

NASSAU COUNTY BUS TRANSIT PUBLIC MEETING

NICE BUS MITCHELL FIELD DEPOT

700 COMMERCIAL AVENUE

GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK 11530

THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023

5:30 P.M.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

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2 A P P E A R A N C E S:

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4 JOEL BERSE, Member

5 LIVIO TONY ROSARIO, Member

6 JEAN DUROSEAU, Member

7 DAWN FALCO, Member

8 JILLIAN ENRIGHT, Deputy County Attorney

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3 MS. ENRIGHT: Welcome, everybody, to
4 the bus transit committee meeting. I am
5 Jillian Enright. I am counsel to the
6 committee.

7

8 So before we begin. I would just
9 introduce all of our members. The far right,
10 we have Mr. Joel Berse. Next to him, we have
11 Tony Rosario, Jean Duroseau, and Ms. Dawn
12 Falco.

13

14 So we are going to start today, have
15 a presentation, and then we will go into some
16 public comments and some Board comments.

17

18 So we have NICE CEO, Mr. Jack Khzouz,
19 who is going to be giving the presentation.

20

21 MR. KHZOUZ: Thank you, Ms. Enright.

22

23 Good to see everybody. I think I
24 have given the Board copies of the
25 presentation only because some of it is quite
26 small and quite hard to read. If you are me
27 at my age, it's difficult to read.

28

29 But we will go through the
30 presentation, and please I am open to
31 questions at any time from the Board and then

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2 we can go from there for everybody else.

3 So the agenda for tonight is just the
4 budget presentation, that's what we're really
5 here to talk about; the service updates; and
6 then the budget vote.

7 This is our general calendar year as
8 it runs. We run with the state calendar as we
9 know.

10 So 2023 operating budget, I am very
11 happy to say that over the last 6 years ago,
12 again with the help of the County and our
13 contract manager, especially Sharon Persaud,
14 we have been able to really stabilize the
15 operating budget and look for growth year over
16 year over year, without the fluctuations of --
17 if you all remember, the first 5 years or so
18 of the contract was up and down in service
19 levels.

20 So I am very happy to report that our
21 plan for this year is to increase our
22 operating hours and our service levels. They
23 are somewhat affected by inflation and our
24 costs are increasing, but in general, there
25 are no service cuts. There are no planned

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2 fare increases into the budget.

3 Again, I will speak a little bit
4 about fare increases so there is a caveat to
5 that, but I will talk about that in a minute.
6 But in general, it's a conservative increase
7 in service with no service cuts ahead, so we
8 are very happy about that.

9 The way the budget breaks out, it's
10 not any different from years past. You can
11 see the large lighter orange area is the State
12 Operating Assistance fund. That is the
13 majority of our budget.

14 We are looking from the State --
15 looking for the State to contribute
16 \$106,500,000. That is the vast majority of
17 our \$152,900,000 operating funds.

18 The State -- the Governor's office is
19 very supportive of transit. We look forward
20 to receiving those funds and putting them to
21 good use.

22 The Nassau County Required STOA Match
23 of 2.5 million.

24 The two next series are parts of the
25 FTA that we continue to use to help support

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2 the system that are somewhat echoes of Covid.
3 We use the money very smartly and
4 strategically and are able to help -- again,
5 we are not fully recovered yet. We haven't
6 seen the fare box recovery yet that we would
7 expect. So this money helps bridge that gap,
8 and that's good to see.

9 Passenger revenue is projected just
10 under \$30 million, and then non-user revenue
11 which is really just the advertising on the
12 side of the vehicles. There's some other
13 smaller things there also.

14 Also that's all in recovery. In
15 other words, before Covid, that number was
16 closer to \$800,000. It's still recovering a
17 little bit, but it's coming along.

18 So that makes up our budget of 152,9.

19 So the way our fees breaks down,
20 there is a monthly fixed fee. It's basically
21 overheads, operations, and facility fees. You
22 see in 2022, the County paid about
23 \$3.9 million, just under \$4 million. This
24 year, the fee's gone up slightly to
25 \$4.17 million, just slightly.

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2 The variable rate is the hourly rate
3 that the County pays for every vehicle on the
4 road. It's broken down into two different
5 rates. There's a fix route rate and then a
6 paratransit rate.

7 You can see both rates basically
8 stayed the same. The fixed route rate went up
9 a little less than a dollar, not even that.
10 The paratransit rate actually went down
11 slightly. We're seeing a little bit more
12 efficiencies with paratransit customers coming
13 back, and we're able to bundle rides a little
14 bit better.

