

1 STATE OF NEW JERSEY
2 COUNTY OF HUDSON
3 TOWNSHIP OF NORTH BERGEN

4 -----x

5 In Re: PUBLIC SCOPING HEARING FOR THE
6 NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
7 GREEN ACRES DIVERSION PRE-APPLICATION FOR
8 NORTH BERGEN PRE-K PROGRAM AND NORTH
9 BERGEN EMS SOUTH BUILDING

10 -----x

11 August 11, 2020
12 6:05 p.m.

13 PROJECT TEAM

14 MODERATOR:

15 BERNADETTE P. McPHERSON, ESQ., Millennium Strategies

16 DIVERSION PROJECT TEAM

17 DAVE DRUMELER, Deputy County Administrator
18 County of Hudson

19 SUSAN McCURRIE, ESQ., Counsel to Hudson County

20 WANDA MONAGHAN, ESQ., Counsel to Hudson County

21 CHRISTOPHER PIANESE, Township Administrator
22 Township of North Bergen

23 GEORGE SOLTER, Superintendent of North Bergen
24 Board of Education

25 STEVEN SOMICK, Administrator, North Bergen Board
of Education

GRACE LYNCH and REBECCA USS, Architects for the North
Bergen Board of Education

Reported by:
CELESTE A. GALBO, CCR, RPR, RMR

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

INDEX

<u>PUBLIC COMMENTS:</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ROBERT DOWD, 1459 77th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	18
JOHN BENDER, 1537-38th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	20
LAUREN CABRERA, 8819 First Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	22
MAYOR NICHOLAS SACCO, 9060 Palisade Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey	23
ANTHONY VAINIERI, 7808 Fifth Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	25
STEVEN ZBAIDA, 7855 Boulevard East, Apartment 12L, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	28
JANET GLASS, 8700 Boulevard East, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	29
THOMAS STAMPE, 1006 85th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	31
KRISTINA BRACERO, 9037 New York Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	32
ROGER QUESADA, 233 79th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	33
TIFFANY TODD, 2039 Kennedy Boulevard, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	36
MAUREEN FOYLE, 7002 Kennedy Boulevard East, #26B, Guttenberg, New Jersey 07093	38
DAVID CASE, 479 Liberty Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey 07307	40
ESTER ORTEGA, 8306 Fifth Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	43
NICK SACCO, 327 73rd Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	45

INDEX

<u>PUBLIC COMMENTS:</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
MARTHA TORRES, 1410 79th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	46
REANN BENDER, 1537 38th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	47
FRANKLIN FABRE, 9128 Durham Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	49
KRISTIN RUUD-DIAZ, 603 81st Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	52
LINDA WALDEN, 7855 Boulevard East, Apartment 15I, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	54
EMIL FUDA, 524 72nd Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	56
SYLVIA CORTINA, 441 76th Street, Apartment A5, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	57
ROBERT WALDEN, 7855 Boulevard East, North Bergen, New Jersey	58
JOSEPH LOMBARDI, 1451 44th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	61
SHAREEN SHIBLI, 7714 Broadway, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	62
JOSE LARA, 1452 48th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	63
OZGUR AKKAS, 8800 Boulevard East, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	65
JODI JAMIESON, 8600 Boulevard East, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	69
DANIEL PEREZ, 5210 Cottage Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	70
MARIA HIDALGO 301 79th Street, Apartment C2, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	72

INDEX

<u>PUBLIC SPEAKERS:</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
LARRY WAINSTEIN 7414 Fourth Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	74
AMANDA CABRERA, 8819 First Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	77
INAYA JAAFAR, 1433 70th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	78
KARLA MILLER, 7512 Park Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	80
DAWN GELPI, 5826 Meadowview Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	81
ANDREA LUGO, 407 79th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	82
MARK STEVENS, Braddock Park, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	83
IMANE DOUKALI, 810 89th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	85
TONY ANZIVINO, 405 79th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	86
DENNIS VASQUEZ, 7507 Third Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	87
GERALD LANGE, 8306 Fifth Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	89
RAVENISH VARMA, 3808 Liberty Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	92
BRIDGET LUPIA, 34 Woodcliff Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	94
ASMAA LOPEZ, 1443 B 68th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047	95

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

INDEX

PUBLIC SPEAKERS:

PAGE

LARA RINALDI, 60 Genoble Road, Montville, New Jersey 07045 97

ANDRIANA MEDENA, 1451 76th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047 98

FRANK PIAZZA, JR., 9060 Palisade Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047 99

GIULA ESPOSITO, 8315 Grand Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047 101

VERONICA OLANIEL, 7113 Jackson Street, Apartment 3, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047 102

CARMEN BORELL, 407 79th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047 103

JULIA MINERA, 407 79th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047 103

FRAN AUN, 34 Woodcliff Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047 105

1 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your
2 patience everyone. If you'll just give us a few
3 minutes while we're admitting those that called in
4 and on Zoom into the meeting.

5 Welcome, everyone, to this Public
6 Scoping Hearing for the North Bergen Pre-K Program
7 and North Bergen EMS South Diversion.

8 Before we begin tonight's presentation,
9 which will be in both English and Spanish, I'd like
10 to acknowledge the members of the project team: Dave
11 Drumeler, Deputy County Administrator, Chris Pianese,
12 North Bergen Township Administrator, Board of
13 Education Superintendent George Solter, Board of
14 Education Administrator Steve Somick, Susan McCurrie,
15 Hudson County Law Department, Wanda Monaghan, counsel
16 to Hudson County, and Grace Lynch, the Board of
17 Education Architect.

18 I'm Bernadette McPherson of Millennium
19 Strategies and I'll be serving as moderator here this
20 evening.

21 Tonight's presentation material have
22 been posted on North Bergen's website at
23 www.northbergen.org and on the Hudson County website
24 at www.hudsoncountynj.org. Printed copies will also
25 be available at the township library and the Township

1 Clerk's office.

2 Please be aware that all members of the
3 public will be muted during the presentation. When
4 the presentation is over, the public comment period
5 will begin and end no later than 9 p.m. tonight. If
6 you wish to speak during the public comment period,
7 please use the raise your hand feature on Zoom or
8 press star 9 on your telephone. When called upon,
9 you'll be unmuted and must state and spell your name
10 and address for the record before providing your
11 comment. North Bergen residents will be given the
12 opportunity to speak first. All participants are
13 advised that this meeting is being recorded and will
14 be a public record subject to the Open Public Records
15 Act. Each speaker will be limited to three minutes
16 and please remember that additional comments will be
17 accepted by August 25, 2020. Now, let's begin the
18 presentation.

19 (Spanish translation.)

20 THE NARRATOR: Public scoping here for
21 the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
22 Green Acres Diversion Pre-Application for North
23 Bergen Pre-K Program and North Bergen EMS South
24 Building, August 11, 2020.

25 (Spanish translation.)

1 THE NARRATOR: More than 20 years ago
2 the New Jersey Department of Environmental
3 Protection, NJDEP, awarded Green Acres funding to
4 Braddock Park and the 43rd Street Park. An
5 application for a major disposal or diversion of
6 parkland is necessary now because the placement of
7 the North Bergen Pre-K Program Temporary Classroom
8 Units, TCUs, at Braddock Park in 2001 and the EMS
9 South Building at 1814 43rd Street in 1999 should
10 have approved by the NJDEP prior to use. This public
11 scoping hearing is just one of the steps for final
12 approval as shown in the chart on the right.

13 (Spanish translation.)

14 THE NARRATOR: Frequently Asked
15 Questions About Diversion.

16 Why permanent diversion now?

17 For more than a decade, Hudson County,
18 North Bergen Township, and the North Bergen Board of
19 Education have made extensive efforts to find an
20 alternate location for North Bergen's Pre-K Program,
21 to remove it from Braddock Park, and comply with both
22 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and
23 New Jersey Department of Education regulations
24 without success. NJDEP regulations permit permanent
25 diversions in limited circumstances like this one.

1 Approval would provide a fair and reasonable
2 resolution that will make lawful the use of the
3 Braddock Park site and the 43rd Street EMS South
4 Building.

5 Should more property be diverted at
6 Braddock Park?

7 Some public comments suggest a greater
8 area of the Braddock Park site should be permanently
9 diverted as part of this application, such as the
10 access driveway and parking lot next to the pre-K
11 trailers. Both areas are necessary for the public
12 use of Braddock Park, specifically Bruin Stadium and
13 its track and athletic field. All comments will be
14 duly considered about the correct calculation for
15 diversion so that public use and access to the park
16 are preserved while ensuring no more parkland than
17 necessary is diverted.

18 Are the proposed replacement properties
19 inadequate?

20 No, they are not inadequate to the
21 residents in the underserved areas of North Bergen
22 living near them and enjoying them as park and
23 recreation space. They are valuable to all North
24 Bergen and Hudson County residents in preserving
25 limited open space from further development, evident

1 to anyone who knows the real estate market in North
2 Bergen. For the taxpayers of North Bergen and Hudson
3 County, the proposed replacement properties also
4 represent the loss of tax revenue they would have
5 generated if privately opened and developed.
6 Furthermore, the proposed properties exceed the
7 acreage required by NJDEP to meet the three to one
8 ratio for this application.

9 The 2018 referendum was supposed to
10 make room to remove the TCUs from Braddock Park, what
11 changed?

12 Since the referendum was passed, plans
13 to locate early childhood students in neighborhood
14 school can still be realized with the exception of
15 Robert Fulton and Horace Mann schools. After
16 renovation is complete, Lincoln, Franklin, Kennedy
17 and McKinley preschool children will go to their
18 neighborhood schools. However, the Braddock Park
19 site is still needed for the ACES autistic program
20 and Robert Fulton and Horace Mann pre-K children,
21 which will allow for NJDOE classroom regulation
22 compliance throughout the district.

23 Are the pre-K trailers unsafe?

24 No, they are inspected yearly by the
25 North Bergen Office of Fire Code Enforcement and meet

1 all New Jersey Department of Education standards for
2 pre-schools.

3 (Spanish translation.)

4 THE NARRATOR: North Bergen Pre-K
5 Program Temporary Classroom Units, 8701 Boulevard
6 East.

7 (Spanish translation.)

8 THE NARRATOR: The purpose of the North
9 Bergen Pre-K Program Diversion at Braddock Park.

10 In 2001, a state mandate required North
11 Bergen to provide a full day kindergarten and pre-K
12 program, funded in part and regulated by the New
13 Jersey Department of Education. Construction of an
14 early childhood center was delayed when property
15 purchased next to Lincoln School was found to be
16 contaminated. Temporary classroom units, TCUs, were
17 ordered for emergency placement at the old municipal
18 pool site, but that was found to be contaminated as
19 well. To ensure the new pre-K program opened for the
20 2001-2002 school year, Hudson County agreed to allow
21 the TCUs to be placed at Braddock Park in the area
22 leased to North Bergen next to Bruin Stadium. Over
23 the years other efforts were made to find an
24 alternate location without success. In 2011 Hudson
25 County and North Bergen officials were notified that

1 the TCUs at Braddock Park violated NJDEP Green Acres
2 regulations. This diversion has taken place to
3 comply with Green Acres regulations.

4 (Spanish translation.)

5 THE NARRATOR: Compelling public need
6 for North Bergen Pre-K Program Diversion at Braddock
7 Park.

8 In 2018, North Bergen voters approved a
9 bond referendum for the purchase of the former Hudson
10 County High Tech High School and district-wide
11 realignment improvements with a new full day pre-K
12 program in accordance with NBBOE's Long Range
13 Facilities planning. Since the referendum was
14 passed, plans to locate early childhood students in
15 neighborhood schools can still be realized with the
16 exception of the Robert Fulton and Horace Mann
17 schools. After renovation is complete, Lincoln,
18 Franklin, Kennedy and McKinley schools pre-K children
19 will go to their neighborhood schools. However, the
20 Braddock Park site is still needed for the ACES
21 autistic program and Robert Fulton and Horace Mann
22 pre-K children which will allow for NJDOE classroom
23 regulation compliance throughout the district.

24 (Spanish translation.)

25 THE NARRATOR: Past efforts to identify

1 alternatives and reasons for rejection - North Bergen
2 Pre-K Program at Braddock Park.

3 Alternative site for pre-K program and
4 reasons for rejection.

5 In 2008, a 32-classroom facility at
6 64th Street with shared space for community was
7 proposed. The NJDEP rejected 64th Street property
8 under Green Acres Funding Regulations. Please see
9 below.

10 From 2008 to 2013 near Franklin School
11 and 53rd Street, on 16th Street in the southern end
12 of North Bergen, Temple Beth-El. Properties did not
13 prove feasible, reasonable and/or available without
14 high acquisition costs including eminent domain.

15 In May 2012, requests for proposals,
16 RFP, for the lease of a full facility for preschool
17 use, with joint use by a branch of the library. The
18 Board deemed all proposals excessive and efforts to
19 negotiate reduced pricing were rejected.

20 In 2013, informed by NJDEP the
21 rejection of the 64th Street property was made in
22 error. Adjacent properties available in 2008
23 necessary for New Jersey Department of Education
24 regulations were no longer available, so this was no
25 longer an option.

1 (Spanish translation.)

2 THE NARRATOR: North Bergen EMS South
3 Building.

4 Purpose of the diversion of North
5 Bergen EMS South and NB C.A.R.E.S. building.

6 In 1999 North Bergen and Hudson County
7 Improvement Authority, HCIA, agreed to build a
8 firehouse for the newly formed North Hudson Regional
9 Fire and Rescue at 43rd Street. In 2005 it became
10 home to the new North Bergen EMS South Unit,
11 expanding service and providing greater response time
12 in the southern part of a highly congested and
13 densely populated North Bergen. Since 2013 North
14 Bergen C.A.R.E.S. has been housed there as well to
15 help North Bergen residents in need. The purpose of
16 this diversion is to allow these organizations to
17 remain in place with their mission uninterrupted.

