

# **Transcript of Hearing**

Date: March 19, 2024

Case: In Re: Espirales Montessori Bilingual LLC

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	Conducted on 1		3
1	'	1	And as I was saying, I'm getting ready to turn it over
2		2	to the Simaseks and their attorney after the attorneys
3		3	introduce themselves for the record. But I just wanted
4		4	to say again that it's being recorded.
5		5	Some of you had wanted to provide written
6		١.	testimony. You can do it today once I swear you in and
7		6	you state your name and address. Remind me that you
8	TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO-RECORDED	7	
9	HEARING IN THE MATTER OF	8	have written testimony.
10	ESPIRALES MONTESSORI BILINGUAL LLC	9	And you may have to e-mail it again, but we'll
11			make sure it's a part of the record unless there's
12	PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY OFFICE OF THE ZONING HEARING		objections. So, I think I got it all. If Counsel will
13	EXAMINER		identify themselves for the record.
14		13	8
15	MARCH 19, 2024		Traci Scudder, for the record. Can you hear me okay?
16 17		15	
18		16	, , ,
19			zoning counsel.
	Job No.: 531111	18	
	Pages: 1 - 167		we'll give it to you now.
22	Transcribed by: Christian Naaden	20	MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner, Mr. Brown froze
		21	and is are you seeing that?
		22	MS. MCNEIL: I just saw him move his head.
1	2 PROCEEDINGS		AMD DROWNLY 1 Have Letter 1' a
	PROCEEDINGS	1	MR. BROWN: Yeah. I'm I I'm alive,
2	MALE 1: Hello, tech support. Can you hear us?	2	Stacey [sic]. I'm here.
3	FEMALE 1: Do we have to start again?	3	MS. SCUDDER: Hopefully that doesn't happen to
4	MALE 2: We can hear just fine.	4	me. I have a backup though, have my backup laptop. So,
5	FEMALE 2: Yes.	5	hopefully I don't freeze.
6	MS. MCNEIL: Okay. So, are we recording again?	6	MS. MCNEIL: Okay. So, we're ready for you to
7	FEMALE 2: No. It's on pause. I'm waiting.	7	start if you're ready.
8	MS. MCNEIL: Oh.	8	MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Thank you. Good morning, e
9	AUTOMATED VOICE: Recording stopped. Recording	9	everyone. And again, thank you, Madam Examiner. And,
10	10 in progress.		for the record, Traci Scudder with the Law Office of
11 FEMALE 2: It's now recording. I'm not sure if			Traci R. Scudder, LLC, rep representing the
12 they're ready.			applicant in this case. This is a special exception
13	FEMALE 1: Are you ready? We're ready.	13	application for a daycare center for 16 children.
14		14	
15	MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Me, again, Maurene McNeil.		history. The applicant had filed this application, Mr.
16 Today is also March 20th and we're here on special			Ben Simasek, pro se, and recently retained me to take
17 exception 2023-001, the at the applicants are			him through this hearing today. The applicant filed the
18	18 Claudia and Ben, please forgive me until I hear it		application, the special exception, on on their own,
19	officially, Simasek. Hope that was pretty close.	19	they prepared a statement of justification, they
20	MR. SIMASEK: Simasek, pleasure. Yes.	20	handled the required notice mailings and sign postings.
21	MS. MCNEIL: Simasek, sorry. Simasek. And the	21	And I have actually rewritten a statement of
	request is for a daycare center for up to 16 children.	١٥٥	justification, Madam Examiner. I would like to submit

1 my statement of justification into the record. If it 2 would be okay with you, we can send it to you now by e- 2 3 mail. MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Let me clarify. Ms. Bah, would it be exhibit 16? FEMALE 1: Yeah. MS. MCNEIL: So, you'd like -- you said yes? Okay. So please e-mail it to -- to Stan Brown, myself, 9 and Ms. Bah, and we'll get it admitted as exhibit 16. 10 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And I believe you already 11 have the notice mailings and the sign posting 12 affidavits and information, and I believe that's 13 already on your exhibit list, exhibits 5 and 6. So, I 14 think we're good there. Okay. And I have several witnesses here this morning 16 that are going to testify in special exception SPE-17 2023-001. My first witness is going to be Ms. Kelley 18 Oklesson, who is the landscape architect who prepared 19 the site plan. 20 Then I will call Mr. Ben Simasek, and then I 21 will call Mrs. Simasek, Claudia Simasek. And then 22 lastly, I'll put on Mr. Steven Gaskins, who I hope to 1 be able to qualify as our expert land planner in this 2 case. I'll save him for last. So, but for this hearing, our landscape 3 4 architect, she did prepare a markup site plan, Madam 5 Examiner. And she'll go through that information with 6 you when I call her. But would you like for us to go ahead and e-8 mail that in now so that you will be able to have it in front of you, and Mr. Brown will have it in front of 10 him as we -- as she testifies? 11 MS. MCNEIL: Sure. 12 13 -- the markup plan would be exhibit 17. MALE 3: Yes. 14 MR. BROWN: Ms. Scudder, you know, it's going 15 15 16 to be difficult to read a statement of justification 17 you're submitting now while this case is going on as 18 well as looking at this markup. Do you have the ability 19 to put this markup on the screen while this young lady 20 is testifying? 21 Perry put his e-mail address in the chat, and then Ms. 21

MS. SCUDDER: Yes, sir.

MR. BROWN: All right.

22

MS. MCNEIL: And --1 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. MS. MCNEIL: And we should have that ability as well. I was going to ask it to -- I was going to ask that it be put up. So --6 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Yes. If -- if it's okay, when I call her, she'll be ready to share her screen so 8 that she can actually have the ability to use her 9 cursor to point things out on the markup plan. So, 10 hopefully, that'll be helpful. MS. MCNEIL: Okay. But I -- I do want you to 12 e-mail it as well --13 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. 14 MS. MCNEIL: -- before that. Okay. MS. SCUDDER: I believe Ms. Myers is going to 15 16 send that in right now. 17 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. MS. SCUDDER: So, with that, I think that's 18 19 all the preliminary matters I wanted to bring up. We 20 also have photos, Madam Examiner. We can e-mail those in as well. I think it 22 might be helpful for us to go ahead and submit those, 1 because there might be some points throughout our testimony that we might need to point to a particular photo. So, can we also submit the photos at this time? 4 MS. MCNEIL: How many are there? 5 MS. SCUDDER: Ms. Myers? MS. MYERS: I -- I believe there's about 10 or 6 12. 8 MR. BROWN: Madam Examiner, let me just ask 9 you a quick -- are there persons in opposition to this 10 case on this hearing? MS. MCNEIL: I should ask that now. But is MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And so, I -- that would be 12 there anyone here that's opposed to the request? And if 13 so, just come on camera first. I see Mr. Perry. Is 14 there anyone else? MR. BROWN: Because, in fairness, any 16 documents that Ms. Scudder is submitting into the 17 record right now, the opposition really needs to get a 18 copy of it as well. They cannot fairly cross-examine if 19 they don't have these documents.

MS. SCUDDER: Mr. Brown, may I ask that Mr.

22 Myers can include him when she sends in our exhibits.

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

1 And she can go ahead and send him the statement of

- 2 justification that we've submitted, as well as the
- 3 markup plan, and then these photos that we would like
- 4 to submit.
- And, Mr. Brown, I know typically when we're in
- 6 person, you have these pho- -- photos need to be
- authenticated. And so, I would ask how we might go
- about authenticating the photo --?
- MS. MCNEIL: We're going to authenticate it 10 with the witness that you're going to have to discuss
- 11 them. So when you're ready for that witness --
- 12 FEMALE 2: [inaudible].
- 13 MS. MCNEIL: All of these documents, people
- 14 have a right to question once we pull them up.
- 15 MS. SCUDDER: Okay.
- 16 FEMALE 2: Ms. McNeil?
- 17 MS. MCNEIL: Yes, ma'am?
- FEMALE 2: Oh, okay. I'm sorry. I just wanted
- 19 to say we were having problems with Granicus, but it's 20 back running.
- 21 MS. MCNEIL: All right. Okay -- okay. So, Ms.
- 22 Scudder, while Ms. Myers is sending everything, is
- 1 there a witness you'd like to put on?
- MS. SCUDDER: Yes, ma'am. I would like to call
- as my first witness our landscape architect, Ms. Kelley
- Oklesson.
- MS. MCNEIL: Oklesson, and there you are. Ms.
- 6 Oklesson, do you swear or affirm under the penalties of
- perjury that the testimony you shall give will be the
- truth and nothing but the truth?
- 9 MS. OKLESSON: I do.
- 10 MS. MCNEIL: And it's O-k-l-e-s-s-o-n,
- 11 correct?
- MS. OKLESSON: Correct. 12
- 13 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Thank you.
- 14 MS. MYERS: It looks like the participant's
- 15 screen sharing is disabled.
- MS. SCUDDER: Can she be given the right to --
- 17 ? Okay. Sorry. Okay. Before we get to the plan that's
- 18 on the screen, I just want to ask a few questions of
- 19 Ms. Oklesson. Ms. Oklesson, could you please just state
- 20 your name again and your business address for the
- 21 record?
- MS. OKLESSON: My name is Kelley Oklesson, I 22 22

- 1 am the owner of Groundsmith Collective, LLC. My address
- is 7003 Eversfield Drive, Hyattsville, Maryland 20782.
- MS. SCUDDER: And what is your profession?
- MS. OKLESSON: My profession is I am a
- landscape architect.
- MS. SCUDDER: And are you licensed by the
- state of Maryland?
- 8 MS. OKLESSON: I am licensed in the state of
- 9 Maryland.
- 10 MS. SCUDDER: And is your license current?
- 11 MS. OKLESSON: My license is current.
- 12 MS. SCUDDER: And did you personally prepare
- 13 the special exception site plan that is before the
- 14 zoning hearing examiner today?
- 15 MS. OKLESSON: Yes. I personally prepared the
- 16 site plan that is before the zoning hearing examiner.
- 17 MS. SCUDDER: And in preparing the site plan,
- 18 did you follow the requirements of the Prince George's
- 19 County Zoning Ordinance and the Prince George's County
- 20 Landscape Manual?

