STATE OF NEW JERSEY
COUNTRY OF HUDSON
TOWNSHIP OF NORTH BERGEN

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

----------------------------------

August 11, 2020
6:05 p.m.

PROJECT TEAM

MODERATOR:
BERNADETTE P. McPHERSON, ESQ., Millennium Strategies

DIVERSION PROJECT TEAM

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County of Hudson

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Bergen Board of Education

Reported by:
CELESTE A. GALBO, CCR, RPR, RMR
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MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your patience everyone. If you'll just give us a few minutes while we're admitting those that called in and on Zoom into the meeting.

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

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

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

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

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

(Spanish translation.)

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

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

(Spanish translation.)

THE NARRATOR: Frequently Asked
Questions About Diversion.

Why permanent diversion now?

For more than a decade, Hudson County,
North Bergen Township, and the North Bergen Board of
Education have made extensive efforts to find an
alternate location for North Bergen's Pre-K Program,
to remove it from Braddock Park, and comply with both
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and
New Jersey Department of Education regulations
without success. NJDEP regulations permit permanent
diversions in limited circumstances like this one.
Approval would provide a fair and reasonable resolution that will make lawful the use of the Braddock Park site and the 43rd Street EMS South Building.

Should more property be diverted at Braddock Park?

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

Are the proposed replacement properties inadequate?

No, they are not inadequate to the residents in the underserved areas of North Bergen living near them and enjoying them as park and recreation space. They are valuable to all North Bergen and Hudson County residents in preserving limited open space from further development, evident
to anyone who knows the real estate market in North Bergen. For the taxpayers of North Bergen and Hudson County, the proposed replacement properties also represent the loss of tax revenue they would have generated if privately opened and developed. Furthermore, the proposed properties exceed the acreage required by NJDEP to meet the three to one ratio for this application.

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

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

Are the pre-K trailers unsafe?

No, they are inspected yearly by the North Bergen Office of Fire Code Enforcement and meet
all New Jersey Department of Education standards for pre-schools.

(Spanish translation.)

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

(Spanish translation.)

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

In 2001, a state mandate required North Bergen to provide a full day kindergarten and pre-K program, funded in part and regulated by the New Jersey Department of Education. Construction of an early childhood center was delayed when property purchased next to Lincoln School was found to be contaminated. Temporary classroom units, TCUs, were ordered for emergency placement at the old municipal pool site, but that was found to be contaminated as well. To ensure the new pre-K program opened for the 2001-2002 school year, Hudson County agreed to allow the TCUs to be placed at Braddock Park in the area leased to North Bergen next to Bruin Stadium. Over the years other efforts were made to find an alternate location without success. In 2011 Hudson County and North Bergen officials were notified that
the TCUs at Braddock Park violated NJDEP Green Acres regulations. This diversion has taken place to comply with Green Acres regulations. (Spanish translation.)

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

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

THE NARRATOR: Past efforts to identify...
alternatives and reasons for rejection – North Bergen Pre-K Program at Braddock Park.

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

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

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

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

In 2013, informed by NJDEP the rejection of the 64th Street property was made in error. Adjacent properties available in 2008 necessary for New Jersey Department of Education regulations were no longer available, so this was no longer an option.
(Spanish translation.)

THE NARRATOR: North Bergen EMS South Building.

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

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

(Spanish translation.)

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

In a densely populated and highly congested North Bergen, the central location and purpose of this property meets the compelling need of providing for the health, safety and well-being of
North Bergen's residents. If forced to move, there will be irreparable damage to public safety, significant harm to a highly successful public outreach program, and an outrageous waste of taxpayer dollars in demolition and relocation costs.

(Spanish translation.)

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

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

(Spanish translation.)

THE NARRATOR: Significant public benefits are: With the Braddock Park diversion, the North Bergen Board of Education will provide a full
day pre-K and be able to meet NJDOE classroom regulations throughout the district. The diversion of the NB EMS South Building will allow emergency service and public outreach to continue uninterrupted and spare North Bergen and Hudson County taxpayers the expense of demolition and relocation. 

(Spanish translation.)

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

(Spanish translation.)

THE NARRATOR: 1811 Paterson Plank Road. 

(Spanish translation.)

THE NARRATOR: 1703-1709 River Road. 

(Spanish translation.)

THE NARRATOR: 1401 64th Street.
(Spanish translation.)

THE NARRATOR: 6300 Meadowview Avenue.

(Spanish translation.)

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

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

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

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Melissa.Abatemarco@dep.nj.gov.

(Spanish translation.)

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

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

(Spanish translation.)

MS. McPHerson: Okay. We have our first speaker.

(Robert Dowd, 1459 77th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

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

At this point, I really don't need the
other two minutes other than just to say that I've
read some scuttlebutt online through social media
about how horrible an idea it is to take county
parkland, and I find that to be very myopic because
the land that we're talking about, it's inside Bruin
Stadium. It was formerly a rocky, dirty, dusty
softball field, quite frankly, when my stepdaughter
played in recreation softball and we now have
state-of-the-art, state-of-the-art fields at 64th Street, 76th Street. Our recreation program is second to none and we certainly don't need another field. What we do need is a quality space for a quality school.

