War II.

13 They didn't question whether they
14 should serve, only how long they would be
15 permitted to. As a young Marine, I was
16 impressed by their example. Their commitment to
17 service and country became values I carried
18 through my enlistment and combat tour, a tour in
19 which I lost friends before I could learn their
20 full names.

21 For what died the sons and daughters of
22 America? Was it fame? Will your children line

1 up to be fodder for the vain? Now, potentially,
2 a gigantic arch will cast a shadow on my resting
3 family, friends, and leathernecks, as vanity is
4 rewarded with a momentous symbol of selfishness.

5 A 250-foot arch is a profound
6 disruption and insult at the entrance to sacred
7 ground. The space at the gates of Arlington
8 Cemetery exists as a threshold, a transitory
9 passage between service and burial.

10 To preserve this integrity, it must
11 remain open and unobstructed. Service members
12 and their families navigate many transitions
13 throughout a military career and beyond. The
14 transition out of the military is among the most
15 dangerous periods a service member will face.

16 That final transition from service to
17 eternal rest is not theirs to manage, it is
18 ours. It falls to us, the living, to receive
19 our wounded and our dead with the highest esteem
20 and care. An arch is not what they need. Who
21 is the arch for? Is it for me? The President
22 has already answered that question. And yes,

1 it's for him.

2 This arch would obstruct the sight line
3 of the Arlington Memorial Bridge, a symbol of
4 unity and reconciliation connecting those
5 divided by war and grief. Rather than honoring
6 that unity, it deepens a wound that has not
7 fully healed.

8 Hasty construction is no path to a
9 monument worthy of this nation. Previous
10 memorials were shaped by extensive public input
11 and rigorous agency review, ensuring that the
12 final design reflected our shared values. This
13 proposal has had neither.

14 Others have already raised the serious
15 safety hazards of placing a monument in a
16 roundabout at a high traffic intersection,
17 consistent with this administration's pattern of
18 placing pedestrians in harm's way.

19 Funding has been stripped from the
20 Department of Veterans Affairs, the National
21 Park Service, and Department of Interior,
22 degrading the capacity of these very agencies

1 that provide direct services to veterans and
2 their families.

3 If we are to truly support the men and
4 women who serve in uniform, direct this money to
5 those agencies. How will this project be
6 funded? With our tax dollars? With the
7 redirected entrance fees from parks across the
8 country? Anonymous donations flowing into
9 undisclosed funds?

10 We deserve an answer. No one needs
11 this arch. It's inappropriate, unnecessary,
12 insulting. It's a waste of our land, our time,
13 and our money. If the President wants his own
14 arch, he can sift through the rubble of the East
15 Wing demolition piling up along the banks of the
16 Potomac and build one himself. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.
18 Shaughnessy, and thank you for your service to
19 our country and for your family's service. Next
20 up, we have James Lardner. Mr. Lardner,
21 whenever you're ready, you have three minutes,
22 and please proceed.

1 MR. LARDNER: Thank you. I want to say
2 a word about one of Washington's great glories,
3 the Lincoln Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial in
4 general, and the Lincoln Memorial after dark.

5 I've lived here most of my adult life.
6 The sight of the Lincoln Memorial in the
7 nighttime with the wondrous glow that it casts
8 into the sky is a spectacle that never fails to
9 move me. Others, including veterans and family
10 members, have pointed out that the proposed arch
11 would alter the character of Arlington National
12 Cemetery, that it would interrupt a sight line
13 meant to forever symbolize the reunification of
14 North and South after the Civil War, that its
15 massive size and winged figures on top evoke the
16 celebratory architecture of dictatorships --
17 democracies.

18 Those are powerful considerations.
19 Beyond them, this gigantic structure would block
20 our view of the Lincoln Memorial day and night
21 from most places on the Arlington side of the
22 river, and with its decorative floodlighting and

1 the FAA-mandated -- it would make the Lincoln
2 Memorial in the nighttime a dimmer and less
3 striking sight from almost every direction.

4 By conferring your approval, you would
5 diminish something precious in order to add
6 something -- unplanned and uncalled for. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.
9 Lardner. Next up, we have Ralph Nix, who I
10 believe is also in person. Mr. Nix, you have
11 three minutes to provide your testimony, and
12 please proceed whenever you're ready.

13 MR. NIX: Thank you, sir. Okay, thank
14 you, sir. I did serve in the United States Navy
15 as a hospital corpsman. I've had experiences
16 that a lot of people in this room have not had.
17 I've seen our soldiers, airmen, sailors take
18 their last breath. I've seen families break
19 down outside the ICU rooms, mothers, fathers,
20 grandparents, children, wives. A lot of these
21 are buried in the cemetery.

22 And, you know, for me, it's not about

1 right or wrong. It's not about left or right.
2 It's not about the height. It's not about
3 whether Congress approved it or not. It's about
4 the people that's in that cemetery that cannot
5 speak today because they died serving our
6 country.

7 And it's about morals. It's about
8 respect and disrespect. And to me, this is a
9 disrespect to those who have given their lives
10 up for this country in World War I, World War II
11 -- and now Iran.

12 So for me, it's -- you know, Congress
13 probably should approve this. Somebody needs to
14 start respecting people who have given their
15 lives to this country. You know -- because I'm
16 going to use my three minutes. I found the
17 comment of the St. Louis Arch appalling. This
18 is not St. Louis.

19 This is Washington, D.C., and you're
20 wanting to block some of my comrades who gave
21 the ultimate sacrifice. Has anybody asked the
22 families of these service members -- about this?

1 This is a disgrace. And thank you for your
2 time.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr. Nix,
4 and thank you for your service to our country.
5 Next up, we have David Parker, who I believe is
6 with us virtually. Mr. Parker, you have three
7 minutes to provide your testimony and you can
8 proceed whenever you're ready.

9 MR. PARKER: Thank you, Chairman
10 Scharf, and Commission members. I am David
11 Parker, practicing architect for 35 years and a
12 fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

13 As a preservationist, I appreciate your
14 thoughtful deliberation of the current proposal.
15 The location between Arlington Cemetery and the
16 Lincoln Memorial at Memorial Bridge is a
17 National Register-listed site, which, as noted
18 in your own executive director's project
19 summary, quote, was designed to create a
20 physical and symbolic connection between the
21 North and South, close quote.

22 The overriding significance of this

1 physical relationship and the viewshed between
2 these solemn landmarks cannot be diminished and
3 should not be impeded or obscured. The height
4 of the proposed arch exceeds Washington's Height
5 of Buildings Act of 1910, which generally limits
6 structures to a maximum of 130 feet, and its
7 proximity to Reagan National Airport is of
8 serious concern since the FAA must approve any
9 structures higher than 200 feet within two miles
10 of a major airport.

11 Your report observes that the proposed
12 arch is 3,000 feet from Reagan National Airport,
13 substantially closer than two miles, and in the
14 immediate flight path of two major runways
15 there.

16 The immense size of the proposed arch
17 has been touted by the applicant as a
18 requirement in order to be larger than any other
19 triumphal arch in the world, as though physical
20 scale and dominance is more essential than
21 meaning or appropriateness of its scale to this
22 very specific context and setting.

1 The symbolism of the proposed arch
2 itself is contradictory and incongruent in this
3 place. Triumphal arches throughout history have
4 been built to, quote, symbolize specific
5 military victory and political power, or to
6 honor victorious generals and emperors while
7 acting as state propaganda, close quote.

8 This historical association is
9 inconsistent with the vague justifications
10 currently being offered for this immense
11 structure.

12 The purpose of this arch, according to
13 the applicant, is, quote, to celebrate the
14 triumphs of the American people, close quote,
15 but the overriding solemnity of this specific
16 location is ignored by this generalized trope.

17 The Commemorative Works Act signed into
18 law by President Ronald Reagan on November 14th,
19 1986, requires that the proposal not interfere
20 with, encroach on, or -- an existing
21 commemorative work and, to the maximum extent
22 practicable, that it protects open space,

1 existing public use, and cultural and natural
2 resources.

3 The pair of tall columns cited as
4 precedent that were once suggested but never
5 built here have been used as justification for
6 the height and also for why the current proposal
7 doesn't need congressional approval.

8 Note the historic image behind me
9 showing those columns compared to the present
10 arch. Based upon historical drawings, those
11 columns were only 14 feet in diameter and were
12 272 feet apart, as opposed to the present arch
13 itself, which has a width of 170 feet and a
14 depth of 90 feet. Clearly, the columns were
15 never built, would not have affected views,
16 however, the immense arch most definitely will.

17 Besides your approval, pursuant to the
18 Commemorative Works Act, the Triumphal Arch must
19 be approved by Congress. Thank you for your
20 thoughtful consideration of this highly
21 consequential proposal.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.

1 Parker. Next up, we have Teresa Lucas, who I
2 believe is also here with us virtually. She is
3 representing the Walnut Street Historical
4 Society and therefore will have five minutes to
5 provide testimony. Ms. Lucas, are you with us?

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: I don't believe Ms.
7 Lucas has joined the meeting, so we can move on
8 to questions.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: With that, do any
10 commissioners have questions for any of this
11 previous group of witnesses, starting with Mr.
12 Shaughnessy?

13 COMMISSIONER CASH: Mr. Chairman?

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, Commissioner.

15 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yeah, I actually
16 wanted to go back to Mr. Parker, because I
17 thought his background image was actually very
18 informative, because we've heard a lot of the
19 talk of these -- the former columns that were
20 supposed to go there --

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: The four columns.

22 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yeah, the columns,

1 and I think that Mr. Parker's background image
2 showed that, so I have a couple questions
3 actually for Mr. Parker, if he's still online.

4 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Mr. Parker, are you
5 still with us, or can we bring him back or
6 -- I don't know how the system works exactly.

7 MR. PARKER: I'm here. Can you hear
8 me?

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We can hear you. I
10 think Commissioner Cash wants to see your
11 diagram.

12 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yeah. So this is
13 perfect. So this is the first that I've seen
14 this at least superimposed with the proposed
15 arch. Could you talk a little bit more about
16 the size and the scale? I think you said they
17 were 14 feet in diameter, but could you talk a
18 little bit about the size and scale of what was
19 proposed there under this former permit,
20 compared to what we're looking at here?

21 MR. PARKER: Yes, I'd be happy to. The
22 columns, and from the period, the historic

1 drawings, they were 14 feet 6 inches in diameter
2 and 166 feet high, and they were not -- they
3 were beyond the Memorial Bridge, and they were
4 272 feet apart.

5 And that really has not been
6 recognized, the fact that they didn't block
7 anything, either in their dimension or in their
8 placement.

9 And the other thing that I would note,
10 apropos of that, is that if you compare them
11 with the arch, the arch is 170 feet wide and 90
12 feet deep. Compare the mass of that with a
13 column that is only 14 and a half feet wide.

14 COMMISSIONER CASH: So -- and you said
15 the columns were more than 270 or something like
16 that feet apart from each other. So I was up at
17 Arlington House this morning and looking down
18 the hill and looking at some of the graphics
19 that we had in the slide deck.

20 The archway seems to really blot out
21 from up there the view of the Lincoln Memorial,
22 but I'm getting the sense that from this

1 picture, the two columns are far enough apart
2 that if you were up at Arlington House, I'm
3 guessing it would more likely kind of frame the
4 Lincoln Memorial than block out the image. Is
5 that fair to say?

6 MR. PARKER: That's absolutely correct.
7 And that's what they were intended to do, to
8 frame the view.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Mr. Parker, I'm just
10 curious. The 1924 commission report makes
11 reference to, I think it's called the July 9th
12 column in Paris, or the July column in Paris. I
13 know that that column has sort of an interior
14 staircase. Do you know if that was a piece of
15 the original design of these two columns, or
16 were they just closed off architectural features
17 or what were they supposed to be like as
18 planned?

19 MR. PARKER: The drawings that I've
20 seen didn't show any internal staircases in
21 them. Yeah.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, sir. Are

1 there any other questions for Mr. Parker?

2 Hearing none, thank you again, sir.

3 And with that, we'll proceed to our
4 next five witnesses, who are Paul Romano,
5 Victoria Fox, Stephen Rhodes, Shady Migally, and
6 David Weinberg. Mr. Romano, I believe, is here
7 with us in person. Sir, you have three minutes
8 to provide your testimony, and please proceed
9 whenever you're ready.

10 MR. ROMANO: If we can get the
11 microphone to work, right? Is it working?

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Loud and clear.

13 MR. ROMANO: Okay. My name is Paul
14 Anthony Romano III. I live in Springfield,
15 Virginia, and I'm a Vietnam veteran. I was a
16 medic in Vietnam. I flew medevac in air rescue.

17 I've never protested for or against
18 anything in my life, but now at 76, I'm stepping
19 forward. I raised my right hand and swore to
20 this document here in 1968, the Constitution of
21 the United States, to protect it against all
22 foreign and domestic enemies, and would bear

1 allegiance, true faith and allegiance, to the
2 same that I will obey the orders of the
3 President of the United States and the officers
4 above me, according to regulations and the
5 Uniform Code of Military Justice.