10

- 21 MS. OKLESSON: Yes. I did follow the
- 22 requirements of the Prince George's County Zoning

Ordinance and Landscape Manual.

- MS. SCUDDER: And have you reviewed the
- technical staff report in this case?
- MS. OKLESSON: Yes. I have reviewed the
- technical staff report.
- MS. SCUDDER: And are you familiar with the
- conditions of approval that are listed at the end of
- the staff report?
- 9 MS. OKLESSON: Yes. I am familiar with the
- 10 conditions that are listed at the end of the staff
- 11 report on pages 14 and 15.
- 12 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And have those conditions
- 13 been addressed on the site plan?
- MS. OKLESSON: So, with what I'm sharing on my
- 15 screen here, the conditions have not yet been met. But
- 16 all conditions are implementable. We're -- these --
- 17 we'll be submitting a revised site plan after the
- 18 hearing today.
- 19 MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner, I would just ask
- 20 if we could leave the record open in this case so that
- 21 we can submit a revised site plan.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay. But you're saying that

16

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

applicant agrees to, and -- and the site plan will be
revised to address the applicable conditions for the
site plan?

So, applicant agrees to all of the conditions suggested by staff? Okay.

FEMALE 1: So, what do you want me to do?

MR. BROWN: Po- -- point of clarification here

8 though, Ms. Scudder, I mean, we don't really know what

9 this case is about in a vacuum. No one has told us no -

10 - what is the location of this particular property. I 11 know it's a daycare, you haven't given us that -- any

12 of that background.

So, before we get into the specifics here of 14 this particular site plan, like to have a witness to 15 tell us what they are requesting.

And also, with regards to a revision to this
17 site plan, we don't know, at least this witness hasn't
18 told us yet, are you planning to make changes other
19 than showing compliance with the proposed conditions to
20 this site plan?

MS. SCUDDER: Mr. Brown, I'm -- I'm happy to 22 reverse the order of the witnesses that I call. I

1 thought that we would put Ms. Okles- -- ma- -- Ms.

2 Oklesson on first just to acclimate everyone to the

3 site plan and what it's showing, and then I was going

4 to call Mr. Simasek to, you know, kind of go through

5 the proposal and the details of the daycare center.

6 But if you -- if you think that I should 7 reverse that order, I'm happy to do that. And I can go

8 ahead and call Mr. Ben Simasek, and then I can put Ms.

9 Kelley back on.

MR. BROWN: I mean, I think that's the way to 11 go so the people who are totally unfamiliar with this

12 record will have an understanding with what we're

13 talking about.

MS. SCUDDER: Okay. No problem. So, Ms. -- Ms.

15 Kelley, just hold on for a second, and then we'll pick

16 back up with your testimony after Mr. Simasek and after

17 Ms. Claudia testifies.

18 MS. OKLESSON: Shall I unshared my screen or

19 continue to share?

MS. SCUDDER: I think that it doesn't hurt to

21 keep it up, just because there may be a need to point

22 something out as we go through the testimony of Mr.

1 Simasek.

2 MS. MCNEIL: And if I may, welcome to a zoning

3 hearing. We like to allow people that can't stay to

4 testify, and I just got a message from Mr. Fischer that

5 he has to leave in the next 10 minutes. Would you all

6 mind allowing Mr. Fischer to go first?

7 MS. SCUDDER: Not a problem.

8 FEMALE 1: Yes.

9 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. So, if you take the exhibit

10 down for one second, Ms. Oklesson, we'll -- so Mr.

11 Fischer, can you come on screen?

12 MR. FISCHER: I can.

MS. MCNEIL: All right. Do you swear or affirm

14 under the penalties of perjury that the testimony you

15 shall give will be the truth and nothing but the truth?

16 MR. FISCHER: I do.

MS. MCNEIL: Okay. State your name and address

18 for the record, and then tell me what you'd like me to

19 know about your position on this application.

20 MR. FISCHER: Michael Fischer, 3409

21 Pennsylvania Street, Hyattsville, 20783. I provided

22 written testimony on behalf of this prior to the

1 session. Should I read that out loud now, or is it

2 enough to have submitted it to the commission for

3 exhibition?

14

4 MS. MCNEIL: You should read it, if you like.

5 And then, if you would send it to me again, just to

6 make sure that what you're reading now is what you're

7 sending.

8 And it will be marked as -- as exhibit 18 if

there's no objection after you start reading. Go ahead.

10 MR. FISCHER: All right. I'm writing on -- and

11 speaking on behalf of Espirales Montessori Bilingual

12 Daycare in -- with enthusiastic and without reservation

12 Daycare in -- with chalastic and without reservation

13 support for the approval of the zoning exception.

Our family has benefited immensely from the 15 care provided by Claudia and the other providers at

16 Espirales. Our older son attended Espirales for over

17 three years, never once did we doubt that he was in a

18 safe and nurturing environment.

19 Claudia and her team work hard to provide

20 enriching activities for the children, ensure that they

21 are meeting their developmental milestones. Our son's

22 verbal, social, and physical development blossomed

1 under her care, which included during the pandemic and the difficulties provided by that. We hope to be able to send our other children there too. Quality and affordable childcare is essential for many families nowadays. Allowing Espirales to expand and welcome more children, we believe, would 7 provide a significant positive impact on this 8 neighborhood which we live in, and the community writ 9 large. We live in the same neighborhood as Espirales 10 and appreciate having childcare so close. Thank you for considering our perspective. We 12 hope that this statement and those of the others, the 13 committee will understand the invaluable service that 14 Espirales provides to the community and allow for more 15 families to benefit from it. Thank you. 16 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Whi- -- while you're 17 resending it, does Mr. Brown have questions of Mr. 18 Fischer? 19 MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you. 20 MS. MCNEIL: Does Mr. Perry have questions of 21 Mr. Fischer? MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner --18 MR. BROWN: I see --MS. SCUDDER: -- I see that he put in the chat that he has none. And I saw that another person put in the chat that they also might need to leave earlier. And so, while we're kind of on this track, do 6 you think we could allow anyone that's here to testify either in support or in opposition if they have to lea-8 -- you know, maybe that we can just get everyone to put 9 in their testimony now before we get into the hearing. 10 Because I know people have to work. MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Hold up. Yes. We can. If 12 you don't mind and people's zoning counsel doesn't 13 mind. So, Mr. Fischer, you're free to go. And thank you 14 very much. And you sent it again, right? 15 MR. FISCHER: I will send it right now. MS. MCNEIL: Okay -- okay. Who else would like 16 families in the Hyattsville area, and now the daycare 16

17 to testify at this time? You could come on mike if

18 you'd like to testify, because it's sort of hard to see

FEMALE 3: You can --

FEMALE 3: -- go ahead.

MS. SORKIN: Yeah.

19 all of you.

20

21

22

19 MS. SORKIN: So --2 FEMALE 3: Yeah -- no. You go ahead and -- if -- if you need to go sooner. Go ahead. 4 MS. MCNEIL: So, Ms. Sorkin? MS. SORKIN: Thank you so much, Madam. Yeah. My name --MS. MCNEIL: And do you swear --? One -- one second. Do you swear or affirm under the penalties of 9 perjury that the testimony you shall give will be the 10 truth and nothing but the truth? That was a yes? Okay. 11 MS. SORKIN: Can you hear me? 12 MS. MCNEIL: And, Ms. Sorkin, state your name 13 and address, and then provide your testimony. 14 MS. SORKIN: My name is Naomi Sorkin. My -- my 15 address in Hyattsville is 5906 34th Avenue, 16 Hyattsville, Maryland 20782. 17 MS. MCNEIL: And what would you like to tell 18 me about the request? MS. SORKIN: So, my husband and I are property 20 owners in Hyattsville with a deep commitment to the 21 community at large. We're lu- -- we were lucky enough to find 20 1 Espirales Montessori Bilingual Daycare in 2020, and with Claudia and Ben's love and care, our daughter flourished there. Even in the midst of the pandemic, Claudia created a second home for our daughter and her classmates with a nature-based chi- -- child-led curriculum focused on play, movement, and so much 8 respect. Now our daughter is a thriving, independently-10 minded, curious, and creative, and confident 4-and-a-11 half-year-old, and we are forever indebted to Espirale-12 -- Espirales Montessori Bilingual Daycare for becoming

13 a critical part of our village in helping us raise our 14 daughter in those early years. 15 Claudia and her team have supported so many 17 is truly a rock in the community. Claudia is a driving 18 force for so much community-building in Hyattsville, 19 supporting and organizing creative storytelling and 20 music events in local parks, collaborating with local 21 artists, and strengthening local community-based 22 organization -- organizations.