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

MS. McPHerson: Thank you, Mr. Dowd. Next speaker, please.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. CABRERA: So, I'm 100 percent for keeping the trailers. I'm actually a former student there, a former graduate and, honestly, the fact that I can still remember what it was like being a student
there means a lot. We had gym outside. We had the playground right there. I was able to interact with other kids. There was a cop on campus. There is still a cop on campus, so it felt super safe going there. They have walks outside. They have activities where parents can come and see what their children are doing. They have Father's Day events outside. They have all these events that are outdoors and any other location won't have the same accessibility as this location has, that's why I'm 100 percent for keeping it. And I fully support them staying. That's all I need to say.

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Lauren.

Thank you, Lauren.

Our next speaker is Mayor Sacco, welcome, mayor.

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

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

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

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

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

We are a terribly underfunded school district, worse by the current state funding formula. It's a horrible formula to North Bergen. To purchase land would be a hardship and the thought of a
district trying to find a large enough tract of land
for a full-time preschool would probably condemn
anything that's done in North Bergen to a part-time
school probably forever. You would never be able to
do anything about it.

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

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

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

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

(ANTHONY VAINIERI, 7808 Fifth Avenue,
MR. VAINIERI: Good evening. Can you hear me?

MS. McPHERSON: Yes.

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

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

I remember a freeholder meeting when someone came up to the freeholder board and said put the school on Tonnelle Avenue. You got to be insane. I just want to state for the record that this area of where the preschool trailers are can never be used for a county purpose. The County of Hudson can never take this property and use it for a park or a playground. This is in the perimeter of Bruin Stadium which is under jurisdiction of the Township of North Bergen. So if the trailers aren't there,
the county residents aren't going to get any more
amenities from this at all. They're not going to get
a park there. They're not going to be able to be on
it. It's still going to be locked and gated for
Bruin Stadium. So it makes no sense to leave it.

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

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

So, again, as a freeholder, I am
stating this property can never, ever been used for a
county purpose at all. I strongly urge anyone in
this jurisdiction that has authority to approve this,
to move ahead with the plan and let's get North
Bergen students, the schools and the facilities that
are so desirably needs. Thank you very much.

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Freeholder.

MR. VAINIERI: Thank you, ma'am.

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

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

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

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

MR. ZBAIDA: So, I don't really know enough. I'm a recent. I recently moved into North Bergen and of course, you know, it's very interesting to hear a lot of the comments. I'm also an educator in New York City and so I definitely salute teachers and want to create space for kids, and I'm not an opponent of creating spaces for children to be safe or to play but I am generally concerned about ever giving away public land for the purpose of building structures. Because I think it's so rare to have green space and open space and public park. I know that the park itself was one of the things that drew
me to this community. And I do worry about setting a precedent for taking over pieces of the park and what that would mean.

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

MS. McPHERSON: Okay, thank you, sir. Our next speaker is Janet Glass. Miss Glass, if you could unmute yourself.

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

MS. GLASS: I -- first of all, in terms of protocol, I've actually spoken at a number of
public hearings and I've never seen one where paid or political staff spoke first and spoke their mind. Public hearings, I thought, was supposed to be for the public and I understand they're public as well but I find that a little irregular.

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

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Than you, Ms. Glass.

Our next speaker is Thomas Stampe.

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Stampe.

Our next speaker I see Antonia.
Antonia, if you state your name and address and please spell it for our reporter.

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

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

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

(Discussion off the record.)

(The record was read.)

MS. BRACERO: First teacher, her name was Ms. Cabrera. Her opening speech put me at ease. She answered every question that I had, every doubt that I had and made me feel at ease with sending my daughter here. The mere fact that you're taking a child at four years old and sending her into a school, you want smaller classes as a parent because you want your child to have the attention that she was getting at home for the first four years of her life. Having a school that's on one end of North
Bergen and another pre-K at the other end of North Bergen is good for the working parents, parents that need to rely on neighbors to pick their children up from school. These are the concerns as a parent. And people in this call that want to talk about money and greenery and everything, I'm floored by that. Why don't we take about children's education which takes precedence? They are our future and we have to do right by them now and put them in a community where -- in a school where they're going to get the attention and the education that they need and they deserve as our future. That's all I have to say. (Reporter clarification off the record.)

MS. McPHERSON: Our next speaker is from phone number (201) 854-7820. Have you pressed star 9? I'm not picking up the phone call.

Can we move to the next speaker?

It appears that the star 9 feature for this phone call doesn't seem to be working. May I call on Roger Q at this point?

(Roger Quesada, 233 79th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

MR. QUESADA: Thank you so much for
First of all, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to all the hard working teachers in the district and especially those specifically that endure these subpar conditions at the preschool trailers in Braddock Park. I have spoken to a few of you and I hope my intentions are clear.

Preschool happens to be the most important developmental years of these children's lives, so their work as educators is crucial to building the future of this community here in North Bergen. And although some of you may be satisfied with these structures, I as a homeowner and taxpayer am not as this is a poor reflection of how our money is utilized to improve on the quality of life. And I don't know anyone that can be so passionately defending putting your children in trailers.

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

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

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

(Reporter clarification.)