6 Here today, I stand in strong
7 opposition to the building of the arch at
8 Memorial Circle. It is nothing more than an ego
9 arch for the current occupant of the White
10 House. It's a slap in the face to every veteran
11 who is laid at rest, not only at Arlington, but
12 every national cemetery around the world.

13 In 1994, I had the great privilege and
14 honor to attend a reunion for all the veterans
15 who fought in Italy in World War II, my stepdad
16 being one of them, who also received the Silver
17 Star, two bronze medals for valor, and was a POW
18 for a short period of time.

19 I spent 16 days with the greatest
20 generation of men and women who were called and
21 they stood the watch. Just like all the
22 individuals that are laid to rest at Arlington

1 National Cemetery, they all stood the watch.

2 I have personal friends there, guys I
3 grew up with, went to high school with, junior
4 high school here in Arlington, guys like Andy
5 Castelda, Sean Mashburn, Jerry Lockridge, John
6 W. Kennedy, Roger Holyfield, and Butcher Hall.
7 These young men that I grew up with, but would
8 never have the chance to grow old with them, and
9 someday I will be laid to rest as well at
10 Arlington.

11 Only Congress can approve the building
12 of this arch. This administration has bypassed
13 every legal process in any project they have
14 wanted to do in Washington, by adding the
15 current occupant's name to the Kennedy Center,
16 tearing down the East Wing of the White House,
17 which they said they wouldn't touch, to build
18 the big beautiful ballroom. They were only
19 going to use private donations. And a certain
20 member of the Senate wants to pass a \$1 billion
21 legislation to add funds to the big beautiful
22 ballroom.

1 It is time to put this madness to stop.
2 When the legislation was introduced in Congress
3 for the first time for the World War II
4 Memorial, it was 1987. Then similar legislation
5 was brought forth in '89, '91, and '93. In '93,
6 President Clinton signed Public Law 103-32,
7 authorizing the American Battle Monument
8 Commission to establish a World War II Memorial
9 in the District.

10 Not to bore you with a lot of other
11 dates, but from 1987 until November 11, 2000,
12 before groundbreaking started. It took 13 years
13 to approve it, and then took another four years,
14 and it was dedicated on May 29th, 2004. So from
15 the time the first legislation to its dedication
16 was 17 years, not a few months.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Mr. Romano, I'm
18 sorry, but your time has expired, sir.

19 MR. ROMANO: Thank you. I appreciate
20 it. It's time to stake a stand, ladies and
21 gentlemen. Stand the watch and turn the arch
22 down.

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you for your
2 testimony, Mr. Romano, and thank you, as I've
3 said to others, for your service to our country.
4 Next up, I believe we have Victoria Fox, who's
5 with us virtually.

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: I don't believe
7 Victoria Fox or Stephen Rhodes, our next
8 witness, are here, so I believe we can move on
9 to Shady Migally.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I don't know whether
11 Shady Migally is -- Mr. Migally, are you there?

12 MR. MIGALLY: Yes, I'm here.

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay. You have three
14 minutes to provide your testimony. Please
15 proceed whenever you're ready.

16 MR. MIGALLY: Good afternoon, Chairman
17 and Commissioners. My name is Shady Migally. I
18 am an American architect and founder of ME
19 Innovations, with more than 22 years of
20 professional experience in architectural design
21 across multiple countries.

22 I want to begin by saying that I fully

1 support the vision of creating a monumental arch
2 to celebrate America's 250th anniversary, but
3 not in its current form. It would be a missed
4 opportunity to rely on copying historical
5 European landmarks, especially the Arc de
6 Triomphe in Paris, and then add a winged statue
7 to achieve a height of 250 feet.

8 We are a nation of innovators and
9 leaders, capable of creating our own history and
10 completing what our ancestors began.

11 I believe this historic opportunity
12 deserves a uniquely American solution that
13 reflects our identity, culture, symbolism,
14 innovation, and leadership.

15 As an architect motivated by patriotism
16 and professional commitment, I developed and
17 submitted an alternative American design that
18 responds directly to the Commission of Fine
19 Arts' recent feedback and public concerns. The
20 proposal preserves the historic sight lines and
21 visual relationship among Lincoln Memorial,
22 Arlington House, and Arlington National Cemetery

1 through a more open architectural form that
2 frames these landmarks rather than competing
3 with them.

4 It also improves visitor circulation
5 and safety through dedicated drop-off areas and
6 short underground access to reduce conflict with
7 traffic, while enhancing the public experience
8 with museum spaces and panoramic rooftop
9 observation towers.

10 Most importantly, the design creates a
11 meaningful civic tradition. Every July 4th at
12 noon, sunlight accesses through a calibrated
13 oculus in the arch roof and illuminates our
14 stone datum on the ground, inscribed with words
15 from the Declaration of Independence.

16 In that moment, architecture, history,
17 science, and national memory come together in a
18 shared public experience, a renewed reminder of
19 the ideals on which this nation was founded, and
20 what Lincoln later described as a new birth of
21 freedom.

22 This would become a global event,

1 drawing the world's attention to this historic
2 moment every year, one that honors our past,
3 inspires our future, and gives the American
4 people a civic tradition that belongs uniquely
5 to them, and a source of pride for generations
6 to come.

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.
9 Migally. I wanted to, also, thank you for -- I
10 know you sent a few hard copies of your proposal
11 to us here at NCPC. I'll make sure that we
12 deliver at least one of those to the project
13 team.

14 I reviewed it with a number of my
15 fellow commissioners early, earlier today, and I
16 appreciate the obvious attention that you paid
17 to -- or the attention that went into creating
18 that proposal.

19 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Mr. Chairman?

20 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes. Commissioner
21 Dixon?

22 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Is there a chance

1 we can share an image of that with the -- with
2 us today? Can he share an image of that?

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Mr. Migally, do you
4 have the ability to bring up a digital image of
5 your proposal right now? Or maybe you could
6 email us the deck that you sent us, and we can
7 circulate that to the Commission.

8 MR. MIGALLY: I can --

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: We're not able to
10 share during the meeting, but we -- I believe,
11 Mr. Migally, you shared the image with your
12 testimony, and it is already online.

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Oh, great.

14 MS. HOTTEL-COX: So individual
15 commissioners can view it there.

16 COMMISSIONER DIXON: It would be useful
17 if the public could see it. It's a public
18 forum. The public should be able to see it, I
19 would think.

20 MS. HOTTEL-COX: It's on the website.
21 The public can see it on the website, as well.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Meghan's saying it's

1 publicly accessible, Commissioner Dixon. Is
2 that sufficient or --

3 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I'm not happy with
4 it, but that seems to be the direction. If I
5 were making the presentation, I would have had
6 an image behind me, around me. It sounds like
7 it's very creative, and it would be interesting
8 for everybody to see at one time, rather than be
9 driven to a computer to have to look it up and
10 see it but --

11 MR. MIGALLY: I have it, and I tried to
12 put it as a background, but I see that it has
13 more details that should be shown directly with
14 you. And I can share any of this presentation,
15 or just an image of that design, if you would
16 like.

17 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Well, yeah, I
18 think we can get it. I can get it. I know I
19 can get it, but the public is looking at this,
20 will not see it, and it's too bad. No matter
21 how detailed it is, at least the image would
22 have been good to show but I'm not critical of

1 you. Thank you for your testimony, and your
2 effort. Thank you.

3 MR. MIGALLY: Thank you. Appreciate
4 it.

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.
6 Migally, and thank you, Commissioner Dixon.
7 David Weinberg, I believe, is next, and I
8 believe Mr. Weinberg is with us in person. Mr.
9 Weinberg, you have three minutes to provide your
10 testimony, and please proceed whenever you're
11 ready.

12 MR. WEINBERG: Thank you very much.
13 Can you hear me?

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

15 MR. WEINBERG: Good afternoon, members
16 of the Commission. My name is David Weinberg,
17 and I am a resident of Washington, D.C.

18 I am here today to strongly oppose the
19 proposed 250-foot United States Triumphal Arch
20 at Memorial Circle. This project is a radical,
21 unprecedented mistake that threatens
22 Washington's historic skyline, bypasses

1 democratic oversight, and creates immediate
2 public hazards.

3 The most urgent issue is the sheer
4 visual disruption, as many have stated already.
5 At 250 feet tall, this arch will completely
6 dwarf the 99-foot Lincoln Memorial. It destroys
7 the sacred, quiet access connecting Arlington
8 National Cemetery to the Lincoln Tribute,
9 inserting a loud visual barrier into a landscape
10 meant for solemn reflection.

11 This ignores a core lesson from the
12 historic McMillan Plan. Over a century ago,
13 planners intentionally rejected massive entrance
14 columns on the Virginia side of the bridge,
15 specifically to protect the quiet harmony of
16 this very skyline.

17 Compounding the design flaw is a deeply
18 flawed process. The project deliberately avoids
19 standard public input and historic preservation
20 reviews. It faces active federal lawsuits from
21 veterans and direct opposition from lawmakers
22 because it circumvents the democratic oversight

1 required of our public spaces.

2 Finally, we cannot ignore the severe
3 public practical hazards. Memorial Circle is a
4 vital high-speed traffic roundabout for tens of
5 thousands of daily commuters. Placing a major
6 tourist attraction here without pedestrian
7 safety studies will cause severe gridlock and
8 put millions of visitors in direct physical
9 danger.

10 We must not trade a century of
11 carefully cultivated civic harmony for short-
12 term monumentalism. I urge the Commission to
13 reject this proposal. Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you. Thank
15 you, Mr. Weinberg. Do any commissioners have
16 any questions for these five witnesses or the
17 previous group of witnesses? Hearing none,
18 thank you all very much. We'll move on at this
19 point to our next set of witnesses, who are
20 Holly Fletcher, Elizabeth Finn, Steven Eubank,
21 Robert Harris, and Lawrence MacDonald.

22 Ms. Fletcher, I believe, is here with

1 us in person. Ma'am, you have three minutes.
2 Please proceed whenever you're ready.

3 MS. FINN: Thank you. My name is Holly
4 Berkeley Fletcher. I hold a Ph.D. in American
5 history, specializing in the Civil War.

6 I strongly object to the building of
7 the proposed arch because it is an affront to
8 the history and meaning of the site. In 1864,
9 General Montgomery Meigs made a deliberate
10 decision to bury Union dead at the Arlington
11 estate of his former friend and mentor, Robert
12 E. Lee, whom he considered a traitor to the
13 United States, and he was.

14 Meigs wanted to send a message both to
15 Lee personally and to the nation about the
16 rebellion's high moral and human cost. Decades
17 later, the McMillan Commission approved a long
18 overdue plan for Washington based on the
19 original design of Charles Pierre L'Enfant, who
20 notably is, also, buried at Arlington.

21 The Lincoln Memorial was purposely
22 placed in the direct sight line of Lee's home

1 and the graves of the first Union soldiers
2 buried there, with the memorial bridge
3 connecting the two as a symbol of Union
4 reconciliation and the high price of freedom.

5 This site was never meant to be
6 triumphal, but rather somber, reflective, and
7 profound, much like Lincoln's second inaugural
8 and Gettysburg addresses, which are etched into
9 the walls of his memorial.

10 In light of other actions taken by this
11 administration, I can't help but conclude the
12 arch is part of an intentional revision of
13 history in which the gravity of insurrection is
14 minimized, the violence of right supremacy is
15 sanitized, and the anniversary of our hard-won
16 democracy becomes an occasion for cowardly
17 avoidance of the painful lessons of the past.

18 Our triumph as a nation isn't
19 represented by an overcompensating, imperial-
20 looking arch. Our triumph is and ever will be
21 embodied only by our commitment to becoming a
22 more perfect Union. The accurate, reverent

1 remembrance of the tragedy of the Civil War and
2 the racial oppression that caused it, as well as
3 our more general allegiance to the truth, is
4 vital to our republic's endurance.

5 I am, also, a former CIA analyst
6 working on Africa who was raised in Kenya under
7 a dictatorial regime. This arch reminds me more
8 of the bombastic, self-aggrandizing displays of
9 the African strongmen I have observed than the
10 expression of a mature, dignified democracy
11 whose greatness has been proven over time
12 through the fulfillment of and fidelity to its
13 founding principles.

14 Thank you for this opportunity.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Ms.
16 Fletcher, and thank you for your service in our
17 intelligence community. Elizabeth Finn is next.
18 Ms. Finn is representing the Third Act DMV.

19 Ma'am, you'll have five minutes to
20 provide your testimony, and please proceed
21 whenever you're ready.

22 MS. FINN: Thank you. Can you guys

1 hear me?

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yeah.

3 MS. FINN: My name is Elizabeth Finn.
4 You can call me Lisa, and I'm part of Third Act
5 DMV. It's an elder group that's focused on
6 democracy and climate. I live in Virginia,
7 Alexandria.

8 We're folks that skew older. We're in
9 our third act, so to speak. We are made up of
10 veterans, historians, teachers, nurses, doctors,
11 Peace Corps volunteers, artists, and everything
12 in between.

13 And we're all agreed that this is not
14 the time to build anything in Memorial Circle,
15 and in particularly a monstrous arch that is
16 basically a vanity project of one man who acts
17 like a king.

18 If you are standing on Memorial Circle,
19 and I've stood there quite a lot in the past few
20 months, the proposed grassy area for the arch,
21 you are standing on Piscataway and Powhatan
22 land.