24

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

In today's world, Espirales Monte- --

2 Bilingual Montes- -- Montessori Bilingual is the

- 3 definition of the kind of local women-led business we
- 4 should all be working to support and help sustain.
- 5 Therefore, I fully support the expansion of Espirales
- 6 to a larger space in the neighborhood.
- 7 Given the limited affordable options for
- 8 quality childcare in the area, we hope that a favorable
- 9 -- favorable, excuse me, decision is made to ensure
- 10 that more families and children can benefit from this
- 11 incredible daycare. Thank you.
- MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Mr. Brown, do you have
- 13 questions of Ms. Sor- --?
- 14 MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you.
- 15 MS. MCNEIL: Okay.
- 16 MS. SORKIN: Thank you.
- MS. MCNEIL: And, Mr. Perry, do you have
- 18 questions? Somebody looking at the chat for me? Oh, I
- 19 see it. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Perry. Thank you, Ms.
- 20 Sorkin. Ms. Ridgway, would you like to go next?
- MS. RIDGWAY: Sure. Yes. My name is Jennifer
- 22 Ridgway. I'm at --

1 contributions all the more vital.

- When the pandemic hit, I suddenly was
- 3 unemployed and I used the opportunity to bring my
- 4 skills to my community creating experiences in
- 5 neighbors' yards for a safe and physically distant art
- 6 learning experience to help youth navigate their
- 7 difficult emotions and enhance their digital learning.
- 8 Espirales Montessori Bilingual, LLC has been
- 9 and integral part of the Yard Drama's journey
- 10 supporting our expansion and growth so that together,
- 11 we can support our community's expansion and growth.
- Our partnership began after the City of
- 13 Hyattsville contracted my company to bring a theater
- 14 storytelling program to its local neighborhood parks.
- 15 Espirales Montessori Bilingual, LLC attended one of the 16 sessions.
- 17 In our post-session conversation, Claudia
- 18 Simasek and I recognized the opportunity for our
- 19 companies to collaborate.
- Since then, we have conducted weekly free
- 21 sessions for early learners and their caretakers at the
- 22 park. Espirales has even supported my interest in

- 1 MS. MCNEIL: Wait, wait, wait. Ms. Ridgway, do 2 you swear or affirm under the penalties of perjury that
- 3 the testimony you shall give will be the truth and
- 4 nothing but the truth?
- 5 MS. RIDGWAY: Indeed. Yes.
- 6 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Now your address and what 6
- you'd like to tell me.
- 8 MS. RIDGWAY: I am at 6116 43rd Street,
- 9 Hyattsville, Maryland. I'm a theater teaching artist
- 10 and the cofounder of Yard Dramas, LLC based in
- 11 Hyattsville, Maryland.
- I am grateful to share about my partnership
- 13 with Espirales Montessori Bilingual, LLC. I urge you to
- 14 grant their request for a ve- -- zoning special
- 15 exception at 7207 Hitching Post Lane as submitted in
- 16 case number SE-2023-001.
- 17 As a theater teaching artist, I have spent 30
- 18 years specializing in leading arts learning and making
- 19 experiences in educational and community settings.
- 20 Teaching artists like me leverage our professional
- 21 artistic skills and operate at the intersection of
- 22 arts, education, and community, making our

- supports to create -- my interest and efforts to create
- 2 intergenerational programming, allowing me to invite
- 3 members of my aging in place storytelling program to
- 4 participate too.
  - Lastly, Espirales Montessori Bilingual, LLC
- 6 has collaborated with me on several summer programs
- 7 with the aim of nurturing stewards of the Anacostia
- 8 Watershed. Working with Espirales Montessori Bilingual,
- 9 LLC has been a fantastic experience and a dream come 10 true.
- 11 Claudia's expertise with the Montessori
- 12 curriculum makes her a valuable partner that has mutual
- 13 benefit for the community overall. Our partnership
- 14 allows her clients' youth to develop strong
- 15 communication skills, and a love and respect for nature
- 16 that enriches the community overall.
- 17 Thank you for your time. And I hope you will
- 18 grant the zoning special exception for Espirales
- 19 Montessori Bilingual, LLC at 7207 Hitching Post Lane. 20 Thank you.
- MS. MCNEIL: Thank you, Ms. Ridgway. Mr.
- 22 Brown, do you have any questions?

28

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you. 1 Hyattsville resident and a parent of a child that's MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry, do you have any gone to Espirales, I want to share my full support for questions? Okay. None. Now, yes. If you -- I -- I can't Espirales Montessori Bilingual and encourage you to tell who's asking this question. But, yes. Submit the approve the daycare permit for a residential zone. document via e-mail to us. Okay. Ms. Carter, would you The work they are doing to provide affordable, like to testify? high quality, local daycare is so valuable to the Which e-mail address? community, especially in an area like Hyattsville where MS. MCNEIL: Did you contact us to get the there really is a shortage of affordable daycare. 9 link? When we first started looking for childcare 10 Yes. 10 for our daughter, we were really overwhelmed. It seemed MS. MCNEIL: Okay. It can be the same one. So 11 like every option we could find had a really long 11 12 it -- zhe@co.pg.md.us, or if you had an individual's 12 waitlist, was unbelievably expensive, or was a really 13 name, it'll still come to us. I don't know which way 13 long commute away from home. 14 you e-mailed us at this moment. You know what? Who's I'm so glad we found Espirales, and I truly 15 asking this, Ms. Sorkin? 15 could not imagine a better setting to sit- -- to send 16 MS. RIDGWAY: It was. 16 my baby girl. 17 FEMALE 1: Yeah. Would be her. 17 Espirales cared for my daughter for two years, 18 MS. RIDGWAY: But I also had the same 18 and we remained friends with the Simasek family. 19 Claudia and the other dedicated staff members are 19 question, Jennifer Ridgway too. 20 FEMALE 1: Mm-hmm. 20 nurturing, caring and provide such an enriching 21 21 environment for young children. MS. MCNEIL: Okay. 22 MS. SORKIN: Typical e-mail, the z-h-e. Okay. I know of multiple Hyattsville families that MS. MCNEIL: Okay. And, Ms. -- Ms. Rawlings are on the Espirales waitlist and hoping to get in if [ph], if you hear this, if you were to e-mail them the daycare is able to expand. right now, they'd know how to respond. So, it's Ms. 3 The community would truly benefit for -- from Sorkin and Ms. Ridgway. Espirales moving to the home across the street, and be 5 MS. RIDGWAY: Thank you so much. able to support more families in need. Espirales is the MS. MCNEIL: Thank you both. Okay. Ms. Carter, exact kind of business I want Hyattsville to support, do you swear or affirm under the penalties of perjury and I encourage the approval of the zoning permit. that the testimony you shall give will be the truth and Thank you. nothing but --? Oh, Alex, was it? I thought it was 9 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Mr. Brown, do you have 10 Miranda. 10 any questions? I was looking at Miranda. Which one of you 11 MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you. 12 wants to speak now? Both of you. Okay. So, I'll go with 12 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. And, Mr. Perry? Thank you, 13 Miranda first. 13 Mr. Perry. Thank you, Ms. Carter. Ms. Alex Carter, do Do you swear or affirm under the penalties of 14 you swear or affirm under the penalties of perjury that 15 perjury that the testimony you shall give will be the 15 the testimony you shall give will be the truth and 16 truth and nothing but the truth? 16 nothing but the truth? 17 MS. M. CARTER: Yes. 17 MS. A. CARTER: I do.

18 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. And provide your address 19 and then go ahead and provide your testimony. MS. A. CARTER: Alexandra Carter, 3308 Gumwood 21 Drive, Hyattsville, Maryland 20783. I'm probably the

22 first person testifying who is not a parent. But I am a

18

MS. MCNEIL: Okay. State your address and what

MS. M. CARTER: My address is 5512 39th

21 Avenue, Hyattsville, Maryland 20781. Good morning,

19 you would like to tell me about this application.

22 everyone. Thank you for letting me speak. As a

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

1 neighbor of Espirales, I live about two doors down in -- in University Hills.

And I am delighted to support, very 4 enthusiastically, their application for a zoning exception to expand their operations.

The childcare center has been, I think, an 7 enormous benefit to our community as a small, high 8 staff to student ratio. The students -- the center 9 maintains a clean and orderly environment, and the 10 students -- children there seem to be happy and well-11 cared-for.

12 One of my greatest joys as a resident in this 13 neighborhood is to see the staff and children every 14 morning on their way down to -- going down to the 15 playground near the pond and coming back up. They 16 always seem full of energy, and very happy, and it is a 17 pleasure to see Claudia, her -- her folks, and the 18 young children going by.

Espirales is a woman-owned and operated small 20 business providing a -- an invaluable service to our 21 community at an affordable rate. I've had numerous 22 conversations with my neighbors about this proposed

1 expansion, and have not heard a single negative 2 comment.

Everyone is delighted that this is the kind of 4 business that we want in our community, and that the opportunity to expand should be -- should be seized 6 upon, not only approved. It should be enthusiastically embraced.

I also believe that moving the daycare center 9 to Hitching Post Lane will provide a slight degree of 10 better safety for the children, as Hitching Post Lane 11 is a less well-traveled street than Gumwood, which is 12 somewhat of a through street in our neighborhood, and 13 we've had issues with speeding and other careless 14 driving.

15 So, I'm enthusiastically supporting the 16 application of Espirales for this exception, and urge 17 you to vote in support. And I appreciate the 18 opportunity to speak on their behalf. Thank you. MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Mr. Brown, any

20 questions?

MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you. 21

22 MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry? Oh, okay. Well, Mr. 1 Perry, come on camera. He has a question of you, Ms.