15 So again, nothing shocking or
16 different here. Pretty standard and easy to
17 go to. The detail, as you can see, we will go
18 through each one of these very quickly, but
19 operator wages go up slightly. Again, that's
20 more of a function currently of hour served or
21 hours on the road.

22 Maintenance wages go up slightly.
23 Other wages, that is administrative wages, a
24 slight increase.

25 Benefits go up a little bit more

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2 aggressively, and that is basically because of
3 health insurance costs. Health insurance
4 costs projected this year, up 11 percent.
5 It's a huge number.

6 General services, about flat.

7 Fuel and lubricants, you can see it
8 goes down, and you can ask yourself, well, how
9 is that down from last year. The reason being
10 is again, our fleet is CNG. And CNG has seen
11 quite a beneficial reduction in costs for this
12 year. So obviously, the County takes
13 advantage of that for the CNG fleet, yay. And
14 plus, fuel costs are down overall, gasoline
15 and diesel and lubricants that go into that.

16 Parts and repairs are flat.

17 Other materials and supplies are
18 basically flat, a little down.

19 Marketing, legal and other fees,
20 basically flat, a little down.

21 Utilities are up. Our electric is
22 up. The cost per electric unit is up.

23 Casualty and liability insurance is
24 flat.

25 Then we get down to corporate

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2 overhead is what it is. It is a percentage of
3 total.

4 Our margin at risk is what it is.
5 It's a percentage of total.

6 And then 152,9 is our operating
7 budget. You can see last year, it was 148,4;
8 and we are now at 152,9, so a nice
9 progression.

10 We've been able to find efficiencies
11 in the budget by line. Innovation has helped.
12 Every year, innovation comes along a little
13 bit more and helps us find efficiencies. So
14 that certainly has helped us along to mitigate
15 some of the inflationary pressures that go up.

16 Yes, Mr. Berse?

17 MR. BERSE: What caused the
18 depreciation to double?

19 MR. KHZOUZ: The depreciation doubled
20 basically because of new vehicles, new
21 equipment to come into play, so --

22 MR. BERSE: In other words, the
23 vehicles are no longer new. They are now a
24 year old, so to speak.

25 MR. KHZOUZ: Yes.

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2 So on the capital plan side, this is
3 the highlight of the capital plan. The next
4 two pages show the detail, and it's an I chart
5 so that's why I printed it for you. If you
6 want to go to sleep, please read that.

7 So the operating budget, interior
8 surfaces at Rosa Parks will start later on
9 this year. That's the last phase of the Rosa
10 Parks Hempstead Transit Center redo. It's
11 been a 3 and a half, 4-year project. All the
12 interior surfaces are being redone, so the
13 floors, the walls, the glass, the everything.

14 MR. CLOLERY: Will there be seats
15 inside?

16 MR. KHZOUZ: There is heat inside.

17 MR. CLOLERY: Seats.

18 MR. KHZOUZ: Oh, seats, no. Not any
19 more seats. We've had some issues there so --

20 MR. CLOLERY: I like to sit. Thank
21 you very much.

22 MR. KHZOUZ: We will continue to
23 monitor that. Hopefully it will get a little
24 better, but it's gotten a little worse lately.
25 So we've got to be careful there, but I

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2 understand what you are saying. I completely
3 understand.

4 Battery electric bus -- battery
5 electric bus infrastructure, I'm going to talk
6 about that in a minute, but that's on the list
7 for this year.

8 Delivery of 33 new paratransit
9 vehicles, yay, we are very happy about that.

10 CNG fuel island upgrade, so the fuel
11 island that you see out there with the canopy
12 is going to be completely upgraded. It will
13 be torn down, a new updated system, faster
14 pumps, safer pumps with some innovation and
15 technology built in.

16 Currently, we have to actually take
17 physical odometer readings, and the pumps will
18 be able to do that for us in the future. So
19 that will be nice to see.

20 Digital bus signage at some selected
21 stops across the county. So you will be able
22 to look up at the stop and see the predicted
23 arrival time of your bus.

24 And then the OMNY implementation
25 which is quite a resource heavy implementation

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2 as we move onto the OMNY system away from the
3 Metro card.

4 So those are the major projects that
5 we are hoping to begin this year, some major
6 project management.

7 Here is the I chart I talked about.
8 If you want to cover one right eye and then we
9 will go through it.

10 Again, this is the balance of the
11 capital project, and again, there's a copy in
12 the board members' presentation so that you
13 can look at it.

14 So service updates, what does that
15 do, Jack? It looks like we have about 2 and a
16 half million dollars more or \$3 million more.
17 Over the total year of service, we are going
18 to do some fairly minor adjustments to make
19 service better.

