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STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF ORANGE

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CITY OF NEWBURGH
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
PUBLIC HEARING
regarding
GRAND STREET NEWBURGH PROPERTY CO., LLC
and
FSH NEWBURGH HOTEL, LLC

-----X

DATE: November 4, 2021
Newburgh, New York
Commencing at 1:00 P.M.

Laura Evans, Reporter

MINUTES
OF
PUBLIC HEARING

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INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY:

- Austin DuBois, Chairman
- Cherisse Vickers, Executive Director
- Michael Kelly
- Robert McLaughlin, Counsel

1 IDA HEARING 11/04/21

2 IDA EXEC. DIR. CHERISSE VICKERS:

3 Hello. Thanks everyone for
4 attending. This is the City of
5 Newburgh Industrial Development Agency
6 public hearing for FSH Newburgh Hotel
7 and Grand Street Newburgh Property.

8 This is a little bit different than
9 your normal city council meeting. You
10 don't have the same IT setup. We do
11 have a camera that's recording. And if
12 you want to make a comment, just sit in
13 that corner chair there, pull up the
14 mic, press the button, and you'll be
15 able to make a comment.

16 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

17 Anybody who would like to comment,
18 if you haven't already signed the
19 sign-in sheet, please do so, just so we
20 have an order of it. And the last
21 person that signs it, please return it
22 to me. If anybody comes after that,
23 they can comment, too, after everybody
24 has an opportunity.

25 IDA EXEC. DIR. CHERISSE VICKERS:

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2 All right, we begin. Good
3 afternoon. My name is Cherisse
4 Vickers. I am the Executive Director
5 of the City of Newburgh Industrial
6 Development Agency in connection with
7 the project, which is the subject of
8 this public hearing.

9 Today, I'm holding this public
10 hearing to allow citizens to make a
11 statement for the record relating to
12 the involvement of the Agency with the
13 project, the "Proposed Project," for
14 the benefit of Grand Street Newburgh
15 Property Co., LLC, a New York limited
16 liability company, and FSH Newburgh
17 Hotel, LLC, a New York limited
18 liability company, each and
19 collectively known as the "Company."

20 The Proposed Project consists of
21 the following:

22 A, the lease of an interest in an
23 approximately 1.78-acre parcel of real
24 property located at 48-54-62 Grand
25 Street, Newburgh, New York, also known

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2 as the "Land." Number 2, the occupancy
3 of the improvements made to the
4 existing three buildings on the land
5 totaling approximately 79,072 square
6 feet to consist of a hotel, events
7 venue, spa, and dining facility, known
8 as the "Facility." And 3, the
9 acquisition and installation therein
10 and thereon of related fixtures,
11 machinery, equipment, and other
12 tangible personal property,
13 collectively known as the
14 "Equipment" -- the Land, the Facility,
15 and the Equipment herein after
16 collectively referred to as the
17 "Project Facility."

18 B, The granting of certain
19 financial assistance within the meaning
20 of Section 854(14) of the Act, with
21 respect to the foregoing, including
22 potential exemptions from certain sales
23 use taxes, real property taxes, real
24 estate transfer taxes, and mortgage
25 recording taxes, collectively, the

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2 "Financial Assistance."

3 And C, the lease, with an
4 obligation to purchase, or sale of the
5 Project Facility to the Company or such
6 other person as may be designated by
7 the Company and agreed upon by the
8 Agency. One Company, Grand Street
9 Newburgh Property Co., LLC, will lease
10 the buildings on the Land, and the
11 other Company, FSH Newburgh Hotel, LLC,
12 will operate the businesses located
13 thereat.

14 I intend to provide general
15 information on the Agency's general
16 authority and public purpose to provide
17 assistance to this Proposed Project. I
18 will then open the comment period to
19 receive comments from all present who
20 wish to comment on either the Proposed
21 Project or the Financial Assistance
22 contemplated by the Agency with respect
23 to the Proposed Project.

24 The City of Newburgh Industrial
25 Development Agency is authorized and

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2 empowered by provisions of Chapter 1030
3 of the 1969 Laws of New York,
4 constituting Title 1 of Article 18-A of
5 the General Municipal Law, Chapter 24
6 of the Consolidated Laws of New York,
7 as amended in the Enabling Act, and
8 Chapter 577 of the 1982 Laws of New
9 York, as amended, constituting Section
10 913 of said General Municipal Law, said
11 Chapter and Enabling Act having been
12 hereinafter collectively referred to as
13 the "Act."

14 The purpose of this public hearing.
15 Pursuant to Section 859-a(2) of the
16 Act, prior to the Agency providing any
17 financial assistance as defined in the
18 Act of more than \$100,000 to any
19 project, the Agency, among other
20 things, must hold a public hearing
21 pursuant to Section 859-a of the Act
22 with respect to said project. Since
23 the proposed financial assistance to be
24 provided by the Agency with respect to
25 the Proposed Project may exceed

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2 \$100,000, then prior to providing any
3 financial assistance, as defined in the
4 Act, of more than \$100,000 to the
5 Proposed Project, the Agency must hold
6 a public hearing on the nature and
7 location of the Project Facility and
8 the proposed financial assistance to be
9 provided by the Agency with respect to
10 the Proposed Project.

11 The Executive Director of the
12 Agency caused notice of this public
13 hearing to be mailed on October 21,
14 2021 to the chief executive officers of
15 Orange County, the City of Newburgh,
16 and the City of Newburgh School
17 District, and published on October 26,
18 2021 in the Times Herald Record, a
19 newspaper of general circulation
20 available to the residents of the City
21 of Newburgh, Orange County, New York.

22 In addition, the Executive Director
23 of the Agency caused notice of the
24 public hearing to be hand-delivered to
25 each of the chief executive officers of

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2 the City of Newburgh on October 21,
3 2021, and posted on October 21, 2021 on
4 the Agency's website and also on a
5 public bulletin board located at City
6 Hall, 83 Broadway, Newburgh, New York.

7 Now, unless there's any objection,
8 I'm going to suggest waiving the full
9 reading of the notice of public
10 hearing, and instead request that the
11 full text of the notice of this public
12 hearing be inserted into the record of
13 this public hearing as Schedule A.

14 The comments received today at this
15 public hearing will be presented to the
16 members of the Agency at or prior to
17 the meeting at which the members of the
18 Agency will consider whether to approve
19 the undertaking of the Proposed Project
20 by the Agency and the granting by the
21 Agency of any financial assistance in
22 excess of \$100,000 with respect to the
23 Proposed Project.

24 The notice of this public hearing
25 indicated that written comments could

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2 be addressed to Cherisse Vickers,
3 Executive Director of the Agency.
4 Written comments have been received by
5 the Agency on July 15th, by Senator
6 Skoufis and other members of the City
7 of Newburgh City Council, also on
8 November 4th by Councilmember Anthony
9 Grice, and on November 4th by Naomi
10 Hersson-Ringskog, who specifically
11 asked that her letter be part of the
12 transcript for today's hearing.

13 "To the Board of Directors at
14 Newburgh IDA:

15 "When I first thought of adapted
16 reuse of the three fraternal buildings,
17 a hotel made sense for the buildings'
18 use and community. I've been lucky to
19 visit three Foster Supply Hospitality
20 properties in Sullivan County, and
21 continually come away impressed with
22 their ability to respect the property's
23 history, community's cultural heritage,
24 while creating a distinct atmosphere
25 that wins design, food and tourism

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2 awards.

3 "I will make a few quick points in
4 my full support for the proposed PILOT
5 for FSH Hotel Newburgh's project:

6 "One: It seems clear that a
7 project of this scope can only happen
8 with a PILOT. Full property taxes on
9 renovated market value would be
10 astounding and unworkable.

11 "Two: The proposed FSH project
12 will go a long way to expanding the
13 revitalization of the downtown area
14 beyond Liberty Street. Expanding the
15 areas that tourists walk and visit is a
16 major step towards expanding Newburgh's
17 revitalization. As co-chair of the
18 Newburgh Transportation Committee, I
19 look forward to seeing more pedestrians
20 and bicyclists on our streets,
21 exploring the cultural richness of our
22 community.

23 "Three: High-end hotels with
24 restaurants and spas create many more
25 good paying jobs than simple box

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2 hotels. Newburgh is incredibly
3 well-situated to pull in a larger share
4 of the Hudson Valley tourism dollars,
5 and this will translate to good
6 employment for Newburgh residents.

7 "Four: Indirectly, jobs will be
8 created from additional tourism in the
9 city and from ancillary services
10 provided by the hotel, for example,
11 tours, babysitting.

12 "Five: I have talked to half a
13 dozen people through the years that
14 have business dealings with FSH, and I
15 have yet to hear a negative word.
16 While skepticism over developer
17 intentions is always well-warranted,
18 based on FSH's history in Sullivan
19 County, I can't think of a better
20 partner for Newburgh's next chapter.

21 "This is an important project for
22 Newburgh and Orange County. Let's make
23 it an immediate success. Naomi
24 Hersson-Ringskog."

25 So our Chairman, Austin DuBois,

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2 will now give opening comments.

3 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

4 Thank you, everybody, for coming
5 today. Thank you, Cher, for reading
6 all the legalese, which is important
7 and required. I thought I would just
8 kind of distill it down into plainer
9 English.

10 So the Newburgh IDA is a
11 state-regulated public agency that's
12 empowered to grant certain tax
13 incentives in exchange for community
14 benefits that supercede those
15 incentives. Although there are many
16 potential benefits, the biggest benefit
17 that we examined is jobs that are
18 either created or retained. Especially
19 in a city like Newburgh, whose
20 residents have been generationally
21 economically oppressed, the ability to
22 ensure that our friends and neighbors
23 are given new and better ways to bring
24 paychecks home to their families is of
25 the utmost importance.

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2 It should be made clear what tax
3 breaks are being proposed to be
4 granted. We live in a state where
5 property taxes are owed based on the
6 value of the property. If that value
7 goes up, your tax payments go up. If
8 that property then runs a business,
9 those tax payments that have gone up
10 can affect your ability to run a
11 healthy business and employ Newburgh
12 residents. The primary benefit that an
13 IDA is empowered to offer is a PILOT, a
14 payment in lieu of taxes. This is a
15 set schedule of payments made to the
16 city that start at or above the current
17 assessment of the property in question,
18 and then they gradually increase over
19 time until the owner is paying taxes in
20 full at full assessed value. The IDA
21 does not, and indeed, cannot, reduce
22 the taxes an owner owes based on the
23 current property value. Every PILOT
24 recipient makes taxes -- makes tax
25 payments, starting in year one, at or

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2 above the current assessed value. Say
3 that again. Every PILOT recipient
4 makes tax payments starting in the
5 first year at at least the property's
6 current assessed value, and it goes up
7 from there. The break, as they refer
8 to it, the tax break that an owner gets
9 in this situation is they get an
10 assurance of what that increased
11 schedule is going to be. The reason
12 for that is because the fluctuations in
13 taxes going up typically can affect
14 their ability to get financing to
15 actually do the project; or even if
16 they got the financing, affect their
17 ability to have the project be a
18 success, and then all the people that
19 had jobs for two or three years get to
20 be laid off because the project wasn't
21 a success because the taxes increased
22 so much.

23 In many cases, as with abandoned
24 buildings or buildings that are owned
25 by the city or county, the property in

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2 question is currently contributing
3 nothing to the tax base. That means
4 that new tax revenue in this kind of
5 situation would start in year one and
6 would continue as long as the property
7 remains privately owned -- continue and
8 increase as long as the property
9 remains privately owned.

10 In addition to the new tax revenue,
11 because a PILOT is a legal agreement
12 that the applicant makes with the IDA,
13 it will contain a list of other
14 benefits that the applicant's promised,
15 such as jobs being the big one, and in
16 a city like Newburgh, workforce
17 development initiatives, partnership
18 for public entities, things like that.
19 This is made a part of the agreement,
20 and we are thereby able to hold this
21 person accountable to the promises
22 they've made via this agreement. If
23 those benefits are not followed through
24 with as promised, then we essentially
25 get to go back and hit them for the

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2 full freight of taxes that would have
3 otherwise been owed.

4 We're here today to listen to the
5 project that is proposed, to understand
6 what benefit it would offer our city --
7 jobs, tax revenue, and other
8 benefits -- and to evaluate whether the
9 project merits the assistance it's
10 requesting.

