



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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COREY JOHNSON
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

February 25, 2013

Amanda M. Burden, Chair
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: ULURP Applications Nos. 130139ZSM, N130138ZCM, 130137ZRM, and 130140ZSM - Madison Square Garden

Dear Chair Burden:

At its regularly scheduled Full Board Meeting on February 6, 2013, Manhattan Community Board 4, following a request by Manhattan Community Board 5 to review and comment on the cited applications, voted 37 for, 0 against, 0 abstaining and 0 present not eligible as set forth below.

Background

MSG has applied for a special permit to renew their 1963 arena permit which expired on January 24, 2013, as well as a series of actions to make changes to the sign regulations within the Pennsylvania Station Subarea B4 of the Special Hudson Yards District and to the surrounding plaza.

MSG is located in Community District 5, but Community District 4 would be affected by the proposed changes. At the request of the Office of the Borough President MSG met with CB4 land use representatives, and CB5 has asked CB4 to comment on the proposed actions.

Arena Special Permit

With the failure of the plan for MSG to move into the western end of the Farley building across Eighth Avenue, MSG began an extensive renovation. They made it clear that they are investing in their existing facility for the long term, and now have requested a new arena special permit to replace the one that expired in January. The application has no time limit and thus would be in perpetuity if granted.

Madison Square Garden (MSG) sits above Pennsylvania Station, which is the most important transportation hub in the city, handling 650,000 passengers per day. Concerned about being able

to plan for the future of Pennsylvania Station, CB5 has recommended that the special permit be limited to ten years.

CB4 believes that a permit granted in perpetuity is inappropriate, and potentially inconsistent with necessary future improvements to Pennsylvania Station. MSG is a vital part of the city, but like CB5 we believe that the transportation hub underneath the arena is far more important to the future of the city. We recommend that the term of the special permit be set so as not to interfere with future improvements to Pennsylvania Station, which most certainly means not in perpetuity.

Signage

MSG is requesting changes to the sign regulations within the Pennsylvania Station Subarea B4 of the Special Hudson Yards District that would permit them to erect 3,000 sq. ft. LED signs extending to about 80 feet high on the four escalator towers, and a 5,300 sq. ft. sign on the Eighth Avenue frontage. The signs would display advertising for MSG teams, including video footage, as well as third party advertising.

CB4 believes that the proposed signs might be appropriate for Times Square but is certain that they are not appropriate for this neighborhood. In particular we don't believe bathing the landmarked James Farley building in bright, flickering lights would show it in its best light. We also are concerned about affects on residential buildings at a distance; our experience is that even where there is not direct line of sight to a building it may be adversely affected by reflections from windows in neighboring windows.

MSG has said that they want to bring the excitement that goes on inside the arena to the outside, including to people unable to obtain tickets for events, and that such advertising is a necessary component of any modern arena business plan. CB4 prefers that MSG keep the excitement inside the arena where it belongs, and notes that even the best business model is not applicable or appropriate in every situation. The community should not have to suffer environmental pollution simply because it is in the best financial interest of MSG and its owners.

CB4 strongly recommends that the requested changes to the sign regulations within the Pennsylvania Station Subarea B4 of the Special Hudson Yards District be denied, and that all signage be in compliance with existing regulations.

Plazas

MSG proposes changes to the plaza to promote the arena, to improve pedestrian circulation and to provide seating. The plazas are busy pedestrian thoroughfares, especially during morning and evening rush hours when Pennsylvania Station commuters are rushing to and from trains. CB4 believes that the plazas should be optimized to accommodate this traffic. Plaza seating might provide welcome resting spots during mid-day traffic lulls, but that they are inappropriate and potentially dangerous obstructions during rush hours. CB4 recommends that the plazas be optimized to handle Pennsylvania Station traffic.

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Future improvements to Pennsylvania Station are critically important to the city. CB4 recommends that MSG be granted an arena special permit, but that its term is consistent with plans for the station. CB4 also believes that the proposed changes to sign regulations inappropriately elevate MSG's interests above those of the surrounding community and recommends that they be denied.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CJ', is positioned above the typed name of the sender.

Corey Johnson
Chair

cc: MCB5
Irene Baker – MSG
Elise Wagner – Kramer Levin
NYC Council Speaker Quinn
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
Frank Ruchala – DCP