20 There is not going to be necessarily
21 a big, oh, wow, kind of, but we are just happy
22 that we're able to maintain and increase
23 service a little bit, especially frequency.

24 We are going to look at potentially
25 adding another MINI micro-transit solution,

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2 somewhere in the county. We have one now in
3 Freeport to Lynbrook. We don't know if we are
4 going to do a second one, but we think we are.
5 It will be in the second half of the year, and
6 we're going to study where we're going to put
7 that.

8 We're going to study additional
9 opportunities to increase frequency on
10 off-peak routes, especially Saturdays and
11 Sundays. They're going to be two areas that
12 we're going to look at. Again, I'm not sure
13 how much we can really squeeze out of the
14 year, but we'll see.

15 And then we're going to potentially
16 add some express trips.

17 But that's our priorities. Again, it
18 may be two or three trips here and there.
19 It's not necessarily going to be a big showy
20 wow, but it's important.

21 Other things that we are doing that
22 aren't revenue trips that I wanted to make
23 sure everybody was aware of that we do on
24 behalf of the County at no charge for the
25 County or no charge for riders. That's the

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2 Games for the Physically Challenged. We
3 supply all the bus trips for all those
4 athletes to and from Hofstra to Nassau
5 Community College. We do that for a three-day
6 period every year. We've done it every year
7 since we have been here. I think this is Year
8 12.

9 We are supplying chase vehicles for
10 Long Island Marathon again this year, again,
11 paratransit vehicles that literally follow the
12 marathon runners. If you are like me, you get
13 about a third of way in and then you just take
14 the bus for the rest of the way. So that's
15 what we do in the marathon. We do that every
16 year.

17 And again, this year, I think the
18 County is planning to do the Eisenhower Park
19 Summer Concert Series this year. That was
20 very successful last year. We will be doing
21 all the free buses for that also. So we are
22 happy to be able to do that on behalf of the
23 County.

24 So on the actual capital side, again,
25 you saw me, 33 Ford E-450s are on the way.

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2 They'll be there by mid June so that's great.

3 Again, just upgrading our paratransit
4 infrastructure, making those trips much more
5 comfortable. Those vehicles will be in
6 service relatively quickly after they got
7 here.

8 The only other thing I had was really
9 just to let you guys know that -- and I had a
10 slide in there and I think I deleted it
11 because I was depressed -- the electric buses
12 have been delayed again.

13 So there are still some technology
14 issues. Currently, the manufacturer recalled
15 all the electric buses in the field and have
16 put on hold all production. So where we
17 thought we are going to get them, remember
18 back in October, then we got pushed to
19 December and then to January. Now it's some
20 time anywhere between late summer and early
21 fall.

22 MR. CLOLERY: Or the second coming of
23 Christ whichever comes first.

24 MR. KHZOUZ: Well, the upside to that
25 is it does give us a little bit more time to

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2 get the charging stations in the ground and
3 ready to go. It does put us back a little bit
4 on running those vehicles and understanding
5 their limitations. I do not want to do that
6 in the winter obviously, but we are -- just we
7 have to be patient, I guess is the way to go
8 at it.

9 Yes, Joel.

10 MR. BERSE: With regards to those
11 buses, right now in the TODDRI, work going on
12 in Hicksville, there are major issues where
13 they're talking about underground parking,
14 vehicles that have the electric batteries in
15 them, fires in them. And because a regular
16 car requires over 12,000 gallons and it
17 doesn't even burn out, they have to wash it
18 down and let it burn itself out when they get
19 a battery fire.

20 So the Fire Marshal's Office and the
21 Hicksville Fire District are working together
22 with any developer that is going to put in any
23 stations or have parking for those kind of
24 vehicles.

25 Are we talking to the Fire Marshal's

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2 Office now about these buses before they get
3 here?

4 MR. KHZOUZ: Yes, so the fire
5 marshall is involved in the whole process.
6 Also, too, we have alerted all the volunteer
7 fire companies around the county.

8 Once the vehicles actually get here,
9 we will go through a full training with them,
10 have them onsite. They will go through a full
11 training on how to deal with those vehicles
12 and if anything were to happen, yeah. But we
13 are interacting with them right away.

14 MR. BERSE: It has become a major
15 issue because there already have been those
16 kinds of battery fires. And for some reason,
17 it's not always because the car was in an
18 accident and the battery got damaged. There
19 were other things that something internally
20 happened.