Carter. No. We can't hear or see you yet. Mr. Brown,

Mr. Perry is saying he has a mike and no camera.

MR. BROWN: Can -- so, can you speak for a moment, sir? You may want to log off and log back on,

sir.

7 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Ms. Carter, do you have a

little while?

MR. PERRY: Can I be heard?

10 MS. MCNEIL: Can you wait? Oh, Mr. Perry?

11 MR. PERRY: Hello?

12 MS. MCNEIL: Can hear you now. What's your

13 question of Ms. Carter?

MR. PERRY: Okay. Can you hear the microphone? 14

MS. MCNEIL: Yes. 15

MR. PERRY: Okay. Just a quick question for --

17 for -- for Ms. Carter. You mentioned that the road had,

18 quote, high traffic and was not as safe as -- as -- I

19 think it's -- is it Bridle Path that the --

20 MS. A. CARTER: Hitching --

21 MR. PERRY: -- daycare center it's on?

MS. A. CARTER: Hitching Post would be the new 22

1 location.

30

MR. PERRY: Sorry, Hitching Post. I knew it

3 was a horse name. So, it's Hitching Post. Can you kind

of describe what you're talking about when you say the

5 traffic from Gumwood? Because Hitching Post is a dead 6 end road, and there's on- -- only one way in and one

way out into -- onto Gumwood.

MS. A. CARTER: Right. So, Gumwood Drive

9 extends from Wells Parkway to a dead end near an

10 apartment complex. And for a residential street, it's

11 fairly heavy tra- -- heavily traveled, especially at 12 rush hour.

13 The -- the good news about that is that all of 14 the houses on -- on the side of the street that I live 15 on and that Espirales is located on are set back from

16 the street by approximately 30 feet.

And that wa- -- and since University Hills was

18 incorporated into the City of Hyattsville, we've had 19 sidewalks installed in the neighborhood, which the

20 Espirales staff make use of to take the students down

21 to the -- to the playground and return them to the

22 facility.

36

### Transcript of Hearing

Conducted on March 19, 2024

MR. PERRY: Well, actually, I -- I walk the

2 neighborhood just about on a daily basis. So, to -- to accurately describe what you're talking about, the

sidewalks, I believe in 2019, were recently installed

on Gumwood.

10

There are no sidewalks on Bridle Path, and the

street actually to the duck pond is Stanford Street.

Stanford Street does not have any sidewalks. So, in

9 order to actually get to --

MR. BROWN: Mr. Perry -- Mr. Perry --

MR. PERRY: Go ahead. 11

12 MR. BROWN: You're testifying now. At this

13 point in time, you only have --

MR. PERRY: Okay. Well, I'm going to --14

15 MR. BROWN: -- permission to ask questions.

16 MR. PERRY: -- the -- I -- I don't want this

17 to go long. I'm just saying -- I just want to make note

18 that -- that Ms. Carter is indicating that there's high

19 traffic on Gumwood. And that's it.

20 MR. BROWN: All right. Do you have any other

21 questions?

MR. PERRY: No thank you. Thank you for -- for 22 like to about this application.

34

1 -- for working with me.

MS. MCNEIL: Sure. Ms. Carter, do you have any

redirect based on the questions that you were asked? Or

are you --?

MS. A. CARTER: Ma- -- my under- -- my

experience with the travel of the children to and from

the school, between the school and the -- the

playground is that they travel down Gumwood, and then

9 down Wells Parkway or Boulevard, I can never remember

10 on which side of Adelphi we're on. And that they are on

11 the sidewalks at all times. They do not take Stanford,

12 they take the route of Gumwood to -- to Wells.

It is true that Hitching Post does not have

14 sidewalks due to voting -- a vote by the -- the

15 homeowners on that -- on that bit of street. But

16 because the road is so lightly traveled, I feel that

17 there's no -- that the net increase for -- that the net

18 for safety for the students is positive in terms of

19 safety.

MS. MCNEIL: Okay. And -- and because of the

21 questioning, I got a little confused as well. So,

22 there's an existing daycare on Gumwood. I thought I

1 heard you say, and you can tell me if I heard

incorrectly, that you think that the new daycare along

Hitching Post may be safer to travel because it had

less traffic. Did I hear that?

MS. A. CARTER: That is my belief.

6 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. All right. And that's --

and that's -- I just wanted to clarify it. So, I think

-- I think we have asked you sufficient questions, and

9 you can stay, or you're free to go at this point either

10 way. Thank you. So, is there any other citizen that

11 would need to testify now?

12 MS. FISH: I would like to.

13 MS. MCNEIL: If so, just come on camera.

14 MS. FISH: Yeah.

15 MS. MCNEIL: Yes. I see you. Jessica Fish. Ms.

16 Fish, do you swear or affirm under the penalties of

17 perjury that the testimony you shall give will be the

18 truth and nothing but the truth?

19 MS. FISH: I do.

20 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. State your name and address

21 for the record, and then let me -- tell me what you'd

MS. FISH: Sure. My name's Jessica Fish. I

live at 9704 52nd Avenue in College Park, Maryland

20740. Today I'm writing to express my earnest

endorsement for the expansion of Espirales Montessori

5 Daycare.

6 As a parent to two children who have and

currently attend the daycare, and as a member of the

8 neighboring community, I can attest to the invaluable

9 role that Claudia and the Simaseks have played in my

10 child's development and care. Espirales is a vital

11 support system for myself and numerous families in our

12 area. Claudia is exceptionally dedicated to delivering

13 childcare that remains affordable to young families.

I first met Claudia five years ago when we

15 were looking for a daycare for my now 6-year-old. He

16 was struggling at a larger daycare center, dealing with

17 extreme separation anxiety and shyness, and we were

18 desperate to find a smaller daycare center to meet his

19 needs. I instantly felt at ease with Claudia, and

20 immediately enrolled him after meeting her.

In the years that he was there, he received 21

22 incredible love and care from Claudia and blossomed

40

# Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

1 into a social and confident kid who easily transitioned 1 address,

- 2 to preschool. It therefore came as no surprise that
- when we found out that I was pregnant with our
- 4 daughter, that we immediately called Clau to ensure
- daughter, that we immediately earlied chart to ensure
- 5 that she was able to benefit from the incredible care
- 6 from Espirales Mont- -- Montessori Daycare, just like
- 7 her brother had.
- 8 Espirales excels in creating a nurturing and
- 9 stimulating environment for young children. The
- 10 committed staff are not only highly skilled
- 11 professionals, but also compassionate individuals who
- 12 pri- -- prioritize the well-being of growth of each
- 13 child that goes through their door.
- 14 As someone who has a PhD in child development,
- 15 I want to emphasize the critical importance of these
- 16 early social learning experiences in the first years of
- 17 life, and cannot say enough about how Espirales and
- 18 Clau meets and exceeds these needs for young children
- 19 in our community. She truly creates a vibrant, thriving
- 20 environment for little ones that is really hard --
- 21 you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone else who does a
- 22 better job.
  - I think you'll hear from many of us today, and
- 2 you already have, of the value of Espirales for our
- 3 local community, and it's -- and -- and the fact that
- 4 it's indispensable for children and young families, and
- 5 is therefore seemingly deserving of support from
- 6 community leadership to approve the zoning exception
- 7 and the relocation and expansion of Espirales.
- 8 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Mr. Brown, do you have
- 9 any questions?
- 10 MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you.
- 11 MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry, do you have any
- 12 questions?
- 13 MR. PERRY: No questions.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay. He said no questions? Okay.
- 15 Thank you, Ms. Fish. Okay. Ms. Rodriguez, are you
- 16 coming on camera to testify? Okay. So, turn off your
- 17 mi- -- I mean, turn on your mike. And do you swear or
- 18 affirm under the penalties of perjury that the
- 19 testimony you shall give will be the truth and nothing 20 but the truth?
- 21 MS. RODRIGUEZ: I do.
- 22 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. State your name and

- 1 address, and go ahead and --
- 2 MS. RODRIGUEZ: [inaudible].
- 3 MS. MCNEIL: -- go through your testimony.
- 4 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Sindy Rodriguez, 921 Butternut
- 5 Street Northwest, Washington, DC. I've been acquainted
- 6 with Ms. Claudia Simasek for over 10 years. We've
- 7 worked together, she care of my baby boy for some time.
- 8 And all I have to say about her and the way she is with
- 9 the children, it's amazing.
- 10 I've also been in prepar- -- teacher
- 11 preparation with her, we've taken training together.
- 12 She's very passionate about her work, she is very
- 13 passionate about what she do, and how she does it with
- 14 the children. One thing I love about Claudia is that
- 15 she put her culture in front of everything. She loves
- 16 showing her children in her daycare about her culture
- 17 and teach them about it too.
- I am super excited about her expanding her
- 19 business because I -- I mean, I'm one of the few people
- 20 that think that there needs to be more childcare around
- 21 the area, Hyattsville need it. And also, I have a new
- 22 baby that I would love to have in Claudia's center if I
- 38
- 1 have the chance. thank you very much.
  - MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Mr. Brown, any
  - 3 questions?
  - 4 MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you.
  - 5 MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry, any questions?
  - 6 MR. PERRY: No questions.
  - 7 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Thank you, Ms.
  - 8 Rodriguez. Ms. Wood, you would like to testify? Are you
  - 9 on camera?
  - MS. WOOD: Yes. Hello. Thank you. Good
  - 11 morning.
  - MS. MCNEIL: Wait, wait, wait, wait. I have to
  - 13 find you. It -- I like to see the people I'm talk- --
  - 14 where is Ms. Wood?
  - MS. WOOD: I'm here.
  - MS. MCNEIL: Right next to me. There you are.
  - 17 Ms. Wood, do you swear or affirm under the penalties of
  - 18 perjury that the testimony you shall give will be the
  - 19 truth and nothing but the truth?
  - 20 MS. WOOD: I do.
  - MS. MCNEIL: Okay. State your name and
  - 22 address, and tell me what you want to tell me [ph].