11 Today's hearing is for you all to
12 be heard, our community, and for us to
13 listen. Today, the nature of a public
14 hearing, it's not like an open Q&A
15 session, but I'm sure that the
16 Applicant would be happy to answer some
17 questions. In some cases, I may be
18 able to answer some questions. And
19 even if we can't today, a lot of you in
20 this room know me. For those of you
21 that don't, I'm always available to go
22 get coffee somewhere and talk about
23 what the IDA does, how we do it, what
24 our philosophy is, and how we evaluate
25 the applications that come before us

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2 and what our obligations are to the
3 City of Newburgh and its residents. So
4 even after today, always feel free to
5 reach out to our office, and if you
6 want to get coffee and talk about it,
7 that's what we're here for. I live
8 three blocks that way.

9 Thank you very much for coming
10 here. I really truly appreciate all
11 your involvement, and we really look
12 forward to your attendance, your
13 attention, and your input.

14 With that, I think our mask policy
15 for today, when someone's talking, I
16 think it's okay for you to take to your
17 mask down. Obviously, put it back up
18 when you're done talking so we are as
19 safe as we can be while people can
20 still be heard clearly. I hope
21 everybody heard me clearly. I forget
22 to take my mask off.

23 With that, we're going to start
24 with the presentation of the Project
25 from Sims Foster, the Applicant, the

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2 principal of the Applicant entities.

3 Thank you, sir.

4 MR. SIMS FOSTER:

5 Thank you. Hello, everybody. My
6 name is Sims Foster with Foster Supply
7 Hospitality. And I'll just take a
8 couple minutes to introduce the project
9 to anybody that might not know the
10 details. We did a Zoom call with the
11 full IDA Board in June to go over the
12 details of what we were proposing.

13 It's pretty special. I brought the
14 board, but the truth is, I don't know
15 how many times you get to look out the
16 window and see the proposed project.

17 But before I go into that, I just
18 want to say how excited we are to be
19 joining the City of Newburgh community.
20 By "we," I mean my wife and I. We have
21 a family business. And as we look to
22 expansion, like many of you and many
23 people that we've met who are
24 passionate about the City of Newburgh,
25 there's something about this place that

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2 called us to explore opportunities
3 here. And core to our values are
4 choosing places do to business that
5 matter to us and where we feel we can
6 have a general positive impact in all
7 kinds of different ways. That's our
8 ethos. So it's not random at all that
9 we're here. We're proud now to own
10 property, as well, in the City of
11 Newburgh.

12 We are proposing a hotel and
13 restaurant hospitality complex in the
14 three buildings: The American Legion,
15 the YMCA, and the Masonic Grand Temple,
16 all spectacular buildings with great
17 heritage to the City of Newburgh,
18 currently owned by Orange County. We
19 are in contract on the buildings. We
20 are proposing now to do a 75-room hotel
21 as part of the project. That would be
22 in the YMCA and American Legion
23 buildings. And in the basement, a spa
24 facility, gym facility, that would
25 service both the guests that come to

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2 stay, but also the Newburgh greater
3 community. The Masonic Temple is --
4 I've toured it many, many, many, many
5 times with many people. I still get a
6 great smile on my face as I go through
7 it architecturally. But we are
8 proposing there to do a 150-seat ground
9 floor restaurant, all-day restaurant.
10 The second and third floors, the second
11 was the meeting space for the Masons,
12 the third being the ritual room, both
13 of those would be event spaces. We are
14 proposing on the fourth floor to add a
15 small addition to the building that
16 would look down the Hudson and would
17 also serve as another smaller scale
18 restaurant. And then as far as food
19 and beverages are concerned, we're also
20 proposing a small green area behind the
21 American Legion, a pavilion, very
22 casual food truck concept. So multiple
23 food and beverage concepts going on.

24 Where we are right now is we have
25 been working straight through with

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2 architects and engineers for the past
3 six months. We've made great progress
4 with the Planning Board, at least from
5 our perspective. We've gone through a
6 public hearing there and were grateful
7 to see the support for the project from
8 the Planning Board -- the public
9 hearing, I should say.

10 Also, the Architectural Review
11 Committee, which of course needs to
12 approve everything that we do, we're
13 not proposing to change the facade of
14 the building, so it's not a major
15 impact architecturally.

16 So that's -- I'm happy to stay
17 after. I have the boards. I think I
18 only have ten minutes or so, so I don't
19 want to -- but I'm happy to answer any
20 questions about the details of the
21 project that we're proposing.

22 I want to just put it out there
23 that this is the first time that I've
24 ever been in front of an IDA with an
25 application. We have not applied for

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2 it in any of our previous projects.
3 And the question might come up, well,
4 why are you now asking for it here?
5 The answer to that is that we assess
6 every project based on many factors,
7 but also, if the taxes go up, can we
8 reasonably pay that? And so, in our
9 other projects that are in, let's call
10 it, healthier tax districts than the
11 City of Newburgh, where we've done
12 those assessments, we've not felt the
13 need to go and ask for help. I
14 generally don't like to ask for help.
15 I like to just get things done. But
16 I'm here today asking this Board for
17 help. And the question is, well, what
18 help do you need? I don't have the
19 money in my bank account to finance
20 this project. I need to go with the
21 typical route, which is to get capital,
22 and that includes debt and equity. In
23 this market, finding, especially, debt
24 or equity for hospitality projects,
25 especially after the pandemic, has been

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2 very challenging. We're very lucky to
3 have a local bank that sees a vision
4 for Newburgh and our vision and is
5 supportive, but they are a bank, and
6 they need to see the project being in a
7 risk profile where they feel we can pay
8 them back their money. It's the same
9 with equity investments. And a
10 critical part of that is what we've
11 proposed through application to the
12 City of Newburgh IDA, which is not that
13 we don't pay taxes. The buildings
14 right now pay nothing. As soon as we
15 take title, we will be paying taxes to
16 the City of Newburgh, which we're proud
17 of. What we need to do to get this
18 project financed is some help in
19 escalating those taxes, which is what
20 our application is asking for. So
21 that's why we are here doing that.
22 Quite frankly, anything is possible in
23 life. It is highly unlikely that we
24 will be able to get financing without
25 assistance of this type, due to being

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2 able to pay -- getting into the risk
3 profile.

4 So I think that I'll leave it there
5 and turn it back to the Board.

6 Obviously, if there's any other
7 questions that I can answer, that's why
8 we're here.

9 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

10 Thank you very much. We'll start
11 with public comment and we'll go off of
12 the sign-in sheet. Paul Ernenwein.

13 MR. PAUL ERNENWEIN:

14 Good afternoon. Paul Ernenwein.
15 So I'm just here to give my two cents
16 and ask that the IDA approve this
17 proposal.

18 For me, this is a story about
19 opportunity for families and
20 multi-generations of families. I won't
21 bore you all with the whole story like
22 I have many in this room, but I'm
23 fourth generation -- my kids are
24 fifth -- and one of my dreams is to see
25 a sixth generation come home. I want

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2 my grandchildren to come here.

3 How does that happen? How do we
4 give our city council and our city
5 manager the ability to have a complete
6 Department of Public Works who doesn't
7 only have to be reactive, but can be
8 there to make our streets clean and
9 beautiful, and our structures
10 completely secure? How do we allow our
11 city manager and our city council to
12 have a police department that is
13 complete, where our community, who live
14 here, who work here, get to see their
15 police officers on the street and get
16 to know them and talk to them? How do
17 we do that? How do we have a fire
18 department that is not just reactive,
19 but has the ability to have a superior
20 immediate response to emergencies? How
21 do we have recreation for our families
22 in the city, at Downing and Delano
23 Hitch and all of our parks, our
24 playgrounds, our fields, our riverfront
25 and our stadium? Did you kids know

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2 that we have a stadium in this city?

3 Well, I don't think anybody in this
4 room has probably sat in it, not in 50
5 years or something. How do we make
6 that stadium and those fields
7 illuminated, lighted, secure, superior
8 fields that are being taken care of for
9 our entire community? How does it
10 happen? It requires multi millions in
11 investment.

12 This project will bring millions
13 for our city council and our city
14 manager to deploy for our community
15 now. And it will bring hundreds of
16 millions to our community eventually.
17 It will bring visitors from around the
18 County of Orange, from around the
19 Hudson Valley, from around the United
20 States of America. It will bring
21 visitors from around the world to come
22 to the City of Newburgh, spend time,
23 spend money, spend energy, and invest,
24 every dollar spent investing in our
25 community. It will be millions now.

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2 It will be hundreds of millions later.

3 If you were born on Dubois, like my
4 two daughters, if you were born on
5 Dubois today, by the time you get to
6 South Middle School, like my two
7 daughters, this property will be fully
8 and completely tax provided, complete
9 opportunity for our entire community,
10 for that DPW, that police department,
11 for our sidewalks, for our lights, for
12 our security. This is an opportunity
13 for our entire community, for our city.

14 Please, to our IDA, please have the
15 foresight to understand how fast the
16 time goes, how the kids born today will
17 see dramatic benefit to their entire
18 families and their community.

19 My interest in speaking to you
20 today is also self interest. The
21 opportunity to make the sixth
22 generation -- I'm going to start
23 crying -- to have a sixth generation
24 come home and support this community,
25 this is how you do it. For 50 years --

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2 well, let's call it for 30 years, as an
3 adult, I have been witness to
4 shortsightedness -- and I'll be polite
5 and use the word shortsightedness -- in
6 what it means to build a municipality
7 and build opportunities for our
8 families, for generations to remain,
9 for the quality of life, for the
10 opportunity of all our familiars and
11 for generations to come together. If
12 are you a Honduran or an Ecuadorian or
13 Peruvian or a Mexican family that has
14 just moved here in the last 20 years,
15 you are working to provide opportunity
16 for your children, just like the
17 generations of immigrants before you
18 that came here. And imagine a place
19 where your children and your
20 grandchildren want to return to because
21 of the quality of life, because of the
22 opportunity of the school district,
23 because your families can be together.

24 So I hope the opportunity comes
25 where the first hotel in Newburgh in a

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2 generation can be. And don't tell me
3 the Imperial, please. The first hotel
4 in a generation. We grew up here.
5 When I graduated from North High and
6 from NFA, we graduated hearing the
7 stories of the Hotel Newburgh and how
8 people came from all over the world and
9 all over the country and all over the
10 Hudson Valley. Folks would stay in New
11 York City for a few nights in
12 Manhattan, and then stay in the Hotel
13 Newburgh for a few nights. We don't
14 have a hotel in the City of Newburgh.
15 There's not a hotel in Newburgh.

16 Bring that first hotel in a
17 generation. Bring a quality of life.
18 Bring opportunity. Bring economic
19 stability. Bring generations of our
20 families home. And this is how you do
21 it. So thanks.

22 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

23 Thank you. Donna Cornell.

24 MS. DONNA CORNELL:

25 That's a tough act to follow, isn't

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2 it? My name is Donna Cornell and I was
3 born and raised in this city, so like
4 many of you in the room, I consider it
5 my city. I have been actively
6 involved. I had my businesses here in
7 the City of Newburgh. I'm retired,
8 whatever that means. I'm still
9 working, as you can see.

10 Volunteer hat of economic
11 development: I was the startup
12 chairperson for the Orange County
13 Partnership, the economic development
14 agency that promotes growth here. And
15 I am -- in order to become the first
16 chairperson, I went to the University
17 of Maryland and took the first leg of
18 being a certified economic development
19 professional. And I share that fact so
20 that you understand that, when I talk
21 about the ripple effect, the economic
22 impact, one can appreciate I'm doing it
23 from a knowledge base and from an
24 education viewpoint.

25 The ripple effect cannot even be

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2 calculated as to how positive this can
3 be for our city and the region. I love
4 this city, as Paul does, and I think
5 that we cannot underestimate how
6 beneficial a project like this can be
7 to the city residents that are here
8 today, and as he talked about, the
9 city's future residents and future of
10 those residents.

11 In order to make that happen, we
12 need to have incentives. We need to
13 have economic development. I'm
14 cognizent of the fact that you need to
15 incentivize investment in your
16 community. We need to have incentives.
17 And the benefits that can come from the
18 IDA granting this application will make
19 a project like this happen and will be
20 a win for the City of Newburgh. And I
21 ask that you consider it and approve
22 it. Thank you very much.