18 (Spanish translation.)

19 THE NARRATOR: Compelling need for the
20 diversion of North Bergen EMS South and NB C.A.R.E.S.
21 building.

22 In a densely populated and highly
23 congested North Bergen, the central location and
24 purpose of this property meets the compelling need of
25 providing for the health, safety and well-being of

1 North Bergen's residents. If forced to move, there
2 will be irreparable damage to public safety,
3 significant harm to a highly successful public
4 outreach program, and an outrageous waste of taxpayer
5 dollars in demolition and relocation costs.

6 (Spanish translation.)

7 THE NARRATOR: Past efforts to identify
8 alternatives as reasons for rejection, North Bergen
9 EMS South.

10 The cost for construction of the North
11 Hudson Regional Fire and Rescue Department Firehouse
12 was financed by the HCIA in 1999. In 2005 the
13 building was repurposed for North Bergen to establish
14 the EMS South Unit, expanding service and providing
15 greater response times in the southern part of highly
16 congested and densely populated North Bergen. Since
17 2013 the 1814 43rd Street location has housed NB
18 C.A.R.E.S. as well. Acquisition of any alternative
19 sites in the area and construction of a new firehouse
20 would be cost prohibitive, estimated to exceed \$1
21 million dollars.

22 (Spanish translation.)

23 THE NARRATOR: Significant public
24 benefits are: With the Braddock Park diversion, the
25 North Bergen Board of Education will provide a full

1 day pre-K and be able to meet NJDOE classroom
2 regulations throughout the district. The diversion
3 of the NB EMS South Building will allow emergency
4 service and public outreach to continue uninterrupted
5 and spare North Bergen and Hudson County taxpayers
6 the expense of demolition and relocation.

7 (Spanish translation.)

8 THE NARRATOR: Compensation and
9 proposed replacement properties.

10 The proposed replacement properties
11 exceed the three-to-one ratio for this application
12 with a combined fair market value of \$7,715,000.
13 They would provide substantial tax relief for North
14 Bergen and Hudson County taxpayers if developed. Now
15 they will be preserved as open space. By agreement
16 of North Bergen and Hudson County, the proposed
17 diverted area of Braddock Park will only be used for
18 another public purpose in perpetuity.

19 (Spanish translation.)

20 THE NARRATOR: 1811 Paterson Plank
21 Road.

22 (Spanish translation.)

23 THE NARRATOR: 1703-1709 River Road.

24 (Spanish translation.)

25 THE NARRATOR: 1401 64th Street.

1 (Spanish translation.)

2 THE NARRATOR: 6300 Meadowview Avenue.

3 (Spanish translation.)

4 THE NARRATOR: Thank you for
5 participating in this hearing, one of the first steps
6 in this diversion process. Your input is important
7 to Hudson County, North Bergen Township, and the
8 North Bergen Board of Education. All comments
9 received will be considered. After this hearing, we
10 will continue to receive public comments until
11 Tuesday, August 25th, 2020, by both mail and email.

12 To submit comments by mail, please send
13 to the office of the North Bergen Township
14 Administrator at 4233 Kennedy Boulevard, North
15 Bergen, New Jersey, 07047 or to the office of the
16 Hudson County Administrator at 567 Pavonia Ave, 4th
17 floor, Jersey City, New Jersey 07306. By email send
18 to buildingsandgrounds@northbergen.org.

19 NJDEP requests all comments submitted
20 by mail be sent to the New Jersey Department of
21 Environmental Protection, Green Acres Program, Bureau
22 of Legal Services and Stewardship, Mail Code 501-01,
23 501 East State Street, P.O. Box 420, Trenton, New
24 Jersey 08625-020, Attention: Melissa Abatemarco,
25 Esq., Regulatory Officer or by email

1 Melissa.Abatemarco@dep.nj.gov.

2 (Spanish translation.)

3 MS. McPHERSON: Okay. Thank you for
4 your attention, everyone. We will now begin the
5 public comment period. If you wish to speak again,
6 please use the raise your hand feature on Zoom or
7 press star 9 on your telephone. Please remember that
8 North Bergen residents will be given the opportunity
9 to speak first. Each speaker will be limited to
10 three minutes and when called upon you will be
11 unmuted and must state and spell your name and
12 address for the record before providing your comment.
13 All participants are advised that this meeting is
14 being recorded and will be a public record subject to
15 the Open Public Records Act.

16 Please remember also that additional
17 comments will be accepted by mail or email after this
18 hearing until August 25th, 2020. Now let's begin the
19 public comments period.

20 (Spanish translation.)

21 MS. McPHERSON: Okay. We have our
22 first speaker.

23 (ROBERT DOWD, 1459 77th Street, North
24 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

25 MR. DOWD: I'm appearing today in

1 support of the diversion and to keep the pre-K at the
2 Braddock Park location. I've been a resident of the
3 township for 49 and a half years and I've spent more
4 than half of those years in service of the Township
5 when I worked the police department. I recently
6 retired in May. I can bring unique prospective
7 having been at this location both outside and inside
8 in excess of 100 times. Over the course of my career
9 I've met scores of parents, students, teachers, all
10 with smiling faces, happy to be in the park. It's a
11 beautiful setting. It's a safe setting. The school
12 is isolated inside the stadium, so it becomes
13 particularly safe for the students. It's a very
14 vulnerable population that's important to protect and
15 I couldn't think of a better location than Braddock
16 Park.

17 At this point, I really don't need the
18 other two minutes other than just to say that I've
19 read some scuttlebutt online through social media
20 about how horrible an idea it is to take county
21 parkland, and I find that to be very myopic because
22 the land that we're talking about, it's inside Bruin
23 Stadium. It was formerly a rocky, dirty, dusty
24 softball field, quite frankly, when my stepdaughter
25 played in recreation softball and we now have

1 state-of-the-art, state-of-the-art fields at 64th
2 Street, 76th Street. Our recreation program is
3 second to none and we certainly don't need another
4 field. What we do need is a quality space for a
5 quality school.

6 I would hope that preschool would
7 actually be built in its existing footprint, a
8 permanent structure, to really give the children what
9 they deserve. I know the faculty and the staff there
10 are completely committed and I commend them and I
11 commend the township and Mayor Sacco's leadership and
12 Superintendent's Solter's vision on this idea. I
13 think it's a wonderful idea. I stand in full support
14 and I thank you for hearing me out. Thank you for my
15 time.

16 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Dowd.

17 Next speaker, please.

18 (JOHN BENDER, 1537-38th Street, North
19 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

20 MR. BENDER: As a parent whose two
21 children went through this program, you do not
22 realize how important it was for them to start their
23 career or their education in an atmosphere that was
24 unbelievable. There was so many things for the kids
25 to do. You never worried about safety for them. I

1 always knew that it was an ideal situation.

2 I would like to see those trailers be
3 replaced with modern, concrete ones so that those
4 kids have a nice place to go every day. I'm
5 disheartened by the people who want to remove them
6 only because of the ACE program. That is a wonderful
7 program that if you took those kids and you put those
8 students and you put them back in a school setting,
9 it may be disruptive to them. And I think by keeping
10 them there where they mingle with other kids and they
11 get to learn how to go to school every day, they
12 learn what values there are up there.

13 You go there whether it's
14 Christmastime, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Easter, they
15 have that place set up beautiful. The activities for
16 the kids, not to have to get in buses and go to other
17 locations that they do everything onsite is amazing.

18 I see majority the people who are
19 against this are people who don't have kids in the
20 system who are just worrying about whether they take
21 1.2 acres of land that the administration has said we
22 will give back to the Hudson County residents the
23 small parcel of land that we want.

24 So I'm asking the people to really open
25 your eyes and see how important and how safe and how

1 we need this facility. Like I said, my -- both kids
2 went through it. Wonderful administration.
3 Wonderful teachers. There is nothing you can say bad
4 about it. It's off to -- it's off in Hudson County
5 Park. It doesn't create a traffic jam. It doesn't
6 cost us over \$150 million to build. So, please take
7 into consideration that this has been there 20 years.
8 There has never been a problem. It's a successful
9 program. While every on the town is cutting back,
10 North Bergen is looking to move forward and give our
11 kids better facilities, better places to go. I mean,
12 it's a home run. So anybody who is not for it,
13 please reconsider, think about the children and how
14 important it is for those kids to have a good
15 education. Thank you.

16 MS. McPHERSON: Our next speaker I
17 believe is Lauren Cabrera. Lauren, state your name
18 and address, please, and spell that for our court
19 reporter.

20 (LAUREN CABRERA, 8819 First Avenue,
21 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047).

22 MS. CABRERA: So, I'm 100 percent for
23 keeping the trailers. I'm actually a former student
24 there, a former graduate and, honestly, the fact that
25 I can still remember what it was like being a student

1 there means a lot. We had gym outside. We had the
2 playground right there. I was able to interact with
3 other kids. There was a cop on campus. There is
4 still a cop on campus, so it felt super safe going
5 there. They have walks outside. They have
6 activities where parents can come and see what their
7 children are doing. They have Father's Day events
8 outside. They have all these events that are
9 outdoors and any other location won't have the same
10 accessibility as this location has, that's why I'm
11 100 percent for keeping it. And I fully support them
12 staying. That's all I need to say.

13 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Lauren.

14 Thank you, Lauren.

15 Our next speaker is Mayor Sacco,
16 welcome, mayor.

17 (MAYOR NICHOLAS SACCO, 9060 Palisade
18 Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey.)

19 MAYOR SACCO: Okay. About 20 years
20 ago, a part-time preschool was set up inside Bruin
21 Stadium, a football stadium. This part of the park
22 was under North Bergen's jurisdiction. We rented.
23 It's been ours. It probably will be North Bergen
24 forever. We pay for all the repairs there. We
25 manage it. We take care of it. We supply security

1 for it.

2 Inside it was once said there was a
3 softball field; that's not true. There was something
4 there. It was a plate and a pitcher's -- not even a
5 mound. The outfield would have the running track.
6 So it was something that was never utilized. It was
7 kind of almost like a joke when people looked at it.

8 The children right now have large
9 fields to play on, a playground, a running track
10 where they actually have tricycle lessons and a
11 trike-a-thon. Many of our children have never ridden
12 a tricycle before coming to this preschool.

13 The goal of the school board would be
14 to make a permanent location for a full-time
15 preschool, full-time, despite North Bergen only being
16 required to have a part-time one. The part-time one
17 is not good for the parents. The parents you have to
18 work. We only have about half the enrollment of the
19 kindergarten because parents can't send their
20 children to the school the way it is in a part-time
21 situation.

22 We are a terribly underfunded school
23 district, worse by the current state funding formula.
24 It's a horrible formula to North Bergen. To purchase
25 land would be a hardship and the thought of a

1 district trying to find a large enough tract of land
2 for a full-time preschool would probably condemn
3 anything that's done in North Bergen to a part-time
4 school probably forever. You would never be able to
5 do anything about it.

6 North Bergen is solving its overcrowded
7 issue by a school plan which refurbishes the high
8 school and removes the grade nine out of it,
9 establishes a junior high school seven through nine,
10 and the seventh and eighth grade being removed, give
11 room for things like art rooms, musicals, computer
12 labs, media centers and overcrowded classrooms can
13 now expand into that area. Class size would be
14 reduced throughout the school system.

15 It is beyond my comprehension how
16 anybody with a rational person -- can be a rational
17 person and oppose this plan. This plan works for
18 North Bergen and works for our children. Anyone who
19 says no is condemning our children to a second rate
20 education. Thank you.

21 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mayor, for
22 those comments.

23 Our next speaker is Freeholder
24 Vainieri. Good evening, Freeholder.

25 (ANTHONY VAINIERI, 7808 Fifth Avenue,

1 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

2 MR. VAINIERI: Good evening. Can you
3 hear me?

4 MS. McPHERSON: Yes.

5 MR. VAINIERI: Anthony Vainieri, 7808
6 Fifth Avenue, North Bergen.

7 I have the distinguished honor to serve
8 this town as its county freeholder which happens to
9 have James J. Braddock North Hudson County Park in
10 its district, which is District 8 in Hudson County.
11 I am a strong supporter of this plan, number one, for
12 the kids' safety. They're in a safe environment. As
13 the mayor stated, anyone who opposes this probably
14 doesn't have any kids, number one. Number two,
15 doesn't care about the kids.

16 I remember a freeholder meeting when
17 someone came up to the freeholder board and said put
18 the school on Tonnelle Avenue. You got to be insane.
19 I just want to state for the record that this area of
20 where the preschool trailers are can never be used
21 for a county purpose. The County of Hudson can never
22 take this property and use it for a park or a
23 playground. This is in the perimeter of Bruin
24 Stadium which is under jurisdiction of the Township
25 of North Bergen. So if the trailers aren't there,

1 the county residents aren't going to get any more
2 amenities from this at all. They're not going to get
3 a park there. They're not going to be able to be on
4 it. It's still going to be locked and gated for
5 Bruin Stadium. So it makes no sense to leave it.

6 If you leave it, where are we going to
7 put it? It's a fiscal burden on the taxpayers of
8 North Bergen, number one. Number two, it affects our
9 EMS down south. It affects all of us.

10 And, you know, if you have a child that
11 went through this, as Mr. Bender said, you appreciate
12 it. I've been there on numerous occasions. I went
13 to the Halloween parties. I went to the Easter
14 parties. I've been there. It's a beautiful setting.
15 It's a safe setting. I strongly support it. I
16 believe every parent that goes to the school system
17 supports this. If you don't, you're just an
18 anti-administration person. You should just move out
19 of town because you don't like the town.