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

d on March 19, 20.

1	MS. WOOD: My name is Nicola Wood and I live
2	at 2022 Common ad Drive Heatterville Marriand 20792 I

- 2 at 3032 Gumwood Drive, Hyattsville, Maryland 20783. I
- 3 support this exception to accommodate a larger daycare
- 4 in my neighborhood. And thank you for allowing me to
- 5 testify.
- 6 I live down the street from Espirales
- 7 Bilingual Daycare, and my son Lucio Ventura went there
- 8 from mid-2019 to the end of 2022. Espirales provided
- 9 excellent care and instruction for my son, and I kept
- 10 him there actually longer than I usually would have
- 11 because it was so good, and it was a small daycare
- 12 center, and during the pandemic, it felt safer to be at
- 13 a small center.
- 14 The community that Claudia creates among the
- 15 families at the daycare was invaluable to raising
- 16 Lucio. Claudia and her staff are the reason that my son
- 17 is fluent in Spanish. We're a bicultural household, and
- 18 it was important to our family that his daycare
- 19 reinforce learning Spanish.
- During the pandemic, my kids and I walked up
- 21 the street together, and I came home to telework, and
- 22 to join my daughter, who was doing virtual school.
- 1 Before and after that, when we weren't doing pandemic
- 2 routine, I could drop him off on my way out of the
- 3 neighborhood to drop my daughter at school, and drive
- 4 to the metro for work.
- I know that two families up the street wanted
- 6 to go to Espirales too, they're kind of between me and
- 7 the daycare, and they asked me about it, but Claudia
- 8 didn't have any vacancies at the time.
- 9 As someone who is -- who has to travel Gumwood 10 to go anywhere from my house, I think that Gumwood will
- 11 be safer if the daycare is on Hitching Post Lane.
- 12 People will no be pulling out of parking spots on
- 13 Gumwood into the traffic, and instead will be turning
- 14 from Hitching Post.
- 15 I support this exception for a daycare that
- 16 can accommodate more kids, although my kids are too old
- 17 to attend. The early years with little kids are tough,
- 18 and I was so lucky to have a daycare conveniently up
- 19 the street. It made things easier.
- There are no other places, except maybe the
- 21 library, that I can walk to with my kids to teach them
- 22 healthy habits, that exercising is part of our daily

- 1 routine. I support this zoning exception to make our
- 2 neighborhood a better place to live. Thank you very
- 3 much for your time.
- 4 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Mr. Brown, any
- questions?
- 6 MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you.
- 7 MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry, any questions?
- 8 MR. PERRY: Yes. One question.
- 9 MS. MCNEIL: Okay.
- MR. PERRY: I'd ask the -- Ms. Wood to clarify
- 11 what she means by safe. Because once again, I believe
- 12 that street is -- is a one-way street, and there's only
- 13 one way to get in and out, and it's Gumwood. How are
- 14 you saying that's safer just one -- just having to go
- 15 onto that busy road when you can't go any other way?
- MS. WOOD: Because right now when I'm passing
- 17 by, I have to keep my eyes peeled with two little kids
- 18 in the backseat looking for people who are pulling out
- 19 of parking spots. And I don't think somebody coming
- 20 from Hitching Post Lane is going to be quite as
- 21 difficult to spot.
- MR. PERRY: There are cars parked on Gumwood
- 1 Drive that obstruct the view. So I'm just going to
  - 2 leave it at that. So I -- I disagree with that answer.
  - 3 But thank you.
  - 4 MS. MCNEIL: Okay.
  - 5 MS. WOOD: Yes. I think we disagree.
  - 6 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Thank you -- thank you very
  - 7 much.

42

- 8 MS. WOOD: Thank you.
- 9 MS. MCNEIL: Ms. Banks, would you like to 10 testify?
- 11 MS. BANKS: Yes, please.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Do you swear or affirm
- 13 under the penalties of perjury that the testimony you
- 14 shall give will be the truth and nothing but the truth?
- 15 MS. BANKS: Yes.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay. So, state your name and
- 17 address, and then proceed with the testimony.
- MS. BANKS: I'm Alexis Banks at 5703 37th
- 19 Avenue in Hyattsville, Maryland. And I am joining today
- 20 to express my strong support for the establishment of
- 21 an Espirales Montessori Bilingual childcare center at
- 22 7207 Hitching Post Lane.

Our family has had two children attend

- 2 Espirales over the past three years, one of which is
- 3 there today, and we cannot speak highly enough of the
- 4 incredible care that Claudia and her staff offer. It's
- 5 truly a Hyattsville gem, and it would be such an
- incredible benefit to the community to allow Espirales
- to expand into a larger space.
- Espirales thoughtfully approaches its work
- 9 with children and invests in the surrounding community.
- 10 So, for example, we already heard about Claudia's work
- 11 with Yard Dramas that take place at the nearby duck
- 12 pond for children at Espirales and of their neighbors
- 13 that would like to join.
- She has also worked with other area businesses
- 15 to cater meals for the children and parents, and so an
- 16 investment in Espirales is an investment in the
- 17 community overall. We know many families that are on
- 18 the waiting list at Espirales as we- -- as well as
- 19 other daycares in the area, and there's a severe gap
- 20 between supply and demand for high-quality care in
- 21 Hyattsville.
- 22 It'd be a missed opportunity not to let this
- 1 well-established daycare expand into a larger space in
- 2 order to welcome more children and families. So, as a
- 3 resident of Hyattsville and an Espirales parent, I
- 4 sincerely encourage you to approve this request and
- allow Espirales to move to 7207 Hitching Post Lane.
- 6 And I shared that testimony via e-mail. I also
- 7 just wanted to add that as a parent, I have also
- 8 thought many times that it would be safe -- safer to
- 9 move into the cul-de-sac across the street from the
- 10 current location. And so, excited, for safety purposes,
- 11 about this proposed change. Thank you.
- 12 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Do you have any questions, 12
- 13 Mr. Brown?
- 14 MR. BROWN: No questions.
- MS. MCNEIL: Any questions, Mr. Perry? 15
- 16 MR. PERRY: No questions. Thank you.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Will you all double-check -
- 18 Ms. Bah, would you double-check that we have an e-
- 19 mail from Ms. Banks, and if so, let me know what that
- 20 exhibit number will be, when you get a chance. Okay.
- 21 Thank you, Ms. Banks. Jenny?
- MS. ROCHE: Yes, ma'am. Good morning. 22

- MS. MCNEIL: Good morning. Do you swear or
- affirm under the penalties of perjury that the
- testimony you shall give will be the truth and nothing
- but the truth?
- MS. ROCHE: I do.
- MS. MCNEIL: And what's -- okay. So, state
- your full name for the record and your address, and
- then provide your testimony.
- MS. ROCHE: My name is Jenny Roche, and I live
- 10 on 8536 Adelphi Road, Adelphi, Maryland, which is the
- 11 same as Hyattsville, 20783.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay. And are you saying Roach,
- 13 R-o-a- -- a-c-h?
- 14 MS. ROCHE: Roche, R-o-c-h-e.
- 15 MS. MCNEIL: Got you. Thank you. Okay. What
- 16 would you like to say about this application?
- MS. ROCHE: Well, first of all, I want to say
- 18 that I am delighted that -- to be so close to this
- 19 daycare. Regardless -- I think that regardless of how
- 20 big or small streets are, we moms need daycare,
- 21 especially single moms. And I am only five minutes
- 22 away.

1

46

I also -- I am su- -- super excited that Ms.

- Claudia's also Spanish-speaking, which means that she
- is bilingual, and that can be a plus for our own
- growing minors. Claudia is very passionate, so I'm very
- looking forward for a positive outcome. And that is it,
- ma'am. Thank you.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Thank you. Mr. Brown, do
- you have any questions?
- 9 MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you.
- MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry --10
- 11 MS. ROCHE: Thank you.
- MS. MCNEIL: I'm so -- Mr. Perry, any
- 13 questions?
- MR. PERRY: Questions. Thank you. 14
- MS. MCNEIL: You said no questions. Okay. 15
- 16 Thank you, ma'am. Who's next that would like to
- 17 testify? Is it Ms. Fischer?
- 18 MS. FISCHER: Yes.
- 19 MS. MCNEIL: Okay.
- 20 MS. FISCHER: Thank you. I'd be happy to
- 21 testify.
- 22 MS. MCNEIL: So, do you swear or affirm under

47

52

### Transcript of Hearing

Conducted on March 19, 2024

the penalties of perjury that the testimony you shall

- 2 give will be the truth and nothing but the truth?
- MS. FISCHER: I do. 3
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay. State your name and address
- for the record, and then tell me about --
- MS. FISCHER: My name is Laura --
- 7 MS. MCNEIL: -- position.
- MS. FISCHER: My na- -- my name is Laura
- 9 Fischer, I live at 3409 Pennsylvania Street,
- 10 Hyattsville, Maryland 20783. My husband Michael
- 11 testified earlier, but in order to be a person of
- 12 record, we testified separately.
- 13 So, I support everything that he said, but I
- 14 wanted to add that I live in the neighborhood, my two
- 15 sons -- or sorry, my older son attended Espirales from
- 16 August of 2020 through September of 2023. It was a
- 17 fantastic environment for him. We really appreciated
- 18 that he was in a very safe, loving, nurturing
- 19 environment.
- 20 The fact that it's a bilingual daycare was
- 21 also very important to us. I speak Spanish, and I
- 22 really appreciated having my son in an environment that