23 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

24 And thank you, Donna. Jeff Werner.

25 MR. JEFF WERNER:

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2 My name is Jeff Werner. As
3 difficult as it may have been for Donna
4 Cornell to follow Paul Ernenwein, I now
5 have to follow my wife.

6 I grew up in Newburgh. I love
7 Newburgh. It was a wonderful place in
8 which to grow up. And we have an
9 opportunity to help make it return to a
10 wonderful place that it once was, and
11 will be. I grew up right down the
12 street here, three doors from
13 Washington's Headquarters. I am an
14 attorney and I was a town judge in the
15 Town of Newburgh for 17 years.

16 I'm very involved in economic
17 development. I, together with an
18 associate, redeveloped East Parmenter
19 Street, which back then was known as
20 crack alley. And what we did was we
21 took an entire neighborhood with
22 anchors at either end, one anchor being
23 Washington's Headquarters, and the
24 other St. George's Cemetery, and we
25 redeveloped it later on with the

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2 assistance of Habitat for Humanity.
3 And today, there are a lot of people
4 living on that street that are
5 homeowners paying mortgages and taxes,
6 and whose kids have their own bedroom
7 in which to do their homework, and they
8 run in and out of each other's houses
9 with the doors unlocked. That's
10 progress. And that helps.

11 And one of the reasons I mentioned
12 that is because, intertwined in this
13 application is reference to
14 Washington's Headquarters, which is the
15 highlight of a visit to Newburgh. The
16 last time I checked, it drew about
17 22,000 people to the City of Newburgh
18 each year. And I'm mentioning that
19 tourism is going to be an integral
20 factor in the success of this operation
21 that's proposed here, seeking these
22 benefits.

23 I want to mention one fact that
24 probably has slipped by that the
25 developers need to pursue and the

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2 county needs to pursue, and that is
3 Storm King Arts Center. Those people
4 have their act together. If I told you
5 that it drew 20,000 people a year, you
6 might say, that sounds about right, or
7 maybe a little more than that. Well,
8 if I told you that, I'd be wrong.

9 Storm King Arts Center draws 200,000
10 people a year to Cornwall. And when I
11 talked to the operators of Storm King
12 Arts Center, what they tell me is,
13 people typically come there from afar,
14 for half a day, and then they want to
15 know where else to go. Well, the where
16 else could be Cornwall, which has some
17 limited advantages, but where they
18 really want to come to is Newburgh.
19 And we need to make that happen. They
20 have wonderful marketing techniques and
21 they're going to be able to take
22 advantage.

23 This is a good project. This is a
24 helpful project. This is a project
25 that should be approved.

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2 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

3 Thank you. Maureen Halahan.

4 MS. MAUREEN HALAHAN:

5 Chairman DuBois, City of Newburgh
6 IDA directors, thank you for the
7 opportunity to address this afternoon
8 regarding the Sims Foster Hospitality
9 application.

10 I, too, was born in the city. But
11 I've been working in the economic
12 development industry for 21 years, and
13 I say with confidence that this is
14 extraordinarily rare that a company of
15 this caliber takes an interest in a
16 city that is clawing its way back from
17 decades of extreme poverty, high crime,
18 and corruption. The city has suffered
19 with a bad reputation.

20 But now, there's you. And there's
21 us. There's a new group of leaders
22 that not only want to take care of our
23 social challenges and do what's right
24 by the citizens of Newburgh, we also
25 recognize the fact that businesses

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2 drive the city's economy, and without
3 it, poverty continues, and block by
4 block, we step over the rubble and the
5 lost opportunity.

6 Nothing reduces domestic violence,
7 drug addiction, alcoholism and crime
8 like a paying job. Nothing builds self
9 esteem better than opportunity to work
10 and support one's self and one's
11 family.

12 Sims Foster has an outstanding
13 reputation for turning things around,
14 creating beauty in properties that were
15 old. As leaders, we have to help them.
16 They can't take all the risk. They
17 can't afford to put in all the money
18 when the city is in such dire need of
19 companies like theirs to invest and
20 turn things around. So let's build a
21 foundation today. By welcoming this
22 company and being a part of their
23 success story, we have an opportunity
24 to partner with them and to buy in with
25 them. When they succeed, it paves the

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2 way for others to invest in our city.

3 There always has to be a first.

4 The first ones in take the highest

5 risk. In time, real estate, we hope,

6 in the City of Newburgh, will be at a

7 premium. There will be no reason to

8 have to beg businesses to invest in a

9 crumbling city. They'll want to come

10 here. That's how it works. First, we

11 must build it and offer incentives to

12 attract quality and opportunity, and

13 then it becomes so darned attractive

14 that others will want to follow on

15 their own. But it's the pioneers, the

16 risk-takers, the trailblazers, the

17 first ones to navigate the uncharted

18 waters that we have to rally behind and

19 empower.

20 Let's count the jobs. Let's count

21 the capital investment. When you do

22 this, you'll be part of our solution

23 here in the city, and we'll all be part

24 of the future of the City of Newburgh.

25 And we'll all be partners to Sims

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2 Foster. It's not them and us. It's
3 all of us.

4 So this is your job as the IDA. I
5 know you have an awesome responsibility
6 in that respect, so it's my job as an
7 economic developer to help make this
8 happen. Let's not let this go. Let's
9 do this together. It's a privilege to
10 work with you guys and I thank you for
11 this opportunity.

12 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

13 Thank you, Maureen. Carl Bonitz.

14 MR. CARL BONITZ:

15 Good afternoon. My name is Carl
16 Bonitz. I'm a resident of 95 Liberty
17 Street right around the corner. Thanks
18 for the opportunity to comment today.

19 As a new city resident but longtime
20 county resident, I'm excited to be here
21 to endorse a truly great project for
22 the City of Newburgh. Like probably
23 many of you in the room, I reviewed the
24 project's PILOT application, the
25 independent cost benefit analysis, and

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2 as someone who's been involved in the
3 City of Newburgh and the greater county
4 business community for over 25 years,
5 this is a total no-brainer scenario.
6 \$25 million investment. Significant
7 construction and permanent jobs.
8 Historic building preservation and
9 restoration for buildings that have sat
10 empty for quite some time. Boost to an
11 already blossoming tourist destination.
12 Sales tax, occupancy tax revenue, and
13 great new buildings that have
14 essentially never been on the tax rolls
15 to tax-revenue-producing properties.
16 Like I said, a total no-brainer. Thank
17 you.

18 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

19 Thank you. Thomas Dodd.

20 MR. THOMAS DODD:

21 So the last time I spoke here, I
22 forgot to take my mask off and nearly
23 passed out, so I won't make that
24 mistake.

25 It's nice to see so many people

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2 here who I assume are in support. I
3 certainly hope so. I am in support.

4 Briefly about me and my
5 contribution to the City of Newburgh
6 and what I've been doing here, my wife
7 and I have been investing heavily in
8 the City of Newburgh for the last six
9 years. We fell madly in love with the
10 city. We have completed five vacant
11 buildings that were in severe shape,
12 kind of like I'd never seen before.
13 And currently, we are -- we broke
14 ground over at the Liberty Street
15 School, which we call PS 6 Center for
16 Film and Television, and we also broke
17 ground at Weigant's Tavern on the other
18 side of town, which is a historically
19 significant building that I hope you
20 get a chance to drive by. Both these
21 projects, they're extremely impressive.

22 I am also the president of the
23 Newburgh Preservation Association. And
24 I identify myself as an artist, not a
25 developer. So I'll start with my role

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2 as the president of the NPA. I took on
3 that role because we were possibly
4 going to have to close the
5 organization, and I felt that it is so
6 incredibly important that we protect
7 one of the second largest historic
8 cities in New York State. That's a big
9 deal. And that is a huge attraction
10 for so many millions of people, not
11 just in the United States, not just in
12 New York, but worldwide. We have an
13 airport that seems to turn on and off
14 flights so often, like a yo-yo, that,
15 you know, we know that if we can get
16 things back on track here, that will be
17 an incredible opportunity to bring
18 people from all over the world. That,
19 again, is incredibly important.

20 There are three buildings here that
21 are falling apart, and this project
22 will save those buildings and put them
23 into new use. So I can't underestimate
24 how important that is.

25 As I hear our council contemplate

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2 tearing down historical buildings, it
3 is so important that you protect this
4 fabric. You cannot rebuild these
5 buildings from scraps anymore. Once
6 they're gone, they are gone. That is
7 it.

8 I had the luxury of going to the
9 Savannah College of Art and Design, and
10 I was part of a preservation that had
11 started there when I was a much younger
12 man. And it rubbed off. And I know
13 that Newburgh is capable of doing these
14 same things and protecting these
15 gorgeous, gorgeous buildings.

16 The historical tourism cannot be
17 underestimated as far as revenue
18 dollars, tax dollars. The restaurants
19 that are sprouting up along Broadway
20 and along Liberty and other streets,
21 hopefully, will benefit greatly from
22 that tourism. There is nothing better
23 than to go walk a city, experience its
24 historical draws, and then go and have
25 a beverage or have a meal. So all

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2 those things, you know, the entire
3 board of NPA is in support of this
4 project to preserve those buildings.

5 As far as my experience in
6 Newburgh, I fell in love with these
7 buildings and we invested heavily.
8 What I did not anticipate is that I was
9 going to be getting 300 to 800 percent
10 tax increases. That knocked the wind
11 out of us. And we have still made
12 progress despite COVID and other
13 hurdles that we've had to navigate.
14 There are things here that we were not
15 expecting, but the taxes has been one
16 of the largest burdens that we've had
17 to face.

18 There are so many other reasons
19 here for this project and the benefits
20 to the City of Newburgh. That
21 relationship with the college is not to
22 be underestimated. The colleges, we
23 want these college students here. We
24 want them to have jobs when they
25 graduate and we want them to stick

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2 around Newburgh. That relationship,
3 that real world experience, is
4 everything.

5 The community here, one of the main
6 things -- and I work with -- we hire
7 locally -- we work -- we've gotten to
8 know a lot of people in this community.
9 The one thing they need here are jobs,
10 and this project will obviously provide
11 those. But also, don't forget, when
12 the restaurants get busier and the bars
13 get busier and the stores get busier,
14 those will create jobs. So those don't
15 end up in the report. But working in
16 the film industry for the last 20
17 years, the byproducts of jobs of
18 operations like this, they're hard to
19 quantify, but I think everyone can
20 understand that they're real and they
21 will be significant.

22 The sales tax that's being
23 generated by this project, the room
24 tax, again, revenue that Newburgh needs
25 desperately, and it will have it.

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2 The other issue here is that this
3 project will support the film industry.
4 We see that film has been growing here
5 exponentially. It will continue. It's
6 still in the early phases. Our project
7 will add to that. But people need a
8 place to stay. They need a place for
9 their talent to stay. And once people
10 come here to shoot and to stay the
11 night, like my wife and I, they may buy
12 a building or two buildings. They may
13 open a business. They will want to
14 invest here. It is hard to drive
15 through these streets and not fall
16 deeply in love and want to be part of
17 this community.

18 I see in the news a lot of the
19 surrounding cities and towns
20 prospering. And I sometimes feel like,
21 we have a lot of good news coming out
22 of Newburgh, but I sometimes feel like,
23 hey, what's going on? Why do I feel
24 sometimes it's two steps forward and
25 one step back? The answer to that, and

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2 we've experienced it ourselves, are the
3 taxes. And I've talked to the mayor
4 and I've talked to councilmembers.
5 I've talked to Skoufis over there. It
6 is burdensome. And the only way to
7 change that is to attract more
8 businesses and support those
9 businesses. The businesses here need
10 the city's support.

11 That's it. I appreciate everyone's
12 time, and I hope that you guys will
13 approve this project. I don't think
14 what they're asking is unreasonable at
15 all. And the benefits in revenue and
16 in taxes and in jobs is very large.
17 Even if they're only half right with
18 some of these projections, it's still a
19 win for Newburgh. Thank you very much.