20 So, again, as a freeholder, I am
21 stating this property can never, ever been used for a
22 county purpose at all. I strongly urge anyone in
23 this jurisdiction that has authority to approve this,
24 to move ahead with the plan and let's get North
25 Bergen students, the schools and the facilities that

1 are so desirably needs. Thank you very much.

2 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Freeholder.

3 MR. VAINIERI: Thank you, ma'am.

4 MS. McPHERSON: I believe our next
5 speaker is Steve Zbaida.

6 MR. ZBAIDA: Hello. I'm a recent
7 resident --

8 MS. McPHERSON: If I could stop you for
9 a moment, Mr. Zbaida. If you could please state your
10 name and address and spell it for our reporter,
11 please.

12 (STEVEN ZBAIDA, 7855 Boulevard East,
13 Apartment 12L, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

14 MR. ZBAIDA: So, I don't really know
15 enough. I'm a recent. I recently moved into North
16 Bergen and of course, you know, it's very interesting
17 to hear a lot of the comments. I'm also an educator
18 in New York City and so I definitely salute teachers
19 and want to create space for kids, and I'm not an
20 opponent of creating spaces for children to be safe
21 or to play but I am generally concerned about ever
22 giving away public land for the purpose of building
23 structures. Because I think it's so rare to have
24 green space and open space and public park. I know
25 that the park itself was one of the things that drew

1 me to this community. And I do worry about setting a
2 precedent for taking over pieces of the park and what
3 that would mean.

4 Also, when I heard the presentation, it
5 seems like there were other options for acquiring
6 other spaces but they were just not cost effective.
7 And I know that to me, having public land is
8 priceless. And I -- if I as a resident had to make a
9 choice between paying more money to have a different
10 piece of land to use, I would prefer to preserve
11 public land as much as possible. And that is not a
12 statement against teachers or children or the
13 wonderful programs and testimonials that we heard
14 here today. But, again, I'm a recent resident, so I
15 definitely don't have longevity in the neighborhood
16 that some people spoke about. That's all I have to
17 say.

18 MS. McPHERSON: Okay, thank you, sir.

19 Our next speaker is Janet Glass.

20 Miss Glass, if you could unmute
21 yourself.

22 (JANET GLASS, 8700 Boulevard East,
23 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

24 MS. GLASS: I -- first of all, in terms
25 of protocol, I've actually spoken at a number of

1 public hearings and I've never seen one where paid or
2 political staff spoke first and spoke their mind.
3 Public hearings, I thought, was supposed to be for
4 the public and I understand they're public as well
5 but I find that a little irregular.

6 I am in opposition to the structure
7 that's there now and another structure. The Green
8 Acres project and the Green Acres of New Jersey has a
9 mission, and I'd like to very briefly read what part
10 of the mission is. It is "to achieve a system of
11 interconnected open spaces whose protection will
12 preserve and enhance New Jersey's natural
13 environment."

14 Well, if anything goes against New
15 Jersey's natural environment, it's certainly a bunch
16 of trailers and certainly a school which is the same.
17 This does not enhance the natural environment and, in
18 fact, as we speak, there is a field that's being
19 built, yet another field with AstroTurf, with
20 artificial turf which takes away habitat from bees
21 and butterflies and from birds. It is certainly
22 antithetical to the natural environment and I find
23 that actually quite unethical that we are taking
24 Green Acres properties and we are chipping away
25 little by little of the natural environment in

1 Braddock Park.

2 I've lived here for 23 years and over
3 the 23 years I've seen more and more spaces chipped
4 away from the natural environment. Artificial turf,
5 by the way, also is related to toxins. So there are
6 carcinogens in what we call the tire crumb that is
7 used to support artificial turf. So for any number
8 of reasons, I am opposed to this project. That's it.

9 MS. McPHERSON: Than you, Ms. Glass.

10 Our next speaker is Thomas Stampe.

11 (THOMAS STAMPE, 1006 85th Street, North
12 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

13 MR. STAMPE: I would like to express my
14 gratitude for the pre-K in the park. Both my
15 children graduated from pre-K and I cannot tell you
16 the first year being in school what an experience
17 having it and it being at Braddock Park I felt safe.
18 It wasn't a burden on me as a parent. It wasn't a
19 burden on me as a taxpayer. I think it was a win-win
20 for my children. They got to play in Bruin Stadium.
21 They had many programs like the other people
22 mentioned. So I am in full support of this for our
23 town. Thank you.

24 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Stampe.

25 Our next speaker I see Antonia.

1 Antonia, if you state your name and address and
2 please spell it for our reporter.

3 (KRISTINA BRACERO, 9037 New York
4 Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

5 MS. BRACERO: I live at 9037 New York
6 Avenue. That's literally right up the road from the
7 trailers.

8 I'm from New York City. I have a year
9 and a half here and I was very troubled to see
10 trailers here. I didn't want to send my daughter
11 there but I ended up doing it. When I did it, I was
12 floored by my daughter's first teacher opening --
13 (audio disruption).

14 (Discussion off the record.)

15 (The record was read.)

16 MS. BRACERO: First teacher, her name
17 was Ms. Cabrera. Her opening speech put me at ease.
18 She answered every question that I had, every doubt
19 that I had and made me feel at ease with sending my
20 daughter here. The mere fact that you're taking a
21 child at four years old and sending her into a
22 school, you want smaller classes as a parent because
23 you want your child to have the attention that she
24 was getting at home for the first four years of her
25 life. Having a school that's on one end of North

1 Bergen and another pre-K at the other end of North
2 Bergen is good for the working parents, parents that
3 need to rely on neighbors to pick their children up
4 from school. These are the concerns as a parent.
5 And people in this call that want to talk about money
6 and greenery and everything, I'm floored by that.
7 Why don't we take about children's education which
8 takes precedence? They are our future and we have to
9 do right by them now and put them in a community
10 where -- in a school where they're going to get the
11 attention and the education that they need and they
12 deserve as our future. That's all I have to say.

13 (Reporter clarification off the
14 record.)

15 MS. McPHERSON: Our next speaker is
16 from phone number (201)854-7820.

17 Have you pressed star 9? I'm not
18 picking up the phone call.

19 Can we move to the next speaker?

20 It appears that the star 9 feature for
21 this phone call doesn't seem to be working.

22 May I call on Roger Q at this point?

23 (ROGER QUESADA, 233 79th Street, North
24 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

25 MR. QUESADA: Thank you so much for

1 this time.

2 First of all, I want to extend my
3 sincere gratitude to all the hard working teachers in
4 the district and especially those specifically that
5 endure these subpar conditions at the preschool
6 trailers in Braddock Park. I have spoken to a you
7 few of you and I hope my intentions are clear.
8 Preschool happens to be the most important
9 developmental years of these children's lives, so
10 their work as educators is crucial to building the
11 future of this community here in North Bergen. And
12 although some of you may be satisfied with these
13 structures, I as a homeowner and taxpayer am not as
14 this is a poor reflection of how our money is
15 utilized to improve on the quality of life. And I
16 don't know anyone that can be so passionately
17 defending putting your children in trailers.

18 Some of you may have amazing memories
19 that has to do with the quality of staff there, not
20 the fact that they were in these trailers. So when I
21 hear people describe how bad it was before the
22 trailers were there, it reminds of how one time this
23 town justified building a toxic power plant on what I
24 call an asphalt wasteland. So that's it.

25 I would like to discuss the goals of

1 what I and others in my community voted for when we
2 voted for a \$65 million referendum in good faith. I
3 realize that this referendum was challenged in court
4 and that was dismissed shortly thereafter. So the
5 goal that I'm aware of is that we are to use the
6 high-tech campus on Tonnelle Avenue which I attended
7 as a solution to overcrowding in North Bergen and to
8 get the preschool program out of the park as we were
9 promised before the referendum.

10 My question is: Will the schools
11 continue to be overcrowded after the realignment and
12 if so, how is that possible? Are you taking
13 additional out-of-district students as part of this
14 new plan or is the 65 million being used to actually
15 mitigate the overcrowding these children are
16 experiencing in town. We were also promised that
17 broken facilities would get repaired and that new
18 equipment would be acquired.

19 (Reporter clarification.)

20 MR. QUESADA: We're in the middle of a
21 pandemic in which students aren't even required to go
22 to in-person classes. So this would be actually be
23 an opportune time to solve this problem as
24 construction is seen as essential business.

25 TCU trailers in general do not have

1 good ventilation and these TCUs are almost 20 years
2 old and have had safety issues in the past. They
3 need to be discarded and the preschool should be in a
4 brick and mortar school as soon as possible. If
5 you're unequipped to do this, and hopefully you can
6 be transparent as to why, then you will compensate
7 county taxpayers with at least nine acres per Green
8 Acres requirement, which five times, not three times
9 the land that was used for the trailer and parking
10 lot.

11 Finally, I find it extremely offensive
12 that some officials, including Mr. Vainieri and Mr.
13 Sacco are saying that you must have children in order
14 to have an opinion on how my tax money is used in a
15 public school system. That's not acceptable. But
16 thank you so much for this time and I hope we come to
17 a resolution.

18 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you very much for
19 your comments, sir.

20 Our next speaker is Tiffany Todd.

21 (TIFFANY TODD, 2039 Kennedy Boulevard,
22 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

23 MS. TODD: I actually -- my son is
24 going into seventh grade. He is 12 now. He was a
25 student at the preschool trailers and, yes, of

1 course, we -- myself and him as well have wonder --
2 (audio disruption) -- his education, had great
3 experiences there. They have been able since it is
4 in a park setting to not only learn inside the
5 classroom but also take that learning outside of the
6 classroom. They've learned about the community,
7 about the environment. So that trailers being in the
8 park has helped him so much to -- (audio disruption)
9 -- outside of the classroom as well.

10 And that's all I have to say. I really
11 think the trailers being in the park is beneficial
12 for the children and especially for a child like my
13 son who does have a disability and being confined to
14 a classroom all day is hard on them. That has
15 definitely helped him with his disability to be able
16 to go outside of the classroom and do things outside
17 of the building.

18 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Todd.

19 MS. TODD: Thank you very much.

20 MS. McPHERSON: It appears at the
21 moment there is some difficulty with the star 9
22 feature. We're going to continue to try to correct
23 that.

24 At present I believe the next speaker
25 is Maureen.

1 (MAUREEN FOYLE, 7002 Kennedy Boulevard
2 East, #26B, Guttenberg, New Jersey 07093.)

3 MS. FOYLE: Thank you for this time.
4 Thank you everyone else for your comments and for
5 having this meeting. I've lived in this community
6 for 30 years and I'm very much in favor of giving all
7 children a first rate education with wonderful
8 teachers. It's everyone's due. But I'm against
9 using our valued, scarce public opening spaces for
10 school construction. The replacement parks are
11 small, full of cement, AstroTurf and not at all like
12 the treasure of North Hudson Park. We have so little
13 open space and other communities arrange to school
14 their children well, first rate educations with right
15 school kind of amenities without appropriating public
16 Green Acres park space.

17 The application is fraudulent. The
18 correct amount if you legally diverted land as it
19 stands now without taking more would be 1.1 acres
20 which includes the illegally diverted parking lot,
21 not 1.25 acres. There is an alternative location for
22 the preschool which involves using the availability
23 of the High Tech High School classroom space which
24 would need to be realigned with other students and to
25 take the preschool out of community parkland of

1 Braddock Park. Students from other towns should not
2 be allowed to use up North Bergen classroom space.
3 North Bergen should be required to provide five times
4 as much replacement land totaling nine acres, 9.05
5 acres if they want the preschool to remain in
6 Braddock Park as the parking and roads would
7 obviously had to be part of the equation and
8 replacement land should be of similar quality as
9 Braddock Park which is really a treasure. Beautiful
10 sloping hills, green natural, old trees, beautiful.
11 It's used so often by everyone in our community. We
12 need this space. This kind of options with Paterson
13 Plank Road and River Road replacement lands, they're
14 not anything like this. Much smaller. It would be
15 crowded. It would not have the same sort of feeling
16 as being in nature which is essential to everyone's
17 well-being.

18 Replacement land cannot be existing
19 parkland. It must be newly acquired land that is
20 converted to a new parkland. Originally we were
21 offered mostly concrete and synthetic grass
22 replacement land under the 14th Street viaduct in
23 Hoboken, and that was already a park.

24 Green Acres has guaranteed us this
25 amount of parkland and I really believe that we --

1 everyone in the area benefits by using that park.
2 It's a busy, happy park. I wish all students could
3 have the first rate education that they all
4 definitely deserve. But I don't understand and I
5 don't agree with taking over community open space.

6 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, ma'am.

7 MS. FOYLE: Thank you.

8 MS. McPHERSON: I'd like to call on
9 from a phone number (201) 854-7820. Would you press
10 star 9, please?

11 Can we move on then to call from (201)
12 320-1194 for unmuting?

13 May we move on at this point to Ace
14 Case as our next speaker.

15 (DAVID CASE, 479 Liberty Avenue, Jersey
16 City, New Jersey 07307.)

17 MR. CASE: I'm co-chair of Hudson
18 County Group of New Jersey Sierra Club chapter.
19 Sierra Club is the country's oldest and largest
20 environmental group. Sierra Club has over 80,000
21 members and supporters in New Jersey and 2,500
22 members and supporters in Hudson County. The club is
23 on record as opposing the presence of the preschool
24 trailers in Braddock Park. The club strongly
25 believes that Braddock Park should be restored to its

1 original purpose. The park was created to provide
2 access to open space with outdoor recreation. Green
3 Acres must enforce its own regulations. This matter
4 should have been settled in 2011 when North Bergen
5 and Hudson County were found to be in violation for
6 having illegally diverted Green Acres land. If there
7 was any question, it was settled when North Bergen's
8 original application for diversion was rejected in
9 2016. The trailers must go.