- 1 infants up into toddlerhood, having a home environment
- that can be replicated for the daycare setting is
- something that is really important to us.
- 4 And Claudia and the other care providers at
- the daycare certainly create a home environment, and
- so, I have no problem handing my children over to
- Claudia and to the other providers to be taken care of.
- 8 So, like my husband Michael testified earlier,
- 9 I strongly and enthusiastically support the approval of
- 10 the zoning exception, and hope that we can continue to
- 11 provide and expand access to Espirales care in the
- 12 community. Thank you.
- 13 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Mr. Brown, do you have
- 14 any questions?
- 15 MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you.
- MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry, do you have any 16
- 17 questions?
- 18 MR. PERRY: No questions. Thank you.
- 19 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Ms. -- I'm going to
- 20 mess it up, Palus?
- 21 MS. PALUS: Palus.
- MS. MCNEIL: Palus. Ms. Palus, do you swear or

1 was Spanish-speaking so that he could develop and learn

- from an early age.
- As my husband mentioned earlier, we never 3
- 4 doubted and have never doubted the care that Claudia
- provides. Our son blossomed under his daycare, and we
- were very sad when he eventually needed to transition
- to preschool last year when he was older.
- As you can see, I'm holding my younger son
- 9 right now, Luke [ph], he's a couple months old. And we
- 10 hope that one day he might be able to go to Espirales
- 11 as well, too.
- 12 Like others have said on the line, we know
- 13 many families that are interested in attending
- 14 Espirales, but can't do so right now because of the
- 15 waiting list and -- and the smaller size. And the --
- 16 the daycare has been such a fabulous oppor- -- option
- 17 for us, and we want other people to be able to avail
- 18 themselves of that opportunity.
- 19 And like I mentioned, I live just a block away
- 20 on Pennsylvania Street, which is one street up, and we
- 21 love being able to have a daycare in the neighborhood.
- 22 We really feel that in the early childhood ages from

- affirm under the penalties of perjury that the
- testimony you shall give will be the truth and nothing
- but the truth?
- MS. PALUS: I swear.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay. So, state your name and
- address, and then provide your testimony.
- MS. PALUS: Thank you. My name is Emily Palus,
- and I reside at 7101 Pony Trail Lane -- excuse me, in
- 9 Hyattsville, Maryland 20782. I want to thank you for
- 10 the opportunity to speak today about the zoning special
- 11 exception for the property located at 7207 Hitching
- 12 Post Lane requested by Espirales Montessori Bilingual,
- 13 LLC.
- 14 I live about three blocks away from the
- 15 property in question, and I speak today in overwhelming
- 16 support of the application. Access to childcare is
- 17 critical for working families, yet daycare providers
- 18 are in short supply. My kids are now in elementary
- 19 school age, but I know what a crippling challenge it is
- 20 when a parent can't find quality, affordable daycare in
- 21 their community.
- 22 I know several neighborhood families that have

56

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

1 attended Espirales, and their children have thrived.

2 The requirements for a licensed facility are rigorous,

and I applaud the steps Ms. Claudia has taken to meet

4 all the standards and guidelines as a provider and as

an employer.

6 Childcare businesses are largely locally-

7 owned, and an avenue for entrepreneurship for working

women. As a neighborhood, we should support these

9 enterprises and the opportunities they bring.

10 I also appreciate the investment made by the

11 new owners of the property. Since they purchased in

12 2022, I've observed the renovations made by Joe Luebke

13 and Tom Wright. The transformation is incredible,

14 wonderful after a decade or really more of maintenance

15 issues at the sight. The additional improvements have

16 re- -- the additional improvements now required for a

17 childcare center will only further improve the

18 appearance and the utility of the property.

Traffic will be minimal, and being in the

20 neighborhood allows for pedestrian drop-offs and pick-

21 ups by those in walking and bicycle distance. The

22 location is along my children's walk to the school bus

54

1 stop, and I'm delighted that Espirales is on their

2 route.

3 When I chance upon the caregivers and children

4 in the neighborhood, I am filled with joy at seeing

their smiling young faces, and hearing their bilingual

6 banter. Daycare centers within neighborhoods serve

important and special community roles.

I wish Ms. Claudia the greatest success in her

9 endeavors, and know her being able to expand will --

10 will bring great value to the community, and it's very

11 important. I su- -- fully support the zoning special

12 exception and urge you to approve. Thank you so very

13 much.

14 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Mr. Brown, any

15 questions?

16 MR. BROWN: No questions.

17 MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry, any questions?

MR. PERRY: Yes. I do. Thank you. Could you

19 describe why you escort your children to the bus stop?

20 MS. PALUS: I'm sorry. Can you speak up? I

21 can't hear you.

22 MR. PERRY: Can you describe why you escort 22 at 7209 Hitching Post Lane, I fully and

1 your children to the bus stop, please?

MS. PALUS: Why I escort them? Because of

their age -- because of their ages. However, in more

time, they would be able to walk alone. And I am

relieved to know that there are houses that are

occupied by caring people along the route.

MR. PERRY: Last question, can you tell me

8 which route you take to -- take for walking to the bus

9 stop, please?

10 MS. PALUS: We walk up my street, Pony Trail

11 Lane, then down Bridle Path, then along the right-of-

12 way to the top, or the end, of Hitching Post Lane, down

13 Hitching Post Lane, then onto Gumwood to the corner of

14 Gumwood and Stanford.

15 MR. PERRY: Okay. Thank you.

MS. MCNEIL: Thank you, Ms. Palus. 16

17 MS. PALUS: Thank you.

18 MS. MCNEIL: Is that everyone? Oh, no. We have

19 Tom.

20 MR. BANKS: [inaudible].

MS. MCNEIL: Oh, pardon me. Who's --? I'm 21

22 sorry. Who was that speaking?

1 MR. BANKS: This is [inaudible].

MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Banks, you're breaking up. If

you don't mind, I'm going to start with Tom so you can

work on the sound. Tom, what's your last name? You're -

- vou're muted.

MR. WRIGHT: Wright, W-r-i-g-h-t. 6

MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Mr. Wright, do you swear or

affirm under the penalties of perjury that the

testimony you shall give will be the truth and nothing

10 but the truth?

11 MR. WRIGHT: Yes. I do.

12 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. So, gi- -- state your

13 address and then your position on this application.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes 7209 Hitching Post Lane,

15 Hyattsville, Maryland 20783. We actually live adjacent

16 to the property at 7207 Hitching Post Lane, and we also

17 co-own that property with our neighbors next door on

18 Gumwood. It's -- it's a four partner ownership of the

19 house.

As a co-owner of the property at 7207 Hitching

21 Post Lane, and also a resident on the adjacent property

1 enthusiastically support this exception to allow

- 2 Claudia and Ben to relocate and expand Espirales
- 3 Montessori Bilingual, LLC under this special exemption
- 4 hearing 2023-001.
- We've lived in this neighborhood since 2011.
- 6 We've seen the wonderful gift that Espirales has
- 7 brought to the neighborhood for providing top quality
- 8 daycare. When we acquired the property in 2022, it was
- 9 primarily as an investment.
- We were approached by Claudia and Ben if they
- 11 might be able to lease the property in order for
- 12 Espirales might be able to expand their wonderful gift
- 13 with a much-needed community service. We immediately
- 14 felt this would be a perfect fit, and we're absolutely
- 15 thrilled to know that this is a possibility, and we
- 16 fully support it, and we hope that this is fully 17 approved.
- Just another quick question. I -- I have to
- 19 pop off at 11:00. I don't know how long this hearing's
- 20 going to be, I could pop back on at early afternoon.
- 21 But I wasn't entirely sure what the venue of this was.
- MS. MCNEIL: I will -- I will allow as much
- 1 time as is needed for the hearing without repetitive
- 2 testimony, and hoping that everyone gives me an early
- 3 birthday present, since my birthday is Friday. So I
- 4 don't know what time you're planning on popping back,
- 5 but I'm hoping we won't be here after 12:00, even. But
- 6 we'll see.
- 7 MR. WRIGHT: Got it, got it, got it. Okay.
- 8 Yes. I -- I was thinking if it went into early
- 9 afternoon, I'd pop back on at 1:00. But I -- I do have 10 a work --
- MS. MCNEIL: But feel free -- you know what?
- 12 Contact -- contact the Simaseks -- the Simas- -- I'll 13 get it.
- 14 MR. WRIGHT: Yeah.
- 15 MS. MCNEIL: Contact them, and if -- if we're
- 16 still going, do come back.
- 17 MR. WRIGHT: Oh, perfect. I'm going to stay on 18 until 11:00, but I have a work meeting I have to go to.
- 19 So --
- 20 MS. MCNEIL: Okay -- okay. Thank you.
- 21 MS. ROCHE: Happy birthday, mi- --
- MS. MCNEIL: Who's that?