20 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

21 Thank you. Councilman Sklarz.

22 COUNCILMEMBER ROBERT SKLARZ:

23 Good afternoon. I'll be very
24 brief. I just want to thank the
25 Fosters for the hospitality they've

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2 shown. They gave us a tour back in the
3 early days of the summer. It's a very
4 exciting program, a very exciting
5 project that will do great things for
6 Newburgh.

7 My issue is -- I don't have much to
8 say today because I learned about this
9 meeting a couple hours ago. There is
10 certainly a breakdown in communications
11 somewhere along the lines between the
12 IDA and the city council. I can't talk
13 about the merits of your request
14 because I don't know what the request
15 is. I haven't seen the details. So if
16 information was passed to the city
17 manager or to the mayor's office, it
18 hasn't made it out to the Third Ward
19 for us to review, or any of our
20 councilmembers, to my knowledge.
21 There's a breakdown somewhere. I'm not
22 really sure where it is.

23 But it's an exciting project and I
24 wish you well.

25 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

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2 Thank you, Councilman. I will
3 state for the record that notice of the
4 meeting was hand-delivered to the
5 mayor's office on October 21st.

6 Brian Wrye, if you'd like to speak.

7 MR. BRIAN WRYE:

8 Hello. I live across the river, so
9 I'm not going to presume to tell you
10 anything about how to conduct business
11 over here, other than I come and
12 conduct business a great deal of the
13 time with business and governmental
14 entities.

15 And I just want to offer one
16 observation. I know that a lot of
17 people have made great points. This is
18 a diamond in the rough. When I first
19 moved to Fishkill, Beacon was crack
20 city. Political leadership somehow met
21 DIA Arts Center, and the rest exploded.
22 So I'm just hoping that this will turn
23 into your DIA. Thank you.

24 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

25 Thank you. Senator Skoufis.

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2 SENATOR JAMES SKOUFIS:

3 Thanks very much, Chairman. Thank
4 you, Board.

5 I had and still have the framework
6 of my remarks in my head, prepared
7 since, I don't know, 10 a.m., 10:30
8 a.m., which is also when I found out
9 about this meeting, and I'll get to
10 those remarks.

11 But first, I am outraged, my blood
12 is boiling at what some -- a couple of
13 individuals -- said at this hearing,
14 notably, Maureen Halahan. She referred
15 to the City of Newburgh as a city
16 that's crumbling; suggested that this
17 city's riddled with alcoholism and
18 drugs, and all sorts of vices and
19 problems. We should be blessed that
20 anyone would come to the City of
21 Newburgh and grace us with their
22 presence. How dare you.

23 This is a good project. I look out
24 at those buildings every single day
25 from my window. I'm right across the

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2 street. There's nothing I would like
3 more than to see those buildings filled
4 with activity and energy and economic
5 development. It's a good project, and
6 I've communicated that to all the
7 stakeholders here who I've spoken with.

8 The issue is the largess of the
9 abatements that are being sought. May
10 I first make a remark that I know how
11 these hearings work. I've been doing
12 this for nine years in the state
13 legislature. I've been to IDA
14 hearings. I've commented -- and some
15 of the folks in this room know full
16 well I've commented on many. It's rare
17 that I'll concede. I think a PILOT for
18 this project even makes some sense.
19 I'm not opposed to a PILOT out of hand;
20 I'm opposed to this PILOT and this
21 PILOT application. But I know how
22 these hearings work. You have a couple
23 people in this room, Maureen Halahan,
24 Bill Fioravanti, maybe there's one or
25 two others, who rally the troops, send

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2 out emails, text messages, come to this
3 hearing, show some support. That's how
4 I found out about this hearing. I got
5 two text messages this morning from
6 people telling me they were encouraged
7 to come to this hearing at one o'clock
8 in City Hall. And they asked me, can I
9 have a few minutes of your time? I
10 don't know anything about the
11 incentives I'm being asked to talk
12 about. Some of the folks who spoke
13 today, I have deep respect for and
14 consider friends. I don't question
15 their motives. But that is what
16 happens at these hearings. They are
17 not representative of the residents of
18 this city.

19 The City of Newburgh is two-thirds
20 non-white. How many non-white people
21 do you have here? We got a couple
22 councilmembers, one or two others,
23 maybe. Walk up and down any of these
24 streets. Ask residents of this city.
25 Yes, it's a great project. Do you

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2 support giving 12 years of property tax
3 breaks to that project? The taxpayers
4 of this city, the renters who pay to
5 their landlords money that pays the
6 property taxes of this city, ask them
7 that question. Not just the people in
8 this room. Ask them if they support
9 six years of a 90-percent abatement.
10 That is unheard of. First six years, a
11 90-percent property tax abatement is
12 being proposed. Ask them if they
13 support that, not just the people in
14 this room.

15 I bet a lot of people who were
16 asked to come here don't even know that
17 this project is already heavily
18 subsidized, or as of rights is entitled
19 to subsidies. Right off the bat, \$2.3
20 million in savings from what Orange
21 County paid for these three buildings.
22 A steal. Yes, of course, there's got
23 to be significant work that goes on in
24 these buildings. \$2.3 million off of
25 what Orange County paid for them, and

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2 that was seven years ago. Property
3 values have only gone up since then.

4 The Applicant is looking for \$2.5
5 million from the state for the
6 consolidated funding application
7 process. I've had enough experience to
8 know they will likely get all or most
9 of that request. \$2.5 million -- 2.3,
10 2.5. We're up to 4.8. As a right,
11 they can walk downstairs and fill out a
12 45B application. It's a one- or
13 two-page form. Automatic property tax
14 breaks. They don't have to come to the
15 IDA. \$2.6 million. \$7.4 million
16 without a dime coming from the IDA. I
17 guarantee you most of the folks who've
18 spoken in support don't even know about
19 that.

20 I strongly urge this IDA Board to
21 continue doing their due diligence and
22 to make sure you do what any IDA is
23 tasked to do, and that is not just
24 issue a blank check to anyone that
25 walks through your doors, but to

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2 balance the interest of economic
3 development with the interest of your
4 taxpayers. This application is
5 imbalanced.

6 The Applicant has communicated to
7 me over a number of conversations
8 there's significant risk. That's why
9 we need IDA benefits. There's
10 significant risk with this project.
11 The hypothetical of guests -- hotel
12 guests being shot at was brought up
13 once. And who's going to come to my
14 hotel if one of my guests gets shot in
15 the City of Newburgh?

16 Maureen Halahan talks about the bad
17 reputation that the City of Newburgh
18 has. That bad reputation is only
19 perpetrated by comments like that that
20 are false. This is one of the most
21 revitalized neighborhoods in the entire
22 City of Newburgh. It's one of the
23 safest, if not the safest, neighborhood
24 in the entire City of Newburgh.

25 I agree with something that Paul

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2 Ernenwein said, strongly. Because of
3 the nature of this project, you're
4 going to have people from all over the
5 state, the country, and the world
6 coming to stay at these properties.
7 Those rooms are going to be booked
8 faster than you can snap a finger.
9 There are 10, 12 hotels in the Town of
10 Newburgh. They all do well. You're
11 telling me the first and the one hotel
12 in the City of Newburgh, that's going
13 to be as beautiful as this project,
14 with as many tourists coming to the
15 City of Newburgh, that this is somehow
16 a risky business proposition? Give me
17 a break. This project will make big
18 bucks when it's open. And God bless
19 it. I hope you do. I want it to be
20 successful. But it should not come on
21 the backs, unnecessarily, of local
22 taxpayers.

23 So I hope this IDA Board continues
24 to do your due diligence and finds an
25 outcome here that is far more balanced

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2 than the one that is before you in this
3 application. The City of Newburgh's
4 taxpayers and residents will thank you
5 for that. And I think it would send a
6 strong signal that, yes, you're
7 fair-minded, you want business in this
8 community, you want smart economic
9 development and jobs in this community,
10 but the taxpayers come first.

11 You approve a 12-year PILOT at a
12 time when investment -- talk about, you
13 know, who's coming to the City of
14 Newburgh? There is untold investment
15 happening right now in the City of
16 Newburgh, and the vast majority of it
17 is not pursuing PILOTS. So send the
18 signal, yes, we're fair-minded, yes, we
19 even think you could use a little extra
20 help on top of the millions you're
21 already getting to do this project, but
22 12 years of what's being proposed is
23 outrageously unacceptable and
24 unreasonable.

25 Thank you for your consideration.

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2 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

3 Thank you. I do want to
4 particularly thank you for recognizing
5 that we're doing our due diligence. We
6 will continue to do that.

7 Councilwoman Mejia.

8 COUNCILMEMBER KAREN MEJIA:

9 Hey guys, buenas tardes. I'm not
10 used to not having a three-minute
11 timer, so this could be fun.

12 One, I just wanted to thank the
13 Chairman and the rest of the Board for
14 the service that you do for the
15 community, and start off by saying
16 that, damn, why did I have to follow
17 Senator Skoufis.

18 I will say that his -- the
19 sentiments that he shared, I want to
20 echo on the process of the missteps
21 around communication about it. I've
22 spoken to some of the Board members
23 about the want and the need for a
24 partnership, a collaboration between
25 your body and the city council body,

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2 so -- and I feel that that has not
3 occurred and it needs to get back going
4 forward.

5 The other thing would be, in terms
6 of scheduling the public hearing, I
7 hope that the Board will consider
8 having additional public hearings at a
9 different time than a 1 p.m. time so
10 that you can partner with the council
11 body to get the word out to get other
12 folks to come out to the public hearing
13 aspect of it. I think it does a
14 disservice to the project -- which is
15 great. It's a great project. I don't
16 believe you have a debate about that.
17 I think the details -- right, as a
18 councilmember, I'm still looking and
19 searching for some of those additional
20 details, where we've had conversations
21 about.

22 I will be following up with the
23 city manager's office and the mayor's
24 office about putting structures in
25 place, because the mayor's one entity,

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2 the council body is another, and the
3 city manager is another, and somewhere
4 in between there, none of us got
5 notified. I found out about it this
6 morning as well, along with everybody
7 else. So I think it does a disservice
8 to the project not to have those lines
9 of communication open, not to be
10 transparent about it. This is coming
11 from the impact of -- you know, a lot
12 of you guys have come out to some of
13 our council meetings and speak from
14 that side of the mic about the want to
15 communicate, the want for transparency,
16 and the want for sharing information.
17 It's always interesting that, now that
18 you guys are on this side of the mic
19 and of the table, you have an
20 opportunity to impact that and model
21 that, and I would expect more of that
22 modeling to take place.

23 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

24 Councilwoman, we did hand-deliver
25 notice to the mayor's office. And I

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2 understand that the mayor is different
3 than the city council, but -- and your
4 comments are well taken, and I'm
5 certainly willing to do something
6 different in the future, but I don't
7 think you can blame us for thinking
8 that was sufficient to hand-deliver it
9 to the representative of the body.

10 COUNCILMEMBER KAREN MEJIA:

11 Right, so let me just be clear on
12 my comments. My comments are for a
13 collaboration, right, so at a public
14 hearing, we have additional members of
15 the public present.

16 But, you know, to what Senator
17 Skoufis stated, a lot of these things
18 are already in the works. I do
19 appreciate you guys continuing to do
20 your due diligence. I look forward to
21 being able to digest those numbers,
22 right, the 12 years and the 90 percent.
23 And I'll echo that the success of your
24 project -- it should be wonderful.

25 As the representative for Ward One,

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2 where this project is taking place, we
3 had a great walk-through. I was very
4 candid with you about the project
5 itself, like yes, please. It should be
6 successful, and I think there's
7 commitment from everybody here that we
8 want to make it successful, but it has
9 to be collaborative and it has to
10 involve the community as well. And I
11 think when we don't have transparency
12 in the process, when we don't have
13 communication, it does a disservice to
14 the message that's trying to get out,
15 that I know you guys all want to
16 fulfill.

17 So, like I said, I'm used to a
18 three-minute thing. There's no time
19 limit, but I won't belabor the process
20 any further, just that I hope that this
21 is a misstep that can get rectified
22 going forward.

23 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

24 Thank you, Councilwoman. Hannah
25 Brooks.

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2 MS. HANNAH BROOKS:

3 Hello, everybody. So I think I
4 know every single person that spoke
5 before, and that, I think, is
6 important, because I think people are
7 the most important.