10 When voters approved a bond issue to
11 purchase High Tech High School, they were told that
12 the preschool would be relocated using this money.
13 That were deceived. The trailers should be removed
14 by 2021 as was agreed to in the decision from 2016.

15 A couple of points. First, that the
16 DEP would even consider this present application is
17 unconscionable and it's absurd. How many times for
18 how many years were North Bergen and Hudson County be
19 allowed to reapply to divert the same land? How many
20 times will we repeat this same farce? Our
21 grandchildren could be sitting here rehashing the
22 same arguments, saying the same things.

23 Taxpayers of North Bergen, Hudson
24 County and all of New Jersey have paid to our park.
25 It's our Green Acres money. It belongs to all of us.

1 If North Bergen is allowed to take over our park,
2 then we're all being cheated. Preschoolers and all
3 school children need safe classrooms. Of course they
4 do. Nobody is going to dispute that. North Bergen's
5 administration needs to do its job and provide those
6 classrooms. Children all ages, people of all ages
7 need access to open space and healthy outdoor
8 recreation.

9 If this illegal action is allowed to
10 stand, the precedent established will be disastrous.
11 What's next from Braddock Park, a casino? a water
12 park? a racetrack? Where does it stop? There will
13 be nothing left to the park if we let this happen.
14 Braddock Park should be there as a legacy for future
15 generations, not a way for politicians to avoid their
16 responsibilities. Thank you.

17 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Case,
18 for your comments.

19 I'd like to remind everyone, that
20 priority is going to be given to North Bergen
21 residents to speak. So if you have raised your hand,
22 the priority and order will go to North Bergen
23 residents.

24 The next speaker I see is Ester Ortega.

25 (ESTER ORTEGA, 8306 Fifth Avenue, North

1 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

2 MS. ORTEGA: I've been a supervisor at
3 the North Bergen Preschool with the exception of this
4 year that I was sent to a different school. I've
5 been in the preschool for the last 15 years. I can't
6 imagine a better place for these children of North
7 Bergen to be. This program has allocated an immense
8 amount of children in an area that has been very safe
9 for all the children in our community. It is an open
10 land. Children have -- it is not an open land.
11 Children have enjoyed this park immensely and are
12 connected with their surrounding. This area is
13 suitable for the learning and for the exploration of
14 these children. This program houses one of our best
15 autistic programs in Hudson County, possibly even in
16 the state. And what these children need is to be
17 outdoors and explore.

18 I feel and I feel it's absurd for
19 people to judge what these children need and where
20 they belong like on Tonnelle Avenue when these people
21 are not educators and not possibly have never entered
22 one of our buildings ever. So for me, to opionate
23 like that, it would be like me going into a doctor's
24 office and opinionating to the doctor what medicines
25 I should be taking. And I take a great offense in

1 that.

2 It is a great program. I can't imagine
3 this program being in any other place and the land
4 that we're consuming right now is just a very small
5 part of a land connected to our football field. So
6 this is where I stand. I think it's a very safe
7 environment and to send our children to Tonnelle
8 Avenue, whoever thinks that, shame on them. Because
9 to be honest, that would be the worst decision that
10 anyone could ever make. That's all I have to say.

11 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your
12 comments.

13 Our next speaker is Jelly. Jelly, if
14 you'll state your name and address for the record and
15 spell it for the reporter, please.

16 (Discussion held off the record.)

17 MS. McPHERSON: Let me interrupt you.
18 We have priority for North Bergen residents. So
19 you'll be able to speak later but I need to give
20 priority to North Bergen residents at this time.

21 A VOICE: I'm a teacher in North Bergen
22 at the preschool.

23 MS. McPHERSON: Okay. I still -- I
24 have to abide by what the rules are.

25 A VOICE: Okay.

1 MS. McPHERSON: We'll call back on you.

2 The next speaker is listed as Ms. Jen.

3 (Discussion off the record.)

4 (Nick Sacco, 327 73rd Street, North
5 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

6 MR. SACCO: I am working through my
7 phone in my hand. I'm the principal of Lincoln
8 School. (Audio distortion)two years ago. He
9 absolutely loved his experience. Can you hear me?
10 Okay.

11 MS. McPHERSON: Yeah.

12 MR. SACCO: I can call from another
13 phone if that's works better for you.

14 MS. McPHERSON: We can hear you now.

15 MR. SACCO: Hello?

16 MS. McPHERSON: Are you able to hear
17 us?

18 MR. SACCO: Yes. My son went to the
19 preschool and had a great experience. The best part
20 for us was the (audio distortion) and the fact that
21 they hold events on the field. So they're safe,
22 secure. They had pumpkin picking. (Audio
23 distortion.) My son was very nervous in going to
24 school.

25 I can hear you perfectly. And the best

1 part of the pre-K for us is the dedicated facility
2 just for pre-K-aged students so they don't have to
3 interact with older students in the beginning so they
4 can (audio distortion) with school with kids their
5 age and it was great for him. And the field is safe
6 for events, (audio distortion). You can take classes
7 outside. They can be in open air in small groups and
8 that's going to help them (audio distortion) hallways.
9 Everything is open air. (Audio distortion.) But my
10 son loved the pre-K. He had a great experience. The
11 teachers are amazing and I was happy to send him
12 there. Thank you.

13 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your
14 comments.

15 I'd like to remind everyone that if you
16 would like, you may also email your comments through
17 both the North Bergen website, there is an email
18 address that we will provide at the end of the
19 presentation as well, but it's currently available on
20 the website, and also on the Hudson County website.

21 Our next speaker is Martha Torres.

22 (MARTHA TORRES, 1410 79th Street, North
23 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

24 MS. TORRES: I live in North Bergen for
25 over 30 years and I have two children. My

1 14-year-old child is a chronically ill child who
2 never fully attended preschool at the trailer because
3 his condition was mostly -- his education was mostly
4 at home. Still, he was included in activities at the
5 park trailers during his preschool year. And I am
6 grateful for that.

7 My daughter who is 12 was able to be
8 part of a safe and supportive preschool environment
9 and she was allowed to thrive as a child. Many years
10 later we still visit long-term teachers there,
11 especially Miss Pura Cabrera who was my son's home
12 instructor and my daughter's teacher.

13 The preschool trailers are my
14 children's happy place and they have the best
15 memories ever from there. Therefore, I support
16 keeping the trailers. That's all I have to say.
17 Thank you.

18 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Torres.

19 Would caller (201) 214-9801 unmute
20 yourself, please?

21 Okay. The next speaker will be Reann
22 Bender.

23 (REANN BENDER, 1537 38th Street, North
24 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

25 MS. BENDER: So I think it's very

1 beneficial for us to keep the pre-k where it is.
2 It's a very familiar area for the children. There is
3 no children from uptown to downtown, they go there.
4 Everybody brings their children there. It's a
5 beautiful area, like they mentioned, inside and
6 outside. It's good for the kids to get the fresh
7 air. There is a lot for them to do and it's in
8 Braddock Park, we know that, but it's in the Bruin
9 Stadium.

10 Their sporting events are there from
11 when they're little. I was a cheerleader for North
12 Bergen and I cheered in that stadium. High school, I
13 went to that stadium. So they're growing up inside
14 that stadium for all those careers.

15 It's beautiful. The teachers are
16 amazing. People have mentioned Ms. Cabrera. My
17 little sister had her personally and she's amazing.
18 The teachers are amazing. The staff is amazing.
19 It's very safe. It's a closed-in gated area. There
20 is the police officers who are there. There is the
21 security who is there who are amazing. They have bus
22 aides there. The kids are very protected. I've
23 never had a kid who wasn't happy there. It's
24 beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. And the education
25 is amazing. For me and all my friends going there,

1 living in North Bergen my entire life I think it's
2 amazing to keep it there and it's benefiting a lot
3 the kids.

4 I've worked for the school system. So,
5 again, I've spoken to the pre-K. I've been to the
6 pre-K. I've worked with people in the pre-K and it's
7 just amazing all around and I think it benefits
8 everybody for it to remain there and that's all I
9 have to say.

10 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Bender.

11 MS. BENDER: Thank you.

12 MS. McPHERSON: Just as a reminder, the
13 email address is buildingsandgrounds@northbergen.org
14 if you'd like to submit the comments that you've made
15 in writing or some additional comments if we were
16 unable to hear you.

17 The next caller is Franklin Fabre.

18 (FRANKLIN FABRE, 9128 Durham Avenue,
19 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

20 MR. FABRE: I have both children who
21 have attended North Bergen schools. Two of them are
22 already graduated from the school. They went through
23 the system. And two little went to the system. My
24 little ones, they both went to the trailers when they
25 were younger and have gone back during the summer

1 programs, the summer camp. The last time they went
2 back was probably like two years ago. One day they
3 come home very hot. I think it was 90 to 100 degrees
4 outside, just like today, and they come home. They
5 were like their faces were red. You could take their
6 temperature it was so hot. Same thing happened to
7 one of my neighbors and my wife, she was very, very
8 concerned. She said, "You know what, I cannot send
9 my kids to that summer camp because there is no AC
10 over there." And she was worried. And I say, "You
11 know what, that's fine. Let's just not send them
12 anymore."

13 So for some people that have -- who
14 went to that trailers before, maybe they were nice
15 when they were first built but not now. No, like I
16 said, my kids went there two years ago. Anyone who
17 goes and sees the condition of the trailers, they're
18 noisy, dirty bathrooms, would not want to send their
19 child over there.

20 Just like same thing happened with one
21 of your schools that my kids go to were same thing, I
22 had to stop sending them for the summer programs
23 because there is no AC. And on a day like today how
24 can you have children playing sports in a gym with
25 100 plus degrees outside?

1 So I'm against the building the
2 trailers over there. I believe that if they had been
3 so nice like some people have said, why would they
4 allow to deteriorate to the point where they are
5 today? What happened to the funding that we provided
6 as taxpayers? They should have been keeping those
7 buildings up, not letting them deteriorate.

8 Now, as a parent I want my children to
9 be able to go to a good school system where they can
10 get the best education. As a homeowner, I will be
11 very happy if my school system in this town was rated
12 one of the best because that will make my property
13 value go up. As everyone knows, towns are rated on
14 the quality of their school system.

15 Unfortunately, this is not what's
16 happening over here. The school system has been
17 allowed to deteriorate. Taxpayers and homeowners,
18 we've been sending money, paying taxes. The trailers
19 have deteriorated to a point where you can't even
20 send them for summer camp because there is no heat.
21 So I'm against the project. Thank you very much.

22 MS. McPHERSON: Thank, sir.

23 Our next speaker is listed as Kristin
24 Diaz.

25 (KRISTIN RUUD-DIAZ, 603 81st Street,

1 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

2 MS. RUUD-DIAZ: Okay. I'm a resident
3 of North Bergen the past 18 years. I moved here from
4 St. Paul, Minnesota where throughout the entire twin
5 cities, it's parks and lakes. Something that I
6 frequented almost daily living in Minnesota. Coming
7 to North Bergen what saved me was the park and lake
8 and I live very close. A place that I go nearly
9 every day for walking on the lake. I do have
10 children now and we had always deemed the trailers
11 built and were curious about them. When our children
12 were of age to attend, I actually took a tour just to
13 see because I had no idea what a trailer would be,
14 what the quality of the program was.

15 I was given a tour. I went into the
16 trailer pleasantly surprised. I'm an educator of
17 over 25 years, most of the time in private schools,
18 quite a few at private schools because I am a French
19 teacher, and the rooms in the trailers when my boys
20 were there were fully equipped and I felt in good
21 condition. I do acknowledge that I've heard about
22 perhaps after 20 years the trailer needs some
23 updating and I know that the plan is to build a
24 permanent structure on that space.

25 Going back to the park, I am in

1 conflict because this park does mean so much to me,
2 this lake, this green space. I marvel at it every
3 day. We live in such a crowded, congested area.
4 Tensions are high, people are angry and the peace
5 comes from being able to enjoy this beautiful park,
6 seeing the wildlife. I would feel awful if more
7 space was taken away. Like I said, I acknowledge the
8 new field I see going on, the turf that's being
9 built. I have mixed emotions about that but there
10 have been many things that have come in such as big
11 building on the lake, the dog parks. Things have
12 been renovated and updated. I just feel that this
13 park will not miss this little space attached to the
14 North Bergen stadium for these children for pre-K.
15 The quality of the program is high. I think it
16 will -- it's our first taste of the North Bergen
17 school district. I teach in private schools but I
18 keep my students, my children in the schools because
19 of the teachers, the quality, the commitment to them
20 and the school district is doing the best they can.
21 We're not an AVID district, we don't have the money
22 but we're staying in North Bergen because we know the
23 dedication to the students. We have a big job it's
24 hard but I really hope that the pre-K can stay where
25 it is in this beautiful, beautiful spot for them

1 tucked in within the stadium. I don't foresee them
2 taking the stadium out, so I really hope that others
3 will see that this is a great need and will agree
4 with it. Thank you so much.

5 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you.

6 Just a reminder that those who are
7 calling in on their phones to unmute is star -- I'm
8 sorry -- pound 6. If (201) 606-5547, I apologize,
9 it's star 6. Could you unmute your phone, please?

10 Okay. Our next speaker is listed as
11 Linda Walden. Ms. Walden, if you could state your
12 name and address and spell it for the record, please.