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

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

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

MS. McPHerson: Thank you very much for your comments, sir.

Our next speaker is Tiffany Todd.

(Tiffany Todd, 2039 Kennedy Boulevard, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

MS. Todd: I actually -- my son is going into seventh grade. He is 12 now. He was a student at the preschool trailers and, yes, of
course, we -- myself and him as well have wonder --
(audio disruption) -- his education, had great
experiences there. They have been able since it is
in a park setting to not only learn inside the
classroom but also take that learning outside of the
classroom. They've learned about the community,
about the environment. So that trailers being in the
park has helped him so much to -- (audio disruption)
-- outside of the classroom as well.

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Todd.

MS. TODD: Thank you very much.

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

At present I believe the next speaker
is Maureen.
(MAUREEN FOYLE, 7002 Kennedy Boulevard East, #26B, Guttenberg, New Jersey 07093.)

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

The application is fraudulent. The correct amount if you legally diverted land as it stands now without taking more would be 1.1 acres which includes the illegally diverted parking lot, not 1.25 acres. There is an alternative location for the preschool which involves using the availability of the High Tech High School classroom space which would need to be realigned with other students and to take the preschool out of community parkland of
Braddock Park. Students from other towns should not be allowed to use up North Bergen classroom space. North Bergen should be required to provide five times as much replacement land totaling nine acres, 9.05 acres if they want the preschool to remain in Braddock Park as the parking and roads would obviously had to be part of the equation and replacement land should be of similar quality as Braddock Park which is really a treasure. Beautiful sloping hills, green natural, old trees, beautiful. It's used so often by everyone in our community. We need this space. This kind of options with Paterson Plank Road and River Road replacement lands, they're not anything like this. Much smaller. It would be crowded. It would not have the same sort of feeling as being in nature which is essential to everyone's well-being.

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

Green Acres has guaranteed us this amount of parkland and I really believe that we --
everyone in the area benefits by using that park. It's a busy, happy park. I wish all students could have the first rate education that they all definitely deserve. But I don't understand and I don't agree with taking over community open space.

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, ma'am.

MS. FOYLE: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

MR. CASE: I'm co-chair of Hudson County Group of New Jersey Sierra Club chapter. Sierra Club is the country's oldest and largest environmental group. Sierra Club has over 80,000 members and supporters in New Jersey and 2,500 members and supporters in Hudson County. The club is on record as opposing the presence of the preschool trailers in Braddock Park. The club strongly believes that Braddock Park should be restored to its
original purpose. The park was created to provide access to open space with outdoor recreation. Green Acres must enforce its own regulations. This matter should have been settled in 2011 when North Bergen and Hudson County were found to be in violation for having illegally diverted Green Acres land. If there was any question, it was settled when North Bergen's original application for diversion was rejected in 2016. The trailers must go.

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

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

Taxpayers of North Bergen, Hudson County and all of New Jersey have paid to our park. It's our Green Acres money. It belongs to all of us.
If North Bergen is allowed to take over our park, then we're all being cheated. Preschoolers and all school children need safe classrooms. Of course they do. Nobody is going to dispute that. North Bergen's administration needs to do its job and provide those classrooms. Children all ages, people of all ages need access to open space and healthy outdoor recreation.

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

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

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

The next speaker I see is Ester Ortega. (ESTER ORTEGA, 8306 Fifth Avenue, North
Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

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

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your comments.

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

(Discussion held off the record.)

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

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

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

A VOICE: Okay.
MS. McPHERSON: We'll call back on you. The next speaker is listed as Ms. Jen. (Discussion off the record.) (Nick Sacco, 327 73rd Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

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

MS. McPHERSON: Yeah.

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

MS. McPHERSON: We can hear you now.

MR. SACCO: Hello?

MS. McPHERSON: Are you able to hear us?

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your comments.

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

Our next speaker is Martha Torres.

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

MS. TORRES: I live in North Bergen for over 30 years and I have two children. My
14-year-old child is a chronically ill child who
never fully attended preschool at the trailer because
his condition was mostly -- his education was mostly
at home. Still, he was included in activities at the
park trailers during his preschool year. And I am
grateful for that.

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

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

Thank you.

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Torres.

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

Okay. The next speaker will be Reann
Bender.

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

MS. BENDER: So I think it's very
beneficial for us to keep the pre-k where it is. It's a very familiar area for the children. There is no children from uptown to downtown, they go there. Everybody brings their children there. It's a beautiful area, like they mentioned, inside and outside. It's good for the kids to get the fresh air. There is a lot for them to do and it's in Braddock Park, we know that, but it's in the Bruin Stadium.

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

It's beautiful. The teachers are amazing. People have mentioned Ms. Cabrera. My little sister had her personally and she's amazing. The teachers are amazing. The staff is amazing. It's very safe. It's a closed-in gated area. There is the police officers who are there. There is the security who is there who are amazing. They have bus aides there. The kids are very protected. I've never had a kid who wasn't happy there. It's beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. And the education is amazing. For me and all my friends going there,
living in North Bergen my entire life I think it's amazing to keep it there and it's benefiting a lot the kids.

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Bender.

MS. BENDER: Thank you.