8 I'll be very brief. I do disagree
9 with some of my friends here, because I
10 think if you want to know about what's
11 happening, you make it your business to
12 know what's happening. Even if you
13 missed the notice on October 21st,
14 certainly, there were many, many other
15 opportunities to find out that there
16 was a project in the works and there
17 were multiple meetings and upcoming
18 meetings. So I do have to respectfully
19 disagree with those comments.

20 I also think that the answer here
21 lies somewhere in the middle. We need
22 balance. I think that it's extreme to
23 say that this is the first project
24 that's taking a risk in Newburgh. Many
25 people in the short term have brought

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2 us to this point and have taken on many
3 financial and emotional risks. And
4 around the corner from here, probably
5 many of you may know, that George
6 Washington took a risk to turn down the
7 monarchy right around the corner. This
8 is the birthplace of America, right
9 here in Newburgh.

10 I was not born here in Newburgh. I
11 was a convert, like so many others here
12 in the room, and fell in love. This is
13 a very special place. We need to treat
14 it with care. And it's not just the
15 architecture of the buildings, the fact
16 that it's the second biggest historic
17 district in the state. It's because of
18 the people. The people. We need to
19 treat them with care, the people who
20 were born here, who have a stake in
21 this place, the people who come here
22 and have invested their hearts and
23 their souls in this place. And I was
24 one of them. I don't want to belabor
25 that.

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2 I had to recently leave. I think
3 the taxes are truly a burden that has
4 pushed out people who wanted to make a
5 difference. And I think it's very
6 painful to have to say that. I think
7 whenever we bring in -- whenever a
8 PILOT is asked for, a PILOT is
9 somewhere between a gift and an
10 investment, and I think we need this
11 investment. These properties right now
12 are not contributing anything, so we
13 can begin with a PILOT and then move
14 on. We need to stabilize the
15 assessments, and the developer asked
16 for that, saying they need to know what
17 the bill will be next year. Many
18 homeowners in this city don't. There
19 have been -- again, I had a 400-percent
20 property tax increase since I've been
21 here. You can't budget like that. If
22 a developer needs it, how much more so
23 the individuals who live here, the
24 homeowners and the renters who live
25 here?

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2 And if we fund sustainable
3 businesses that will ultimately
4 contribute to the tax rolls, I think
5 that will be, in the long term, the way
6 we need to go. Too many short-term
7 decisions have gotten us in a very
8 difficult place here. So I just want
9 to add my support for providing what's
10 needed for this project. Thank you.

11 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

12 Thank you. Sean Ward.

13 MR. SEAN WARD:

14 Thank you. So I'm going to start
15 with that I am a resident of Newburgh.
16 I have been my whole life. I played
17 baseball at Delano Hitch Stadium
18 throughout my whole youth. I would
19 love to see my kids play there someday.

20 I'm here on behalf of Advance
21 Testing. We are a member of the local
22 community that started in Newburgh, and
23 over the past 37 years, we've observed
24 many changes. We want to see more
25 positive change come to the region, as

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2 well as the City of Newburgh.

3 Foster Supply is a community
4 focused group. They've proven and
5 provided high quality projects that
6 become staples of the community they
7 join, allowing them to further engage
8 and support the areas they have
9 businesses in.

10 The Grand Street project will bring
11 spending from outside the City of
12 Newburgh, helping bolster the local
13 economy, growing the existing
14 businesses, as well as encouraging
15 others to join in the ongoing
16 revitalization of the city.
17 Additionally, it will deliver
18 meaningful employment opportunities,
19 which are much needed, as well as sales
20 and tax revenue.

21 The project as demonstrated has
22 applied not just for a PILOT, but this
23 PILOT, in order to proceed. The IDA's
24 approval of the requested agreement
25 will allow this important and impactful

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2 project to move forward. We fully
3 support the project and encourage the
4 IDA to approve the requested PILOT
5 agreement, allowing this to be the
6 Newburgh to realize the many benefits
7 that it represents. Thank you.

8 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

9 Thank you. Bill Fioravanti.

10 MR. BILL FIORAVANTI:

11 Thanks very much. My name is Bill
12 Fioravanti. I live at 262 Montgomery
13 Street in the City of Newburgh. I am
14 also the Director of Economic
15 Development for Orange County, and soon
16 to be the Director of the Orange County
17 IDA. Full disclosure, again, I work
18 for the county, and the county is
19 selling these buildings to Foster
20 Supply Hospitality, but anyone that
21 knows me, in this room or otherwise,
22 knows it has little to nothing to do
23 with my motivation here. I'm just
24 passionate about this project.

25 I have been emotional also about

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2 this project, especially -- I've been
3 working on this for over two years.
4 And to see -- and I've seen it over
5 several weeks and months. To see the
6 Fosters being pitted, really seen as
7 someone who's trying to come in here
8 and take advantage of the city -- and
9 I've heard that. This is a project for
10 real Newburgh people. These aren't
11 real jobs. They're trying to rape the
12 city. I am incredibly emotional about
13 that, because it's just plain wrong.

14 People in my line of work use the
15 words game-changer and transformative.
16 We use that all the time. We overuse
17 it. In this case, it is absolutely the
18 case. I know we're talking about what
19 happens here, and absolutely, I'm very
20 proud of the little piece that I play
21 and so many of us here, and what we've
22 done to turn the city around in the
23 direction we're going, but let's not
24 get carried away. A lot of the
25 investment we're seeing is homes being

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2 purchased by, say, people from
3 Brooklyn, fixing them up. We're not
4 seeing very much private development
5 and do-it-yourself remodelers. We're
6 just starting to see it.

7 The Baxter project, Wireworks,
8 that's one of the first projects we've
9 had where it's private investment,
10 commercial investment in the city.
11 Before that, the assessor told me we
12 had -- in the last 15 years, the new
13 construction projects we were having in
14 the city, commercial, were a Dunkin
15 Donuts and a gas station. That's all
16 we've had here, so let's not get
17 carried away.

18 And by the way, where are all the
19 hotels? If the market is so great and
20 everyone's dying to build a hotel, who
21 else is doing it? I don't know of any
22 others. Maybe I'm missing it. And by
23 the way, I honed in on the RFP, the
24 request for proposals, for the county
25 when we put this out last year. We got

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2 Foster Supply's bid and one other. One
3 other from Kearney Development Group,
4 who does great work here in the Mid
5 Hudson, mostly in affordable housing.
6 I'm all for it. I absolutely believe
7 we need the balance, commercial
8 development, bringing in jobs, new
9 money, new investment, outsiders --
10 believe it or not, outsiders. We can't
11 do it on our own. We have to balance
12 that with affordable housing, making
13 sure that the people who have been here
14 can stay here.

15 So I co-chair the mayor's Strategic
16 Economic Development Advisory
17 Committee: SEDAC. You may have heard
18 of it. That's a lot of where our work
19 is. Trust me, there are other members
20 here in the room of that committee, and
21 we wrestle and struggle all the time to
22 maintain that balance. It's not easy,
23 what we do. We absolutely believe in
24 that.

25 Let's just talk about the benefits

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2 here. First of all, jobs. We all know
3 we need jobs. And I talk to people in
4 the city all the time. Hey, we have
5 help. Maureen, myself, others in the
6 Economic Development, we've helped
7 bring in plenty of jobs outside
8 Newburgh. Just here in the town. If
9 we can master the transportation, we
10 can get them there. We don't have a
11 lot of job creators right here. I
12 think when they applied, they said 61
13 jobs. I know that when it really comes
14 to full fruition, this project, it can
15 be closer to 80 to 100 jobs, right
16 downtown where people can get to. Also
17 construction jobs; 110 construction
18 jobs.

19 We also brokered a connection with
20 SUNY Orange, which -- I love the
21 college, I love of the president --
22 they're not doing that great here.
23 Enrollment is down. We need it to be
24 strengthened. Right away, we brought
25 Foster Supply Hospitality to SUNY

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2 Orange, and they're working on a
3 hospitality avenue to help create a
4 pipeline of workers, qualified, trained
5 workers for hospitality jobs at their
6 site and elsewhere in Orange County.
7 It's critically important and could
8 help give a real boost to the college.

9 How about taxes? Just looking at
10 your own independent cost benefit
11 analysis done by somebody else not tied
12 to any of us, \$9.2 million in taxes to
13 be generated between property, sales
14 taxes, and occupancy, otherwise known
15 as bed tax.

16 They're going to bring, they
17 estimate, 25,000 visitors to Newburgh.
18 They're going to bring them here. If
19 you know anything about what they do in
20 Sullivan County, they take great pride
21 in sourcing locally -- food, soaps,
22 whatever it might be -- in their hotel,
23 and they curate the experience for
24 their guests all around the locality
25 there. And they're going to do that

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2 here in Newburgh. It's not going to be
3 an island that stands among itself.
4 There are going to be 25,000 people
5 that discover the rest of Newburgh with
6 their encouragement. Incredibly
7 important.

8 And it's also going to spur
9 development, more private investment
10 development around the city. I happen
11 to be -- my agenda, I'm very open about
12 it, is to help redevelop the hillside
13 here. We have a chasm between what's
14 going on on the waterfront and what's
15 happening here. We have that big chasm
16 in between. I want to see it
17 redeveloped. Yeah, I want to see mixed
18 use. I want to see stores, commercial.
19 I want to see mixed income, like what
20 we're trying to do everywhere. I do
21 want to recruit a lot of property tax
22 revenue that we're missing down there.
23 This can help spur that. It's right
24 around the corner. Incredibly vital
25 there.

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2 A few more things for me are in the
3 independent cost benefit analysis.
4 \$9.6 million in construction. \$3.3
5 dollars in job wages, permanent job
6 wages. Again, \$9.2 million in taxes.
7 \$22 million in economic benefit. All
8 this for you phasing in the owner's
9 property taxes.

10 We all know it. If you live here
11 in Newburgh, you know it. If you're a
12 business owner, you know it. Ad
13 nauseam, you hear it all the time in
14 city council. How many times do you
15 have to hear it? And yes, are we going
16 to give them a break to come here?
17 Yes. And then when they're done with
18 the PILOT in 12 short years, they're
19 paying full taxes. It will probably be
20 one of the highest taxpaying parcels in
21 the city, just out of nothing. People
22 like to talk about PILOTS and say,
23 yeah, they get the PILOT, then it's up,
24 the tax break is over, then they leave.
25 It's never happened here. Never in

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2 Orange County. Never. Yes, we have
3 advantages. It's a great place to be.

4 Again, this is for the benefit of a
5 phase-in on property taxes and being
6 exempted from sales tax on building
7 materials and equipment, and saving on
8 mortgage recording tax. That's what
9 we're giving them. Why do we give the
10 IDA incentives? Yes, it's a risk. I
11 don't want to hear from anyone that
12 says it's not a risk. Again, where are
13 the rest of the hotels? Where is the
14 rest of the hospitality investment
15 going up in downtown Newburgh during
16 the pandemic? I'm not seeing it. I'm
17 not hearing about any of it. And if
18 you know some people, call me, because
19 that's what I'm here to do. I want
20 competition for the Fosters. Believe
21 me, I certainly do.

22 Okay. A \$25 million hospitality
23 investor, right here, right now. By
24 the way, these buildings better be
25 paying full taxes right off the bat.

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2 Those three buildings are a combined
3 age of 321 years old. They've been
4 paying taxes -- not been generating
5 taxes for more than 280 years. And now
6 you say, hey, someone comes and makes a
7 \$25 million investment, you've got to
8 be paying your full share right off the
9 bat, even if it means you can't be
10 sustainable. Look, I'm not doing this
11 to make Sims Foster rich or make him
12 profitable, but if his hotel's not
13 profitable, it's not sticking around.
14 It's not going to generate taxes. It's
15 not going to create jobs. Simply put.

16 And the taxes, by the way, on your
17 own estimate show \$800,000 a year out
18 of the gate. And that's one of the
19 highest taxpaying parcels here, because
20 we have so many other institutions,
21 vital ones -- hospitals, colleges --
22 that don't pay anything. So this will
23 be one of the highest taxpayers very
24 shortly, for sure.

25 I just want to be clear. This is

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2 not corporate welfare. This isn't some
3 big megacorporation that's coming here.
4 This is a husband and wife and another
5 partner trying to make this happen here
6 in Orange County. And again, I resent,
7 on their behalf, the fact that they're
8 being pictured as people who are really
9 trying to take advantage of the city.