13 (LINDA WALDEN, 7855 Boulevard East,
14 Apartment 15I, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

15 MS. WALDEN: First of all, I want to
16 thank you for your time. I'm a former elementary --
17 early childhood teacher and so I've come to this
18 issue with a background in education, particularly of
19 early childhood children.

20 In 2001 North Bergen illegally moved
21 its 17 TCU preschool into Braddock Park promising
22 that it was "very temporary" until preschool annex at
23 Lincoln School was complete. In 2017 North Bergen
24 promised votes if a \$60 million bond to buy High Tech
25 High School was approved in referendum, a school

1 realignment would solve North Bergen's school
2 overcrowding thereby enabling the preschoolers to
3 attend elementary schools.

4 Now we are learning that after the
5 realignment North Bergen schools will still be
6 overcrowded and the preschool can't be moved out of
7 Braddock Park. Is this because North Bergen will be
8 taking in more out of district students than prior to
9 the alignment? If this is the case, the public trust
10 has been betrayed. I believe that the High Tech
11 should be used as the solution to ending 19 years of
12 non-compliance in Braddock Park and for keeping
13 preschool children safe.

14 North Bergen diverted 1.86 acres
15 including the parking lot. 9.3 acres of replacement
16 land should be required, not 7.4 -- .04 acres as has
17 been proposed.

18 The TCUs didn't have required emergency
19 exits, they had hazardous electrical conditions and
20 rotten, broken and missing external walls. TCUs are
21 notorious for having poor ventilation and now that
22 we've experienced the pandemic, we should not
23 continue to use these antiquated TCUs.

24 Save Braddock Park for open space and
25 recreation. Developing Braddock Park for schools,

1 et cetera, in strange, inferior, synthetic pocket
2 parks miles away is not a good idea. That's all I
3 have to say. Thank you.

4 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your
5 comments, Ms. Walden.

6 The next speaker is listed as Emil.
7 Emil?

8 MR. FUDA: Yes, I'm here.

9 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you sir. If you
10 could state your name and address and spell that for
11 our reporter, please.

12 (EMIL FUDA, 524 72nd Street, North
13 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

14 MS. McPHERSON: Please continue.

15 MR. FUDA: I really don't have too much
16 to say except I have four kids that graduated and
17 came through the North Bergen school system and I
18 couldn't be more proud because they matured into
19 strong citizens and good people. Also, I'm highly in
20 favor of keeping the school there in Braddock Park.
21 It's a safe environment for these little kids, the
22 parents can come to the big parking lot. You can
23 walk across the field without any worries bringing
24 these kids into school or any driveway and it's
25 highly secure and I think it should stay there.

1 And these people that are opposed,
2 they're not really coming up with any suggestions,
3 they're just making comments and are against it. So
4 that's all I have on the say. Keep the school where
5 it is.

6 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, sir.

7 Our next speaker is Sylvia Cortez?
8 Court?

9 (SYLVIA CORTINA, 441 76th Street,
10 Apartment A5, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

11 MS. CORTINA: I just want to say that
12 as a parent, I have six kids, five of them who went
13 to the pre-K. My youngest one starts this September
14 and they loved it, I loved it. It was outside. They
15 got to go outside. They got to go on nature walks.
16 They got to experience the fresh air, the -- when
17 they were inside the classrooms, the trailers, the
18 trailers were very well kept inside. They were
19 clean. There is air conditioner and also during the
20 winter they had heat and everything. My kids loved
21 it. I felt as a parent safe sending them there
22 because they had did have a police officer there.
23 They do have a security there. All the staff
24 members, the teacher aides, the teachers, they are
25 very caring, they care for those children, they watch

1 over them as if those were their own babies
2 basically.

3 As for trying to get the High Tech on
4 Tonnelle Avenue for the preschool is unacceptable. I
5 personally would not feel safe sending my youngest
6 who is four years old to a school that's right on
7 Tonnelle. Tonnelle is dangerous. A lot of accidents
8 happen there. I wouldn't feel safe. In the park,
9 they have the Bruin Stadium is right there. For gym,
10 they go onto the football field. They run, they make
11 snow angels if they go outside during the winter.
12 They do lots of events there. The Halloween parade,
13 the Mother's Day, Father's Day, picking the pumpkins,
14 the butterflies when they watch them go from a
15 caterpillar to a butterfly, they let them go outside.

16 I personally feel that the pre-K should
17 stay where it is. That's all that I have to say.
18 Thank you.

19 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, ma'am.

20 Our next speaker is listed as
21 bobamongus.

22 (ROBERT WALDEN, 7855 Boulevard East,
23 North Bergen, New Jersey.)

24 MR. WALDEN: I want to say that this
25 has nothing to do with the quality of the school or

1 the teachers. The law is if there is an alternative
2 location for the preschool, it must be utilized, the
3 preschool must be moved out of the park. And even
4 though North Bergen is not an AVID school district,
5 it can afford to move the entire preschool out of
6 Braddock Park using the High Tech acquisition as a
7 means of sending the kids to High Tech or by using
8 the 64th Street properties.

9 And here is some history. Beginning in
10 1997, North Bergen received millions of dollars in
11 state ECPA preschool funding and officials knew that
12 they had to have an operating preschool by September
13 2001. Construction of the Lincoln's Preschool Annex
14 started late and when it was completed six years
15 later, it got used for other purposes. In
16 combination there is no excuse for years of
17 construction.

18 In 2000 North Bergen wanted to build a
19 \$65 million high school in Braddock Park. That's
20 equivalent to \$100 million today. This plan was
21 scrapped after a referendum showed voters objected to
22 building the school in the park.

23 In 2019 North Bergen announced its
24 biggest budget surplus in many years, \$15 million.
25 If you think North Bergen has been shortchanged by

1 the state, blame the state senator who has been
2 representing you since 1994, not the AVID decision.
3 19 years North Bergen's priority has been to build
4 shopping centers and apartment complexes, not a
5 preschool. And it gave developers highly tax
6 incentives which increased the school tax burden on
7 everyone else.

8 A few years ago the downtown Hudson
9 News property was considered as a site for the
10 preschool. It was big enough to also accommodate a
11 park, a rec center and a library but North Bergen
12 chose to allow Freeholder Vainieri's brother-in-law
13 planned to bail out Freeholder Vainieri's plan to
14 build a parking complex there instead of a preschool.

15 North Bergen's Braddock Park Preschool
16 violation has cost taxpayers millions of dollars in
17 penalties and costs associated with nine years of
18 stalling. Tonight we're getting more stalling and
19 more wasted money. North Bergen illegally diverted
20 1.86 acres including the parking lot. You need to
21 provide 9.3 acres of replacement land, not 7.04
22 acres. Now is the time to stop using the ancient
23 TCUs and use High Tech as a means to ending 19 years
24 of non-compliance, betrayals and unsafe TCUs. Save
25 Braddock Park. Thank you.

1 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, sir.

2 Our next speaker is listed as Joseph
3 Lombardi.

4 MR. LOMBARDI: Hello? Can you hear me?

5 Mr. Lombardi, please state your name
6 and address and spell them for our reporter.

7 (JOSEPH LOMBARDI, 1451 44th Street,
8 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

9 MR. LOMBARDI: Yeah. I just want to
10 say the pre-K in the park, it's a great need for this
11 town so I support the decision to keep it there.
12 It's been there for 20 years. It's -- I believe the
13 North Bergen School District has proven their safety
14 in 20 years, nothing really bad has happened there
15 and still provided a quality education in that
16 setting, a nice setting. There is already so much
17 green land in that park, the freeholder takes really
18 good care of it, Vainieri, and I don't think the
19 people are going to miss out on the rest of the park
20 if that school stays there, so I think it should
21 stay.

22 Even when the kids leave the trailers
23 in the park they can go play with their families and
24 enjoy the amenities, so it is a good location. I
25 don't think it's that big of a deal if they keep the

1 location there, especially the full-time pre-K is
2 offered because a lot of parents in the town want
3 that, especially single parents and people that could
4 use a full-time pre-K, if that's offered, then I
5 think it's a good deal. And I just say to keep that
6 location. Thanks.

7 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, sir.

8 The next speaker is listed as Shareen
9 Shibli.

10 (SHAREEN SHIBLI, 7714 Broadway, North
11 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

12 MS. SHIBLI: As a lifelong resident,
13 I'm speaking in support of the diversion plan. Being
14 that North Bergen is a gravely underfunded district,
15 this is the best case scenario for our pre-K program
16 without putting extra burden on our overcrowded
17 schools and classrooms.

18 My three sisters went through this
19 program. I know many families that were excited and
20 eager to send their children to the pre-K especially
21 because of its placement in the park. The area is
22 beautiful. The staff and faculty are great and those
23 opposed have clearly never been inside the classrooms
24 or spoken to the staff that work day in and day out
25 in this coveted area. Those opposed to this

1 diversion plan cannot in good faith claim to be pro
2 public education and, quite frankly, would benefit
3 from taking the basic school law and finance course
4 to understand that we do not receive funding the way
5 our neighboring districts do. The three-to-one ratio
6 for public open space will be exceeded. We are not
7 losing space in our parks. Any other options for our
8 pre-K program would impose an irreversible financial
9 hardship on our school district and that's why I'm in
10 support of this plan. Thank you for your time.

11 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your
12 comments.

13 Could we see (201) 898-9604? Please
14 press star 6 to unmute yourself. It's 898-9604.

15 Let us move on. The next listed caller
16 is or speaker rather is Jose Lara.

17 (JOSE LARA, 1452 48th Street, North
18 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

19 MR. LARA: So, three years ago when we
20 were looking for pre-K for my son that we went to
21 register at the park, just by looking at the
22 conditions of the trailers itself, my wife and I
23 decided to pay for pre-K because just, again, just by
24 looking at the condition you could see that it is
25 deteriorated, it hasn't been taken care of, the

1 electrical power, the electrical cables are corroded.
2 It was just a fire hazard. And the fact that it's a
3 matter of time, honestly. I'm not sure, the people
4 that have spoken saying my son went there 14 years
5 ago, 20 years ago. I'm talking now. I'm talking
6 about two years ago, three years ago. The conditions
7 at the park is not suitable. Those trailers are not
8 suitable for the kids.

9 Now, if they're talking about building
10 a new school, the new school can also have a space
11 for the kids to run around and a space to have their
12 own personal time with their -- you know, enjoying
13 with the other kids and stuff. But as a parent, I
14 have another child coming into the school district
15 next year, and I wouldn't want my kids to be in the
16 same condition this has been promised for 20 years in
17 North Bergen.

18 I grew up in West New York. I came to
19 North Bergen because right next door, believe it or
20 not, you look -- you come from West New York, you
21 come from Union City, you look at the town of North
22 Bergen but once you're in North Bergen, you realize
23 that it's not what it looks like from the inside
24 out -- from the outside in, I mean.

25 I believe the kids should have their

1 own space. We could find a way to find another
2 school. They mention many possible options for
3 there. The road just by the Paterson Plank Road,
4 there is plenty of land there. I don't know who owns
5 that now, but about two years ago, maybe five years
6 ago there was plenty of land to build a huge school
7 there, if not, maybe the high school.

8 Instead of building a building to
9 taking away time -- taking away space from the county
10 itself, like the park, it's not suitable. It's like
11 my tenant will tell me after 20 years, Hey, you know
12 what, I'm not going to move out. You know, it
13 doesn't make any sense. But, it's the future of our
14 kids. They're looking to, you know, come into the
15 school, look at their children, look at their friends
16 and enjoy, having a good time. We all talk about the
17 nature of the park. It's all loveable, but education
18 and the park is two different things. So let's keep
19 it to that.

20 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, sir.

21 The next speaker is listed As Ozgur,
22 O-Z-G-U-R. If you would please unmute and state your
23 name and address and spell it for the record, please.

24 (OZGUR AKKAS, 8800 Boulevard East,
25 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

1 MR. AKKAS: So I hear parents that
2 you're talking about locations and their appreciation
3 about the park. I am totally against the location
4 like Tonnelle Avenue. I take a drive through there,
5 it is definitely not an appropriate location but
6 really bothers me --

7 MS. McPHERSON: Sir, sir, if you could
8 just speak a little bit slower for the reporter,
9 please.

10 MR. AKKAS: Thank you. Thank you for
11 my time.

12 So what really bothers me is that there
13 seems to be 19 years of time where taxes were paid
14 and accommodations were made. And it sounds like
15 there was some sort of purpose, some sort of a --
16 even with issue and it came out in this point. You
17 know, what I believe, what I want to say this is --
18 you know, that are two issues at hand, one is a
19 temporary school and the lack of education
20 environment, and the other the land diversion from
21 the protection of the state. Right?

22 We are talking about diversion from the
23 protection of the state. You know, whatever happens
24 after this, whether it stays at pre-K trailers or
25 permanent construction or a new hotel in that

1 location is irrelevant. Diversion happens and that
2 is the conversation here.

3 I want to say that, you know, it was
4 illegal to begin with. You know, when a plumber or
5 electrician does something wrong, we ask them to
6 correct it and make it compliant. So in that case
7 this is illegally done in that land and I understand
8 this is a much bigger issue than just repairing a
9 small thing but we need to understand that actually
10 public land is about the health and well-being of the
11 people and they need their recreation, they need
12 every acre of that space to use it and not divert it
13 for another purpose.

14 You know, it's a changing moment for
15 the North Bergen community for sure but it is also
16 for the children to attend classes and their parents
17 and they could end permanent location to be proper
18 and regulation compliance full chapter.