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

The next caller is Franklin Fabre.

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

MR. FABRE: I have both children who have attended North Bergen schools. Two of them are already graduated from the school. They went through the system. And two little went to the system. My little ones, they both went to the trailers when they were younger and have gone back during the summer
programs, the summer camp. The last time they went back was probably like two years ago. One day they come home very hot. I think it was 90 to 100 degrees outside, just like today, and they come home. They were like their faces were red. You could take their temperature it was so hot. Same thing happened to one of my neighbors and my wife, she was very, very concerned. She said, "You know what, I cannot send my kids to that summer camp because there is no AC over there." And she was worried. And I say, "You know what, that's fine. Let's just not send them anymore."

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

Just like same thing happened with one of your schools that my kids go to were same thing, I had to stop sending them for the summer programs because there is no AC. And on a day like today how can you have children playing sports in a gym with 100 plus degrees outside?
So I'm against the building the trailers over there. I believe that if they had been so nice like some people have said, why would they allow to deteriorate to the point where they are today? What happened to the funding that we provided as taxpayers? They should have been keeping those buildings up, not letting them deteriorate.

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

Unfortunately, this is not what's happening over here. The school system has been allowed to deteriorate. Taxpayers and homeowners, we've been sending money, paying taxes. The trailers have deteriorated to a point where you can't even send them for summer camp because there is no heat.

So I'm against the project. Thank you very much.

MS. McPHERSON: Thank, sir.

Our next speaker is listed as Kristin Diaz.

(KRISTIN RUUD-DIAZ, 603 81st Street,
North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

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

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

Going back to the park, I am in

Celeste A. Galbo, CCR, RPR, RMR -- celestegw@gmail.com
conflict because this park does mean so much to me, this lake, this green space. I marvel at it every day. We live in such a crowded, congested area. Tensions are high, people are angry and the peace comes from being able to enjoy this beautiful park, seeing the wildlife. I would feel awful if more space was taken away. Like I said, I acknowledge the new field I see going on, the turf that's being built. I have mixed emotions about that but there have been many things that have come in such as big building on the lake, the dog parks. Things have been renovated and updated. I just feel that this park will not miss this little space attached to the North Bergen stadium for these children for pre-K. The quality of the program is high. I think it will -- it's our first taste of the North Bergen school district. I teach in private schools but I keep my students, my children in the schools because of the teachers, the quality, the commitment to them and the school district is doing the best they can. We're not an AVID district, we don't have the money but we're staying in North Bergen because we know the dedication to the students. We have a big job it's hard but I really hope that the pre-K can stay where it is in this beautiful, beautiful spot for them.
tucked in within the stadium. I don't foresee them taking the stadium out, so I really hope that others will see that this is a great need and will agree with it. Thank you so much.

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

In 2001 North Bergen illegally moved its 17 TCU preschool into Braddock Park promising that it was "very temporary" until preschool annex at Lincoln School was complete. In 2017 North Bergen promised votes if a $60 million bond to buy High Tech High School was approved in referendum, a school
realignment would solve North Bergen's school overcrowding thereby enabling the preschoolers to attend elementary schools.

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

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

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

Save Braddock Park for open space and recreation. Developing Braddock Park for schools,
et cetera, in strange, inferior, synthetic pocket parks miles away is not a good idea. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

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

The next speaker is listed as Emil.

Emil?

MR. FUDA: Yes, I'm here.

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Please continue.

MR. FUDA: I really don't have too much to say except I have four kids that graduated and came through the North Bergen school system and I couldn't be more proud because they matured into strong citizens and good people. Also, I'm highly in favor of keeping the school there in Braddock Park. It's a safe environment for these little kids, the parents can come to the big parking lot. You can walk across the field without any worries bringing these kids into school or any driveway and it's highly secure and I think it should stay there.
And these people that are opposed, they're not really coming up with any suggestions, they're just making comments and are against it. So that's all I have on the say. Keep the school where it is.

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, sir.

Our next speaker is Sylvia Cortez?

Court?

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

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

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, ma'am.

Our next speaker is listed as

bobamongus.

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

MR. WALDEN: I want to say that this
has nothing to do with the quality of the school or
the teachers. The law is if there is an alternative location for the preschool, it must be utilized, the preschool must be moved out of the park. And even though North Bergen is not an AVID school district, it can afford to move the entire preschool out of Braddock Park using the High Tech acquisition as a means of sending the kids to High Tech or by using the 64th Street properties.

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

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

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

Celeste A. Galbo, CCR, RPR, RMR - - - celestegw@gmail.com
the state, blame the state senator who has been representing you since 1994, not the AVID decision. 19 years North Bergen's priority has been to build shopping centers and apartment complexes, not a preschool. And it gave developers highly tax incentives which increased the school tax burden on everyone else.

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

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

Our next speaker is listed as Joseph Lombardi.

MR. LOMBARDI: Hello? Can you hear me?

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

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

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

Even when the kids leave the trailers in the park they can go play with their families and enjoy the amenities, so it is a good location. I don't think it's that big of a deal if they keep the
location there, especially the full-time pre-K is offered because a lot of parents in the town want that, especially single parents and people that could use a full-time pre-K, if that's offered, then I think it's a good deal. And I just say to keep that location. Thanks.

    MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, sir.

    The next speaker is listed as Shareen Shibli.

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

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

    My three sisters went through this program. I know many families that were excited and eager to send their children to the pre-K especially because of its placement in the park. The area is beautiful. The staff and faculty are great and those opposed have clearly never been inside the classrooms or spoken to the staff that work day in and day out in this coveted area. Those opposed to this
diversion plan cannot in good faith claim to be pro
public education and, quite frankly, would benefit
from taking the basic school law and finance course
to understand that we do not receive funding the way
our neighboring districts do. The three-to-one ratio
for public open space will be exceeded. We are not
losing space in our parks. Any other options for our
pre-K program would impose an irreversible financial
hardship on our school district and that's why I'm in
support of this plan. Thank you for your time.

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your
comments.

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

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

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

MR. LARA: So, three years ago when we
were looking for pre-K for my son that we went to
register at the park, just by looking at the
conditions of the trailers itself, my wife and I
decided to pay for pre-K because just, again, just by
looking at the condition you could see that it is
deteriorated, it hasn't been taken care of, the
electrical power, the electrical cables are corroded.
It was just a fire hazard. And the fact that it's a
matter of time, honestly. I'm not sure, the people
that have spoken saying my son went there 14 years
ago, 20 years ago. I'm talking now. I'm talking
about two years ago, three years ago. The conditions
at the park is not suitable. Those trailers are not
suitable for the kids.

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

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

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, sir.

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

(OZGUR AKKAS, 8800 Boulevard East, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)
MR. AKKAS: So I hear parents that you're talking about locations and their appreciation about the park. I am totally against the location like Tonnelle Avenue. I take a drive through there, it is definitely not an appropriate location but really bothers me --

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

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

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

We are talking about diversion from the protection of the state. You know, whatever happens after this, whether it stays at pre-K trailers or permanent construction or a new hotel in that
location is irrelevant. Diversion happens and that is the conversation here.

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

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

    I have sympathy for the parents of the students and I stand with them to demand a better property and better and proper school environment and permanent location. But a public area land cannot be the right place for kid. Public parks are purported used like bridges. We use your tolls. Just like we cannot demand roadway lead into a tunnel to build a
In 1975, in 1975 Hudson County was reported, as reported by The New York Times, to have the least recreational land for it 609,000 people. And this was much less than the recreation condition at resulting acres. Fast forward to recent data, today Hudson County has more than 600,000 people and the available recreation land is less than five acres per thousand people. And, you know, about half a century only approximately five acres increased per thousand people.

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

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

MR. AKKAS: -- is impossible at this

point.

MS. McPHERSON: -- comments. Appreciate

them.

The next listed speaker is Jodi

Jamieson.

(JODI JAMIESON, 8600 Boulevard East,

North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

MS. JAMIESON: I've been a resident

here for over 17 years and the park is the reason

that I moved here. It's one of the things that kind

of makes living in this urban area humane and keeps

me sane.

I'm a strong believer in the importance

of parks and especially in our urban areas. It helps

to keep our -- it helps to clean our polluted air, it

gives us space for passive recreation as well as the

team sports, it gives us nice space for family to

unwind and a place the clear our heads from the daily

grind of our fast-paced world. It gives us a place

to observe nature. This park is the most heavily

used in the county parks and it offers much needed

natural space.

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Jamieson.

The next speaker is listed as Daniel Perez.

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

MR. PEREZ: Okay. First thing, I just want to say thank you for over 200 participants in this Zoom call. Regardless of how we feel about this
plan, it seems that we all care about the well-being of our town and education. So I just wanted to say start off saying that I went to the pre-K program, I've gone to Franklin School and NBHS and now I'm a junior at Vassar College, but what's alarming to me is how I could have been four and now I'm 20 and when I went to school at the beginning it was new trailers and it's still trailers now. I think that the condition of the trailers is quite alarming me to that we're still putting our children in these trailers. I won't argue the legality of keeping the school in that area because that's just a whole other issue I won't cover for now, but if the school does stay there, I think it's really important that we upgrade the buildings and stop having trailers there. I don't think the trailers are acceptable. I think they could be put in a more modern building. I think our kids deserve better than that. I just think if the school stays there, that the land that is lost to that school should be elsewhere in a way that's sufficient for provide diversity in this urban area.

And I also just want to echo what Janet Glass said earlier is I don't think it's appropriate for elected officials to speak during a public hearing. I think the comments should have made for
the presentation earlier. Yeah, and just wanted to say that while I do appreciate what the town has provided for me in terms of like the education system, I still recognize and I recognize that education in New Jersey and this county is more complex than a lot of people understand and even I can understand. I think we need to do what's best for our children. I think we need to put more resources into the building. And while I can appreciate the High Tech campus being used to move the freshman and middle schoolers, I think we need to care more about the preschoolers, we need to remember their buildings haven't been updated yet. It's been almost 20 years now and I think we need to get to improve their conditions. Thank you.

MS. McPHerson: Thank you, Mr. Perez.

Our next speaker is Maria Hidalgo.