21 So it's an unpredictable situation.
22 They're running very hot, very long and
23 require a tremendous amount of water where
24 Hicksville is now bought this kind of a cover.
25 Like if a car is on fire in the driveway, they

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2 cover the car, they drag it out to the street
3 so it's not by the house, and let it burn
4 itself out on the street.

5 MR. KHZOUZ: Luckily, we have not
6 seen any vehicle fires with transit vehicles
7 that are in service. So hopefully, we will
8 keep our fingers crossed that that's not going
9 to happen.

10 But unfortunately, vehicle fires do
11 happen on transit vehicles also, but we're
12 taking every precaution between now and to be
13 prepared and we will go from there.

14 So at this point, any other questions
15 from the Board?

16 Ms. Enright?

17 MS. ENRIGHT: No.

18 Anyone else.

19 MR. BERSE: I've got a list. Let
20 other people go. I'll go next.

21 MS. ENRIGHT: We will open it up to
22 the public.

23 MR. CLOLERY: Yes, I know you guys
24 think I'm an annoying pest. I will do my
25 best. I was wondering if one of you would do

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2 me a small favor. Could you record me?

3 To the members of the transit
4 advisory committee, it has been too long since
5 we saw each another, haven't we? Every time I
6 tried to find out when you people are having a
7 meeting, you already had the meeting. I was
8 wondering if you have a mailing service or an
9 e-mail service. That way, when you have these
10 meetings, I can know at least 3 weeks in
11 advance so I can make plans to come to these
12 meetings instead of not coming to these
13 meetings because they are important to me.

14 Anyway, moving on, have you people
15 come up with ways of restoring bus lines that
16 were cut? Because this is a prime time
17 opportunity to do so because everything is
18 getting more expensive here on the island from
19 food price which my customers complain about
20 all the time to gas prices to everything that
21 makes a car county here possible.

22 Let me ask you a question, members of
23 the legislature, would you stay in a county
24 where everything is too expensive for the
25 common folk and what will become of the island

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2 when there is no one to -- let me start again.

3 Let me ask you a question, members of
4 the legislature, would you stay in a county
5 that -- where everything is too expensive for
6 the common folk, you know, like food prices,
7 like gas prices, like everything, like
8 insurance, everything? You know, I wouldn't
9 because --

10 MR. ROSARIO: Yes. That's called
11 inflation.

12 MR. CLOLERY: Moving on, what will
13 become of the service workers, like cashiers,
14 like those who make the small things possible?
15 What will become of the services on Long
16 Island when there is no one to administer
17 them, like doctors, like nurses, like
18 cashiers, like -- think about it for a moment
19 while you consider about what to do.

20 Look, you think I am a pain, right?

21 MR. BERSE: No.

22 MR. CLOLERY: But I care about what's
23 going on here in island, about the people who
24 can't drive anywhere, about those who have to
25 pay ever increasing prices for rent, gas,

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2 insurance and especially food. Wouldn't it
3 nice to have a service where that can take
4 people to where they need to be without having
5 to pay expensive fees to get to places where
6 they need to be? Yet the bus system here on
7 the island, one of the most underutilized
8 because people in Nassau County, at least
9 those that can afford it, will prefer to
10 drive, pay expensive prices on gas and
11 insurance, et cetera, and also contribute to
12 the CO2 levels here on the island.

13 Wouldn't it be nice if we could use a
14 well-funded service that would make things
15 cheaper and help people at the same time?
16 Think about it. Thank you for your time.

17 COURT REPORTER: Can you state your
18 name?

19 MR. TORCIVIA: Joe Torcivia,
20 T-O-R-C-I-V-I-A.

21 I will paint a little more positive
22 picture than that, saying once again, I think
23 that you've gotten service levels up to the
24 best that they can feasibly be.

25 I am satisfied certainly with the

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2 weekday Newbridge Road and the Sunday
3 Newbridge Road, which has been my long list of
4 complaints for a long time now. Jack is
5 smiling.

6 The Saturday, those 90-minute head
7 ways, I think could be cut down a little, but
8 I know we have to share that time with the 48
9 so I know that's why.

10 And again, as I said before, if I had
11 a choice of making the trip on Saturday or
12 Sunday, I will make it on Sunday because the
13 gaps are smaller.

14 When you mention express service,
15 this is something that I have always had in
16 the back of my mind for a long time. You
17 know, you have the N6 going from Hempstead to
18 Jamaica and you have the 70 number buses going
19 out east.

20 Why not consider thinking out of the
21 of box? An express that goes out Hempstead
22 Turnpike from, say, Levittown or East Meadow,
23 pulls into Hempstead, and then continues on.
24 So you don't have -- it's a one-seat ride from
25 halfway out of the 70 lines all the way to

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2 Jamaica terminal.

