



COMMUNITY BOARD # 4Q

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PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2013

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: VFW Post #150
51-11 108 Street
Corona, New York

Subject: Proposed USTA Expansion – Application #: C130155 PPQ

Description: In the matter of an application by the NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the USTA National Tennis Center, Inc. pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the disposition of Lease of city-owned property to the USTA National Tennis Center, Inc.

Chairperson Louis Walker opened the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

District Manager Christian Cassagnol took the attendance. A quorum was present.

Speakers were given time at the beginning of the meeting to register to address the Board.

At this point, Mr. Daniel Zausner, Chief Operating officer of the National Tennis Center discussed the U. S. Tennis Association's (USTA) expansion plans. Using a power point presentation, he reported the sole purpose of USTA's appearance tonight is to review its ULURP application. The ULURP revolves around USTA's desire to do a very short expansion beyond its current leased boundaries at the south gate.

The USTA is seeking to expand the lease for its Billie Jean King National Tennis Center by 0.68 acres in order to rebuild one stadium, construct another and put in two parking garages on top of current asphalt lots.

He outlined the site: the Arthur Ashe Stadium, the Long Island Railroad (North), the Grand Central Parkway (West), and the Unisphere (South) along with the Queens Museum. The entire extent of the ULURP application runs in the area east to west, which is approximately 20' to 30' in totality, which allows it to be a very straight line. Using the diagram, Mr. Zausner gave further details of the site and its perimeter and borders of 42 acres held within the Park since 1993. Eleven parks courts are included just outside the east gate. The

Dinkins Circle headed to the boardwalk over to Citifield. The expansion would allow for seven courts to be shifted to the south, about 20' to 30', which would allow for a public walkway area. Under the existing conditions, it is only about 10' deep, making it very difficult to do the work needed and create a public plaza, unless those seven courts were shifted.

The review process was explained to the Board. USTA representatives meet with all the Community Boards involved, which are set to vote this week on the expansions. Community Board 4 is the second of the six Community Boards involved in the application process. Then it passes to the Borough President's review process, next to City Planning and the City Council, and State Legislature. The Borough Board will vote on the plan April 8.

Background information was provided by Mr. Zausner. The 42-acre NTC is one of the world's largest public recreational tennis facilities. The USTA is a national governing body for the sport of tennis in this country also a nonprofit entity. The US Open, which dates back to 1881, moved to its current site in Flushing Meadows Corona Park in 1978, making its facilities available to the public 11 months of the year. It owns and operates the US Open. They did not own the National Tennis Center, but have a 99 year lease with the City of New York. It is parkland and remains parkland and operates as a public park that plays tennis 11 months of the year and hosts the US Open during a 3-4 week window in late August/early September. They have been hosting the U.S. Open since the late 1800's, since 1915 originally at the Westside Tennis Club through 1977. The facility remains completely public, as it has been since the association moved the U. S. Open there from the West Side Tennis Club in Forest Hills since 1978.

In total over the last 15 years the USTA invested over \$500 million to build the following facilities: Arthur Ashe Stadium, Louis Armstrong & Grandstand, an indoor tennis building (that has 12 indoor courts) and operates all year long, all field courts, and the ancillary building associated with those field courts.

While there was a ground lease with the city dating back to 1978, the association has been responsible for the investment in all the mentioned facilities. There is no city or state funding. Rent is paid to the City of New York. The association considers themselves a good neighbor, providing a great economic impact to the City, Queens, and all throughout the boroughs.

Today, the NTC is one of the largest public tennis facilities in the world. The U.S. Open attracts over 700,000 spectators annually. The grounds of the NTC are open 11 months of the year to visitors of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. Open from 6:00 a.m. to midnight, programs are geared to the 2 to 4 year olds as well as seniors. Over 100,000 people participate in programs all year long. The majority of those people are New York City residents, and 41% of those are Queens based. The NTC works with over 70 high schools and colleges who train, practice, and play all their home matches at the National Tennis Center. Tournaments hosted throughout the year are even more Queens centered than the U. S. Open. When people fly in to see colleges and high schools play, as well as other USTA tournaments, those guests stay in Queens—eating in restaurants and doing other activities for those days they are here in the Queens marketplace.

Three studies have been done concerning the economic impact in 1991, 2001, and 2010, from \$145 million in economic impact to \$420 million to \$756 million. This means over 700,000 people are brought in to the site during the U.S. Open period. 42% of those people come from outside the tri-state area, and 14% come from outside the country. They stay here from three to five days, using our area hotels. 16% of the entire city's hotel occupancy during the US Open is responsible for 2500 room nights just in Queens.

From a jobs prospective, the USTA generates over 127 full time jobs direct and indirect to Queens based residents, between their two offices. There are 53 fulltime USTA employees and over 40 part time employees

that work all year round. Over 6,000 people are hired to work for the U.S. Open, meaning employment can last from three weeks to six months.

\$500 million in construction is being planned to the site over the next five to ten years, which will generate approximately 800 jobs for Queens based residents.