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

MS. HIDALGO: I'm a mother and I actually live near the park. So the preschool -- and I also have a preschool aged child which makes the preschool's location really convenient for me. But I am opposed to keeping the preschool in the park for a few reasons but mainly because for the greater good.
because that park is not just a North Bergen park, it's a Hudson County park that is needed by all of the children in this area not just the North Bergen preschool children, all of the children that reside in surrounding Bergen County and Hudson County areas depend on that park in addition to the adults and many others that do.

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

North Bergen has been squatting in this park for over 20 years. You had 20 years to figure this out and they haven't. A petition was started six years with over 3,100 signatures saying --
supported by people that want this preschool out of the park. You know, how much longer are you going to give them to keep doing this, you know, to keep abusing people. This would never happen if this neighborhood wasn't minority majority. This would never happen in a white neighborhood ever. This is environmental racism. I'm opposed to keeping the preschool.

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

The next listed caller, speaker is Lara Rinaldi.

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

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


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

(LARRY WAINSTEIN 7414 Fourth Avenue,
MR. WAINSTEIN: North Bergen is over six miles long. Sacco wants to build a school on the most northern part of the town where it almost borders with Fairview. It is almost impossible to bus the preschoolers from downtown and it will take parents 40 minutes to get there. It's wrong and unfair. Sacco (audio distortion) to our children or forever 30 years. He exposed our children to cancer producing prohomohock (phonetic) and chemical vapors in violation of our health laws. Sacco used his influence as state senator to break local and state laws.

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

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

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

My plan was to have a state-of-the-art
high school at the current location on 76th Street
and Kennedy Boulevard. We own the property and it
would have no cost to the taxpayers. The State of
New Jersey builds schools in West New York and Union
City as well, and the school would have reduced
overcrowding and classroom size while giving our children the state-of-the-art resources. That's what they deserve and that's what we should give them, the best possible education.

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

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

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

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

MS. CABRERA: Okay. So, as an educator and a former student here in the North Bergen School District, I really believe that the North Bergen pre-K is located in an amazing area and it's a wonderful setting for our students to grow and excel. I know numerous individuals who have gone through the program, including my younger niece who just went there last year and hopefully my nephew this year, and I believe that the diversity and how interactive the programs are are just amazing for growth and these experiences have been just phenomenal. So, I'm
sorry, the staff and faculty are just amazing and
even -- I can't even name all of the events that I
was invited to last year but I would go on for days
but it's just amazing to see how connected the area
is for pumpkin picking, tricycle races. So these
activities just wouldn't be possible if the pre-K
wasn't located where it is. I appreciate how
connected we are and I just wouldn't -- I wouldn't
know where the pre-K would be if we didn't have these
experiences but thank you.

MS. MCPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Cabrera.

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

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

(INAYA JAFAAR, 1433 70th Street, North
Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

MS. JAAFAR: All right. I just want to
say that as a mother of four kids that have gone
through the preschool and the North Bergen system and
having nieces and nephews that have gone there and
other family members for that matter, it's a
wonderful place for our kids to begin the foundation
of their education. I have no objection whatsoever
to keep it there. We definitely have a large facility in place for our kids to continue to excel there without a doubt. Anyone who understands school finances would definitely understand how difficult it is to build a school. It's not that simple for someone to just say, oh, we could just build one in the middle of town. It doesn't work like that.

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

MS. McPHERSON: Are you there?

MS. JAAFAR: I am.

MS. McPHERSON: Okay.

MS. JAAFAR: Thank you.

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

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

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

Ms. Miller, are you there? Karla Miller?

MS. MILLER: Hi. Can you hear me?
MS. McPHERSON: Yes.

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

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

They can go outside, they love it. When you say let's go outside, they run and you can see their happy faces. They can breathe outside, not stay in the classroom forever. And the trailers have been safe. We have people around checking every minute. The teachers are very prepared, they're very great, all of them. They participate in everything with the kids. We all, we help each other. It's a beautiful program. I cannot imagine these kids going in a building. You, they going to miss this area. It's beautiful in winter, summer, fall, whatever,
it's beautiful. I just wanted to say that. Just keep the school there, please. Thank you.


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

MS. GELPI: I would like to speak on behalf as someone who is a resident of North Bergen who has a child who has gone through the North Bergen school system, who also has a child who is disabled, and as someone who has worked in the ACES program in the park in the summer in the trailers in the dead of heat. As to say, I'm not really sure what some of these people are talking about, that they're in poor condition, that they're not air conditioned, that they're dirty. I have a feeling that maybe they've never gone into them or seen them or experienced anything at all with the trailers because it is actually the opposite. And when you work in a program like ACES when children have sensory dysfunctions, being in a program in a situation in an environment such as this is perfect because there is not a lot of older children with the noises. And the atmosphere is very good for the kids with the outside
and working doing sensory programs with them is excellent. I think it is a very -- a perfect spot to have a program such as the ACES program with these children who have autism and sensory issues. Like I said, just the environment, not a lot of outside noise, very calm with the environment.