19 I have sympathy for the parents of the
20 students and I stand with them to demand a better
21 property and better and proper school environment and
22 permanent location. But a public area land cannot be
23 the right place for kid. Public parks are purported
24 used like bridges. We use your tolls. Just like we
25 cannot demand roadway lead into a tunnel to build a

1 school, we cannot use public area to build a
2 permanent school.

3 If there are any intentions to build a
4 permanent structure, then this is why the public
5 relies on gatekeepers like New Jersey DEP creating
6 acres program. For everyone let's look at this issue
7 not as a school and permanent construction but as an
8 importance to discuss about whether there is already
9 sufficient outdoor recreation area for public use.

10 In 1975, in 1975 Hudson County was
11 reported, as reported by The New York Times, to have
12 the least recreational land for its 609,000 people.
13 And this was much less than the recreation condition
14 at resulting acres. Fast forward to recent data,
15 today Hudson County has more than 600,000 people and
16 the available recreation land is less than five acres
17 per thousand people. And, you know, about half a
18 century only approximately five acres increased per
19 thousand people.

20 MS. McPHERSON: Sir, I ask you to
21 complete your comments.

22 MR. AKKAS: What I'm saying really
23 saying is that basically as North Bergen and Hudson
24 County we are all subpar in terms of the available
25 recreation area. Giving another acre on two --

1 MS. McPHERSON: Thanks for your --

2 MR. AKKAS: -- is impossible at this
3 point.

4 MS. McPHERSON: -- comments. Appreciate
5 them.

6 The next listed speaker is Jodi
7 Jamieson.

8 (JODI JAMIESON, 8600 Boulevard East,
9 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

10 MS. JAMIESON: I've been a resident
11 here for over 17 years and the park is the reason
12 that I moved here. It's one of the things that kind
13 of makes living in this urban area humane and keeps
14 me sane.

15 I'm a strong believer in the importance
16 of parks and especially in our urban areas. It helps
17 to keep our -- it helps to clean our polluted air, it
18 gives us space for passive recreation as well as the
19 team sports, it gives us nice space for family to
20 unwind and a place to clear our heads from the daily
21 grind of our fast-paced world. It gives us a place
22 to observe nature. This park is the most heavily
23 used in the county parks and it offers much needed
24 natural space.

25 I believe that our children deserve to

1 have a great education. I have nothing against
2 schools. But the park should not be used as a
3 vehicle for cheap land to set up a school. This
4 natural space can never be replaced and it has
5 already been encroached upon too much in my opinion
6 with acres of plastic turf and fencing everywhere.
7 North Bergen mayor and state senator Sacco and most
8 of the commissioners have been in power for the near
9 20 years that the trailers have been in the park.
10 They need to stop playing games with NJDEP and Green
11 Acres, and they need to fix their school problems
12 without taking public parkland. They had 20 years.
13 New Jersey DEP Green Acres needs to say no to this
14 diversion. The requests is a travesty and it's a
15 breach of the public trust. That's all I have to say
16 on that.

17 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you,
18 Ms. Jamieson.

19 The next speaker is listed as Daniel
20 Perez.

21 (DANIEL PEREZ, 5210 Cottage Avenue,
22 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

23 MR. PEREZ: Okay. First thing, I just
24 want to say thank you for over 200 participants in
25 this Zoom call. Regardless of how we feel about this

1 plan, it seems that we all care about the well-being
2 of our town and education. So I just wanted to say
3 start off saying that I went to the pre-K program,
4 I've gone to Franklin School and NBHS and now I'm a
5 junior at Vassar College, but what's alarming to me
6 is how I could have been four and now I'm 20 and when
7 I went to school at the beginning it was new trailers
8 and it's still trailers now. I think that the
9 condition of the trailers is quite alarming me to
10 that we're still putting our children in these
11 trailers. I won't argue the legality of keeping the
12 school in that area because that's just a whole other
13 issue I won't cover for now, but if the school does
14 stay there, I think it's really important that we
15 upgrade the buildings and stop having trailers there.
16 I don't think the trailers are acceptable. I think
17 they could be put in a more modern building. I think
18 our kids deserve better than that. I just think if
19 the school stays there, that the land that is lost to
20 that school should be elsewhere in a way that's
21 sufficient for provide diversity in this urban area.

22 And I also just want to echo what Janet
23 Glass said earlier is I don't think it's appropriate
24 for elected officials to speak during a public
25 hearing. I think the comments should have made for

1 the presentation earlier. Yeah, and just wanted to
2 say that while I do appreciate what the town has
3 provided for me in terms of like the education
4 system, I still recognize and I recognize that
5 education in New Jersey and this county is more
6 complex than a lot of people understand and even I
7 can understand. I think we need to do what's best
8 for our children. I think we need to put more
9 resources into the building. And while I can
10 appreciate the High Tech campus being used to move
11 the freshman and middle schoolers, I think we need to
12 care more about the preschoolers, we need to remember
13 their buildings haven't been updated yet. It's been
14 almost 20 years now and I think we need to get to
15 improve their conditions. Thank you.

16 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Perez.

17 Our next speaker is Maria Hidalgo.

18 (MARIA HIDALGO 301 79th Street,
19 Apartment C2, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

20 MS. HIDALGO: I'm a mother and I
21 actually live near the park. So the preschool -- and
22 I also have a preschool aged child which makes the
23 preschool's location really convenient for me. But I
24 am opposed to keeping the preschool in the park for a
25 few reasons but mainly because for the greater good

1 because that park is not just a North Bergen park,
2 it's a Hudson County park that is needed by all of
3 the children in this area not just the North Bergen
4 preschool children, all of the children that reside
5 in surrounding Bergen County and Hudson County areas
6 depend on that park in addition to the adults and
7 many others that do.

8 The park is a nice location. Of course
9 it is, you know. But is it the right location for a
10 municipality for a school? The answer is no. And
11 even if you take land and give it to them which
12 starts an uber dangerous precedent, first it's a
13 preschool, then what else, a jail? What else are
14 they going to put in that park that we need? There
15 is not enough space in this area for all of this
16 building. So, even if you take -- even if you take a
17 piece of the park, give it -- give us land in other
18 places, that doesn't make up for the fact that you've
19 destroyed a piece of this park, you know. That's --
20 you know, it's a huge problem and the children and
21 the people around here need it.

22 North Bergen has been squatting in this
23 park for over 20 years. You had 20 years to figure
24 this out and they haven't. A petition was started
25 six years with over 3,100 signatures saying --

1 supported by people that want this preschool out of
2 the park. You know, how much longer are you going to
3 give them to keep doing this, you know, to keep
4 abusing people. This would never happen if this
5 neighborhood wasn't minority majority. This would
6 never happen in a white neighborhood ever. This is
7 environmental racism. I'm opposed to keeping the
8 preschool.

9 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your
10 comments, ma'am.

11 The next listed caller, speaker is Lara
12 Rinaldi.

13 MS. RINALDI: Hi, my name is Lara
14 Rinaldi. I do not live in town. So do I have to say
15 that I will call back? Do I have to raise my hand
16 again?

17 MS. McPHERSON: Yes, ma'am. I believe
18 there are some other callers to North Bergen. If you
19 would allow the courtesy to the North Bergen
20 residents.

21 MS. RINALDI: Of course. Of course.
22 Of course. Thank you.

23 MS. McPHERSON: The next speaker would
24 be Larry, listed as Larry.

25 (LARRY WAINSTEIN 7414 Fourth Avenue,

1 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

2 MR. WAINSTEIN: North Bergen is over
3 six miles long. Sacco wants to build a school on the
4 most northern part of the town where it almost
5 borders with Fairview. It is almost impossible to
6 bus the preschoolers from downtown and it will take
7 parents 40 minutes to get there. It's wrong and
8 unfair. Sacco (audio distortion) to our children or
9 forever 30 years. He exposed our children to cancer
10 producing prohomohock (phonetic) and chemical vapors
11 in violation of our health laws. Sacco used his
12 influence as state senator to break local and state
13 laws.

14 I filed a lawsuit to stop the North
15 Bergen power plant due to the pollution and the
16 proximity to the proposed middle school and Sacco was
17 the only mayor that voted in fair of this
18 cancer-producing power plant which was a football
19 field away from the proposed new school. Sacco's
20 power plant would have pumped 6.4 million pounds of
21 poison air into our children's lungs putting at risk
22 their health, welfare and safety of the children and
23 the people of North Bergen. And this is just another
24 scam on the people of North Bergen.

25 The \$60 million bond that Sacco

1 advertised in his campaign literature was to move the
2 children out of the park into a safe environment.
3 The residents of North Bergen have paid interest on
4 the \$60 million bond approved by Sacco and his
5 commissioners and continues to lie and deceive the
6 residents. You could have built a beautiful facility
7 at the Avalon property, 57th Street and Kennedy
8 Boulevard which had been centrally located or on 18th
9 Street in Paterson Plank Road but they decided to
10 give Sacco's driver, Anthony Vainieri and his family
11 -- and he's also the chief of staff and a freeholder
12 and they gave him a 30 year tax abatement; money that
13 belongs to the residents.

14 There is a pattern of criminality being
15 committed on the people of North Bergen. This
16 project will be a waste of time and money. The
17 school belongs in the center of town so it will be
18 accessible to all the preschoolers and parents in
19 North Bergen.

20 My plan was to have a state-of-the-art
21 high school at the current location on 76th Street
22 and Kennedy Boulevard. We own the property and it
23 would have no cost to the taxpayers. The State of
24 New Jersey builds schools in West New York and Union
25 City as well, and the school would have reduced

1 overcrowding and classroom size while giving our
2 children the state-of-the-art resources. That's what
3 they deserve and that's what we should give them, the
4 best possible education.

5 The government of North Bergen is a
6 criminal enterprise and this enterprise must not be
7 able to continue. Thank you very much. Thank you.

8 MS. McPHERSON: Our next speaker is
9 listed as Stephanie Apple. Stephanie?

10 Can we move to the next speaker is
11 listed as Cabrera. Please state your name and
12 address and spell it for the record.

13 (AMANDA CABRERA, 8819 First Avenue,
14 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

15 MS. CABRERA: Okay. So, as an educator
16 and a former student here in the North Bergen School
17 District, I really believe that the North Bergen
18 pre-K is located in an amazing area and it's a
19 wonderful setting for our students to grow and excel.
20 I know numerous individuals who have gone through the
21 program, including my younger niece who just went
22 there last year and hopefully my nephew this year,
23 and I believe that the diversity and how interactive
24 the programs are are just amazing for growth and
25 these experiences have been just phenomenal. So, I'm

1 sorry, the staff and faculty are just amazing and
2 even -- I can't even name all of the events that I
3 was invited to last year but I would go on for days
4 but it's just amazing to see how connected the area
5 is for pumpkin picking, tricycle races. So these
6 activities just wouldn't be possible if the pre-K
7 wasn't located where it is. I appreciate how
8 connected we are and I just wouldn't -- I wouldn't
9 know where the pre-K would be if we didn't have these
10 experiences but thank you.

11 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Cabrera.

12 Could I ask (201) 310-7549 to unmute,
13 please, by pressing star 6. Phone number (201)
14 310-7549?

15 May we hear from Inaya Jaafar is
16 listed, Inaya Jaafar, please, next.

17 (INAYA JAAFAR, 1433 70th Street, North
18 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

19 MS. JAAFAR: All right. I just want to
20 say that as a mother of four kids that have gone
21 through the preschool and the North Bergen system and
22 having nieces and nephews that have gone there and
23 other family members for that matter, it's a
24 wonderful place for our kids to begin the foundation
25 of their education. I have no objection whatsoever

1 to keep it there. We definitely have a large
2 facility in place for our kids to continue to excel
3 there without a doubt. Anyone who understands school
4 finances would definitely understand how difficult it
5 is to build a school. It's not that simple for
6 someone to just say, oh, we could just build one in
7 the middle of town. It doesn't work like that.

8 As far as the entire park goes, there
9 is a large space for everyone in the county to
10 participate. I've lived here for 40 years in Hudson
11 County, 17 of which in North Bergen.

12 MS. McPHERSON: Are you there?

13 MS. JAAFAR: I am.

14 MS. McPHERSON: Okay.

15 MS. JAAFAR: Thank you.

16 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you so much for
17 your comments.

18 The next listed speaker is Karla
19 Miller. Ms. Miller?

20 We're just under 45 minutes until the
21 end of the hearing. We'd like to give everyone who
22 is participating an opportunity to speak.

23 Ms. Miller, are you there? Karla
24 Miller?

25 MS. MILLER: Hi. Can you hear me?

1 MS. McPHERSON: Yes.

2 (KARLA MILLER, 7512 Park Avenue, North
3 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

4 MS. MILLER: I'm living in North Bergen
5 for 13 years and I love this town and I use this park
6 every single day since I moved here and I never saw
7 the trailers. I don't know how people say the
8 trailers bother the park. We have a big and large
9 park. The trailers doesn't bother at all. And I
10 have -- I start working pre-K by the park and I have
11 such experience. I can tell everything so organized,
12 the program is great, so the ACES, all kids I see the
13 parents very happy with us. You know, I cannot
14 imagine these kids getting another place.

15 They can go outside, they love it.
16 When you say let's go outside, they run and you can
17 see their happy faces. They can breathe outside, not
18 stay in the classroom forever. And the trailers have
19 been safe. We have people around checking every
20 minute. The teachers are very prepared, they're very
21 great, all of them. They participate in everything
22 with the kids. We all, we help each other. It's a
23 beautiful program. I cannot imagine these kids going
24 in a building. You, they going to miss this area.
25 It's beautiful in winter, summer, fall, whatever,

1 it's beautiful. I just wanted to say that. Just
2 keep the school there, please. Thank you.

3 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Miller.
4 Next on the list, Dawn Gelpi. Dawn
5 Gelpi, please unmute yourself.