- MS. ROCHE: Jenny Roche. Happy early birthday
- 2 to you.
- 3 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you, Ms. Roche. I'm so
- 4 spoiled. Still spoiled all these years. Okay. Ms.
- 5 Scudder, does it look like that's everybody? Or do you
- 6 all see --?
- MR. BROWN: Madam Examiner, let me just ask
- 8 Mr. Wright a question or two.
- 9 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. I'm sorry about that. I'm 10 sorry.
- MR. BROWN: Mr. Wright, I was looking at this
- 12 file, and on the application disclosure form, the
- 13 owners of the subject property, 7207, are listed as
- 14 yourself, Joseph -- how did you pronounce his last
- 15 name, Luebke?
- MR. WRIGHT: Luebke, he's my husband.
- MR. BROWN: Luebke, and then Ronald and Ronald
- 18 Pedone, and Elizabeth Payer.
- 19 MR. WRIGHT: Yes.
- MR. BROWN: You did clarify at one point, you
- 21 live next door at 7209 and the property is 7207,
- 22 correct?

58

- 1 MR. WRIGHT: Correct.
  - MR. BROWN: All right. And Mr. Pedone filed an
  - 3 affidavit -- ethics affidavit in this case, but there
  - 4 was no ethics affidavit in this case from the other
  - 5 owners, yourself, Mr. Luebke, I apologize if I'm
  - 6 mispronouncing it again, and Elizabeth Payer. So, Ms.
  - 7 Scudder, they are the property owners, so they need to
  - 8 file ethics affidavits.
  - 9 However, I also looked at the SDAT for this
  - 10 property, and the actual owner of the property is HPL
  - 11 Holdings, LLC. I am assuming, Mr. Wright, that the four
  - 12 members that I just named are the members of HPL
  - 13 Holdings, LLC. Is that correct?
  - MR. WRIGHT: Yes -- yes. When -- when we --
  - 15 when the four of -- when Joe and I and our neighbors,
  - 16 Ron and Elizabeth, talked about purchasing this
  - 17 property as an investment, we were advised by an
  - 18 attorney that we should consider creating an LLC, and
  - 19 have ownership of the house under that LLC. So, under
  - 20 the advisement of an attorney, that's what we did. That
  - 21 was done just about a month or so ago --
  - MR. BROWN: Yeah.

59

63 MR. WRIGHT: -- finalized. And would then --1 Mr. Brown, could -- could someone e-mail me precisely 2 MR. BROWN: I saw that -what I should do so that I can --3 MR. WRIGHT: -- [inaudible] with the county. 3 MR. BROWN: Yes. MR. BROWN: Saw that in the record. So, what, 4 MR. WRIGHT: -- submit what's necessary? Ms. Scudder, you would need to do is you need to get a 5 MS. SCUDDER: I've got you covered, sir. certificate of good standing for HPL Holdings, LLC, MS. MCNEIL: Ms. Scudder will. 7 which is currently in good standing. And we need an MS. SCUDDER: Mr. Brown, I do have ethics affidavit from all four members. Mr. Pedone has certificates of status for both of the LLCs that you 9 already filed his. 9 just covered. And, Madam Examiner, if I may submit 10 Then in addition, the applicant here is 10 those into the record now. I believe they would be 11 described as Espirales Montessori Bilingual, LLC, Mr. 11 exhibits maybe 18 and 19. 12 and Mrs. Simasek. And again, I apologize, I'm not MS. MCNEIL: You would believe that. But I 13 think -- I was getting ready to go over this with Ms. 13 fluent in Spanish, not a bit. You are the applicants 14 individually, but you listed the LLC as the applicant 14 Bah to be on the safe side. But I believe you're 15 on this case. Again, Ms. Scudder, we need to have 15 revised statement of justification was 16, the marked 16 certificate of good standing for Espirales Montessori 16 up site plan was 17, Mr. Fischer's written testimony 17 Bilingual, LLC. 17 was 18. 18 They were forfeited for several years, however 18 I was thinking Ms. Banks' testimony will then 19 they did -- rather, they were reinstated the middle of 19 become 19, and so, the SDAT certificates will be 20 and 20 last year. So, we do need a certi- -- certificate of 20 21. And we'll just let Ms. Bah re- -- mark. I don't 21 good standing for them. All right? And so, my initial 21 know which one will come through first. But it's for 22 question which raised me to look at all these issues 22 the two business entities. 64 62 1 was, there is no family living at the subject property, MS. SCUDDER: Thank you. Ms. -- Madam Examiner, you said Fischer -- Fischer's letter is a- --2 it is primarily used as a daycare center. Is that 3 correct, Mr. Wright? 18, and I'm sorry. What was 19? MR. WRIGHT: It -- the property at 7207? 4 MS. MCNEIL: I -- and I'm sorry. It was Ms. MR. BROWN: Yeah, 7207. Banks, but I can't think of her first name right now. MR. WRIGHT: Is that what --? 6 MALE 4: Alexis Banks. MR. BROWN: Right. MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. I'm glad you stayed. MR. WRIGHT: Right now, it's -- it's -- it is Okay. Thank you, Ms. Banks. 9 not occupied, and we're waiting for this to be approved MR. BROWN: And as I indicated, Ms. Scudder, 10 so that --10 we need ethics affidavits from the four members of HPL MR. BROWN: No. We're aware. My -- my -- my 11 Holdings, LLC. And also, I believe Mr. and Mrs. 12 question is though, once the daycare center, assuming 12 Simasek, they did not file an ethics affidavit either, 13 it's approved, it will not be a residence for anyone, 13 or at least I didn't see it in this file. MS. SCUDDER: Okay. I will add that to the

14 it will only be used as a daycare center?

15 MR. WRIGHT: Oh, yes. I'm sorry. I understand
16 your question. You are correct. It will -- it would
17 solely be used for the purpose of Espirales. Yes.
18 MR. BROWN: All right. So, Ms. Scudder, if you
19 can get those additional documents, I have no further
20 questions of Mr. Wright.
21 MR. WRIGHT: It -- if there's anything that I

13 or at leas
14 MS
15 list of this
16 MS
17 Scudder,
18 one?
19 Can get those additional documents, I have no further
20 LLC. An
21 LLC.

21 MR. WRIGHT: It -- if there's anything that I 22 need to submit in regard of what you just asked for,

MS. SCUDDER: Okay. I will add that to the 15 list of things we need to submit. Thank you, Mr. Brown. MS. MCNEIL: You know, for the record, Ms. 17 Scudder, let's just pick them now. So, 20 will be which 18 one?

MS. SCUDDER: 20 will be the HPL Holdings, 20 LLC. And 21 will be Espirales Montessori Bilingual, 21 LLC.

MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Okay. Does anyone ---

65 67 MS. MCNEIL: -- tell me about your position. MR. WRIGHT: So --1 2 MS. MCNEIL: -- else --? Oh, I'm sorry. 2 MR. BANKS: Brian Banks, 5703 37th Avenue, 3 MR. WRIGHT: So, just to clarify, is there Hyattsville, Maryland 20782. anything else that you need from me as far as these 4 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. affidavits that -- if -- if I'm supposed to submit so-MR. BANKS: As you already heard today, -- I didn't under- -- I didn't -- I guess I didn't 6 Espirales Montessori is a powerful force for good in understand the venue of -- of -- of how this hearing our community, both today in terms of building strong, engaged, and kind citizens for the future, and also we works. If we were supposed to --MR. BROWN: Yeah. Ms. Scudder -- Ms. Scudder 9 know that these benefits will continue to be felt in 10 will submit to you an ethics affidavit for you and the 10 the future. 11 other three members of the LLC, HPL Holdings, LLC to I could be wrong about this, but I don't know 12 execute. So, she'll get with you on that. 12 that your zoning hearings usually turn out with hours 13 of strong and overwhelming support. 13 MR. WRIGHT: Oh, thank you, Mr. Brown. I 14 The passion, commitment, and the level of 14 appreciate that. Okay. 15 effort shown by the Simaseks isn't an effort to become MS. MCNEIL: Thank you, Mr. Wright. Okay. I'm 16 thinking you can go back to the case in chief. Let's 16 wealthy. This is in line with years of public service 17 see. 17 this family has demonstrated from service on city 18 council, to organizing neighborhood cleanup efforts, to 18 MS. SCUDDER: Someone just said they would 19 providing essential public services of childcare to our 19 like to testify, Brian Banks. 20 MS. MCNEIL: Oh, yeah. Mr. Banks, how's your 20 community. 21 sound now? Where are you? 21 I'm hopeful that the county can support this MR. BANKS: I hope it's better. 22 important public service that these wonderful citizens 66 68 MS. MCNEIL: Oh, yes. of this great county are working hard to provide. 2 That said, this really isn't about the MR. BANKS: Can you hear me? I'm cognizant of the fact that Mr. Perry hasn't had an opportunity to Simaseks. This is about the essential needs of our testify. So happy to -- to yield the floor to him, or community. In 2017, there were about 6,000 in-home testify after it that's more appropriate as well. Just childcare providers in the State of Maryland. to make sure all these get through. 6 By 2026, we expect that number to be cut in MS. MCNEIL: I thought we- -- we're only half. This rapid decline in home childcare centers is not keeping pace with the increase in daycare centers, letting you testify if you can't stick around to the proper order. So I thought Mr. Perry was just waiting 9 meaning there's overall less childcare available. 10 for the proper order. So -- so you --10 There are really high barriers to entry, 11 making expanding an existing childcare a much more 11 MR. BANKS: Okay. 12 MS. MCNEIL: Are you opposed to the request? 12 viable option than hoping a new one opens. This 13 MR. BANKS: No. Strongly -- strongly 13 extremely limited supply and decreasing supply 14 increases the cost of childcare. Maryland currently 14 supportive. I can -- I can go ahead and testify now. 15 ranks seventh nationwide when it comes to the cost of MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Then wait. Do you swear or 16 affirm under the penalties of perjury that the 16 childcare, preschool, and infant care. The only hope 17 testimony you shall give will be the truth and nothing 17 here is to increase supply. 18 but the truth? 18 This is also a safety measure for our county. 19 19 We know that people need to work, and so denying this MR. BANKS: Yes. 20 application increases the risk of families being forced MS. MCNEIL: Okay. So, state your name and

21 to use unregulated childcare so that they can get their

22 basic needs met and -- and make sure their kids are

21 address for the record, and --

22

MR. BANKS: Sure.