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

**MS. McPHERSON:** Thank you very much.

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

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

**MS. LUGO:** I'm 27 and I've lived in town for 22 years. I never attended the preschool as a student but I did attend the trailers for the Summer Fun Program that's offered by the town and I really have nothing but fond memories being over there. With that said, I fully support keeping the preschool in the park. It's really safe and it's a controlled environment for the kids. The trailers are air conditioned, they're comfortable and the kids
are able to enjoy the amenities of the park once
they're done with school.

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Lugo.
Our next speaker is listed as Mark
Stevens.

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

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

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

MR. STEVENS: Thank you. I'd like to
say that I think all towns in Hudson County should
build schools in Braddock Park. Apparently something
about the park makes it better for the students than
any other school location in North Bergen. It has
better teachers than anywhere else. It has a safer
location than anywhere else. Apparently the environment allows students to spend an excessive amount of time outside versus the standard climate in New Jersey and it's the only place where tricycle races and pumpkin picking can take place. The school also apparently has police, heating and air-conditioning which apparently aren't available at any other school.

The park is crowded enough already. Having more schools would keep the public out. Given how priceless everyone says the location is, I'd like to say that North Bergen isn't paying enough money to the county for their use of the land the school is on. Further, all parents of all current and former students in North Bergen should be paying an additional school tax that should be paid directly to the residents of Hudson County for their lack of use of the park. And if North Bergen and the residents don't want to have (audio distortion), it's North Bergen's problem to find a sufficient site for the school that isn't on public land. And anyone who is for keeping the school where it is, would you feel the same way if the town decided that your home and your house was the best place for a school and took it away from you? Thank you very much.
MS. McPHerson: Thank you, Mr. Stevens. Our next listed speaker is Rosala Doukali. Please unmute yourself.

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

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

As a resident, I have been to the park many times and as I'm walking around the track, I have looked at the trailers very closely. They're beautifully decorated. They look very cozy and look very pleasant and kid-friendly. I would also like to add that I was preschool educator in an Abbott District, and after looking into the preschool here in North Bergen that isn't an Abbott District, I really thought that I was in one. The amount of activities that are done are excessive. The furniture is in great condition. The supplies for the students are beyond limits and there is air-conditioning. There is no fire hazard of any
wires. And we just have to remember that we're thinking about the children and their happiness and where they would want to be. And that's where they want to be. That is their happy home. What child wouldn't want to go to preschool that is in a park? It motivates them. It makes them happy. So if it's not broken, let's not break it. And that's all I have to say.

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, ma'am.

Could we see if we can hear from Stephanie Apple. Stephanie Apple is listed as a speaker. Could you please unmute yourself? Hello? We're not able to hear whoever is listed as Stephanie Apple.

May we hear from Tony Anzivino. Please unmute yourself.

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

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

Number two, everybody that's on the payroll is painting this beautiful picture of the
park and how great it is for the kids and I'm sure it is. Why don't we just move all of City Hall there so everybody that works there can love the beauty of the park? It doesn't make it right.

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

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

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

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

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

MR. VASQUEZ: So thank you for allowing me this time to speak. I, myself, am I lifelong resident of North Bergen. I have grown up in our
public education system and I have witnessed the corruption that Sacco and his accomplices have done to our public education system. It is not really surprising to me that they were the -- that him and Anthony Vainieri were the first people -- some of the first people on this call to try to intimidate everybody who opposes the illegal preschool trailers that are on James Braddock Park.

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

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

And I just want to remind everyone who is supportive and very nostalgic about the preschool, that they are calling for the illegality to continue.

And this is nothing new for North Bergen.
administrators, this is how they function. And I would really hope that they would really consider what safety really means because they keep emphasizing how safe, how safe these trailers are. And how can you say that while we're living through the pandemic where it's spread so easily and there is no plan of action really to make things better?

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Vasquez.

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

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Yes.

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

There was a speaker, Mr. Stevens, who
identified himself as living in Braddock Park. I
gave my address. He didn't. He was just sarcastic
and spoke about tricycle races and pumpkins. But you
know what, if you have children and I had a daughter,
my daughter is 25 now, and she went to preschool,
that's what you want your children to have. You want
that education. You want the teachers at North
Bergen to teach and to do what they do and have that
environment. So when people are sarcastic and come
across and attack people like, for instance, that
park is an oasis, that park has never been -- in six
years it has been transformed by Anthony Vainieri. He personally made that his mission and nobody could ever dispute that. Call it corruption. Call it whatever you want. It's nonsense. Okay? Because he put his heart and soul into it and everybody has benefiting from it.

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Lange. 

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, sir.

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

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

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

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

As a resident and taxpayer I feel duped at having voted on a bond measure that my town leadership now seeks to void. I've lived across the street from a school. I now live across the street from this park and there is a difference. As a taxpayer and homeowner, this proposal would have the potential to significantly affect property values.
adversely because people that choose to live near a park don't necessarily choose to live across the street from a school. And I'm not surprised that supporters bring up the word safety and lack of other options because this is a reflection of leadership and trust and failed trust. The town had -- has broken my trust, the public trust by not following through on the timeline, not securing space elsewhere, not abiding by the $65 million referendum that we voted on previously.

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Lupia.

The next listed speaker is Asmaa Lopez.

Please unmute yourself.