10 And the last thing is the reason
11 for these incentives: Because they are
12 needed. I happen to know. There's a
13 very, very high likelihood that the
14 close to \$20-million loan they need for
15 this project won't happen unless
16 there's something done with the owner's
17 taxes here. We need to have it. And
18 if they don't get a loan, guess what,
19 the project doesn't happen. These
20 incentives are very simply here for one
21 reason: In order to make the project
22 happen.

23 We talk about a lot of great
24 things, a lot of dreams, but they don't
25 all come to fruition. Let's not miss

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2 this opportunity for all of us, for us
3 as taxpayers, for all the folks that
4 aren't here being represented who can
5 work in this location here, and what it
6 will do for all the businesses in the
7 general area. This is an unbelievable,
8 once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us.
9 Maybe in ten years, there will be other
10 opportunities that aren't once in a
11 lifetime, but these folks are the
12 pioneers. We need to get it started.
13 Let's not miss this opportunity
14 together. I encourage you to approve
15 these benefits. Thanks so much.

16 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

17 Johanna Yaun.

18 MS. JOHANNA YAUN:

19 Good afternoon. I wasn't going to
20 go into my whole personal journey, but
21 everybody else has been. So I am a
22 lifelong resident of Newburgh, born and
23 raised here. I have lived as a renter
24 in every ward of this city at some
25 point in my life. And in 2018, I

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2 bought my first home, which was a
3 deteriorated historic house, falling
4 apart. Jeff mentioned some of the
5 unpleasant nicknames of some of the
6 neighborhoods. My house was known as
7 the keg house. To anybody who grew up
8 here, you all know it. It's where
9 there were wild parties and people
10 trashed the place. So I moved in 2018,
11 I've invested lots of resources, and
12 I've worked with my own hands to
13 restore this house.

14 But unfortunately, every year, my
15 taxes go up 15 percent. There's a
16 long, complicated story I could talk to
17 you about later, but essentially, what
18 they do is they assess it at 100
19 percent market value, and so they get
20 around these tax caps and such. In
21 reality, my taxes have gone up
22 15 percent each year. There's a limit.
23 Of course, my salary doesn't go up that
24 high. There's a limit to the point
25 where I won't be able to afford my

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2 home. I'm fighting very hard for the
3 creation and development of a better
4 economic base so that I won't see those
5 increases and won't lose my home.

6 It's also 259 feet away from the
7 house I grew up in, so I'm not only
8 living in my home city or my home ward,
9 but I'm living on my home street and I
10 don't want to leave.

11 So I am also, in addition to being
12 a resident here, I am also the Orange
13 County Historian. I teach historic
14 preservation at SUNY Westchester. So
15 what I've done today is I've gotten
16 some of the slides from my teaching for
17 my course that I teach in historic
18 preservation, and I've attached them
19 for this group to look at. I encourage
20 them to take a look at the data, and I
21 won't go through every bit of it here,
22 but I can quote a few things here. One
23 statistic is that, for every dollar
24 that's invested in historic
25 preservation in our local adaptive

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2 reuse projects, \$7 is returned in tax
3 revenue. So investment in adaptive
4 reuse is an investment that's going to
5 help our community. I'll skip some of
6 this. You can look at it on your own.

7 There's a big historic tourism
8 industry here in Newburgh.

9 Washington's Headquarters, not only do
10 they bring 22,000 people, like Jeff
11 mentioned, but they are the largest
12 group of visitors of any of the New
13 York State historic sites. So there's
14 the Office of Parks and Recreation in
15 New York. They talk about 35 historic
16 sites around the State of New York, and
17 Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh
18 is the most popular of those sites.

19 And I wasn't going to go through
20 this either, but I should mention it.
21 I got my start in history as a tour
22 guide at Washington's Headquarters when
23 I was 19 years old. I knocked on the
24 door, I needed a job, and I asked if
25 there were any jobs available. And

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2 lucky for me, they were able to
3 cultivate my interest and eventually
4 offer me a position as a tour guide.
5 So I worked seven years there at
6 Washington's Headquarters, and then two
7 years at the Crawford House Museum in
8 Newburgh.

9 There are not many of my friends,
10 people that I went to school with, who
11 can say that they've worked in the
12 city. Most of them get in the car --
13 if they've even been able to stay here,
14 they get in their car and they drive
15 somewhere else. They drive to
16 Westchester or Poughkeepsie or
17 Middletown or Goshen in order to work.
18 It takes even a car. It takes some
19 connections to be able to do that. The
20 fact that I was able to knock on a door
21 in my home community and say I need a
22 job, and then be given an opportunity
23 that has led to an entire career in
24 preservation, it's a blessing that I
25 never want to diminish. It was so

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2 important to me in my life. I want
3 more people in Newburgh to have that
4 opportunity.

5 I want them to be able to work in
6 historic preservation, adaptive reuse.
7 Some people like to do things hands-on.
8 I teach at Westchester how to fix
9 buildings. I want people to have those
10 skills here in Newburgh. And the
11 industry of adaptive reuse,
12 hospitality, these are industries where
13 there can be very good jobs and careers
14 for other young people like me who
15 wouldn't have had those opportunities
16 otherwise.

17 So I just want to leave you with
18 one thought, and that is that, this
19 year, 2021, is the 50th anniversary of
20 urban renewal. From 1971 to 1973,
21 1,300 buildings were torn down behind
22 us. You can look out the window and
23 see the scar that is still there from
24 that disastrous project. And many
25 might not know, because you don't study

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2 these things like I do, but in the
3 1970s when the PILOT program was
4 created, it was created to counter, to
5 rectify the disaster of urban renewal.
6 So here in Newburgh, where we have been
7 afflicted by the loss of that entire
8 district that used to pay taxes into
9 our city coffers, and that is now still
10 suffering 50 years later, this PILOT
11 program is for us. It is for us to
12 take advantage of, to get investors to
13 come and put jobs here.

14 And before I leave, I also would
15 like to say that I had the great honor
16 of being able to open the time capsule
17 at the Masonic Temple a couple of years
18 ago. I did it with a group of Masonic
19 members, people who were very sad to
20 have been displaced from this city and
21 the loss of their building. But they
22 opened the time capsule, and I have
23 those items with me today. They are in
24 a box on the chair. And when this
25 meeting is over, anybody who would like

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2 to stay can take a look at some of the
3 artifacts that came from the Masonic
4 Temple. I'd be happy to talk about the
5 history of the building. Thank you.

6 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

7 Thank you, Johanna. Clark Newman.

8 MR. CLARK NEWMAN:

9 I'm an ardent supporter of this
10 project. It stings every time I hear
11 negative comments about the City of
12 Newburgh that I love dearly. It stings
13 a lot. And there's been some great
14 progress, some really, really great
15 progress, but if we want to really -- I
16 hate to use this word -- accelerate or
17 set this process on fire and bring more
18 great development and projects after
19 this one, we get this going right here,
20 and things will get going. It's a
21 phenomenal opportunity. This is a gift
22 we can't walk away from. I pray you
23 make it happen. I'm pulling for you.

24 Thank you for listening. I
25 appreciate it.

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2 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

3 Thank you. Assemblyman Jonathan
4 Jacobson.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN JONATHAN JACOBSON:

6 Well, as you know, I had an office
7 across the street from the project. I
8 used to be on the city council here,
9 and I'm a resident of the City of
10 Newburgh.

11 Probably, if I was smart
12 politically, I wouldn't even say
13 anything here today. I would tell you
14 I had another event to go to, which I
15 did, which I cut short.

16 First, I don't think anybody's here
17 in bad faith. I think everybody here
18 believes what they believe, and we go
19 from there.

20 Secondly, I'm in favor of
21 development. I write a lot of letters.
22 I try to help people. I've been a big
23 supporter of the studio project, the
24 renovation of Liberty Street School.

25 So the question is here, does this

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2 PILOT make sense for the, obviously,
3 the developer, and the City of Newburgh
4 and the school district, which will be
5 affected? The school district will be
6 affected as well.

7 So when this project was originally
8 pitched to the county, at least
9 publicly, the pitch was, well, since
10 the community college won't be here,
11 this project will pay taxes. There was
12 no mention of this sort of PILOT at the
13 time. And there's no doubt that the
14 city needs more tax revenues. Of
15 course we need more tax revenues. But
16 does it make sense for the first six
17 years for this project to pay almost no
18 additional taxes? So that has to be
19 considered.

20 I do think that it's -- well, what
21 should happen now is that the IDA Board
22 should take all the comments into
23 consideration and have some meetings
24 with the city council, the manager, the
25 comptroller. Go over that. And also

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2 have a discussion with the school
3 district board. I think that would
4 make sense, because they're going to be
5 affected. And I know you don't have to
6 do that. You can just go ahead, make
7 your decisions and wake up the next day
8 and find out what you have or don't
9 have. But I would hope that you do
10 that.

11 You know, whether this project
12 makes economic sense, that's not really
13 for me to comment on. You know, do you
14 think a boutique hotel at 3-, \$400 a
15 night -- because that's what's in the
16 numbers that's being proposed. I don't
17 know if that's realistic. I mean,
18 maybe. I don't know if that's the best
19 place for a hotel. I'd rather see a
20 hotel and convention center on the
21 waterfront. That's my dream. But
22 that's not the decision here. It's not
23 what's a better project, it's another
24 project.

25 So the question is, does this PILOT

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2 make sense? If any developer says,
3 without this PILOT, the project won't
4 survive, then you really have to look
5 at the project and see if the numbers
6 make sense. So that's something that
7 you should consider. And you want to
8 make sure -- I want it to succeed. I
9 do not want to see this project fail in
10 year seven, and then all these rooms
11 are converted to a homeless shelter or
12 something of the sort. I don't want
13 that. I want it to thrive. I don't
14 want it to fail, and then it goes to a
15 not-for-profit, a homeless shelter,
16 something like that. That doesn't help
17 me. So I do want it to work. I want
18 it to make sense.

19 I think at this point, you should
20 reconsider the numbers, sit down with
21 the City of Newburgh and the school
22 district, let them know how they're
23 going to be impacted. There's still
24 going to be additional cost to the city
25 that they're going to need, which is

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2 fine. And I really hope it would work.

3 I hope that we do things in the
4 downtown. And the only way you have a
5 successful downtown is you have to have
6 a reason to come downtown. And that's
7 the kind of thing that I hope will
8 happen in the City of Newburgh, because
9 if you a have successful downtown or
10 reasons to come there, then maybe
11 people will go to the hotel.

12 So without repeating what others
13 have said, I think that the project has
14 a lot of worthy goals, and hopefully,
15 will be successful. But I think that
16 you should reconsider the numbers and
17 sit down with the city and the school
18 district and other people, have another
19 public hearing in the evening like we
20 do for the city council. And as you
21 know, that gets a lot of attendance and
22 a lot of people speaking. That's what
23 government's about.

24 I thank you. If you want to
25 discuss this with me, you know where I

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2 am. Thank you.

3 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

4 Thank you, Assemblyman. Gabriel
5 Berlin.

6 MR. GABRIEL BERLIN:

7 Hello, everyone. Thank you for
8 having this hearing. Thank you for
9 letting all of us speak.

10 My name is Gabriel Berlin. I live
11 in the City of Newburgh. I am a triple
12 threat: I am a taxpayer, a homeowner,
13 and a small business owner. I'm the
14 thing everybody talks about.

15 It's interesting to hear people
16 speaking in the past tense and future
17 tense about Newburgh. I moved here
18 because of how Newburgh is now. I
19 don't want Newburgh to change. It can
20 improve, it's going to get better, but
21 I'm not looking for Newburgh to change.
22 I'm especially put off by people who
23 use words like pioneer or settlers.
24 There's some real bad history with
25 that, both a long time ago and

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2 recently. And people need to come to
3 Newburgh to be a part of the Newburgh
4 that exists. If one is viewing the
5 people that live here in all economic
6 strata as undesirable or pittyable, or
7 they'll be better off when they have
8 smaller numbers, I'm not sure Newburgh
9 is for you.

10 It's interesting how many people
11 have said, I grew up in Newburgh but
12 live somewhere else. If this is not
13 the Newburgh you want, you don't have
14 to live here.