1 On one side of the bridge is Arlington
2 Cemetery. On this side of the bridge is
3 Arlington Cemetery where many buried there died
4 fighting fascism during World War II.

5 On the other side of the Memorial
6 Bridge is the Lincoln Memorial, a memorial to
7 the president who declared that all men are
8 created equal.

9 So many people here have already spoken
10 the best they can about why the arch should not
11 be built. All the architects here have made
12 very good compelling arguments of this, and we
13 do not know where the money will be coming about
14 this -- to build this arch. If private
15 donations, corporations hoping to do more
16 business with the government will gladly grease
17 the palm of the President, pay their way, and
18 reap benefits from no-bid contracts and no more
19 lawsuits against them. This is not the American
20 way.

21 If the money comes from national park
22 entrance fees, which we know some of that money

1 is going to the pool, the reflecting pool, there
2 already is a shortage of park rangers in our
3 most beautiful and popular parks in the country,
4 and there's a lot of maintenance that still
5 needs to be done.

6 Short-term gain, replacing long-term,
7 and for what. And if the money comes from the
8 budget, let us say Medicaid and food stamps,
9 research funding for all kinds of things would
10 be eliminated. How does that look to folks
11 struggling just to put food on the table,
12 really.

13 Our country is not made of one man, it
14 is made of people. We do not need this
15 monstrosity of an arch that is built -- to be
16 built. Thank you for listening, and I hope you
17 all make the right decision to not approve this
18 arch.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Ms. Finn.
20 Next up, we have Steven Eubank, who I believe is
21 in person, as well. Mr. Eubank, you have three
22 minutes to provide your testimony, and please

1 proceed whenever you're ready.

2 MR. EUBANK: I'm here today
3 representing my family and close relatives,
4 seven of whom would, I'm sure, be here if they
5 weren't interred in the hallowed ground of
6 Arlington National Cemetery, along with more
7 than 400,000 others who serve their country
8 defending our freedom and democracy.

9 The proposed monumental arch will be a
10 monumental disgrace to the nation and a
11 monstrous insult to the heroes in the cemetery.
12 I hope those of you foisting it on us will be
13 haunted forever by the ghosts of these 400,000.

14 Like the majority of the planning
15 commission, I'm not an architect, but my
16 architect brother says, quote, architecturally,
17 it's so awful it doesn't merit an architectural
18 critique. It couldn't possibly be more
19 unimaginative or unoriginal or uncreative.

20 At nearly double the maximum height
21 allowed under D.C.'s Height of Buildings Act,
22 it's intentionally designed to obstruct views of

1 the Lincoln Memorial, but highlight the Lee
2 Mansion, the former home of the military leader
3 of a war against the United States that was
4 fought to maintain some people's claims that
5 they owned other humans.

6 Maybe you don't realize that Congress
7 established the Lee Mansion Memorial to honor
8 his role in, quote, promoting peace and reunion
9 following the Civil War, and that Memorial
10 Bridge was built to be a literal bridge spanning
11 the gap between Lincoln and Lee and between us
12 as Americans to signify that we could heal the
13 wounds of that war.

14 I agree that it's a good idea to create
15 a monument to commemorate the 250th anniversary
16 of our founding, but this is not the way to do
17 it.

18 There's been no public input, no
19 considered planning. The majority of Americans
20 don't want this thing. How does that befit a
21 democratic nation's 250th anniversary.

22 In my written remarks, I've noted the

1 planning and completion dates for monuments on
2 the Mall. Here are my take-home messages from
3 that.

4 Presidents don't get to build monuments
5 to themselves, nor do they define their own
6 legacies. Instead, we as a nation have clear
7 processes to decide who to honor and how.
8 Planning and construction takes decades. Why
9 the rush in this case. Because, as Trump
10 himself admitted, this is not a monument for the
11 nation, but for himself.

12 There's no one less deserving of a
13 memorial than the man who perpetrates fraud on
14 our courts in order to avoid \$100 million in
15 back taxes and to pay off insurrectionists for
16 loyalty to him above country.

17 There's no one less deserving of a
18 memorial in this spot than the man who tried to
19 use graves of those he calls suckers and losers
20 as the backdrop for a campaign ad.

21 There's no one less deserving to be
22 honored with a statue of Lady Liberty than a man

1 who wants to erase history, including the
2 stories of those buried at Arlington who were
3 immigrants, who held at least 39 distinct sets
4 of religious beliefs, and who were of all races,
5 genders, and skin colors.

6 Let him build it at Mar-a-Lago, and
7 I'll pay for a plaque to go with it, reading, my
8 name is Ozymandias, king of kings. Look on my
9 works ye mighty and despair. Or, even more
10 appropriate, give him a bouncy castle in
11 Memorial Circle that captures his total
12 disrespect for this country and its people. We
13 can deflate and remove it the day he leaves
14 office at no cost to the taxpayer.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.
16 Eubank. Next up we have Robert Harris, who I
17 believe is in person, as well. Mr. Harris, you
18 have three minutes whenever you're ready to
19 proceed.

20 MR. HARRIS: Hello, can you hear me?

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We can hear you, sir.

22 MR. HARRIS: Oh, never been in front of

1 people like this before in my life. I want to
2 thank the Commission for letting all these
3 wonderful people come and speak.

4 I have never done this before, but I've
5 put up a lot of stuff in the last six or seven
6 years, eight years, and this ground that he
7 wants to build this monument on is so sacred,
8 it's not to be there.

9 I say with that gentlemen let's move it
10 to Mar-a-Lago, and we'll put it there on top of
11 his pool, and maybe he'll like it there better.
12 But thank you so much for not letting this
13 happen, because I'm counting on you not to let
14 this happen. I'm done.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr.
16 Harris. Next up we have Lawrence MacDonald.
17 Mr. MacDonald, I believe, is here in person as
18 well. Sir, you have three minutes to provide
19 your testimony whenever you're ready.

20 MR. MACDONALD: Three minutes.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Three minutes, that's
22 what I said.

1 MR. MACDONALD: No, it just started at
2 two.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Oh, I'm sorry, I
4 didn't see that. You have three minutes.
5 Whenever you're ready, sir.

6 MR. MACDONALD: Lawrence MacDonald, I'm
7 a volunteer with Third Act, a movement of old
8 Americans working to protect democracy and a
9 livable planet. As elders, we are deeply
10 concerned about the legacy we will leave to
11 those who come after us, our children, our
12 grandchildren, and future generations.

13 I invite each of you commissioners to
14 think about your own legacy as you consider your
15 vote.

16 This is not the first time that an
17 autocrat has tried to build a massive arch at
18 the heart of a global capital. Hitler first
19 sketched his idea for a massive, triumphal arch
20 in 1926. In 1939, Hitler's favorite architect
21 presented him with a scale model for his 50th
22 birthday.

1 Photographs of Hitler admiring his
2 model and Trump showing off the model of his
3 arch are eerily similar. As you can see from
4 these drawings, the resemblance is indeed
5 striking.

6 Both were designed to dwarf their
7 surroundings and to be several times bigger than
8 existing imperial arches in London, Paris, and
9 Rome. The resemblance is not a coincidence.
10 Trump and his ex-wife Ivanka have both said that
11 he once kept a book of Hitler's speeches beside
12 his bed.

13 There's another strange similarity
14 between these two arches that will ever be
15 built. Plans for Hitler's arch were scrapped
16 when the Nazis were defeated in 1945.
17 Thankfully, the end of Trump's reign will be
18 less dramatic and less bloody but one way or
19 another, his time as our nation's leader will
20 end well before this monstrous arch can be
21 completed.

22 Given the overwhelming public

1 opposition to the arch, it is very unlikely that
2 his successor will decide to pursue the project.

3 The question before you commissioners
4 today then is not the future of the arch. It's
5 your personal legacy. Each of you will decide
6 how you want to be remembered. If you vote in
7 favor of the arch, you will cast your lot on the
8 wrong side of history. Your friends and your
9 relatives, your children and your children's
10 children will be ashamed of your action.

11 You can avoid this fate by voting
12 against the arch. This will not be without some
13 cost to you. Most of you sit on the Commission
14 because you were appointed by Donald Trump. He
15 will probably fire you. He might call you a
16 mean name. I urge you to grow a spine. These
17 consequences are tiny compared to the price paid
18 by many others who have stood up to tyranny,
19 including the 400,000 Americans who died
20 fighting fascists in World War II, thousands of
21 whom are buried in Arlington Cemetery.

22 Be brave. As you decide how to cast

1 your vote, I urge you to reflect upon your
2 legacy and vote against this monstrous fascist
3 arch.

4 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Isn't it nice that
5 the gentleman thanked the soldiers who died just
6 so that he can call his countrymen fascists and
7 Nazis. That's a shameful display. A shameful
8 display. But you know what, you have the right
9 to do it.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
11 Commissioner Blair. Do any commissioners have
12 any questions for this previous set of
13 witnesses? Hearing none, we'll move on to the
14 next set. Those are John Ayers, Rebecca Miller,
15 Kevin Wheeler, Adrian Liaw, and Patricia
16 McGuire.

17 Again, excuse my pronunciations if any
18 of those were inaccurate. Mr. Ayers is here
19 with us in person. Sir, you have three minutes.
20 Please proceed whenever you're ready.

21 MR. AYERS: Thank you. Can you hear
22 me?

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We can hear you.

2 MR. AYERS: Okay, thanks. This is a
3 lesson in signing up early because I have
4 virtually nothing to add to what's been spoken
5 so eloquently and powerfully here today in
6 opposition of the arch.

7 Even after going down many rabbit
8 holes, I appreciate what you said, Mr. Chairman,
9 about the rabbit holes you've been going down.
10 I've done the same thing for the last few weeks,
11 trying to educate myself about this.

12 So, I'll try to stick to just a few
13 things that I've learned since others have
14 spoken so well.

15 One is to focus on the Comprehensive
16 Plan for the national capital. The Commission
17 itself has described that plan as, quote, the
18 decision-making framework for commission actions
19 on plans, proposals, and policies submitted to -
20 - for its review.

21 From my interpretation, and I'm not an
22 architect, the Comprehensive Plan contains at

1 least 12 numbered policies that call for
2 rejection of this proposal. That includes,
3 they're all initials, but they're all publicly
4 available, UDB1, B3, B4, B5, HPA2, D3, A1, A2,
5 POSA1, A2, C5, and C6.

6 In fact, as the applicants have
7 documented in their own materials, they violate
8 several of these policies by demonstrating a
9 visual incursion into a formally designated,
10 nationally registered, what's known as a
11 preeminent watershed.

12 One last principle that I think is
13 relevant here today is in the historic
14 preservation element of the plan, and it states
15 that, quote, the commission recognizes that
16 sustained citizen engagement in the public
17 process is fundamental to the broad acceptance
18 of preservation decisions.

19 The public comment before the
20 Commission of Fine Arts on this proposal and the
21 comments here today, and in other places,
22 reflect near-unanimous opposition from the

1 citizens of Washington and elsewhere and others.

2 That record is part of the
3 administrative history of this proposal, and the
4 Commission should weigh it accordingly, not as a
5 popularity contest, but as evidence that the
6 broad acceptance the plan identifies as
7 fundamental to legitimate historic preservation
8 decisions has not been achieved. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr. Ayers.
10 Next up, I believe we have Rebecca Miller,
11 representing the D.C. Preservation League, who's
12 with us virtually. Ms. Miller, can you hear me?

13 MS. MILLER: I can. Thank you,
14 Chairman.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: You have five minutes
16 whenever you're ready to proceed, and please go
17 ahead.

18 MS. MILLER: Thank you very much. Good
19 afternoon, Chairman and members of the
20 Commission. My name is Rebecca Miller. I am
21 the Executive Director of the D.C. Preservation
22 League.

1 We were founded in 1971, and we've
2 spent over five decades advocating for the
3 protection of Washington's historic and built
4 environment. Thank you for the opportunity to
5 testify today.

6 I'd, also, like to note that I am the
7 daughter of a Vietnam veteran who is buried in
8 Arlington National Cemetery. He received a
9 Purple Heart and a Combat Infantry Badge.

10 Pierce Charles L'Enfant, grand design for
11 Washington, D.C., created in 1791, was heavily
12 influenced by the European Baroque tradition.

13 This included features such as
14 radiating avenues and monumental gateways that
15 symbolized power and prestige. However,
16 L'Enfant's vision did not account for the future
17 realities of American history, particularly the
18 Civil War and the later development of the
19 National Mall's western access.

20 I bring this to light because of all
21 the images that were presented in your packets
22 of precedence to, of arches and other monumental

1 gateways to Washington, D.C. The viewshed, as
2 we're discussing it, was intentionally crafted
3 by the McMillan Commission in the early 20th
4 century and highlighted in the Lincoln Memorial
5 Commission Report of December 5th, 1912.

6 The report states, if a memorial bridge
7 to Arlington is built directly connecting, as
8 shown on the general plan, the Lincoln Memorial
9 site with the ground containing the dust of
10 those who gave the last full measure of devotion
11 to their country, it will add to the meaning and
12 solemnity of both places.