6 (DAWN GELPI, 5826 Meadowview Avenue,
7 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

8 MS. GELPI: I would like to speak on
9 behalf as someone who is a resident of North Bergen
10 who has a child who has gone through the North Bergen
11 school system, who also has a child who is disabled,
12 and as someone who has worked in the ACES program in
13 the park in the summer in the trailers in the dead of
14 heat. As to say, I'm not really sure what some of
15 these people are talking about, that they're in poor
16 condition, that they're not air conditioned, that
17 they're dirty. I have a feeling that maybe they've
18 never gone into them or seen them or experienced
19 anything at all with the trailers because it is
20 actually the opposite. And when you work in a
21 program like ACES when children have sensory
22 dysfunctions, being in a program in a situation in an
23 environment such as this is perfect because there is
24 not a lot of older children with the noises. And the
25 atmosphere is very good for the kids with the outside

1 and working doing sensory programs with them is
2 excellent. I think it is a very -- a perfect spot to
3 have a program such as the ACES program with these
4 children who have autism and sensory issues. Like I
5 said, just the environment, not a lot of outside
6 noise, very calm with the environment.

7 I think that it should stay there and I
8 think that there is no better place for the ACES
9 program than inside of the park. That's all I have
10 to say.

11 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you very much.

12 The next listed speaker is Andrea Lugo.
13 Please state your name and address for the record,
14 please.

15 (ANDREA LUGO, 407 79th Street, North
16 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

17 MS. LUGO: I'm 27 and I've lived in
18 town for 22 years. I never attended the preschool as
19 a student but I did attend the trailers for the
20 Summer Fun Program that's offered by the town and I
21 really have nothing but fond memories being over
22 there. With that said, I fully support keeping the
23 preschool in the park. It's really safe and it's a
24 controlled environment for the kids. The trailers
25 are air conditioned, they're comfortable and the kids

1 are able to enjoy the amenities of the park once
2 they're done with school.

3 I don't really understand what the
4 argument is behind the trailers taking away from the
5 aesthetic of the park, just for the simple fact that
6 you can't even see them when you drive past the
7 stadium. And it doesn't take away any useful space
8 from people who visit the park. That's really all I
9 have to say.

10 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Lugo.

11 Our next speaker is listed as Mark
12 Stevens.

13 (MARK STEVENS, Braddock Park, North
14 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

15 MR. STEVENS: Yes, hello. Mark
16 Stevens, M-A-R-K, S-T-E-V-E-N-S. I currently live in
17 Braddock Park.

18 MS. McPHERSON: You may continue,
19 Mr. Stevens.

20 MR. STEVENS: Thank you. I'd like to
21 say that I think all towns in Hudson County should
22 build schools in Braddock Park. Apparently something
23 about the park makes it better for the students than
24 any other school location in North Bergen. It has
25 better teachers than anywhere else. It has a safer

1 location than anywhere else. Apparently the
2 environment allows students to spend an excessive
3 amount of time outside versus the standard climate in
4 New Jersey and it's the only place where tricycle
5 races and pumpkin picking can take place. The school
6 also apparently has police, heating and
7 air-conditioning which apparently aren't available at
8 any other school.

9 The park is crowded enough already.
10 Having more schools would keep the public out. Given
11 how priceless everyone says the location is, I'd like
12 to say that North Bergen isn't paying enough money to
13 the county for their use of the land the school is
14 on. Further, all parents of all current and former
15 students in North Bergen should be paying an
16 additional school tax that should be paid directly to
17 the residents of Hudson County for their lack of use
18 of the park. And if North Bergen and the residents
19 don't want to have (audio distortion), it's North
20 Bergen's problem to find a sufficient site for the
21 school that isn't on public land. And anyone who is
22 for keeping the school where it is, would you feel
23 the same way if the town decided that your home and
24 your house was the best place for a school and took
25 it away from you? Thank you very much.

1 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Stevens.
2 Our next listed speaker is Rosala
3 Doukali. Please unmute yourself.

4 (IMANE DOUKALI, 810 89th Street, North
5 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

6 MS. DOUKALI: Okay. I just want to
7 talk about as an early childhood educator, I would
8 like to emphasis on the idea that preschoolers have a
9 very hard time adjusting to preschool. And the fact
10 that we have our preschool in a beautiful park, it
11 motivates our preschoolers to wake up every day and
12 go to school.

13 As a resident, I have been to the park
14 many times and as I'm walking around the track, I
15 have looked at the trailers very closely. They're
16 beautifully decorated. They look very cozy and look
17 very pleasant and kid-friendly. I would also like to
18 add that I was preschool educator in an Abbott
19 District, and after looking into the preschool here
20 in North Bergen that isn't an Abbott District, I
21 really thought that I was in one. The amount of
22 activities that are done are excessive. The
23 furniture is in great condition. The supplies for
24 the students are beyond limits and there is
25 air-conditioning. There is no fire hazard of any

1 wires. And we just have to remember that we're
2 thinking about the children and their happiness and
3 where they would want to be. And that's where they
4 want to be. That is their happy home. What child
5 wouldn't want to go to preschool that is in a park?
6 It motivates them. It makes them happy. So if it's
7 not broken, let's not break it. And that's all I
8 have to say.

9 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, ma'am.
10 Could we see if we can hear from
11 Stephanie Apple. Stephanie Apple is listed as a
12 speaker. Could you please unmute yourself? Hello?
13 We're not able to hear whoever is listed as Stephanie
14 Apple.

15 May we hear from Tony Anzivino. Please
16 unmute yourself.

17 (TONY ANZIVINO, 405 79th Street, North
18 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

19 MR. ANZIVINO: First, I would like to
20 say Mr. Vainieri should be careful in his words
21 painting everyone that could be opposed to this as
22 not liking children because that's simply ridiculous.
23 That's number one.

24 Number two, everybody that's on the
25 payroll is painting this beautiful picture of the

1 park and how great it is for the kids and I'm sure it
2 is. Why don't we just move all of City Hall there so
3 everybody that works there can love the beauty of the
4 park? It doesn't make it right.

5 Green Acres is sacred. It's a sacred
6 thing. It was crafted for the reason of keeping
7 these spaces open. And what do we have if we go with
8 this one and a half acres or whatever, how do we know
9 that that's the end? How do we know that it's not
10 going to keep going and going and going? That's a
11 rhetorical question.

12 My point is -- and I can't put too fine
13 a point on it -- is that Green Acres is sacred and we
14 are not giving it the respect that it deserves.
15 That's all I had to say.

16 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, sir, for
17 your comments.

18 My apologies. Could we hear from
19 Dennis Vasquez? Dennis Vasquez listed; please unmute
20 yourself.

21 (DENNIS VASQUEZ, 7507 Third Avenue,
22 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

23 MR. VASQUEZ: So thank you for allowing
24 me this time to speak. I, myself, am I lifelong
25 resident of North Bergen. I have grown up in our

1 public education system and I have witnessed the
2 corruption that Sacco and his accomplices have done
3 to our public education system. It is not really
4 surprising to me that they were the -- that him and
5 Anthony Vainieri were the first people -- some of the
6 first people on this call to try to intimidate
7 everybody who opposes the illegal preschool trailers
8 that are on James Braddock Park.

9 The reason why I am speaking today is
10 because just like everybody on this call, I am very,
11 you know, concerned for the safety of our children
12 and I do also want them to receive a quality
13 education.

14 And right now I don't know if anybody
15 has really talked about the pandemic that we're
16 living through and how coronavirus is virus spread by
17 respiratory particles. In these trailers the very
18 core ventilation because they have deteriorated over
19 20 years it is likely that it is a breeding ground
20 for this virus. That is why I am opposed to students
21 going back there, especially at this point.

22 And I just want to remind everyone who
23 is supportive and very nostalgic about the preschool,
24 that they are calling for the illegality to continue.
25 And this is nothing new for North Bergen

1 administrators, this is how they function. And I
2 would really hope that they would really consider
3 what safety really means because they keep
4 emphasizing how safe, how safe these trailers are.
5 And how can you say that while we're living through
6 the pandemic where it's spread so easily and there is
7 no plan of action really to make things better?

8 So thank you so much for allowing me
9 the time to speak and I would really hope that the
10 decision-makers would reflect on what they are
11 deciding on. And if they really, really do consider
12 the safety and well-being of the North Bergen
13 children, they would not allow this to continue and
14 the salaries of many of the North Bergen
15 administrators wouldn't be so inflated.

16 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Vasquez.

17 Our next listed speaker is Gerald
18 Lange. Gerald Lange, please unmute yourself.

19 (GERALD LANGE, 8306 Fifth Avenue, North
20 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

21 MR. LANGE: I appreciate the time for
22 the two and a half minutes I have to speak. Can you
23 hear me?

24 MS. McPHERSON: Yes.

25 MR. LANGE: Okay. All right. First

1 off, let me just say I was involved for many years in
2 government, not in North Bergen, in other towns and I
3 know what government entails. Some people don't
4 realize what goes into the thought process and what
5 planning has to go into. North Bergen doesn't have
6 the access, doesn't have the funds of other school
7 districts such as West New York, Union City, Hoboken
8 as Abbott districts. Okay? So because of that Mayor
9 Sacco has created a plan to appease and have a great
10 school system that was overcrowded and he's now
11 trying to achieve that. And the preschool is a
12 fantastic avenue and a fantastic area for the
13 students.

14 There was a speaker, Mr. Stevens, who
15 identified himself as living in Braddock Park. I
16 gave my address. He didn't. He was just sarcastic
17 and spoke about tricycle races and pumpkins. But you
18 know what, if you have children and I had a daughter,
19 my daughter is 25 now, and she went to preschool,
20 that's what you want your children to have. You want
21 that education. You want the teachers at North
22 Bergen to teach and to do what they do and have that
23 environment. So when people are sarcastic and come
24 across and attack people like, for instance, that
25 park is an oasis, that park has never been -- in six

1 years it has been transformed by Anthony Vainieri.
2 He personally made that his mission and nobody could
3 ever dispute that. Call it corruption. Call it
4 whatever you want. It's nonsense. Okay? Because he
5 put his heart and soul into it and everybody has
6 benefiting from it.

7 So what I'm trying to say is that take
8 the politics out of it. Look at the numbers. People
9 say, well, he's these corrupt people, these corrupt
10 people. Listen, you have stable taxes in North
11 Bergen. Okay? If you want to go build schools and
12 bond and get charged through the kazoo, you could do
13 it, okay. But Mayor Sacco has come up with a plan to
14 make sure everybody gets educated and with education
15 you have high real estate values and people can sell
16 their houses. People want to move to North Bergen.
17 People want to stay in North Bergen. That's what
18 it's about. And this preschool is tantamount and
19 important for the whole community.

20 So all I'm saying is put the politics
21 aside and let's keep it there and let's look at it.
22 And when people call and identify themselves, give
23 their address and stand up like a man or a woman and
24 be honorable. Don't hide behind facades and
25 nonsense. That's all I have to say. Thank you very

1 much.

2 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Lange.

3 The next listed speaker is under
4 Ravenish's iPhone. Please unmute yourself.

5 (RAVENISH VARMA, 3808 Liberty Avenue,
6 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

7 MR. VARMA: I would very much like to
8 echo from the previous gentleman who just made a
9 statement. I think it was beautiful, very beautiful.
10 And also I'd like to add 22 of my nieces and nephews
11 have went through the North Bergen education system.
12 Most of them have very good jobs, they're making good
13 money, and ridiculing the educators of North Bergen I
14 think is a disgrace.

15 Now, I have for some reason feel like
16 there is some kind of political platform because I
17 heard from gentleman from Franklin Lakes, Larry
18 Wainstein, come up and say something. I mean,
19 really? When the last time your two kids went to
20 North Bergen school system Larry? When is the last
21 time you've been to North Bergen? When is the last
22 time any of these people who are opposing this
23 beautiful school in North Bergen who came down here
24 for the coronavirus? Nobody.

25 Residents of this town who got together

1 like a big family like we are a big family and we are
2 fighting it, we still fighting it. And to the mere
3 fact we are talking through a phone is because of
4 coronavirus. The mere effect so many people are
5 standing up doing a demonstration to Mayor Sacco, to
6 Anthony who did so much good stuff to the park, I
7 think this is called a family. And when we have
8 somebody from our state -- out of town like Franklin
9 Lake Park and come down and talking attacking like
10 tomorrow is Election Day, that's ridiculous.

11 So in my conclusion, I totally support
12 where it is. It's beautiful. It's secluded. It's
13 what our kids need. Our kids doesn't need to go to
14 1&9. Okay? If you feel your kids want to go to 1&9,
15 then you should move down here and send little kids
16 to those kind of areas. But right now, I'm just
17 loving the way things are going. Our town is the
18 best sanctuary in Hudson County. And I'd like to
19 echo everybody in support and I thank you all very
20 much. And finally I would like to thank
21 Mr. Wainstein's input but I think you should keep it
22 to Franklin Lakes. Thank you.

23 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, sir.

24 The next listed speaker is Bridget
25 Lupia, listed as Bridget Lupia. Please unmute

1 yourself.

2 (BRIDGET LUPIA, 34 Woodcliff Avenue,
3 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

4 MS. LUPIA: I am against the proposal.
5 It comes as no surprise that children, parents,
6 teachers and staff enjoy going to school at the park
7 every day. It's a lovely setting and who wouldn't
8 want to go to the park every day to work and to
9 learn?

10 As an educator, I'm concerned about
11 equity. I am appalled that for 20 years North Bergen
12 has been housing a vulnerable population of pre-K and
13 autistic children in temporary units is now seeking
14 to use this same vulnerable population as a means to
15 transfer valuable parkland and open space from the
16 community through squatter's rights and the legal
17 principle of adverse possession, because that's what
18 it is.