The U. S. Open is seen in 188 different countries covering 41,000 hours of television on many prime networks in the United States as well as all over the world. The U. S. Open is a huge boom for the city and for Queens.

At this point, Mr. Zausner reported the current 6,000-seat Grandstand Stadium is located adjacent to the Louis Armstrong Stadium, on its east façade. Grandstand Stadium was built for the 1964-1965 World's Fair Singer Bowl and is at the end of its useful life. The proposed project would replace the existing Grandstand Stadium with a new up to 55-foot tall, 8,000 seat stadium in the southwest corner of the site. In addition, the area of the city-owned park connector road between United Nations Avenue North and Meridian Road, which runs through the leased area in which the new stadium would be located, would be added to the area covered by the lease, increasing the area subject to the lease by approximately 11,449 sq. (0.26 acres).

Louis Armstrong Stadium located in the northeast corner of the site, is a 10,500 seat facility. As with Grandstand Stadium, it was built for the 1954-1965 World's Fair Singer Bowl and is at the end of its useful life. After demolition of the existing stadium, a new 15,000 seat stadium would be built on the same site, in an up to 80 foot tall facility.

Millions of dollars are spent to maintain these two structures, and now these two buildings desperately need to be replaced. It is code complaint, but not living up to the current codes. Neither city nor state funding would be used to pay for the renovations to these buildings.

Over 90% of traffic enters through the east gate because of the proximity to the Long Island Railroad, the #7 train, and all parking for Citifield is located there. Under the proposed project, Lot B would be replaced with an approximately 270 space, 3-level parking garage, and Lot A and the transportation center would be replaced with an approximately 423 space, 2 level parking garage, and 6,500 square foot transportation center relocated connector road.

The connector road displaced by the relocation of Grandstand Stadium would be relocated to an approximately 0.3 acre area south of United National Avenue North near the Queens Museum of Art parking lot. New approximately five to six foot wide pedestrian walkways would be created. As part of the proposed project, the small portion of Meridian Road below the overpass would be widened to connect to an existing bicycle lane.

According to USTA's Strategic Vision, construction of the proposed project would require removal of trees both outside the existing fence line, including United Nations Avenue North and the proposed location of the connector road south of United Nations Avenue North, and inside the NTC site including in the vicinity of the practice courts, parking lot A, northwest corner of Arthur Ashe Stadium, west side of parking lot B, west side of the Grandstand Stadium, proposed Grandstand Stadium relocation site and a small number in the Food Village. Tree replanting and replacement would comply with DPR's applicable rules and regulations. Approximately 422 trees would be removed, which would be transplanted to the extent practicable. Trees that could not be transplanted would be replaced pursuant to City regulations.

Next, Mr. Zausner recapped the ULURP application—the development of the proposed project would require disposition of 0.68 acres of City property to USTA by long-term lease for the relocation of the fence and playing courts and a small portion of the Grandstand Stadium along the site's southern boundary.

To dispel any misconceptions, Mr. Zausner reviewed both the site and its proposed expansion.

Parking and transportation improvements and pedestrian enhancements for the Park were described at this point.

Also, he reported since 2006 it became important for all partners in the Park to encourage mass transit. A very aggressive campaign was started with the Mayor's office, MTA and the Mets to inform everyone don't drive. Come by mass transit. In 2006, 32% of the people who came to the US Open arrived by mass transit. Last year, 56% came in by mass transit. When tickets are purchased, mass transit is encouraged by e-mails and mailings.

He also pointed out Citifield's actual capacity is 12,000 less seats than the old Shea Stadium. Even when tickets are sold out, there are 12,000 less seats. At the same time, there are 3,100 more parking spaces than there was at the old Shea Stadium.

When there is a conflict with the Mets playing a game at the same time as USTA, (the Mets make every effort to limit that conflict) there is a need to park in the Park. There are lots 1-7 some of those are grass lots, but the priority is to park on 4A and 4B, which are asphalt lots. He pointed out there are times, on conflict days, when the traffic backs up on the Grand Central, NYPD Traffic Enforcement instructs drivers where to park and on limited occasions-when cars backing up on the highway cause a safety issue-directs them to park on small stretches of park grass. The USTA does not tell US Open patrons where to park. Their intent is for people to not park on the grass.

Mr. Zausner reported similar to the existing facility, the new Louis Armstrong Stadium would include approximately 80,000 gsf of enclosed space for concession, retail, broadcasting, and administrative uses as well as expanded rest room, first aid, and guest services facilities.

Next, he spoke about partners and vendors they work with in the marketplace. Being part of the community, they have been here for 35 years.

Next, he spoke about the specific misconceptions about the project:

Trees

Only approximately 40 trees will be lost. USTA ensures the 40 trees which are lost will be replaced according to strict Parks Department tree restitution policy.