15 And I think a similar thing would
16 be true for businesses. Let's be real.
17 Businesses come to a place, any city,
18 Newburgh, anywhere, because it's
19 profitable for them. It's not a
20 charity. It can be beneficial. I
21 think this project is beneficial. I
22 can see that. It clearly seems like a
23 good plan. Hotels are good. Jobs are
24 good. The petitioner has come to some
25 of our meetings and has been really

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2 open. It's been fantastic, which is a
3 big improvement on how things were in
4 the past. But people come here because
5 it makes money or they will make money
6 or they have a business plan to make
7 money. These proposals, this entire
8 negotiation or discussion or public
9 hearing needs to be approached that
10 way. This is not charity. This is not
11 a non-profit. This is a money-making
12 venture. There are secondary benefits
13 to the city.

14 I'm a taxpayer on multiple levels,
15 but I'm not getting any revenue from
16 this. My taxes go up. I don't get any
17 money. I have a business here. I've
18 lost a ton of personal business during
19 COVID. No one's given me any money.
20 I'm just out of luck.

21 So people who are here to make
22 money need to have a reliable business
23 plan. Hearing that they need a tax
24 break doesn't sound quite accurate to
25 me; more like they want one. It is

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2 reasonable to ask for one. I don't
3 think it's dishonest or unfair for them
4 to ask for one. That's how free market
5 capitalism works. You seek out,
6 maximize the profit, you use the tools
7 to your advantage. It is a reasonable
8 proposition. It is up to everybody
9 else, specifically the IDA, to make the
10 decision based on the application. But
11 need and want are two very different
12 things.

13 I've been in Newburgh for six
14 years, and when we moved up here,
15 everyone was like, oh, is Newburgh
16 changing? Is Newburgh changing? Is it
17 gentrifying? And I was expecting it to
18 happen really quickly. And there are
19 good things and there are a lot of bad
20 things about it. But it wasn't
21 happening super quickly. They've
22 opened some amazing restaurants. That
23 was awesome. But, you know, it was a
24 steady progress rather than a
25 skyrocketing thing that I'd been kind

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2 of led to believe.

3 And I would say that, since COVID
4 lockdown, it has dramatically
5 accelerated. All of a sudden, there
6 are a lot of people in Newburgh. I
7 work in the front of my house and stare
8 out my front window every day, and as
9 soon as lockdown hit, all of a sudden,
10 there were twice as many people walking
11 kids and walking around, and people
12 moving here, or people who lived here
13 but were commuting all the time, and
14 now spending more time here.

15 And Newburgh, things are changing
16 in Newburgh. Newburgh is becoming more
17 and more of a valuable commodity to
18 investors. I mean, there are real
19 estate investors that own properties in
20 Newburgh that are investment groups.
21 So we are well beyond the mom and pop
22 ownership level in Newburgh. We need
23 to value Newburgh as such.

24 I think that the years -- the time
25 period where Newburgh was desperate for

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2 people to come, or needed to beg people
3 to come and give away a lot of money,
4 are shifting. And the question is, are
5 we there now? Are we getting there?
6 Are we near it? Has it already
7 happened?

8 This kind of tax break is -- it's
9 basically the opposite of free market
10 capitalism. And I assume most people
11 in this room believe in free market
12 capitalism. But for the government to
13 be giving away tax breaks -- I mean, it
14 is choosing to transfer public wealth
15 from the public to a private
16 money-making entity. That's not free
17 market capitalism. That's something
18 else. If it were publicly owned or the
19 public was seeing a percentage of the
20 profit, maybe it would be a different
21 story. But this is a free market
22 enterprise and a free market company
23 coming to a free market town that is
24 being given a huge financial advantage.

25 The argument is jobs, of course,

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2 and other similar benefits. How many
3 jobs are local residents going to get?
4 How many of the jobs that local
5 residents get are going to come with
6 benefits? How many that local
7 residents get are minimum wage? Are
8 any of them minimum wage? When I go to
9 the restaurant, which I will, because
10 I'm desperate for a good cocktail --
11 Mike has really helped us out on that
12 part -- will I be greeted by someone
13 who went to NFA, or someone who came
14 here for a good paying hospitality job?

15 Basically what we're talking about
16 with these tax breaks and return for
17 benefits is trickle down economics. I
18 guess I foolishly thought that trickle
19 down economics and Reaganomics were
20 pretty widely discredited, but here we
21 are. And why does trickle down
22 economics persist? Generally, because
23 if you're at the top, it's actually a
24 great proposition for you. And most of
25 the people in this room are at or near

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2 the top. I'm not saying you're all
3 one-percenters or whatever, but
4 business owners, people who own their
5 homes, that's who most of the people
6 are in this room. And it's a good
7 proposition for people like me. I will
8 speak for myself. I'm wealthier than
9 most Newburghers. I own my house. I
10 have a business. I am aware of what
11 percentage of Newburgh lives in
12 poverty. If you're at the top of the
13 trickle down pyramid, it's pretty
14 great. If you're at the bottom, it is
15 objectively not.

16 I'm disappointed in the
17 communication from the IDA. Residents
18 did not -- straight up did not know
19 about this. We can pass the buck and
20 blame the mayor, but if the IDA really
21 wants community involvement, it needs
22 to make more of an effort. I run on
23 the Transportation Committee here in
24 the city. It's entirely volunteer. We
25 have no legal authority, no approval

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2 power, no oversight. We are basically
3 a group of volunteers who get together
4 and try and think about good ideas. We
5 do infinitely more outreach than what's
6 being done. Infinitely. And we have
7 no legal authority. We get stop signs
8 put in. So we get better turnout for
9 stop signs getting put in than we get
10 for a question of a million dollars --
11 millions of dollars. Twelve years,
12 millions of dollars. We'll be generous
13 and say this was unintentional
14 oversight.

15 I'm sure everybody here is aware
16 that if you work a minimum wage
17 part-time job, you cannot take time
18 off. If you take time off, you do not
19 pay your rent. So any hearing held
20 during business hours is automatically
21 a hurdle to lower down than you are on
22 the economic ladder. Hearings have to
23 be after 6 p.m., ideally on weekends.
24 It sucks. Pardon my language. Being
25 on these boards, being on these

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2 committees, coming after work, coming
3 extra hours, taking up time, it's a lot
4 of work. But if you're serious about
5 public engagement, especially in
6 Newburgh, from all economic stratuses
7 and all communities, there's a lot more
8 that needs to be done.

9 At minimum, city council should
10 probably be directly involved. I am
11 here because my councilwoman texted me
12 20 minutes before this started. They
13 found out this morning. Once again,
14 you can pass the buck to the mayor, or
15 you do more of an outreach. But this
16 is how it is, and this is the purview
17 of the IDA, to decide the fate of
18 millions in tax breaks, with, in my
19 opinion, inadequate interaction with
20 city residents.

21 I'm glad to see that there are a
22 lot of people here. We have
23 differences of opinions. I was
24 expecting to not see any city
25 residents, but there's been quite a

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2 few, and I think that's great but not
3 nearly enough.

4 This is kind of -- like I said,
5 Newburgh's changing. We're trying to
6 figure out where we are on the change
7 scale. But giving out tax breaks to
8 businesses is old news. It's old
9 business. That's how it's been in
10 Newburgh for decades. To say that this
11 will create jobs and Newburgh's
12 changing and it's gentrifying and
13 positives and negatives and all that --
14 but tax breaks for companies is nothing
15 new on the county level or the city or
16 anything in between.

17 The question would be, when does
18 Newburgh start standing up for itself?
19 Newburgh needs self-esteem. And I
20 don't mean the people, because if you
21 talk to anybody who lives here, new
22 resident or old, they are so proud of
23 the city the way it is now, not the way
24 it used to be. I don't mean city
25 council. Most of the city

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2 councilmembers and staff that are here
3 I consider personal friends, and I'm
4 fully aware of how proud they are of
5 the city. But the people who need to
6 have pride in Newburgh are the ones
7 making the decisions, in this case
8 specifically, the IDA. The ones with
9 final authority to decide the fate of
10 millions of my dollars, of our dollars,
11 of everyone's dollars.

12 It's time for Newburgh to stop
13 begging, basically. We are a great
14 city. People are moving here like
15 crazy. Businesses are opening. And
16 the time of us giving -- doing
17 giveaways is coming to an end. We need
18 to stop giveaways to private companies.
19 We need to start making the demands
20 that Newburgh deserves. Thank you.

21 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

22 Thank you. Elizabeth Rowley.

23 MS. ELIZABETH ROWLEY:

24 Hi, everyone. I think I'm last on
25 the list so I'll keep it brief. It's

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2 been a long afternoon.

3 I'm Elizabeth Rowley. I am also a
4 City of Newburgh resident, but I also
5 have had the good fortune of knowing
6 Sims and Kirsten for about ten years
7 now through their work with A Single
8 Bite, which is a non-profit initiative
9 up in Sullivan County. Prior to the
10 pandemic, A Single Bite was all about
11 educating young people about the value
12 of every bite that goes into their
13 mouth and really how important it is to
14 develop good habits at a young age.
15 And Sims and Kirsten both were
16 literally going into classrooms to
17 discuss just how important this was,
18 and also, of course, up in Sullivan
19 County, talking about all the local
20 farms and agriculture and richness up
21 there, that they could, you know,
22 literally walk into their backyard,
23 pick a mushroom and have it for dinner.

24 So A Single Bite, since the
25 pandemic, has completely driven their

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2 work to really deliver essential meals
3 to families in Sullivan County. Last I
4 checked, it was over 50,000 meals that
5 they delivered in the last 18 months,
6 raised money, given from their
7 businesses, asked their patrons to
8 support residents of Sullivan County.
9 So folks, of course, were coming from
10 all over the world to stay in these
11 beautiful hotels, to make the
12 contribution, spend a percentage of
13 their stay supporting A Single Bite.

14 So why I mention this, there's been
15 a lot of talk about Newburgh, its other
16 needs, poverty, domestic violence, et
17 cetera, et cetera. We all know that
18 the needs are endless and that the
19 support is not bottomless. So, you
20 know, I really am in support of this
21 project for many, many reasons. Of
22 course, as a resident here, I'm looking
23 forward to another vibrant and exciting
24 place to visit, a place to have my
25 friends and family stay when they come

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2 to visit us. But I also believe Sims
3 and Kirsten really add a great deal to
4 our community in terms of giving back,
5 building a culture of that among their
6 employees, their visitors, their
7 stakeholders, and, you know, the
8 thousands and thousands of tourists
9 that come and stay at their hotels
10 every day.

11 So that's my angle this afternoon,
12 talk about community benefit. I think
13 that's very real, in addition to the
14 economics of this project is what they
15 would really bring to the community, to
16 our non-profits, and to the people that
17 live here that aren't here today to
18 lend their voice perhaps. But I really
19 do believe that that is part of their
20 DNA. I think they would be a great
21 benefit to this community.

22 That's it for me. Thank you,
23 everyone.

24 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

25 Thank you. Annmarie Nye.

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2 MS. ANNMARIE NYE:

3 Hi, everybody. I am Annmarie Nye.

4 I am a resident of the City of
5 Newburgh. I live on Clinton Street in
6 Ward One. Some of you may have seen me
7 before, but you almost certainly
8 haven't heard me speak. I hate public
9 speaking. But I was made aware shortly
10 before this public meeting that not a
11 lot of city residents were aware that
12 this was happening, and I was notified
13 by a councilperson, so I decided to
14 come down and speak.

15 So I moved here from Brooklyn in
16 2015, so I'm intimately familiar with
17 the attractions of Newburgh, and I have
18 to tell you, you do not need to
19 incentivize people to come here.
20 They're coming. I think it's hard for
21 people who grew up nearby but not in
22 the city, or who have lived outside of
23 it for any considerable period of time,
24 to understand how the city is viewed by
25 savvy people from the outside. The

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2 Hudson Valley is currently one of the
3 hottest tourism destinations in the
4 entire world. Newburgh is uniquely
5 situated, and to me, it has the best
6 views along the entire river, amongst
7 other things. So I think a lot of the
8 rhetoric about how we have to lure
9 people here with incentives really does
10 more harm than good. Who specifically
11 are we talking about? Who needs to
12 come here and why? And why are they
13 more desirable than the people who are
14 here already?