13 Moreover, linking together the District
14 of Columbia with Virginia, it could serve as a
15 striking symbol of reunion between the north and
16 the south, a most appropriate symbol leading to
17 and from the memorial of the man who said in his
18 first inaugural address, we are not enemies but
19 friends. We must not be enemies.

20 The definition of a precedent is an
21 earlier action, event, or decision that serves
22 as an example or guide for subsequent similar

1 situations. It acts as a benchmark, showing
2 that because something was done a certain way in
3 the past is the proper way to handle similar
4 circumstances in the future.

5 We have no precedent for an arch in
6 Washington. All arches have been concepts. The
7 images the applicant included are not
8 precedents. They are conceptual proposals, and
9 these are in the initial stage of the design
10 process where the core vision, purpose, and why
11 of the project are established.

12 It focuses on articulating broad
13 outlines of form and function before detailed
14 development or actual execution begins. We have
15 these for many different concepts for Memorial
16 Bridge over many, many years, none of which that
17 came to fruition.

18 Arlington House and the surrounding
19 cemetery symbolize the complex legacy of the
20 Civil War, representing both the Confederate
21 cause and the sacrifices made for the Union.
22 The clear sight line from the Lincoln Memorial

1 to the historic site embodies the aspiration for
2 national healing and remembrance, reinforcing
3 values of perseverance and hope for the united
4 future.

5 Any obstruction such as an arch or
6 other structure would disrupt the vital visual
7 connection, diminishing the intended impact of
8 the design. These issues would be discussed and
9 with the goal of avoiding, minimizing, or
10 mitigating through the Section 106 process, a
11 process that has not yet taken place.

12 What we don't want to hear from the
13 applicant is that, well, CFA approved it, NCPC
14 approved this in concept, so the opinions of
15 DCPL, the D.C. State Historic Preservation
16 Officer, the National Trust for Historic
17 Preservation, or other consulting parties are
18 ignored because your Commission has given it a
19 thumbs up.

20 It's important that we have this
21 process going forward so that we can all learn
22 what can be done at this site, if anything.

1 That is what Section 106 is for, and as you have
2 heard, that process needs to take place before
3 this commission approves this design and it
4 moves forward. Thank you for your time.

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Ms.
6 Miller. Next up, we have Kevin Wheeler, who I
7 believe is here with us in person. I think
8 people have been having more success with the
9 handheld, but please proceed when you're ready.

10 MS. WHEELER: All right. My name is
11 Kevin Wheeler, and I wanted to ask members of
12 the Planning Commission, please, to oppose the
13 design, scale, and location of the monumental
14 arch. It is aesthetically unbalanced for the
15 site. The arch's scale is wrong and too large,
16 dominating surrounding sites, blocking existing
17 views.

18 The domineering design and excessive
19 ornamentation, like any of the virtues of D.C.'s
20 architecture, did define its understated beauty.
21 The proposed arch would ruin the beautiful,
22 simple, and elegant views from the Lincoln

1 Memorial to the hallowed ground of Arlington
2 Cemetery.

3 It is with good reason that veterans
4 are suing to stop the arch. I ask that the
5 record include a link to the Lieutenant Kenneth
6 Ott's March 23rd Post column entitled Trump is
7 the Biggest Threat to D.C.'s Architectural
8 Splendor Since the War of 1812.

9 Kenneth Ott, the Post's Pulitzer Prize-
10 winning art and architecture critic, provides an
11 informative overview of how D.C.'s beautiful
12 urban plan and architecture was developed and
13 why the arch's design and location fail.

14 As laid out in Kenneth Ott's column, in
15 1806, Benjamin Latrobe, perhaps the first great
16 architect in America as he describes it, wrote a
17 letter to Congress. In it, he articulated
18 foundational principles for the art, aesthetics,
19 and architecture of the new republic, which
20 recognized no kings, no absolute authority
21 beyond the laws of the Constitution.

22 Quote, nothing appears so clear, wrote

1 Latrobe, as that a graceful and refined
2 simplicity is the highest achievement of taste
3 in art. American buildings should be, quote,
4 chaste and simple, and to ornament them just for
5 the sake of surface attraction was folly.

6 We find ornaments increase in
7 proportion as art declines or as ignorance
8 abounds. The arch's enormous scale of 250 feet
9 would dwarf the elegant 19th-century memorial
10 block and picturesque view of Arlington
11 Cemetery. The mile of open space between these
12 two American historical and architectural
13 treasures is part of what makes it beautiful.

14 It's hard not to walk, bike, or drive
15 across the Memorial Bridge and not have a
16 visceral reaction to the beautiful views. It
17 never gets old. Well, why ruin that.

18 There are at least 1,000 reasons to
19 oppose the monumental arch. As of April 16th,
20 the Commission of Fine Arts received 1,000
21 comments, of which 999 were opposed, and one was
22 offering an alternative design.

1 Further, under the Commemorative Works
2 Act, new congressional authority is legally
3 required to build a structure on protected
4 federal land.

5 I recently saw an old press clip of
6 former Texas Senator Lloyd Benson. He said he
7 asked himself three questions when assessing the
8 merits of an issue. Does it work; do we need
9 it; can we afford it. If we were to apply that
10 test to the monumental arch, the arch should not
11 be approved either by the Commission or
12 Congress.

13 No, the arch's design and location
14 don't work. No, we don't need the arch. No, we
15 can't afford the hundreds or hundreds of
16 millions in construction. We can't afford the
17 maintenance in years to come, especially at the
18 expense of existing parks and monuments that are
19 already neglected.

20 Public is against the arch. The scale
21 and the design don't work. It does not have
22 congressional consent, and therefore, it is

1 against the law to move forward. Please do not
2 approve this monumental arch. Thank you for the
3 opportunity to speak.

4 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you for your
5 testimony. Next up, we have, I'm sorry if I'm
6 mispronouncing this, sir, but Adrian Liaw, who I
7 believe is with us virtually.

8 MS. LIAW: Yes, it's Adrian Liaw.
9 Sorry, I can't start my video.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Liaw.

11 MS. LIAW: Oh, yes.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Excuse me. Sorry.

13 MS. LIAW: That's okay. That's all
14 right. It's no trouble.

15 Okay. To the esteemed members of the
16 NCPC, I very much appreciate the opportunity.
17 As many others before me have stated, this
18 proposed arch has arrogantly skipped many
19 legally required steps, as well as the checks
20 and balances our elected Congress could have
21 provided.

22 Because of this, I respectfully urge

1 that you guys oppose the proposed monumental
2 arch at Memorial Circle. The arch, with its 250
3 feet in height and topped with these gilded
4 sculptures, would really overwhelm the character
5 and the openness of the Memorial Circle with the
6 complete visual national significant landmarks
7 like the Lincoln Memorial.

8 The strength of this landscape has
9 always been, like, the clarity and the
10 symbolism, and I loved driving across it. These
11 views, once they're interrupted, it can't be
12 undone. The damage will be there forever, and
13 it's supposed to be meaningful when you drive
14 across it.

15 Memorial Circle currently serves as a
16 ceremonial gateway to Arlington National
17 Cemetery. And this proposed arch introduces so
18 much ticketing facilities and silliness that
19 just doesn't go with the associated calm and
20 historic reflective purposes of the site.

21 So many citizens, preservation
22 activists, veterans, architects, historians, and

1 community organizations have expressed concerns
2 regarding project's location, scale, and impact
3 on one of the most meaningful ceremonial
4 landscapes.

5 While public opinion alone shouldn't
6 determine the outcome of this arch, I think that
7 the consistency that these people bring forward
8 really reinforced the need for careful
9 consideration into what you're going to do here.

10 And this is a very nationally
11 significant site, and it should be. Your
12 Commission has a responsibility to protect that
13 historic character of that symbolic meaning and
14 the long-term integrity of the National Capital
15 region.

16 For these reasons, I respectfully
17 request that you guys reject this monumental
18 arch before more resources are wasted even
19 discussing it. You have to preserve this
20 historic landscape and these views that have
21 defined the Memorial Circle and the Arlington
22 Memorial Bridge for generations. Thank you for

1 your consideration.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you for your
3 testimony. Our last witness on this project is
4 Patricia McGuire, who I believe is also with us
5 virtually.

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Patricia McGuire
7 wasn't able to join, so we can move on to
8 questions.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Okay. With that, do
10 any commissioners have any questions for this
11 last batch of witnesses? Hearing and seeing
12 none, that concludes the public testimony
13 portion of our consideration of this item today.

14 Thank you to all of you who took the
15 time out of your schedules to come testify. I
16 think the opportunity for public comment on
17 projects like this is important. It's something
18 that this commission always values, and I know
19 given how busy folks' schedules are just in
20 general, taking time out of your day to sit here
21 for many hours, to have three minutes or five
22 minutes to provide testimony on something that's

1 important to you, I think it's a commendable act
2 of civic engagement, and I sincerely thank you
3 all for being here.

4 With that, I'll ask the Commission if
5 there is a motion to approve comments on the
6 concept plans for the new monumental arch.

7 VICE CHAIRMAN LEVENBACH: So moved.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Vice
9 Chairman Levenbach. Is there a second at this
10 time?

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: I second.

12 COMMISSIONER CASH: Second.

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
14 Commissioner. With that, with a motion on the
15 floor, I'll now open it up to the Commission for
16 discussion, and I'll start deliberations with
17 Commissioner Bowron.

18 COMMISSIONER BOWRON: Thank you,
19 Chairman. Thank you for the presentation from
20 the staff and all the work that went into that.
21 Thank you for the applicant for engaging with
22 NCPC, and thank you to all the public that

1 submitted written and showed up today with your
2 comments.

3 I'm here today to represent Secretary
4 of the Interior Doug Bergen regarding the
5 Commission's review of this project. I
6 appreciate the applicant's engagement with the
7 Commission at this early stage and the
8 thoughtful review provided by NCPC staff.

9 The recommendations outlined in the
10 staff report will help inform the next phase of
11 planning and ensure that important technical and
12 design considerations are appropriately
13 addressed as the proposal moves forward.

14 I support the NCPC staff
15 recommendations and appreciate the continued
16 coordination. I look forward to the review of
17 the additional information that was requested in
18 the report. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
20 Commissioner. Commissioner Argo? Is
21 Commissioner Argo still with us?

22 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I am.

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Commissioner Argo,
2 please proceed if you have any comments.

3 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I don't have any
4 additional comments. I have been scribbling
5 for, what, a couple of hours taking notes. I'm
6 really struck by the, sort of, the width and
7 depth of the comments that we heard, the number
8 of people who are interested in this for all
9 kinds of reasons, not just design but
10 functionality, appropriateness, all kinds of
11 things.

12 It was -- I just appreciate all the
13 folks that have come forward that have -- that
14 are focused on this and wanted their comments to
15 be considered by this Commission. That's it.

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you. Thank
17 you, Commissioner. Vice Chairman Levenbach?

18 VICE CHAIRMAN LEVENBACH: Thank you,
19 Mr. Chairman, and thanks for all the commenters
20 who took the time to share your views.

21 So, I recognize that reasonable people
22 may have differing views about the ultimate

1 design scale and details of a monumental arch at
2 Memorial Circle, and those are precisely the
3 types of questions that should be explored
4 through the Commission's review process rather
5 than serving as a reason to halt consideration
6 at this concept stage.

7 So, Memorial Circle is one of the few
8 locations in the National Capital Region where
9 an iconic civic monument could be appropriate,
10 and as many noted, it serves as a ceremonial
11 gateway to Arlington National Cemetery and one
12 of the nation's most sacred landscapes. The
13 site already carries extraordinary symbolic
14 weight, and it's reasonable to consider whether
15 a significant architectural statement belongs in
16 such a location, but this proposal also
17 resonates with me personally.

18 My father is a Vietnam War era veteran,
19 and he passed recently, and he'll be interred at
20 Arlington National Cemetery, and like many
21 American families, my family regards Arlington
22 as a place of profound national significance, a

1 place where service, sacrifice, and memory are
2 honored.

3 And for that reason, I take seriously
4 the responsibility to ensure that any addition
5 to this landscape is worthy of that setting.
6 But at the same time, the presence of Arlington
7 does not require us to reject ambitious civic
8 architecture. To the contrary, some of the most
9 memorable and enduring places in the world are
10 those where architecture, symbolism, and
11 national memory come together in a powerful way.

12 So, the question before us today is not
13 whether every aspect of this proposal has been
14 resolved. It is not. The question is whether
15 the concept merits further study and refinement,
16 and I believe that it does.

17 So, as this moves forward, a couple
18 things for the project proponents. I think it
19 warrants a close look at the results of the
20 traffic study and whether it's better to route
21 people from the Memorial Drive part of the
22 circle rather than from the bridge, and so

1 please take a close look at that and evaluate
2 just how -- the best way to keep people safe.

3 I think it would also be interesting,
4 and we had someone from NPCA here, it'd be
5 interesting to look at the number of visitors.
6 I don't know if fees would be charged. I know
7 there's a significant deferred maintenance
8 backlog of the National Park Service and the
9 extent to which the monument would contribute
10 toward the National Park Service and its
11 deferred maintenance backlog.