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

MS. LOPEZ: As parents of two children, I have great experience there like fun and my kid --
my first one was I want to put my kids in pre-K that
have the good programs. I was very happy that this
pre-K is in park. That's a little piece of park,
just little space.

When I hear the people who against this
pre-K and the beautiful pre-K, I hear just something
about politic, something about money, something about
other environment. I believe good people never been
in the pre-K, never see the pre-K. Because in this
pre-K if you come, I invite you to visit and come
when there is the parade there, when there is some
activity there and you're going to see this beautiful
faces of the kids. They are very happy. You can see
the kids very, very happy and there is a little space
of the park. Plus, when I want to put my kids I was
worried, I was worried who going to be with my kids
and I discover that all the kids are going to be in
the same age. You don't have any age like bigger
than. Their first year of school they're going to be
all of them same age. Plus, the pre-K is very safe.

It has excellent teachers, excellent staff, a
beautiful, and the trailers has AC.

I don't know why the people say it
doesn't have AC, it doesn't have. Come. Go to the
trailer, see inside. That's beautiful space even
inside the trailers. Who doesn't want their kids to be in open space? They go outside. They have fun. They're very, very happy and always my kids, they coming and they happy and they woke up and they are very happy to go to school and thank you.

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Lopez.

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

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Continue, Ms. Rinaldi.

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

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

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

MS. RINALDI: No problem.

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you very much. The next listed speaker is Adriana Medena. Adriana, please unmute yourself.

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

MS. MEDINA: I've lived in North Bergen for 21 years and have gone through our education system as well as our recreation program. I fully support the preschool trailer staying where they are.
as it's the safest location for our young students as it provides an area where they are able to take full advantage of the park surroundings. The testimonies from parents of children that have actually attended the preschool has been nothing short of positive feelers towards the trailers remaining in the present location. The town has built a brand new state-of-the-art softball complex on 64th Street that all players will benefit tremendously from. I know I would have loved it when I was a younger child in the program.

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you very much.

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

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

MR. PIAZZA: Okay. I lived here for 48 years of my life. Let me tell you, North Bergen, Mayor Sacco, the commissioners of the Board of Education, the commissioners in town, everyone does everything with finance. This town has one of the
best rec programs in our town, in the State of New Jersey. And our preschool, I support them. I worked there for over ten years and it was the safest place for children of five and six years old to go to an area that was safe by fenced in area, air conditioning, heat. The North Bergen Police Department patrol it and the sheriff's department patrol it. And what they do in this town and our parks. Anthony Vainieri does an excellent job about the whole fixing up the whole neighborhood up there is incredible. We used to have broken fields in our town. Four years ago, you couldn't play on our fields. Now our children are benefiting for the best turfs in the State of New Jersey.

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

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

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

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

Esposito/Soranni

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you.

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

MS. OLANIEL: Hello. Can you hear me?

MS. McPHERSON: Yes, we can.
(VERONICA OLANIEL, 7113 Jackson Street, Apartment 3, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

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

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you for your comments.

The next listed speaker is listed as Carmen Borell. Carmen, please unmute yourself.
(CARMEN BORELL, 407 79th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)

MS. BORELL: Good evening, everyone.

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

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

MS. McPHERSON: Thank you, Ms. Borell.

Our next listed speak is Julia Minera.

Please unmute yourself.

(JULIA MINERA, 407 79th Street, North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.)
MS. MINERA: I am against the diversion. While -- I'm sorry?

MS. McPHERSON: Keep going.

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

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

MS. MINERA: I fully support (audio distortion).

MS. McPHERSON: Now --

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

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

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

MS. AUN: As you can tell, I'm a
southern, I'm a transplant to the north. I do have
Yankee blood, however, my father was from New Jersey.

One of the things that we are seeing in the south is
that we are seeing the removal of southern monuments
that should never have been placed where they are.
That is the same kind ever situation here. We've got
a school that never should have been placed in a
Green Acres area. It is for trees. Maybe we cannot
put anything else in there but trees and plants. I'm
fine with trees and plants. We need them. They
clean the air and they help protect us as people who
are on this earth and as visitors and not the primary
people, the primary inhabitants of the earth. We
have to all live together in the ecosystem.

Remove those structures. They don't
need to be permanent. They had 20 years. Let's get
on with it. This is illegal. If you took this to
court, you would have it said as illegal and there is no reason that we are still sitting on this. It's time to make the move. If southerners can get rid of Confederate monuments, then for goodness sakes, you can get rid of a school that doesn't belong there and you can find an appropriate place and make it wonderful for those children. Because everybody is concerned about the children, we all are, but we also believe in an equitable situation so that everyone has the right to enjoy the spaces that are provided that are Green Acres and there is an opportunity for the children to have what they need where they need it. Not in trailers, not in space that has been designated as Green Acres space for trees and flowers and plants and birds and bees. Thank you very much.

Y'all have a great evening.

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

In conformance with the public notice for this hearing, we will now close the public comments. We'd like to thank everyone again for your participation in this first step in the process and remind you that all comments whether they're made tonight or emailed or by mail will be considered in
this process. Any additional comments will be accepted by mail or email until August 25, 2020.

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

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

(Spanish translation.)

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