3 I think that that would be an
4 excellent -- if you have a budget to start new
5 express service, I think that would be an
6 excellent way to go.

7 And last thing, to show you just how
8 satisfied I am, you notice I don't come with a
9 paper list anymore? This is going to be my
10 biggest complaint.

11 The new digital signs in lower case,
12 they are difficult. And my long distance
13 eyesight is good. My short distance, no, but
14 my long distance eyesight is good. They are
15 difficult to read.

16 MS. RICHARDS: In Hempstead or
17 Mineola?

18 MR. TORCIVIA: No, no, on the buses
19 themselves. Especially if it's an unfamiliar
20 one or one that I have not seen for years and
21 years growing up like F-A-R-M-S-T-C-O-L-L.
22 When I see that, I can make that out until
23 it's like right up on me. It's not something
24 that my mind even mentally fills in, Farm
25 State College.

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2 MS. FALCO: We have run on. We are
3 going to have to let someone else have a
4 chance that hasn't had an opportunity.

5 MS. ENRIGHT: Is there anyone else
6 who wants to make any comments?

7 MR. KHZOUZ: So at this point, I
8 thank you for your comments. I will speak to
9 you individually afterwards. Thank you very
10 much.

11 At this point, I would like
12 Ms. Enright to call for a vote to approve the
13 2023 operating budget.

14 MR. BERSE: Before you do that, just
15 hearing what everybody else said since they
16 didn't ask the questions I had on my list
17 here, number one, just out of curiosity when
18 that OMNY comes into effect, is the Metro card
19 to going to be completely discarded?

20 MR. KHZOUZ: Not completely. They
21 will have a sunset date so there will be an
22 overlap. So about a year and a half right now
23 is the plan, but it's not my plan. It's the
24 MTA's plan so we will see.

25 MR. BERSE: Speaking of that august

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2 body, the MTA, I heard through the grapevine
3 that they're not going to do transit increases
4 right now. They are hitting us with every
5 other way possible?

6 MR. KHZOUZ: Well, that's a good
7 point, Joel. I forgot to mention it. We
8 talked a little bit about fare increases, and
9 right now, there is nothing planned.

10 But again, our fare policy follows
11 the MTA's fare policy. I don't believe --
12 this is just me speaking and listening to my
13 sources in Albany. I don't believe there will
14 be a fare increase this year for the MTA. If
15 there is, it will be a reduction in some sort
16 of bonus on your Metro card or on bridges and
17 tunnels and not necessarily on the actual
18 fares, but we will keep our fingers crossed.

19 MR. BERSE: My Albany sources are
20 where I got that also.

21 And speaking of that, Senator Steve
22 Rhoads communicated to me yesterday that they
23 are very apprehensive that Saturday, April 1st
24 is not going to be good day, that they're
25 going to get held over in Albany because the

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2 budget is not going to go through.

3 How does that affect us moving
4 forward if we vote for the budget now?

5 MR. KHZOUZ: It won't. Our budget is
6 locked in. We changed the way we have
7 approached this. We know that our budget is
8 our budget, and that's what we're going to go
9 forward with.

10 So there is little to no risk if the
11 budget is going to come in lower than it is,
12 and the County has already made appropriations
13 to make sure that this budget is what I just
14 presented. So that's what we are going to
15 vote on. This is not a potential budget.
16 This is our operating budget.

17 MR. BERSE: Thank you.

18 MS. ENRIGHT: At this time, I will
19 open it up if anyone wants to make a motion to
20 approve the 2023 operating budget?

21 MR. ROSARIO: I make a motion.

22 MR. DUROSEAU: I second it.

23 MS. ENRIGHT: All in favor?

24 (Chorus of ayes.

25 MS. ENRIGHT: Any oppositions?

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2 Okay. That approves the approval of
3 the 2023 operating budget.

4 MR. KHZOUZ: I think we can adjourn
5 the meeting, Ms. Enright, if that's okay with
6 you and if that's good with the Board?

7 MS. ENRIGHT: Yes.

8 MS. FALCO: I move to adjourn.

9 MS. ENRIGHT: Second.

10 MR. ROSARIO: Second.

11 MS. ENRIGHT: All in favor?

12 (Chorus of ayes.)

13 (Time noted: 6:00 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, MONIQUE CABRERA, a Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public, within and for the State of New York, do hereby certify that I reported the proceedings in the within-entitled matter, on March 23, 2023, at 700 Commercial Drive, Garden City, New York, and that this is an accurate transcription of these proceedings.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 24th day of April, 2023.

Monique Cabrera

MONIQUE CABRERA