12 I know that's not a part of this --
13 it's out of scope here, but as a budget person,
14 I'm certainly interested in that aspect, and
15 also, of course, all the important issues that
16 were raised in the NCPC staff comments.

17 So, I appreciate your attention for
18 that, and I look forward to advancing this
19 concept and seeing the proposal further
20 developed.

21 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Vice
22 Chairman Levenbach. I would ask members of the

1 public here to please be respectful when
2 commissioners make their comments in response to
3 this and other projects.

4 I think it's very important that this
5 Commission be allowed to do the work that it
6 does, and for those of you who are opposed to
7 this project, I don't think you help your case
8 by heckling commissioners when they make their
9 reasoned comments in response to the proposal
10 that's before us.

11 With that, Commissioner Blair, are you
12 still with us?

13 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: I'm here,
14 Chairman.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Do you have any
16 comments on this proposal?

17 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: My only comment
18 really is that -- I'm being asked to start my
19 video. Sure. I can start my video.

20 My only comment is that I appreciate
21 the discourse -- the public discourse here.
22 Everybody has a right to do it, whether you're

1 in favor or opposed, and I appreciate
2 architectural critiques or differences. I think
3 that's fine.

4 I think the personal attacks do a
5 disservice to this process, and really just one
6 commenter in particular. So, I guess I will
7 give credit to those who have kept the
8 discussion about the merits of the project and
9 whether or not they like the design, and
10 otherwise, I don't see how personal attacks are
11 warranted or even helpful to this discussion.

12 In my view, the fact that the scale is
13 so grand is part of the allure. People are able
14 to have different tastes in what they want to
15 see with the skyline of the city or otherwise.

16 I think that on our nation's 250th
17 birthday, it's a testament to how big our nation
18 is and how great it is, and I hope that arch is
19 standing a thousand years from now, should it be
20 completed, which I certainly hope it will be. I
21 think it's a testament to how great we are as a
22 country.

1 Frankly, I think that's how the
2 President means it, too. So, I am in support.
3 I look forward to the continued refinement of
4 the project and, you know, certainly welcome the
5 ongoing discussion that we're going to have
6 here, but I'm supportive. I encourage others to
7 support it, as well.

8 And again, thank you to the members --
9 those opposed to the project who have at least
10 kept their comments reasoned and about the
11 subject matter at hand. I think that is the
12 American way, and I commend you for keeping it
13 that way.

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
15 Commissioner. Commissioner Ingrassia?

16 COMMISSIONER INGRASSIA: Thank you,
17 Chairman Scharf. I'd like to align myself with
18 the comments made by both Commissioners
19 Levenbach and Commissioner Blair.

20 I'd like to commend the project
21 managers of this for the level of detail,
22 thoroughness, the time, resources, and the

1 amount of progress that has been made over a
2 relatively short period of time.

3 As the GSA rep standing in on this
4 Commission, we have a motto at our agency called
5 Project 410, which is in reference to the amount
6 of time it took to build the Empire State
7 Building using 1930 technology, only 410 days.

8 So, the fact that we're kind of
9 returning to those principles, making
10 significant progress over a compressed period of
11 time, and making a renewed commitment towards
12 revitalizing the city, not just with this
13 project, but with many other projects, the
14 Department of Interior and others, renewing a
15 city that has needed a lot of work, I think is a
16 great thing.

17 It's a forward-looking perspective, and
18 I think having been on that tour, that walking
19 tour this morning, having visited the Memorial
20 Circle, it's definitely an area asking for
21 something grand and illustrious, and having, you
22 know, viewed the marvelous viewsheds of our

1 capital city atop Arlington Hill and Arlington
2 House, and just noticing, you know, the Lincoln
3 Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, the Washington
4 Monument, the Capitol Building.

5 These are grand, beautiful structures
6 aligned with our founding father's vision for
7 this country, but I couldn't help notice that
8 many of these structures are over a century old.
9 You know, in that period of time, we have not
10 had great, massive building projects that really
11 glorify the Republic in a way that I think this
12 project can do.

13 So, I really appreciate the work being
14 done here, the time, the energy, and, you know,
15 I see it as part of not just, you know, a
16 beautiful structure for tourists, but also part
17 of something that could really enliven and unify
18 the nation and bring beauty and splendor and
19 pride in our country and our national identity
20 at a time that's desperately needed for our
21 country during the 250th anniversary
22 celebration.

1 So, you know, I appreciate all the
2 that's been put in so far.

3 I, also, want to align with the comment
4 made by Commissioner Levenbach regarding, you
5 know, just some additional information for our
6 Commission regarding, you know, how foot traffic
7 and congestion will be managed in that area,
8 especially coming from the Washington, D.C.
9 Lincoln Memorial Bridge.

10 You know, I just want to make sure
11 that, you know, we account for the safety
12 measures and that we have a thorough and
13 detailed plan to ensure that foot traffic is
14 managed in a good way for this design but I
15 appreciate the time and the comments and I look
16 forward to hearing more details in the weeks
17 ahead.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
19 Commissioner. Commissioner Dixon?

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes, Mr. Chairman.
21 First, I want to thank the staff and those
22 working on this because when we deal with these

1 sensitive projects, it takes a delicate
2 management of the tools we have as a commission
3 to do this.

4 I appreciate they always do a good job,
5 but it's more difficult when these things are
6 sensitive.

7 I, also, want to align myself with
8 Commissioner Argo because I think we have to be
9 very, very sensitive to the comments that were
10 made. In fact, I support all the comments made
11 by all the Commissioners to date at this point
12 in terms of the demeanor and in terms of how we
13 need to be open.

14 And I think the staff has laid out the
15 kind of check marks that need to be addressed as
16 we move forward. And I think that's where we
17 should be moving forward with these check marks.

18 I, also, bring another dimension to
19 this. So, I have a brother buried at Arlington
20 Cemetery and I'm a veteran, a retired O-6
21 Colonel in the Army. So, I have -- I'm a
22 veteran like those others who have spoken.

1 So, we do need to be sensitive to their
2 input because of their service and their
3 perspective. So, let's move forward and
4 hopefully we'll make some right decisions.
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
7 Commissioner Dixon. Commissioner Cash?

8 COMMISSIONER CASH: Thanks, Mr.
9 Chairman. And first of all, thanks as always to
10 the staff and thanks to all the commenters this
11 afternoon and for all the questions. I think
12 there's been a lot of thoughtful questions here
13 around the dais.

14 I've got to say, I've been really
15 struggling with this project. First, I want to
16 point out, as has been pointed out in the staff
17 report, that this vote is not about approving
18 the arch. It's not about approving the size,
19 the scale, or any of that.

20 Right now, we're asked to approve the
21 comments that are in the EDR so that the
22 applicant can come back to us with additional

1 information for the future reviews but that
2 said, I do have a lot of concerns. I'm
3 concerned, as you might have noticed, by the
4 Height of Buildings Act implications here. I
5 think that's kind of a threshold issue that
6 hasn't been addressed yet but I also have a lot
7 of the other substantive concerns that have been
8 raised here today.

9 So this morning, I was on that walking
10 tour. It took a while to get up there, but we
11 got up to Arlington House. And one of the
12 things that I noticed was the Park Service
13 Rangers, because that's Park Service property up
14 there at the Arlington House, they were really
15 excited to tell us that this is not just General
16 Lee's house as what everyone thinks about it as.
17 It was actually George Washington's adopted
18 grandson lived there, and it's by many people
19 considered to be one of the first actual
20 memorials to George Washington himself before
21 the other memorials were built. And that's a
22 fact that the Rangers were very, very proud of.

1 But when we were standing up there, you
2 kind of look over down the hill, you look over
3 Arlington Cemetery, which is a memorial to our
4 fallen heroes, you look down Memorial Avenue,
5 through the Memorial Circle, across the Memorial
6 Bridge, and towards the Lincoln Memorial.
7 That's a landscape that already means a lot to a
8 lot of people.

9 It's almost a memorial in and of
10 itself. It's a memorial looking from our
11 founder of the country to the unifier of our
12 country, north to south, and all the other unity
13 that goes together.

14 And that's kind of where I'm having
15 trouble. Is this arch part of that memorial
16 context. Is it going to be another memorial in
17 there because we've been told today this didn't
18 go through NCMAC, it's not a memorial.

19 So the applicant, the Department of the
20 Interior says the purpose of this is to
21 celebrate triumph to the American people,
22 inspire patriotism, and beautify the nation's

1 capital. That's the applicant's statement, but
2 it's not a congressional finding. It's not
3 something that came through a memorial
4 authorization process.

5 It's obviously not something that's
6 been vetted through a broader public discussion
7 about what belongs in this landscape, and I
8 think that's what I'm really stuck on.

9 The EDR asks for important, albeit very
10 technical, information from the applicant, but
11 how will that information help me evaluate this
12 project when it comes back before us.

13 Let's assume the traffic and the
14 pedestrian access works. Let's assume the FAA
15 signs off. Let's assume that historic
16 preservation issues are addressed.

17 Normally when we're dealing on this
18 dais with a commemorative project, we have a
19 framework for understanding what the project's
20 trying to accomplish. We've talked about
21 memorials to fallen journalists recently, a
22 memorial to President Eisenhower was very big on

1 this Commission a few years ago.

2 We know what the memorial is about,
3 then we evaluate the design, the site, the
4 materials, and the visitor experience and how
5 all of that fits within the context of what the
6 memorial is.

7 This is the lens I've looked at every
8 other memorial or monumental project that's come
9 through this commission in 11 years I've been on
10 this commission, whether and why this project
11 belongs in this place and for what commemorative
12 purpose it serves.

13 Again, I want to thank the staff for
14 all their work on the presentation. None of my
15 criticism here lies with the staff. It's really
16 on the applicant and the process or lack of a
17 process that we've had here.

18 I hope the applicant comes back to us
19 at our next meeting with some clarity, some
20 authorization, some purpose like has been the
21 case with every other memorial before us; then I
22 can evaluate this project in that context that I

1 mentioned.

2 Again, we can't approve or disapprove
3 this project today; that's not what's before us,
4 but I'm going to be voting no on the comments in
5 the EDR because I don't think they can answer
6 the more fundamental question about why this
7 project belongs in this place and that's a
8 threshold issue for me. So thank you, Mr.
9 Chairman.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
11 Commissioner Cash. Is Commissioner Henderson
12 with us? I don't believe so. Commissioner
13 Giacchetti is also not with us, so we will
14 proceed with Commissioner Cozart.

15 COMMISSIONER COZART: Picking up where
16 Commissioner Cash left off, I also want to thank
17 the staff for the deeply analytical questions
18 that they're asking the applicant to respond to,
19 and as normal course, it's our expectation that
20 the applicant will respond thoroughly to those
21 and that they will go above and beyond to really
22 understand what are the sets of concerns that

1 have been raised by this commission, what are
2 the sets of concerns that has been raised in the
3 testimony, which I found very compelling.

4 And one piece of it that I do want to
5 lift up that's not emphasized as much in the
6 staff report is around the alignment with the
7 Comprehensive Plan.

8 Mr. Ayer's testimony really raised
9 that, and so my hope is that the next time the
10 project comes before this commission, should it
11 come back, would address those critical points
12 that were in that testimony in addition to
13 what's in the staff report.

14 I also look forward to and heard the
15 promise that the Section 106 process will start
16 tomorrow, and that is critical as well and must
17 be on a parallel path with what this commission
18 is looking at.

19 So, those are my comments.

20 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
21 Commissioner. Commissioner Bruch?

22 COMMISSIONER BRUCH: Thank you,

1 Chairman. I want to thank the presenter for a
2 very professional presentation of this project
3 from a neighbor or from the neighborhood of
4 where this monument would sit.

5 We are very -- you know, it is sacred
6 ground that it sits next to. We have a sacred
7 mission to our nation from the Department of War
8 at the Pentagon that shares this ground, and so
9 we take great interest in this.

10 I want to thank the courage of the
11 public for their statements today, particularly
12 those that respectfully raised their
13 perspectives of the importance of this ground
14 and considerations for the Committee.

15 I do want to thank the developers, and
16 we look forward to the development from the
17 concept for the safety, for the security of the
18 area, for the pedestrian access to the area we
19 think is very important, and I think well on
20 their way for a great concept for that access,
21 but we do look forward to the refinement of
22 that.

1 So, I thank you for your time today and
2 for that presentation.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
4 Commissioner.

5 Speaking for myself, I would like to
6 echo what several previous commissioners have
7 said with respect to our staff's review and
8 presentation on this matter. As is their
9 custom, I think it was outstanding.

10 I'd also echo what some previous
11 commissioners have said in that I think the
12 project team has some homework to do. I think
13 on the NEPA issues, the FAA issues, Section 106
14 issues, as Vice Chairman Levenbach raised sort
15 of the broader traffic picture here.

16 As I alluded to before, I think we'd
17 all like to see more viewsheds. So, what will
18 it look like from the top of the arch, from
19 other monumental -- from other monuments within
20 D.C.

21 I think that's all necessary
22 information we'll need in order to reach our

1 final decision here. All that having been said,
2 I think that it is fitting and proper that we
3 commemorate the 250th anniversary of our great
4 republic with a suitable piece of monumental
5 architecture.