Building a permanent power plant in the Park

The USTA will not be building a permanent power plant in the Park. Temporary generators will be needed, but only during the US Open. They will use ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel and be equipped with advanced controls to minimize pollutant emissions. A draft Environmental Impact Statement analysis of the emissions expected to result from these temporary generators found the air quality impacts on the surrounding area would be below the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards and the standards in the City Environmental Quality Review Technical Manual guidelines, which are intended to protect public health.)

USTA is not open to the public

This statement is completely false. Eleven months of the year from 6 a.m. to Midnight, whether you are playing tennis or just want to come on the grounds the site is open. Four weeks of the year, NTC hosts the US Open Tournament, which is a paid ticketed event.

USTA blocks community soccer leagues from playing in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park during the U. S. Open

USTA never prevented community soccer leagues from playing during the US Open. It had never asked the Parks Department to deny permitting of soccer fields during the US Open.

USTA's courts are overpriced

The vast majority of patrons at the NTC access courts at fees well below the listed rates. The USTA sponsors numerous programs and camps where participants get deeply discounted or free court time. In addition, tennis patrons with a NYC Parks tennis permit enjoy hourly court rates as low as \$11 with a 50% discount at the NTC's outdoor courts. The NTC's indoor and outdoor courts are open to the general public to visit and for play, lessons, clinics, and leagues 7 days a week, 11 months of the year.

NYC taxpayers have provided \$322,025,000 in IDA bonds for USTA construction

Though IDA bonds were provided, the USTA is repaying every penny with interest. To date interest payments have exceeded \$132 million. Also, since 1997, the USTA has invested millions of its own funds into the NTC, and this project will continue that investment.

At this point, Mr. Zausner talked about wetlands and fly overs. Details were provided.

In conclusion, Mr. Zausner recapped the NTC is a non-profit entity, they have been in the marketplace in Queens almost 100 years, specifically, in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park the last 35 years. Over 100,000 people a year participate in their programs, 700,000 people coming to the U. S. Open and 6,000+ jobs created, and broadcasting to 188 countries plus Queens and New York City. The NTC is home court for more than 70 New York City high schools and colleges and a number of diverse organizations seeking to play tennis or host tournaments. The \$800 million dollar economic impact to the City, the \$2 ½ million in rent paid last year over \$39 million over the last 20 years. The fact is that USTA is paying for all construction to date and will continue to pay for it. By completion, it will be over \$1 billion over the next ten years.

As a result of this proposal, 800 construction jobs will be created for the acquisition of 0.68 acres.

Before the speakers were called upon to address the Board, Chairperson Louis Walker informed the audience all speakers have one minute to present their viewpoint. Speakers were timed by a staff member of Community Board 4.

<u>*Speaker</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Vote Recommendation</u>
1. Alyson Beha	New Yorkers for Parks	No
2. Deborah Antoine	New York Junior Tennis & Learning	Yes
3. Ted Newkirk		Yes
4. Pedro Diaz	GO Nature	No
5. Jermino Saldan	32BJ SEIU	No
6. Michael Littman	P/T Tennis Pro, NTC	Yes

At this point, a Board member inquired if this proposal is not approved by the Board, would the programs for the children end? Mr. Littman responded the programs would not end.

7. Vasko Mladenov	Captain/St. John's Men's Tennis Team	Yes
8. Ben Haber		No

<u>*Speaker</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Vote Recommendation</u>
9. Jack Leone	Electrician/Local Union #3	Yes
10. Jim Carlson	MJI Union Local 638/Local 30 Engineers	Yes
11. Father William Hoppe	St. Leo's Church	No
12. Marik (child)	NYJTL	Yes
13. Jennifer Yu	NYJTL (7 th Grade Student)	Yes
14. Isis Gill-Reid	NYJTL (Student, Beacon School)	Yes
15. Yadein Cope	Registered but declined to speak	
16. Marjorie Desir	Program Director, NYJTL & IS 61	Yes
17. Elena Bantovske	NYJTL	Yes
18. Rob MacKay	QEDC	Yes
19. Leandra Requena	Elmhurst Community Resident	No
20. Maria Alvarez	Corona Community Resident	No
21. Hilary Klein	Make the Road NY	No
22. Marisy Pichardo	Corona Community Resident/Daycare Owner	No
23. Mary Ann Rosa	NYC Central Labor Council (Represents 300 Unions)	No
24. Barbara Mulnick	Occupy Queens/Fairness Coalition of Queens	No
25. Lesly St. Louis	USTA Wheelchair Sports	Yes
26. Ricardo Corral	USTA Wheelchair Sports	Yes
27. Ed Westley	CB3 Board Member	No w/conditions
28. Janet Kelly	Retired Newtown High School Teacher/ Treasurer Jackson Heights Beatification	No
29. Carlos Corrello	Corona resident/Works With USTA	Yes

*Complete testimony of each speaker is recorded on tape at the Community Board 4 office.

Since there were no other speakers, Board Chairperson Louis Walker closed the Public Hearing at 8:50 p.m. The regularly scheduled meeting of Community Board 4 immediately followed.