15 Now, Newburgh is depopulated. I do
16 think that we can have development
17 without displacement here if we're
18 careful about it, but we do have to be
19 careful. And I'm not naive. I'm well
20 aware of the benefit of investment
21 capital and the requirements for
22 securing loans. I do not doubt
23 anything that the owners of this
24 project are saying. I completely
25 believe them. I just want to hit pause

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2 on the rhetoric that's always bending
3 to the demands of investment capitalism
4 and how it's good for the city and how
5 we think about that in the larger
6 context of the city's development.

7 I love old houses and historic
8 properties. I grew up in one. I've
9 rented several in my adult life, and
10 I've purchased one here in the city.
11 But I do think it's important to
12 interrogate whose history we believe is
13 deserving of preservation, and help
14 really effect economic forces that
15 double down on the same kinds of things
16 that alienate people who hear things
17 like historic preservation and wonder,
18 does that mean my history? So I think
19 it's very easy for people from a
20 certain background and class to admire
21 and fall in love with the buildings
22 here and overlook the people that live
23 in them now and have lived in them,
24 especially over the past 24 years.

25 As I mentioned before, I moved here

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2 six years ago. I care deeply about the
3 city and I'm proud to be part of this
4 community, but it would be unbelievably
5 disingenuous to pretend that there
6 weren't strong economic incentives for
7 me to purchase a home here. I did not
8 have the capital to purchase in New
9 York City, where I lived. I did have
10 the capital to purchase up here. And I
11 think you need to think about the
12 reasons for that and the underlying
13 economic forces at play.

14 Newburgh has a complex history
15 that's undeniable, that the unhealthy
16 Newburgh tax situation is part of the
17 picture, the depressed real estate
18 values. The taxes are inextricably
19 linked with what makes the city full of
20 such attractive properties to begin
21 with, and as such, they're assuming
22 part of the risk, which, let's not
23 forget, has considerable likely outside
24 cash. That's why this project is being
25 proposed to begin with. I don't blame

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2 the business owners here for pursuing
3 avenues to maximize profitability.
4 That is absolutely their job. I am not
5 against this project. I think it is
6 likely to confer many benefits to the
7 city. But it will also consume
8 resources and infrastructure. That's
9 fine, of course, absolutely, but
10 contribution to the ongoing maintenance
11 of that infrastructure is why they are
12 taxed.

13 But the devil, as they say, is in
14 the details, and it is very important
15 to be very careful about advocating for
16 jobs, as though Newburgh or any city
17 should be grateful for any jobs. We
18 need good jobs. Particularly when we
19 are talking about hospitality, an
20 industry that is notorious for low pay
21 and oppressive working conditions. I
22 trust fully that this project is
23 committed to hiring and developing
24 talent, but I do think that the
25 rhetoric around the quality of jobs

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2 offered must be led just as much or
3 more than the total number in every
4 pitch that we hear. Because, let's be
5 clear, in ventures of this size,
6 anything other than a job that pays a
7 living wage is a factor for
8 exploitation and not a meaningful
9 handout.

10 Again, I think this project is
11 great, and I am not blind to the
12 benefits you may get. Good jobs are
13 important to this city, and I think
14 that there are lots of benefits here,
15 but I do think it's quite easy to
16 evaluate this project -- but I do think
17 it's an argument to say that these
18 business owners are the first, and they
19 deserve special treatment for taking
20 additional risk. But these things do
21 have a way of becoming well-tread
22 paths, as the next developer will come
23 in and claim that they require the same
24 deal in order to secure similar
25 financing, and then we end up in a

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2 situation where we can only bring in
3 people who will ask for those deals.
4 And I think we need to think about
5 setting that precedent and what that
6 means, but I also understand that
7 you're considering Newburgh's
8 reputation as being, like, unfriendly
9 to business, and trying to counter that
10 as well.

11 I trust that you will look at
12 everything and evaluate it carefully.
13 I just wanted to be here to represent a
14 point of view, as some residents don't
15 have the same kind of job flexibility
16 that I do and wouldn't be able to make
17 it. Thanks.

18 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

19 Thank you. Giselle Martinez.

20 Congratulations, by the way.

21 MS. GISELLE MARTINEZ:

22 Thank you so much. I had the
23 pleasure of meeting some of the folks
24 in the room today. My name is Giselle
25 Martinez. I'm a lifelong City of

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2 Newburgh resident. I've lived in Ward
3 One my entire life. My entire life has
4 been in this tiny corner of Newburgh,
5 from my first internship to my current
6 job with the state government as
7 assemblymember.

8 I also have a few concerns. I do
9 think that everybody here is in good
10 faith and everybody here just wants
11 what's best for Newburgh. I know that
12 I am relatively young, and so some
13 folks already questioned my age, but if
14 you do not take my comment -- you know,
15 if you take my comment with a grain of
16 salt, I do ask that you also take into
17 consideration our state
18 representatives' opinions as well. I
19 wanted to echo Senator Skoufis's
20 comments from earlier. I do think that
21 the timing of this hearing is a little
22 bit of a concern for me. A lot of
23 folks in Newburgh are working class.
24 They work from, you know, whatever it
25 in may be, 6, 7 a.m., you know,

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2 different shifts, work two jobs. It's
3 very difficult. Looking at this room,
4 Newburgh is predominantly black and
5 brown. I can count the people of color
6 in this room on my hand. And that is a
7 little concerning for me.

8 I do look forward to working with
9 the IDA in the future, considering that
10 I am a councilmember elect.

11 I wanted to bring up as well some
12 of the other concerns that I had about
13 our taxpayers. Whether these are
14 homeowners or renters, we are also
15 paying taxes, whether it be directly or
16 indirectly. And I want to make sure
17 that we're putting taxpayers first.

18 This business, of course, I would
19 love for it to thrive. We want
20 Newburgh to thrive in business. We
21 want more economic development here.
22 And again, I know that this is all in
23 good faith. I just think that the
24 approach might be a little -- maybe not
25 quite fitting. I think that businesses

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2 do bring risk, and to put an additional
3 burden on taxpayers is probably not the
4 best move right now, considering the
5 situation that Newburgh is in.

6 I grew up listening to all these
7 comments that Newburgh was dangerous,
8 that Newburgh is a dumping ground. I
9 was never ashamed of Newburgh and I
10 will continue to work and fight for
11 Newburgh, but I would also like to
12 mention and echo comments from other
13 folks who spoke earlier that we should
14 not have to -- people should not treat
15 Newburgh as a place where we should be
16 grateful that someone is coming in. We
17 should be on our knees and thank them
18 because they're, you know, saving our
19 city. We should definitely be working
20 with different businesses, we should be
21 working with different developers of
22 course, but I want to make sure that
23 everything that's coming into Newburgh
24 is going to benefit all of our
25 residents.

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2 These visitors that are coming to
3 Washington's Headquarters, these
4 visitors are mostly here for one night.
5 And to pay 300, \$400 a night for a
6 hotel room, where they can pay maybe
7 less, 100, \$150 for a hotel on a
8 highway, I'm a little concerned about
9 the risk that this business might
10 bring.

11 And again, we're going to fall into
12 the cycle where that burden is going to
13 fall on homeowners, the same people
14 that we're trying to keep in Newburgh,
15 the same people that we're trying to
16 protect and make sure their taxes don't
17 go up, because that's the number one
18 thing that I heard knocking on doors
19 and talking to people.

20 So I would really like to ask that
21 you consider perhaps having more
22 conversations with city councilmembers
23 and having another hearing where
24 perhaps you could get a little bit more
25 of a diversity and perspective from

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2 Newburgh residents that couldn't be
3 here today because of their work.

4 Thank you.

5 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

6 Thank you. That's the end of the
7 list. If there's anybody that hasn't
8 spoken yet that would like to speak,
9 now is the time. Okay, great.

10 Before we end, just a couple
11 things. There has been a thread that
12 has gone through a lot of the
13 commentary that I want to address,
14 because it's relevant from our mindset
15 and philosophy as the Board and how we
16 discharge our duty to the people of
17 Newburgh, which is what we're here for.
18 We are here for the people of Newburgh.
19 We are public officials beholden to the
20 people of Newburgh. We're not beholden
21 to Sims or any other developer.

22 We are very aware of -- first of
23 all, we're all City of Newburgh
24 residents. To sit on the Board, you
25 have to be a City of Newburgh resident.

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2 So you have to walk the streets. And
3 all of us moved here because we really
4 wanted to be here, the way it is now,
5 because it's a beautiful city, it's got
6 beautiful people. I love my neighbors.
7 It's fun walking down the street and
8 saying hi to Debby down the block. It
9 really is a great, great thing for me
10 personally. I know the other Board
11 members feel the same way, because we
12 know each other pretty well.

13 We go about what our charge is,
14 what our duty is, because we want to
15 see our friends and neighbors
16 benefited. And any application that we
17 consider, what we are considering is,
18 what benefit is this going to bring?

19 There's a bird in here.

20 (BREAK TAKEN)

21 IDA CHAIRMAN AUSTIN DUBOIS:

22 Thank you for your service and your
23 love of animals. We appreciate it.

24 That's what we're evaluating here.
25 People talk a lot about -- about there

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2 already being a lot of development
3 here. They are doing a lot of things.
4 Part of what's concerning to me about
5 that, especially people that have moved
6 here from the city -- and obviously,
7 it's been brought up a couple times,
8 and it's the way it is -- the
9 development that's happening now is one
10 off, two off. Somebody with money from
11 the city moving up and buying something
12 and doing something that might benefit
13 themselves, maybe their family. Maybe
14 they open a business and they hire some
15 people. By and large, talking about
16 people moving to the city, there is a
17 disparate racial component to that,
18 mostly white people moving up from the
19 city.

20 And we live in a community that has
21 been beset, because of historic racial
22 oppression, systemic oppression,
23 poverty, that what our charge is is for
24 our friends and neighbors, to provide
25 them with some opportunity, with some

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2 ability to not have this Newburgh today
3 and tomorrow and one year, five years
4 from now, be like it had been, in that
5 regard, in the future, or as it has
6 been in the past. We want to benefit
7 our neighbors. We want to benefit the
8 people that are here. That's how we're
9 going to evaluate this. I can assure
10 you that we are doing it on behalf of
11 the people.

12 I'm not sure how we're going to
13 come down. We haven't made a decision
14 yet. That's why we are here, to hear
15 you guys. We want to make sure that
16 there's an economy that benefits
17 everybody, an economy that benefits
18 primarily the people in the City of
19 Newburgh. And there's going to be new
20 people along the way, too, and we want
21 them to join the party.

22 For any information that you ever
23 want from any of us, of course, contact
24 the office. Go to the Newburgh IDA
25 website, Google City of Newburgh IDA,

1 IDA HEARING 11/04/21

2 it will pop up. You'll see all our
3 documents, all the information as far
4 as this application, the cost benefit
5 analysis, the test of reasonableness.
6 That's all published there as soon as
7 we get it. It's right there for the
8 public. You know, it may be the case
9 that we could blast it out better,
10 maybe a City of Newburgh IDA Facebook
11 page so it's more easy for people to do
12 that. So definitely feel free to go on
13 there, and you can look at more
14 information about this application
15 itself, and any kind of future
16 applications or agenda items that we
17 have.

18 We welcome you to contact the
19 office if you have any questions. Get
20 in touch with me. Like I said in the
21 beginning, I'm always happy to talk
22 about any of these things. I mean,
23 there may be some situation where I may
24 not be able to release confidential
25 information or something like that, but

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2 as a general matter, I'm always around
3 to talk about what we're doing, how
4 we're doing it, and how we can go about
5 to essentially always benefit the
6 people of the City of Newburgh. That's
7 what we're here for. That's what we're
8 going to do.

9 And that's good for me. Thank you
10 all for your comments, your
11 consideration.

12 IDA EXEC. DIR. CHERISSE VICKERS:

13 It's 3:08. We'll close the
14 meeting.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK)
)SS:
COUNTY OF ORANGE)

I, LAURA EVANS, a Court Reporter and
Notary Public within and for the State of New
York, do hereby certify that the foregoing is
a true and correct transcript of the minutes
recorded by me and reduced to typewriting
under my supervision to the best of my
knowledge and ability.

X 

Laura Evans

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