6 D.C. has not, as Commissioner Ingrassia
7 said, had a major addition to its monumental
8 pantheon, I guess you could say, in a very long
9 time.

10 I think this is as good an opportunity
11 as any to add something to Washington, D.C. that
12 will hopefully stand the test of time and help
13 commemorate what is truly a remarkable
14 accomplishment that our republic, by hook and by
15 crook, has stood together over this past two and
16 a half centuries.

17 PARTICIPANT: By crook, that's right.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Again, I'd ask the
19 public to remain civil. I tried to respect
20 members of the public when they were speaking
21 and I would ask for the same consideration.

22 I'd also note that within the field of

1 classical architecture, the history of classical
2 architecture, arches are a traditional feature.
3 Many cities in America and around the world have
4 arches. Washington, D.C. currently doesn't.

5 And in light of that, I don't think the
6 addition of an arch to a classical or
7 neoclassically designed city is all that
8 remarkable from an architectural standpoint. I
9 think that it's -- I really don't appreciate the
10 heckling, but I'll continue.

11 The location here is something that
12 many have criticized, but having visited
13 Memorial Circle numerous times, I think it cries
14 out for something. I think having an open
15 circle of grass at such a crucial juncture in
16 the overall skyline of Washington, D.C. and the
17 overall plan of Washington, D.C., really doesn't
18 make much sense.

19 Having said all of that, I'm going to
20 vote to approve the proposed comments and
21 advance this project. When this project
22 hopefully comes back before us in the future, I

1 think we'll have to talk about some of the
2 issues that Commissioner Cash raised,
3 particularly the Height of Buildings Act as I
4 alluded to at the outset of this meeting in my
5 Chairman's Report.

6 But I would also congratulate the
7 project team on a visually striking and quite
8 remarkable monument plan. And let's see how it
9 goes from here. But I support this project.
10 I'm excited to see how it develops in the weeks
11 ahead. And I look forward to having the project
12 team back again in the future.

13 Are there any further questions or
14 comments before we proceed to a vote? Hearing
15 and seeing none, Madam Secretary, can you please
16 confirm the motion and the second and take the
17 vote by roll call?

18 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes, the motion was
19 made by Vice Chairman Levenbach and seconded by
20 Commissioner Bowron. Commissioner Cozart?

21 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

22 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Bruch?

1 COMMISSIONER BRUCH: Yes.

2 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Boron?

3 COMMISSIONER BOWRON: Yes.

4 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

5 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

6 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

7 Levenbach?

8 VICE CHAIRMAN LEVENBACH: Yes.

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

12 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Yes.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

14 Ingrassia?

15 COMMISSIONER INGRASSIA: Yes.

16 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

17 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

18 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cash?

19 COMMISSIONER CASH: No.

20 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Thank you. The motion
21 passes.

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Madam

1 Secretary. With that, we'll proceed to agenda
2 item 6B, which is a request to approve comments
3 on the draft Civil War Defenses of Washington
4 General Management Plan Amendment. And we have
5 Laura Shipman from our team to present on this
6 project.

7 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
8 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION,
9 CIVIL WAR DEFENSES OF WASHINGTON GENERAL
10 MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT

11 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Laura, please proceed
12 whenever you're ready.

13 MS. SHIPMAN: Thank you. Good
14 afternoon, Chairman Scharf and Commissioners.
15 The National Park Service has submitted the
16 draft General Management Plan Amendment for the
17 Civil War Defenses of Washington, also known as
18 the Fort Circle Parks.

19 The Commission previously reviewed the
20 plan concepts in May of last year, and the
21 applicant has been responsive to those comments
22 while noting the limits of the scope to high-

1 level park management and uses.

2 Today, the Commission is providing
3 draft master plan level review focused on issues
4 such as consistency with the Comprehensive Plan,
5 historic preservation and environmental
6 considerations, viewsheds, and connectivity.

7 As background, the Civil War Defenses
8 of Washington were built as a circle of
9 fortifications on high ground to protect
10 Washington, D.C. during the Civil War. The 1902
11 McMillan Plan sought to revitalize these
12 neglected areas by connecting the forts with the
13 parkway.

14 While never fully realized, this
15 initiative spurred preservation efforts and
16 public investment. By the mid-20th century,
17 these battleground remnants were turned into
18 federal parks. And today, the parks form a
19 historic green belt with prominent views to and
20 from the city.

21 The Civil War Defenses of Washington
22 General Management Plan amends the 2004 Fort

1 Circle Parks General Management Plan to meet
2 current and future needs. NPS notes that the
3 city's recreational needs are growing with an
4 increasing population, and often the only land
5 available in some neighborhoods for recreational
6 use is within the Civil War Defenses of
7 Washington parks.

8 Many of the open spaces within the
9 parks are also isolated and lack connectivity
10 with other Civil War Defenses park areas, to
11 community facilities, and to resources outside
12 of the parks.

13 In addition, significant archaeological
14 and natural resources have been identified since
15 2004 that are located outside of cultural and
16 natural resource management zoning designations.

17 NPS General Management Plans typically
18 cover a broad area, providing high-level
19 guidance on land management. These plans
20 identify management zones, which provide broad
21 direction for the use, maintenance, and
22 development of national parks. Specific site

1 planning and design then occurs at later stages
2 in the park planning process.

3 This is an overall map of the Civil War
4 Defenses of Washington project area. The
5 majority of the parks are located in the
6 district, with one located in Maryland, Fort
7 Foote, and one in Virginia, Fort Marcy.

8 The proposed management zone updates
9 are intended to enhance the visitor experience,
10 access, and recreation opportunities, while also
11 protecting natural and cultural resources. The
12 draft amendment retains most of the existing
13 management zones from the 2004 Fort Circle Parks
14 Plan, and introduces two new zones, including
15 the community garden and site-sensitive
16 recreation management zones, highlighted in
17 green.

18 For each management zone, the plan
19 includes an updated description, desired visitor
20 experience, desired resource condition, and
21 appropriate activities or facilities.

22 These management zone descriptions

1 touch on several issues raised by the Commission
2 at concept review, including specific allowable
3 uses, viewsheds, and invasive plan control.

4 With the plan development, staff
5 recommends including a high-level summary of the
6 invasive species management approach for the
7 indicated management zones to prevent overgrowth
8 in the future, and clarifications to the site-
9 sensitive recreation, and connecting corridor
10 management zone descriptions to align with the
11 focus area zoning maps that will be shown in the
12 later slides.

13 In response to the Commission's
14 previous comment recommending a continuous trail
15 network linking the parks, the plan outlines an
16 updated route for the Potomac Heritage National
17 Scenic Trail, connecting all the Civil War
18 Defenses sites, shown as a dotted line.

19 The amendment also separates the parks
20 into four focus areas that geographically
21 encircle the capital from west to east. Staff
22 recommends the final plan include additional

1 information describing why the management zones
2 were selected for each of the focus areas, to
3 help guide future planning and inform
4 stakeholders on the rationale for the specific
5 park management designations.

6 First, we will take a look at the
7 George Washington Memorial Parkway and Rock
8 Creek Park West focus area.

9 The draft plan includes side-by-side
10 maps of the existing and proposed management
11 zone designations for each focus area. The
12 changes in this focus area are primarily to Fort
13 Reno, to add the site-sensitive recreation zone,
14 and additional community and visitor uses, and
15 also to designate management zones for parcels
16 not previously zoned.

17 Next is the Rock Creek Park East focus
18 area, which includes Missouri Avenue, Fort
19 Slocum, Fort Totten, and Barnard Hill Park.

20 The draft plan includes changes to
21 community use-related management zones for
22 recreation and community gardens, as well as a

1 few areas for natural resource protection.

2 The next focus area is National Capital
3 Parks East North, which includes Fort Mahan,
4 Fort DuPont, and Fort Stanton.

5 This area includes a range of added
6 management zones to expand recreation
7 opportunities and connectivity. Of particular
8 note, the management zoning option supported by
9 the Commission was selected for Fort DuPont,
10 which includes the addition of a connecting
11 corridor management zone to allow opportunities
12 for increased multimodal connectivity and safety
13 around and through the park.

14 And finally, the National Capital Parks
15 East South focus area includes Shepherd Parkway
16 and Fort Foote. These parks have expanded
17 connectivity and cultural resource management
18 zone updates, as well as added recreation
19 management zones.

20 In particular, the recreation
21 management zone has been applied to the Parkland
22 Rehabilitation Area, which was previously

1 approved by the Commission. The Civil War
2 Defenses of Washington sites touch all four
3 quadrants of the District, as well as parts of
4 Maryland and Virginia.

5 At concept review, the Commission
6 recommended continued coordination with local
7 agencies and encouraged partnerships to improve
8 the Civil War Defenses parks. NPS included this
9 future guidance in the Park Management
10 Operations and Safety section of the amendment.

11 A few other comments raised at concept
12 review were noted by the applicant to be outside
13 the scope of the plan and should be considered
14 through ongoing coordination and future
15 planning, including improvements to park
16 infrastructure and maintenance near public
17 transit, and safety and connectivity
18 enhancements to the park's visitor attractions,
19 as outlined in Comprehensive Plan policies.
20 Staff also recommends continued engagement with
21 adjacent communities.

22 NPS released the draft plan and

1 environmental assessment for a 30-day public
2 comment period, which closes on June 15. The
3 Commission did receive a letter from the
4 Committee of 100 requesting that NCPC postpone
5 consideration of the plan until next month.

6 However, I had an opportunity to speak
7 with a representative of the Committee and noted
8 that NCPC recommendations need to be submitted
9 this month to be considered as part of the
10 current NPS comment period.

11 This is also not the last time the plan
12 amendment will be reviewed by our Commission.
13 Once NPS has incorporated changes and finalized
14 the document, the Commission will provide a
15 final review of the plan with consideration for
16 all of the public comments.

17 With that, staff recommends the
18 Commission approve the comments on the draft
19 General Management Plan Amendment for the Civil
20 War Defenses of Washington, highlighted
21 throughout my presentation and listed on the
22 following slides, and recommends the Commission

1 support the National Park Service's overall goal
2 to balance the protection of cultural and
3 natural resources with expanded community uses
4 and improvements to the visitor experience.

5 And that concludes my presentation.

6 Shana Scott, Rock Creek Park Deputy
7 Superintendent from the National Park Service,
8 will now provide remarks on the plan. Thank
9 you.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Laura.
11 Deputy Superintendent Scott, are you with us?

12 MS. SCOTT: Yes, sir, I'm present.

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Ma'am, you can
14 proceed whenever you'd like.

15 MS. SCOTT: Thank you so much. Good
16 afternoon to everyone. I would like to start
17 off by saying thank you to the NCPC staff for
18 all of your work on this presentation, and thank
19 you to everyone for being here today.

20 As stated, my name is Shana Scott. I
21 am the Deputy Superintendent of Rock Creek Park,
22 and I'm also here on behalf of three

1 superintendents responsible for the Civil War
2 Defenses of Washington sites.

3 I'm also joined by Christine Bruins,
4 Planning Portfolio Manager for the National
5 Capital Region, who is here to help answer any
6 questions about the plans.

7 Updating a general management plan and
8 zoning that supports it may not be the most
9 visible or exciting work that we do, but it is
10 vitally important to the community. These
11 decisions help shape how we protect and steward
12 these extraordinary places for generations to
13 come.

14 Over the years, we've heard a wide
15 range of perspectives from those focused on
16 preserving the historic significance of these
17 sites to those seeking a higher level of
18 developmental and broader recreational use that
19 better reflects the needs and expectations of
20 surrounding neighborhoods.

21 A shared theme throughout has been a
22 desire to see these sites remain relevant and

1 cared for into the future. In the 20 years
2 since the original management plan was adopted,
3 the communities surrounding these parks have
4 changed significantly and continue to evolve
5 today.

6 Throughout this process, we look
7 thoughtfully at each site to ensure we are
8 protecting what makes these places feel --
9 excuse me, feel special, while also identifying
10 opportunities to better serve the communities in
11 which they exist.

12 This plan amendment lays an important
13 foundation for future projects and continued
14 partnership with the public as we move forward.
15 We appreciate your time and engagement, and we
16 look forward to your questions and discussion.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Deputy
19 Superintendent Scott, and thank you, Laura.
20 Sorry, did I say that before? I'm not sure, but
21 thank you, Laura, for a comprehensive and
22 detailed presentation as always.

1 Do any commissioners have any questions
2 on this project, either for Laura or for the
3 Deputy Superintendent? Hearing none, I believe
4 we have one person signed up to testify publicly
5 on this, and that's Loretta Neumann,
6 representing the Committee of 100.

7 Ms. Neumann, you have five minutes.
8 Whenever you're ready to proceed, please go
9 ahead.

10 MS. NEUMANN: Yeah, I was going to say
11 I was outside, and we couldn't hear much of what
12 was said. The thing is on, how do I know?

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Well, the group is a
14 bit smaller now, so I think we can probably we
15 can probably all hear you, ma'am.

16 MS. NEUMANN: Well, okay. Does this
17 work? Okay, thanks. Thank you very much.
18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the members of the
19 Commission. I've been here before, but it's
20 been a long time, and I'm happy to be back.