19 As a resident and taxpayer I feel duped
20 at having voted on a bond measure that my town
21 leadership now seeks to void. I've lived across the
22 street from a school. I now live across the street
23 from this park and there is a difference. As a
24 taxpayer and homeowner, this proposal would have the
25 potential to significantly affect property values

1 adversely because people that choose to live near a
2 park don't necessarily choose to live across the
3 street from a school. And I'm not surprised that
4 supporters bring up the word safety and lack of other
5 options because this is a reflection of leadership
6 and trust and failed trust. The town had -- has
7 broken my trust, the public trust by not following
8 through on the timeline, not securing space
9 elsewhere, not abiding by the \$65 million referendum
10 that we voted on previously.

11 Leadership had 20 years to figure this
12 out. Give them an inch and they'll take a mile. DEP
13 must not approve this measure because it sets a
14 dangerous precedent. North Bergen leaders must go
15 back to the drawing board and do what they were
16 charged to do. They must lead and they must lead all
17 residents, not just the select few that work or have
18 children that go to school in the park.

19 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Lupia.

20 The next listed speaker is Asmaa Lopez.
21 Please unmute yourself.

22 (ASMAA LOPEZ, 1443 B 68th Street, North
23 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

24 MS. LOPEZ: As parents of two children,
25 I have great experience there like fun and my kid --

1 my first one was I want to put my kids in pre-K that
2 have the good programs. I was very happy that this
3 pre-K is in park. That's a little piece of park,
4 just little space.

5 When I hear the people who against this
6 pre-K and the beautiful pre-K, I hear just something
7 about politic, something about money, something about
8 other environment. I believe good people never been
9 in the pre-K, never see the pre-K. Because in this
10 pre-K if you come, I invite you to visit and come
11 when there is the parade there, when there is some
12 activity there and you're going to see this beautiful
13 faces of the kids. They are very happy. You can see
14 the kids very, very happy and there is a little space
15 of the park. Plus, when I want to put my kids I was
16 worried, I was worried who going to be with my kids
17 and I discover that all the kids are going to be in
18 the same age. You don't have any age like bigger
19 than. Their first year of school they're going to be
20 all of them same age. Plus, the pre-K is very safe.
21 It has excellent teachers, excellent staff, a
22 beautiful, and the trailers has AC.

23 I don't know why the people say it
24 doesn't have AC, it doesn't have. Come. Go to the
25 trailer, see inside. That's beautiful space even

1 inside the trailers. Who doesn't want their kids to
2 be in open space? They go outside. They have fun.
3 They're very, very happy and always my kids, they
4 coming and they happy and they woke up and they are
5 very happy to go to school and thank you.

6 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Lopez.

7 Our next listed speaker is Lara
8 Rinaldi. Lara, please unmute yourself.

9 Just a reminder, we have 15 minutes
10 left in making comments of the public hearing.

11 MS. RINALDI: I spoke before. I'm not
12 a North Bergen resident am I able to speak?

13 MS. McPHERSON: Continue, Ms. Rinaldi.

14 (LARA RINALDI, 60 Genoble Road,
15 Montville, New Jersey 07045.)

16 MS. RINALDI: I'm calling because I
17 have been an educator -- can you hear me?

18 MS. McPHERSON: Yes, I can. If you
19 could please limit your comments. I apologize. I
20 thought --

21 MS. RINALDI: No problem.

22 MS. McPHERSON: If you could. We only
23 have a few short minutes left until the close of the
24 public hearing.

25 MS. RINALDI: Okay. So, just briefly,

1 I have been an educator for North Bergen for 16
2 years. I have been an educator for over 20 years,
3 and for the last three years I have been in North
4 Bergen -- the North Bergen pre-schools. And I just
5 wanted to say to all the comments from the people
6 that have said that, you know, they weren't
7 comfortable, I really wish that they would come and
8 see. I have been in every single one of those
9 trailers. Every single one of them has
10 air-conditioning, has heating. We have been very
11 fortunate, and I feel very fortunate to be working in
12 the preschool these past three years, to have had the
13 experience that I have had as an educator and to see
14 through these children's eyes what they have
15 experienced. So on that end, I will leave you. So
16 thank you for letting me speak.

17 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you very much.

18 The next listed speaker is Adriana
19 Medena. Adriana, please unmute yourself.

20 (ANDRIANA MEDENA, 1451 76th Street,
21 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

22 MS. MEDINA: I've lived in North Bergen
23 for 21 years and have gone through our education
24 system as well as our recreation program. I fully
25 support the preschool trailer staying where they are

1 as it's the safest location for our young students as
2 it provides an area where they are able to take full
3 advantage of the park surroundings. The testimonies
4 from parents of children that have actually attended
5 the preschool has been nothing short of positive
6 feelers towards the trailers remaining in the present
7 location. The town has built a brand new
8 state-of-the-art softball complex on 64th Street that
9 all players will benefit tremendously from. I know I
10 would have loved it when I was a younger child in the
11 program.

12 I really do believe the town has
13 provided great facilities for our children and I
14 think the trailers should remain as where they are.
15 Thank you.

16 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you very much.

17 Our next listed speaker is Frank
18 Piazza. Please unmute yourself.

19 (FRANK PIAZZA, JR., 9060 Palisade
20 Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

21 MR. PIAZZA: Okay. I lived here for 48
22 years of my life. Let me tell you, North Bergen,
23 Mayor Sacco, the commissioners of the Board of
24 Education, the commissioners in town, everyone does
25 everything with finance. This town has one of the

1 best rec programs in our town, in the State of New
2 Jersey. And our preschool, I support them. I worked
3 there for over ten years and it was the safest place
4 for children of five and six years old to go to an
5 area that was safe by fenced in area, air
6 conditioning, heat. The North Bergen Police
7 Department patrol it and the sheriff's department
8 patrol it. And what they do in this town and our
9 parks. Anthony Vainieri does an excellent job about
10 the whole fixing up the whole neighborhood up there
11 is incredible. We used to have broken fields in our
12 town. Four years ago, you couldn't play on our
13 fields. Now our children are benefiting for the best
14 turfs in the State of New Jersey.

15 And that other guy that he called
16 himself -- he'd like to run for North Bergen mayor --
17 Mr. Wainstein. Let me tell you, he should stay in
18 Franklin Lakes because he had no business to come
19 into North Bergen because North Bergen we bleed red
20 and gold. All right?

21 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you,
22 Mr. Piazza -- I'm sorry.

23 MR. PIAZZA: No, that's all I have to
24 say about North Bergen, A number one in the State of
25 New Jersey. Thank you for my time.

1 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you.

2 If we could hear from those listed as
3 Esposito/Soranni, please unmute yourself.
4 Esposito/Soranni.

5 (GIULA ESPOSITO, 8315 Grand Avenue,
6 North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

7 MS. ESPOSITO: I'm in favor to keep the
8 pre-K where it is. I am the mother of three
9 children. My first born attended this facility in
10 2011 and at the time he was under treatment for acute
11 lymphoblastic leukemia. I was a little concerned
12 about my son's health and the fact that the
13 institution was surrounded by nature was a relief.
14 During the school year my son did not miss a lot of
15 school days due to his weakened immune system. My
16 children and myself had great and memorable
17 experiences with all the activities. That's all I
18 have to say.

19 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you.

20 The next listed speaker is simply
21 listed as iPhone. Please unmute yourself and
22 identify yourselves. State your name and address for
23 the record, please and spell it.

24 MS. OLANIEL: Hello. Can you hear me?

25 MS. McPHERSON: Yes, we can.

1 (VERONICA OLANIEL, 7113 Jackson Street,
2 Apartment 3, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

3 MS. OLANIEL: All I have to say is my
4 kids never attended the preschool, okay, but they did
5 attend the Summer Fun Program. And for people to say
6 that it's a school right across from homes, you can't
7 even see the pre-schools. Okay? You can't see the
8 trailers as you're driving by the park. Okay.
9 That's an area that will not be used for anything
10 else in the future, okay, only for the school. I
11 think we should keep the schools.

12 Also Mr. Wainstein mentioned something
13 about moving the schools to 18th Street, I believe.
14 So why is he complaining that the preschool is up on
15 by the park on 90th Street? Is he reversing the
16 streets? I didn't get that point.

17 But I think we should keep it. It's
18 safe, okay, it's gated and they have the best of both
19 worlds, they have school and they also have nature.
20 That's all I have to say and thank you. And I
21 support the preschool to stay where they are.

22 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your
23 comments.

24 The next listed speaker is listed as
25 Carmen Borell. Carmen, please unmute yourself.

1 (CARMEN BORELL, 407 79th Street, North
2 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

3 MS. BORELL: Good evening, everyone.
4 As a homeowner, I am for the pre-K program to be a
5 permanent structure in the park. As a resident of
6 79th Street we frequent the park often and a small
7 area of the park that we're referring to does not
8 interfere with our daily activities in the park.
9 We're able to enjoy it just like anybody else. You
10 can't even see it. The program has been there since
11 1999 and I have only heard great things from parents
12 that have had their children attend there. The only
13 negative comments that I've ever heard are from
14 parents -- from people that do not have children and
15 that feels kind of selfish.

16 My feeling is that we should keep the
17 pre-K there. I don't think that Mayor Sacco and
18 Mr. Vainieri would put our children at risk of any
19 harm. I think it would be beneficial to the children
20 of North Bergen now and in the future. That's all.

21 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Borell.
22 Our next listed speak is Julia Minera.
23 Please unmute yourself.

24 (JULIA MINERA, 407 79th Street, North
25 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

1 MS. MINERA: I am against the
2 diversion. While -- I'm sorry?

3 MS. McPHERSON: Keep going.

4 MS. MINERA: I fully support excellent
5 schools and it is -- I'm sorry?

6 MS. McPHERSON: We can hear you,
7 Ms. Minera.

8 MS. MINERA: I full support (audio
9 distortion).

10 MS. McPHERSON: Now --

11 MS. MINERVA: I fully support excellent
12 schools and I think, you know, nobody is arguing
13 whether or not we should have great schools (audio
14 distortion). It keeps your property values high. We
15 need to have great schools. However, Green Acres was
16 established for the reason that is occurring now, the
17 town will whittle away at that green space that is so
18 important to all of us. It keeps property values up,
19 it's one of the reasons that I chose to move to North
20 Bergen and we need to keep it there. If we allow
21 this to happen, this just opens the door for future
22 development in the park and we need to protect it.
23 They've had over 20 years to decide on
24 a new location. We also have the referendum that was
25 all supposed to change the location. So I'm against

1 the diversion and I believe that we need to keep
2 green space (audio distortion) limited.

3 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Minerva.
4 The next listed speaker is Fran, North
5 Bergen resident. Please unmute yourself.

6 (FRAN AUN, 34 Woodcliff Avenue, North
7 Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

8 MS. AUN: As you can tell, I'm a
9 southern, I'm a transplant to the north. I do have
10 Yankee blood, however, my father was from New Jersey.
11 One of the things that we are seeing in the south is
12 that we are seeing the removal of southern monuments
13 that should never have been placed where they are.
14 That is the same kind ever situation here. We've got
15 a school that never should have been placed in a
16 Green Acres area. It is for trees. Maybe we cannot
17 put anything else in there but trees and plants. I'm
18 fine with trees and plants. We need them. They
19 clean the air and they help protect us as people who
20 are on this earth and as visitors and not the primary
21 people, the primary inhabitants of the earth. We
22 have to all live together in the ecosystem.

23 Remove those structures. They don't
24 need to be permanent. They had 20 years. Let's get
25 on with it. This is illegal. If you took this to

1 court, you would have it said as illegal and there is
2 no reason that we are still sitting on this. It's
3 time to make the move. If southerners can get rid of
4 Confederate monuments, then for goodness sakes, you
5 can get rid of a school that doesn't belong there and
6 you can find an appropriate place and make it
7 wonderful for those children. Because everybody is
8 concerned about the children, we all are, but we also
9 believe in an equitable situation so that everyone
10 has the right to enjoy the spaces that are provided
11 that are Green Acres and there is an opportunity for
12 the children to have what they need where they need
13 it. Not in trailers, not in space that has been
14 designated as Green Acres space for trees and flowers
15 and plants and birds and bees. Thank you very much.
16 Y'all have a great evening.

17 MS. McPHERSON: Thank you everyone for
18 more comments. Unfortunately our time for the public
19 comment period is closed.

20 In conformance with the public notice
21 for this hearing, we will now close the public
22 comments. We'd like to thank everyone again for your
23 participation in this first step in the process and
24 remind you that all comments whether they're made
25 tonight or emailed or by mail will be considered in

1 this process. Any additional comments will be
2 accepted by mail or email until August 25, 2020.

3 All of the information about submitting
4 email comments are on the North Bergen's website and
5 Hudson County's website.

6 I'd like to thank everyone again for
7 their participation tonight and we will continue to
8 keep you updated on this process. Thank you very
9 much.

10 (Spanish translation.)

11 (Time noted: 9:01 p.m.)

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

I, CELESTE A. GALBO, a Certified Court Reporter and Notary Public within and for the State of New Jersey and Registered Professional Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcription of the testimony as taken remotely by me on the date and time aforementioned.

I DO FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither a relative, employee, attorney, nor counsel to any parties involved; that I am neither related to nor employed by any such attorney or counsel; and that I am not financially interested in the outcome of this action.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this 20th day of August 2020.

Celeste A. Galbo

CELESTE A. GALBO, CCR, RPR, RMR
License No. 30X100098800
My commission expires 7/30/2020