21 I'm presenting this testimony on behalf
22 of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City.

1 Established in 1923, the non-profit, non-
2 partisan Committee of 100 is the oldest citizen
3 planning organization in the nation's capital.

4 I am a long-time member, and also a
5 member of the Alliance to Preserve the Civil War
6 Defenses of Washington, an outgrowth of the
7 Committee of 100, of which I am co-founder and
8 past president, and I also want to add that when
9 I first joined the Committee of 100, Libby Rowe,
10 former chair of the NCPC, a wonderful woman, was
11 the chair of the Committee of 100, and I got to
12 be with her for about a year at the end of her
13 term.

14 The Committee of 100 has a long-
15 standing commitment to protect the Civil War
16 Defenses of Washington. We were the only
17 organization that provided comprehensive
18 comments on the National Park Service's first
19 CWDW, that's what we call it, management plan,
20 finalized in 2004.

21 The current draft plan has much to
22 commend and contains useful information. It

1 totals over 100 pages, and I printed them out
2 off of my computers, and I've been scanning them
3 all, and would guide future management of
4 approximately 1,315 acres with 18 historic forts
5 and other fortifications and contiguous areas,
6 so this is a major undertaking.

7 Of great concern, however, is that many
8 of the 18 National Park Service forts are not
9 addressed because, as they say, the new plan is
10 an amendment to the old one. On Page 7, the
11 plan states, for the purposes of this document,
12 the CWDW are grouped into four main areas, and
13 Laura mentioned those, with associated focus
14 areas. Park properties that are within the
15 project area are not included; within the focus
16 area are shown below and would not experience a
17 change in management zones.

18 So the first time I started reading the
19 management plan, I thought, well, I don't
20 understand, this isn't all of our forts, and
21 sure enough, let me turn my page here, on Page 8
22 of the plan, the included areas are listed, but

1 many forts are left out.

2 A major fort that is omitted is Fort
3 Stevens, the most important of all. It was the
4 site of the only Civil War battle in the
5 nation's capital. That was July 11th-12th,
6 1864, and the only time a sitting president has
7 come under -- that was Lincoln, has come under
8 direct enemy fire while in a battle.

9 We are currently reviewing the
10 excellent staff report by Laura Shipman. We
11 concur with most of its findings and
12 recommendations. Unfortunately, however, it
13 states, and we've talked about this, quote,
14 there are no proposed changes to Fort Stevens
15 since the 2004 plan, so it is not included in
16 the focus areas.

17 However, there have been a number of
18 changes to Fort Stevens over the last more than
19 two decades, and I've been there every step of
20 the way.

21 As I recall, in the early 2000s, there
22 was no community garden, and if the Park Service

1 can show me that there was, I'll retract from
2 that, but that's what I remember, and a swath of
3 land adjacent to Missouri Avenue was added to
4 Fort Stevens to prevent a major development that
5 would have degraded the historic area, and I
6 helped with that as well. We got the National
7 Park Trust to buy this land that was proposed
8 for a major development on land that had never
9 been developed or dealt with -- handled in any
10 way since the Civil War.

11 In addition, several years ago, a huge
12 building was constructed adjacent to Fort
13 Stevens that offers potential for uses for
14 visitor services, and we actually do use it
15 every year in July. We have a commemoration of
16 that Battle of Fort Stevens. This year, it will
17 be on July 11th, and I hope some of you might
18 want to come, but it does offer potential uses
19 for visitor services, one of the things that the
20 Park Service has addressed, and I'm really
21 appreciative of being able to study how we can
22 increase the visitor services while protecting

1 the natural and cultural and environmental
2 resources.

3 There are other issues, however, we
4 feel need to be examined, but the Park Service
5 has described this as a final chance to provide
6 input before they complete the required reviews.

7 Park Service announced their new
8 management plan on May 15th, allowing only 30
9 days for public review, with a deadline for
10 comments June 15th. I didn't even see it until
11 May 18th, and some people thought the Committee
12 of 100 was not invited to or not told about the
13 scoping session that was held a year ago, so
14 that has been brought to my attention that we
15 should have been there, and I checked, and I
16 checked with our chairman and the previous
17 chairman, and they have no record of receiving.
18 Do you mind if I -- I'm the only one speaking
19 today. Can I have a couple minutes more?

20 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes. You can proceed
21 for a bit, but you know.

22 MS. NEUMANN: Well, anyway, what I want

1 to say is that Committee of 100 is committed --
2 oh, first of all, this is important.

3 The chairman of the Committee of 100
4 went to the Park Service and said, could you
5 extend the comment period. That's been done
6 before on projects, but they said they couldn't
7 at least until July 15th. That would give us
8 plenty of time to do what we need to do to study
9 this plan, and she was told informally that the
10 Park Service might be able to extend the comment
11 period to June 24th, but that has not been
12 confirmed in writing, and indeed all interested
13 parties must have the same opportunity if we
14 have it.

15 We are committed to getting the Park
16 Service detailed, constructive comments, but
17 this will take time and coordination to achieve.

18 Meanwhile, we are also arranging for a
19 bus tour on Saturday, June 13th. That was in
20 hopes that the comment period would be extended,
21 but we'll still do it on June 13th, to visit
22 many of the forts to see their current state and

1 to ascertain how the proposed plan would affect
2 them.

3 This information could then be
4 incorporated into our comments. We would
5 welcome any member of NCPC or the staff to come
6 with us on this tour, so just let me know. I do
7 sincerely thank you for the opportunity to speak
8 today.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Ms.
10 Neumann. The story of Lincoln getting shot at,
11 it's a fascinating one. There's a probably
12 apocryphal story that Oliver Wendell Holmes, who
13 was a young sort of aide-de-camp on the scene,
14 told him, get down, you fool. I don't think it
15 ever happened but --

16 MS. NEUMANN: Me either.

17 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: -- you know, Supreme
18 Court Justice, that's the story I'd always
19 heard, but thank you for your testimony, ma'am.
20 Are there any questions for Ms. Neumann?

21 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Mr. Chairman?

22 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, Commissioner

1 Dixon.

2 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Loretta, it's good
3 to see you, Ms. Neumann, back in front of us.

4 MS. NEUMANN: Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I do have a
6 concern, and as a former member, I guess I'm a
7 life member of Committee of 100, but I'm not in
8 participation these days for obvious reasons,
9 conflict here, but is there any way, Mr.
10 Chairman or staff, we can get a window for them
11 to be able to do and get input into the process?

12 I guess it's Park Service's call, but
13 we have to answer, and we have to just make some
14 decisions. Is there any chance that can happen,
15 maybe, with the staff to help this?

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I'm happy to ask the
17 Park Service. I don't know if we have a
18 mechanism as a commission to compel that or
19 anything like that. Meghan?

20 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I just don't see
21 maybe it's an emergency to this, but it seems to
22 me a little more time to get this important

1 organization to participate would be good.

2 MS. NEUMANN: Well, we were told that
3 the reason they couldn't extend this was that
4 the contractor -- and this was done by a
5 contractor, their deadline was July 1st, so they
6 had to have everything done by then.

7 I had a small company and had federal
8 contracts, and I got some extended, so I don't
9 know why this couldn't get extended.

10 Nevertheless, if we at least had until
11 June 24th, which they said was a possibility,
12 and if they would announce that then -- and make
13 us feel comfortable that we can plan on that, it
14 would help a lot.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We could certainly
16 reach out to the Park Service and see what's
17 sort of in the realm of the possible here. I
18 know that we scheduled this at this meeting to
19 ensure that we'd have the opportunity to get our
20 comments on the record, so I certainly
21 understand the time line issues there.

22 MS. NEUMANN: And as I said, we're not

1 opposing the plan. We just want to have more
2 time to go into it. I do know of some things
3 that need to be looked at and should be
4 included, and this bus tour, we're going to go
5 see them for ourselves, you know, right now, I
6 mean, on June 13th.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Well, thank you.
8 Thank you, Ms. Neumann. Do any other
9 commissioners have questions for our witness
10 before we proceed? Hearing and seeing none, is
11 there a motion to approve comments on the draft
12 Civil War Defenses of Washington General
13 Management Plan Amendment?

14 COMMISSIONER INGRASSIA: I motion.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
16 Commissioner. Is there a second?

17 COMMISSIONER BRUCH: I second.

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
19 Commissioner. I'll now open it up to the
20 Commission for discussion, and I'll start the
21 deliberations with Commissioner Bruch.

22 COMMISSIONER BRUCH: No comments. I

1 appreciate the presentation and also the
2 perspectives shared today.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
4 Commissioner. Commissioner Bowron.

5 COMMISSIONER BOWRON: First, thank you
6 to the Commission staff. As always, a really
7 incredible job done.

8 I can't help but notice that we spent
9 several hours hearing from the public on
10 memorials relating to the Civil War, but when it
11 came time to talk about the actual Civil War
12 resources that are in this city, the room
13 cleared out, which was a little disappointing.

14 And, you know, I think preambles and
15 GMP amendments are exciting, so I appreciate the
16 work of the agency to move this forward.

17 I think, you know, when you look at
18 that map that you had up in the presentation, it
19 is impossible not to see how these Fort Circle
20 parks really impact the residents of Washington,
21 D.C.

22 They are an integral part of so many

1 neighborhoods, and I think that the plan really
2 does a great job of balancing cultural resource,
3 historic resource preservation, with the modern
4 and changing needs of the city. So, I support
5 the staff recommendations and appreciate all the
6 work that went into this.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
8 Commissioner. Commissioner Argo?

9 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Here I am. There I
10 am. I have no additional comments. I was going
11 to say something about, I remember Ms. Neumann
12 has been involved in things even that go back as
13 far as my term in the D.C. government, and
14 appreciate her interest and her work in this and
15 bringing it to our attention. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
17 Commissioner. Vice Chairman Levenbach?

18 VICE CHAIRMAN LEVENBACH: I think I
19 have spent more time in the Civil War
20 battlefields in Maryland than I have in D.C., so
21 I have a couple parks I need to go to around
22 town. Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Vice
2 Chairman. Commissioner Blair?

3 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: No comments, but
4 thank you for the work.

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
6 Commissioner. Commissioner Ingrassia?

7 COMMISSIONER INGRASSIA: Thank you for
8 the presentation. I appreciate the comments.
9 No further comments on my end. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
11 Commissioner. Commissioner Dixon?

12 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yeah, I appreciate
13 it. Loretta Neumann, she has been a real
14 soldier for many years on issues like this.
15 Commissioner, I would recommend you go on the
16 tour with them. It would be great to see it.

17 As a younger person, I spent a lot of
18 time at Fort Stanton's Park in the caves there
19 as a Boy Scout -- a Cub Scout, I guess, and Boy
20 Scout. So the parks have been meaningful to me
21 in many ways.

22 So I think it is important in history.

1 It is interesting how the testimony was heavy on
2 other things and light on this, but that is kind
3 of the reason why we need the Committee of 100
4 and others to keep tabs and keep involved.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Appreciate it,
7 Commissioner. I actually checked my calendar.
8 I think I am out of town that day,
9 unfortunately, but I will endeavor to educate
10 myself as best I can here. Commissioner Cash?

11 COMMISSIONER CASH: No comments now,
12 but thanks to the staff and for the
13 presentation.

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
15 Commissioner. Commissioner Cozart.

16 COMMISSIONER COZART: Appreciate the
17 work of the staff. Appreciate the work of the
18 National Park Service around this as a nearby
19 neighbor of Fort Bunker Hill, and know that the
20 Friends of group cares deeply about it. They
21 may not be in this room, but they are definitely
22 active around it, so -- and appreciate Ms.

1 Neumann's lifting this up as well. No
2 additional comments.

3 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
4 Commissioner.

5 Speaking for myself, just echoing what
6 a lot of commissioners said, thank you to you,
7 Laura. This is just a massive undertaking, and
8 the care and detail in the reports that we have
9 in front of us really shine through, so thank
10 you.

11 Ms. Neumann, I will also echo what a
12 lot of my fellow commissioners have said. Being
13 relatively new to this commission, we have not
14 had the chance to work together before, but you
15 are obviously somebody with great passion for
16 this region, and we obviously appreciate you
17 sitting through a very long afternoon to provide
18 your testimony.

19 I think it's very important that
20 projects like this incorporate both key
21 principles of historic preservation, while also
22 respecting neighborhood and community needs.

1 And I think it seems like what we have going on
2 strikes that balance well, and I look forward to
3 seeing how things develop in the future.

4 With that, are there any further
5 comments or questions? Hearing and seeing none,
6 Madam Secretary, can you please confirm the
7 motion and the second, and then take the vote by
8 roll call?

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes. The motion was
10 made by Commissioner Ingrassia and seconded by
11 Commissioner Bruch. Commissioner Cozart?

12 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Bruch?

14 COMMISSIONER BRUCH: Yes.

15 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Bowron?

16 COMMISSIONER BOWRON: Yes.

17 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

18 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

19 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

20 Levenbach?

21 VICE CHAIRMAN LEVENBACH: Yes.

22 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Chairman Scharf?

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes.

2 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Blair?

3 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: Yes.

4 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner

5 Ingrassia?

6 COMMISSIONER INGRASSIA: Yes.

7 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Dixon?

8 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yes.

9 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Cash?

10 COMMISSIONER CASH: Yes.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: The motion carries.

12 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Madam
13 Secretary. With that, we'll move on to agenda
14 Item 6C, which is a request to approve final
15 site development plans for the DDOT South
16 Capitol Street Trail, and I believe we have
17 Michael Weil. Please proceed.

18 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE,
19 DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE, 20 MACDILL
20 BOULEVARD, SE, WASHINGTON, DC - DISTRICT
21 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
22 SOUTH CAPITOL STREET TRAIL

1 MR. WEIL: Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Sorry, I thought you
3 were appearing virtually, I thought, so I got
4 confused, and then --

5 MR. WEIL: No, no, yeah, I'm here.
6 Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: I think I misread my
8 notes here. I apologize.

9 MR. WEIL: I can go to my office if
10 you'd like. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
11 Chairman. Good afternoon, Chairman Scharf and
12 members of the Commission.

13 The Air Force has submitted final site
14 development plans on behalf of DDOT to construct
15 a new hard surface multi-use trail extension
16 located along Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling's
17 eastern side in southeast Washington, D.C.

18 NCPC previously gave this project
19 preliminary approval back in December of 2024,
20 and the Commission expressed its support for the
21 new extension since the project is consistent
22 with a number of our transportation policies.

1 In addition, we also encourage DDOT to
2 use native vegetation, pollinator plants, and
3 common milkweed, and to design the project's
4 lighting to minimize light pollution, and staff
5 finds the applicant has addressed these comments
6 in the final submission, as I will highlight
7 during my presentation.

8 Here's where the new two-and-a-half-
9 mile-long trail segment under review will be
10 located along JBAB's eastern edge and along
11 South Capitol Street and Overlook Avenue.

12 The new trail segment will begin at
13 JBAB's northernmost gate located at First
14 Sterling Avenue, which is shown here on the
15 right, and the new trail will extend further to
16 the south along JBAB's property past JBAB's main
17 and south gates, as shown here by the thicker
18 red line, and then eventually the trail will
19 extend down to D.C. Village in the future.

20 The trail expansion will be part of the
21 larger 20-mile-long Anacostia River Walk trail
22 network, which has been planned and under

1 construction by the District since the early
2 2000s. The trail system has improved walking,
3 biking, and micro-mobility access along the
4 Anacostia riverfront until locations east of the
5 river.

6 Here are some photos of the existing
7 10-foot-wide trail adjacent to JBAB, which the
8 new trail will match. And then here are several
9 photos taken along the future trail alignment
10 located to the south of where the trail ends
11 today along JBAB's eastern perimeter.

12 The trail will also be adjacent to
13 South Capitol Street and Overlook Avenue as
14 well.

15 JBAB and DDOT signed an easement
16 agreement back in 2020 to enable DDOT to
17 construct and maintain the new trail, and in
18 some cases DDOT will relocate sections of the
19 JBAB perimeter fence along with regrading,
20 planting new vegetation, and installing new
21 bioswales and trail lighting as part of the
22 project.

1 In response to our previous lighting
2 comment, DDOT noted that they will install new
3 LED lighting fixtures with dimming capability,
4 glare shields, and other features to illuminate
5 the trail when needed and to minimize light
6 trespass away from the trail.

7 DDOT's landscape plans show both native
8 and non-native trees. However, none of the
9 proposed vegetation is invasive to this region,
10 and all future tree species have been approved
11 by DDOT's urban forestry division selected for
12 their durability in urban environments.

13 And staff finds DDOT's landscape plans
14 are consistent with NCPC's pollinator best
15 practices guidelines, which do allow for design
16 flexibility.

17 The DDOT plans do include various
18 pollinator species and common milkweed as
19 requested by NCPC as part of our preliminary
20 review action, and also this is also in response
21 to the upcoming public testimony that you will
22 hear today following my presentation.

1 So with that brief summary, here's the
2 executive director's recommendation, which notes
3 the applicant's responses to our previous
4 preliminary review comments.

5 And finally, before I conclude, we have
6 both DDOT and JBAB representatives here with us
7 today who are available virtually to answer any
8 questions from the commission. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Michael.
10 Do any commissioners have questions either for
11 Michael or for the project team that I guess we
12 have available virtually?

13 COMMISSIONER DIXON: I do, Mr.
14 Chairman.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Yes, Commissioner
16 Dixon. I figured you would have given the area.

17 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Right. I've
18 struggled on that route before, and now it's
19 going to be better. In fact, I hope I have the
20 energy to walk it.

21 Where is it going to terminate?

22 MR. WEIL: All I know is the submission

1 says it'll terminate in D.C. Village. I do not
2 know exactly. We do have a DDOT representative
3 with us today on the line who can probably
4 answer that question.

5 MR. SMOKER: Yeah. Hello. Marlon
6 Smoker with Jacobs Engineering, the lead
7 designer for this project for DDOT. I'm happy
8 to join in today.

9 The trail will extend to connect to the
10 existing trail. Boy, I'm blanking on the name,
11 but it will connect to an existing trail that
12 extends into Maryland down towards the Wilson
13 Bridge and National Harbor.

14 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Okay. That's what
15 I was interested in. It'll be able to get
16 people by foot to National Harbor?

17 MR. SMOKER: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER DIXON: That's
19 interesting. I'm not sure how that is
20 configured, but I'm sure it'll be clear as we
21 move forward. That's good. I don't know if
22 anybody knows it, but that area over there, just

1 before I get out of the Village and to the
2 National Harbor, was supposed to be a golf
3 course at one point, as I recall, but obviously
4 that's not in the mix right now.

5 So, thank you for your information.
6 I'll watch to see where the termination points
7 are. Thank you.

8 MR. WEIL: All right. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
10 Commissioner. Do we have any other questions,
11 either for Michael or for the project team here?
12 Hearing and seeing none, we'll now turn to
13 public testimony. We have Bernard Berne. Mr.
14 Berne is here with us virtually. Mr. Berne, can
15 you hear me?

16 MR. BERNE: Yes, I can. Can you hear
17 me?

18 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: We can hear you loud
19 and clear, sir. You have three minutes to
20 provide your testimony and please proceed when
21 you're ready.

22 MR. BERNE: Yes. Thank you. I must

1 disagree with some of the items in the Executive
2 Director's report on this project.

3 The plant schedule of this project does
4 not align with your Pollinator Best Resource
5 Practice Guide's recommendations. Further, and
6 perhaps just as important, it does not align
7 with the District of Columbia's Department of
8 Energy and Environment's webpage entitled,
9 quote, Native Plants.

10 The plant schedule contains seven
11 trees, shrubs, and perennials that are not
12 native to the National Capital Region. Six of
13 these are not native to North America. Some may
14 not provide forage for native pollinators or
15 food for the caterpillars or native butterflies
16 and moths.

17 And here we get to the important point.
18 A tree, Chinese pistachio -- produces pistachio
19 nuts, but it's highly invasive as it has been
20 found outside of cultivation in a variety of
21 environments in 53 counties all the way from
22 California to North Carolina. The Texas

1 Invasive Database lists the tree.

2 It would indeed be invasive in this
3 area if it is planted here, and particularly if
4 there are more than a few planted.

5 The plant schedule, so even though it's
6 not yet considered invasive in this area,
7 there's no doubt that it would be. The plant
8 schedule also contains five cultivars that are
9 not more resistant to cult than their parents --
10 more resistant to disease than their parents.
11 These may not feed native pollinators and may be
12 toxic to insects.

13 The District of Columbia's Urban
14 Forestry Division responded to my initial
15 comments by claiming that its practice requires,
16 and I say requires, the planting of a broad
17 range of adaptive species and cultivars for this
18 area, including non-native ones, to ensure the
19 success and expansion of the urban canopy.

20 This markedly contrasts the District's
21 Department of Energy and Environment's Native
22 Plants webpage, which states that landscape with

1 native plants can help improve the District's
2 natural and built environment.

3 More significantly, the webpage states
4 that non-native plants can become invasive and
5 harm the environment, and that the District is
6 working to create and preserve native habitats
7 for local wildlife.

8 Nevertheless, despite this, the
9 District's Urban Forestry Division intends to
10 plant non-native invasive species and cultivars
11 as part of this project. Something is seriously
12 wrong here. Maybe one of you can fix it. I
13 tried. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Mr. Berne.
15 Do we have any questions for Mr. Berne before we
16 release him? Hearing none, Mr. Berne, as always,
17 I will say that I truly appreciate your passion
18 for the pollinators policy and for the plantings
19 that accompany many of the projects we review.

20 It's always great having you with us,
21 and thank you for testifying today.

22 With that, is there a motion from the

1 Commission to approve final site development
2 plans for the DDOT South Capitol Street Trail?

3 COMMISSIONER BRUCH: Yes, I motion.

4 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
5 Commissioner. Is there a second?

6 COMMISSIONER ARGO: I'll second.

7 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
8 Commissioner. With that, I'll open it up to the
9 Commission for discussion, and I'll start
10 deliberations with Commissioner Cozart.

11 COMMISSIONER COZART: Appreciate the
12 work of the staff. Look forward to this moving
13 forward, adding more mobility. Good to see this
14 joint project between federal and local. Thank
15 you.

16 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
17 Commissioner. Commissioner Bruch? Have I been
18 pronouncing your name wrong, sir? Bruch, I
19 apologize. I won't get that wrong again.

20 COMMISSIONER BRUCH: No, thank you for
21 the presentation, and I have to echo it's always
22 great to see the kind of public and DDOT and the

1 Department working together for these trails,
2 and a great opportunity for the outdoors folks
3 for both walking and probably bike riding, so
4 this looks good.

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
6 Commissioner. Commissioner Bowron?

7 COMMISSIONER BOWRON: I echo other
8 Commissioner's comments. Excited to see it move
9 forward.

10 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
11 Commissioner. Commissioner Argo?

12 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Same. Appreciate
13 the work and the opportunity to have it advance
14 at this point. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
16 Commissioner. Vice Chairman Levenbach?

17 VICE CHAIRMAN LEVENBACH: Well, the
18 trails in this region, including the rail
19 trails, I think are one of the real attractions,
20 and so it looks like a wonderful project.

21 I am sympathetic with planting invasive
22 species is not really a best practice, so to the

1 extent to which there is one, if it's truly
2 invasive, it'd be nice to take a look at it, and
3 I assume those pistachios are not edible so --
4 but for what that's worth, I appreciate the
5 review and support the project.

6 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Commissioner Blair?

7 COMMISSIONER BLAIR: No comments.

8 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
9 Commissioner. Commissioner Ingrassia?

10 COMMISSIONER INGRASSIA: Thank you for
11 the presentation. I echo my fellow
12 Commissioners' enthusiasm. No further comments.

13 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
14 Commissioner. Commissioner Dixon?

15 COMMISSIONER DIXON: Yeah, I also
16 support the colleague's comments, echoing, but I
17 also want to point to Commissioner Levenbach's
18 statement about the invasive plants. I think if
19 they can come to a meeting of the minds, it
20 would be great. I hope they can look at that.
21 We don't just ignore Mr. Berne, we take his
22 information and try to use it.

1 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
2 Commissioner. Commissioner Cash?

3 COMMISSIONER CASH: No other comments.
4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you,
6 Commissioner.

7 Speaking for myself, I think this is
8 really exciting. It's dramatically -- I think,
9 based on what we've seen, at least, it will
10 dramatically increase pedestrian and bike access
11 in this area.

12 I'm a little concerned with folks from
13 JBAB making it down to the casino and stuff but
14 other than that, I think we're in good shape.

15 And thanks, as always, to our staff for
16 the great work that they've done. Thank you to
17 Mr. Berne for his comments about trees and
18 plantings.

19 At some point, I do want to ask him
20 about the cherry blossoms, which are all over
21 this area and which are definitely not native to
22 D.C. I don't know what the pollinator

1 implications of those are, but that's not
2 germane to this conversation.

3 So with that, if there are no further
4 questions or comments, Madam Secretary, can you
5 please confirm the motion, the second, and then
6 take the vote by a roll call?

7 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Yes. The motion was
8 made by Commissioner Bruch and seconded by
9 Commissioner Argo. Commissioner Cozart?

10 COMMISSIONER COZART: Yes.

11 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Bruch?

12 COMMISSIONER BRUCH: Yes.

13 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Bowron?

14 COMMISSIONER BOWRON: Yes.

15 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Commissioner Argo?

16 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Yes.

17 MS. HOTTEL-COX: Vice Chairman

18 Levenbach?

19 VICE CHAIRMAN 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: Commissioner Ingrassia?

3 COMMISSIONER INGRASSIA: 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: The motion carries.

9 CHAIRMAN SCHARF: Thank you, Madam
10 Secretary. That concludes our agenda for today.
11 Are there any further questions or comments
12 before we adjourn?

13 Hearing and seeing none, our next
14 regular commission meeting will be on Thursday,
15 July 9th at 1 p.m., and this session is now
16 adjourned. Thank you all for being here today.

17 COMMISSIONER ARGO: Thank you, Mr.
18 Chairman.

19 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
20 went off the record at 4:02 p.m.)

21

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 Sandra Munoz

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