72

### Transcript of Hearing

Conducted on March 19, 2024

1 being watched.

2 Of course, not everyone will go to an 3 unregulated childcare, some will also be forced to

4 leave the workforce to manage childcare. We know

5 nationwide this costs parents about \$9 billion. Need

for childcare is urgent.

I also wanted to speak to the safety of the 8 proposed relocation. Doing daily picker- -- pick-up and 9 drop-off, I spend a lot of time thinking about safety 10 around the daycare. I've also walked almost every 11 single street in Hyattsville as part of a personal 12 project, and am familiar with the layout of that area 13 and other similar cul-de-sacs.

Hitching Post Lane only has four or five 15 houses, dramatically decreasing the likelihood of cars 16 moving around while we have kids out and about 17 specifically for pick-up and drop-off.

In contrast, Gumwood has dozens of houses and 19 as a throughway, atta- -- attracts additional traffic 20 as well. More moving cars means more risk. Every time I 20 21 drop off, we pass other cars on Gumwood. I can't think 22 of the last time I saw a car turn in or out of Hitching

1 Post.

2 More moving cars means more risk for my 3 family. A dead end with only four houses has 4 objectively fewer moving cars. Even if you consider 5 that it's two ways, just like Gumwood, even if it was 6 eight houses, it's still fewer than Gumwood.

It also -- the proposed move would also reduce 8 the need for a U-turn on Gumwood for us dropping off 9 and turning back around, improving the flow of traffic 10 and in- -- and reducing the risks of accidents on that 11 street. When I'm making that U-turn, I often can't 12 necessarily see all the points around me, and so there 13 -- there's a significant amount of risk.

The questions so far seem to suggest that 15 having kids on a dead end is somehow more dangerous. I 16 think we can all agree objectively there are fewer 17 moving cars on that road. I would hope that Prince 18 George's County would be working hard to support any 19 opportunities to increase childcare, especially one of 20 this caliber.

21 Recognizing the bureaucratic process required 22 to make this happen, we hope not just for approval but 1 active support to help make this happen. I strongly

support this zoning exception for the well-being of

Prince George's County. Thank you so much. And I'd be

thrilled to answer any questions.

MS. MCNEIL: Thank you, sir. Mr. Brown, do you

have any questions?

MR. BROWN: No questions. Thank you.

MS. MCNEIL: You know, I actually have one,

9 Mr. Banks. Where were you getting the information as to

10 the number of childcare centers reducing since 2017?

11 MR. BANKS: Yeah. I can put the study in the -

12 - in the chat. It's a study from WTOP.

13 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Thank you. Mr. -- in fact,

14 no. I'm -- I'm good. How -- when was the study from

15 WTOP? You don't have to [inaudible].

MR. BANKS: Yeah. In [inaudible]. 16

17 MS. MCNEIL: I'm just --

18 MR. BANKS: It was from --

19 MS. MCNEIL: -- [inaudible] thing.

MR. BANKS: -- September of 2023. It was about

21 ---

1

2

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22 MS. MCNEIL: Okay.

MR. BANKS: -- six months ago.

MS. MCNEIL: Yeah.

3 MR. BANKS: I'll go ahead and drop it in the

chat. I don't know if that's useful to enter into

anything. But there's the link to the study that talks

6 both about decreasing care and relatively high costs

7 her in Maryland, and kind of the paramount importance

of increasing access to childcare, along with the high

9 barriers to creating one from scratch, demonstrating

10 the --

11 MS. MCNEIL: Okay.

12 MR. BANKS: -- importance of --

MS. MCNEIL: I'm -- I'm -- since you -- since 13

14 you gave it to me, I'm taking a wild guess that you're

15 probably more tech savvy than I am. So, instead of the

16 chat, because that won't be part of the record, could 17 you e-mail it to --?

MR. BANKS: I'll e-mail it to you. 18

19 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you --

20 MR. BANKS: Yeah.

21 MS. MCNEIL: -- very much.

22 MR. BANKS: I can e-mail it along with my

75 testimony, 100 percent. 1 applicant -- I mean, this witness a little bit of leeway. But with all due respect, any questions 2 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. And so, now we're up concerning traffic are irrelevant. This is a special 3 to 22. exception, it's not a preliminary plan, a subdivision. MR. BANKS: Ms. McNeil --MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry --And although Mr. Banks has submitted a 6 MR. BANKS: -- could I ask a question please? 6 particular study, the study he submitted is really not MS. MCNEIL: I -- I was getting ready to say. relevant, as well, to the issues of a special Mr. Perry, do you have questions? Go ahead. exception. And so, I'm going to object to your question 9 concerning traffic. If you have another question that MR. PERRY: Yes. Mr. Banks, question I have, 10 goes to the issues of a special exception, we will 10 can you provide any local studies from DPIE in regards 11 to the traffic on that road, specifically that road 11 allow that. 12 MR. PERRY: I do have one fa- -- one final 12 being --? 13 question. How many times have you walked on Gumwood? 13 MR. BANKS: Yeah. Absolutely. So, de- -- sure. MR. BANKS: So, let's see. Five days a week 14 Yeah. So, there's one traffic study that's been done of 15 the Hyattsville area back, I think, in 2012 or 2017. 15 for the past 3 years, so 5 times 52 times 3 is a lot. I 16 don't know the exact number. I would estimate it to be 16 I'll grab the study in just a second. Unfortunately, it 17 looked at the major arteries, and entrances, and exits 17 around ---18 to the city. 18 MR. BROWN: We don't -- we don't need --19 19 MR. BANKS: -- [inaudible]. I -- I believe these roads are owned by the 20 City of Maryland and maintained by the City of 20 MR. BROWN: We don't need to do the math, Mr. 21 Maryland, not the state, and I don't believe there's 21 Banks. We -- you live in the neighborhood, you walk on 22 the street. We -- we got it. It's stipulated. 22 been any traffic studies done. So, in that case, using 76 74 1 house counts as a proxy is a reasonable approach. MS. MCNEIL: And if I may, I'm going to MR. PERRY: So, ju- -- ju- -sustain Mr. Brown's objection a few seconds ago. You 3 MR. BANKS: I'd be happy --3 all are talking faster than I can write and think. So -MR. PERRY: You know --4 - as to the traffic study. The other -- the other 5 MR. BANKS: Sorry? document will, you know, be given the appropriate MR. PERRY: You're telling me that you do not 6 weight. I just asked because he mentioned the reduction have any studies for Gumwood Road, despite the fact in daycare centers in the area -- in the State of that DPIE recently worked on that road to install the -8 Maryland. - the sidewalk? 9 MR. BANKS: Wa- -- perfect. 10 MR. BANKS: Correct. They're not available 10 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. So, you --11 through public records. If you have any you'd like to 11 MR. BANKS: Happy to answer any other 12 enter into evidence or if you already have, I'd love to 12 question. 13 take a look at them. 13 MS. MCNEIL: I don't think we have any more. MR. PERRY: Well, Mr. Banks, I did -- I did 14 We're good, Mr. Perry? 15 talk about that, but I'd be testifying. But as you 15 MR. PERRY: We're good. Thank you. 16 said, I shouldn't be testifying, so I'm going to just 16 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. 17 ask you questions. 17 Banks. 18 MR. BANKS: Sure. 18 MR. BANKS: Thank you for the opportuni- --19 19 MR. PERRY: So, just to make sure, you do not MS. MCNEIL: Sure. Well, is that everybody?

22

20 Jenny's just on camera. But Jenny already spoke. Yeah.

MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner, I know that you

21 Okay. All right. Ms. Scudder?

20 have any traffic studies on Gumwood Road and the dead -

MR. BROWN: Mr. Perry, I -- I've let this

21 - dead end road of Bridle Path?

80

# Transcript of Hearing

Conducted on March 19, 2024

made the study that Mr. Banks just put in by WTOP as --

- 2 I think you made that exhibit 22. Is that correct?
- MS. MCNEIL: Well, did he leave me? Mr. Banks 3
- said something about written testimony. You don't have
- to submit any, but did -- are you going to?
- MR. BANKS: I'm happy to send it in, yeah,
- just for the record. So, I can send that along with the
- study if that's useful.
- 9 MS. MCNEIL: Okay.
- 10 MR. BANKS: Perhaps that's two items [ph].
- 11 MS. MCNEIL: So, then -- so, then you're
- 12 correct. We are now up to 22 and 23. Exhibit 22 will be
- 13 written testimony of Mr. Banks, and exhibit 23 will be
- 14 a study from WTOP, was it? I can't see the --
- 15 MS. SCUDDER: Yes.
- 16 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. On daycare --
- 17 MR. BANKS: Yes, ma'am. That's right.
- 18 MS. MCNEIL: On daycare in Maryland. Thank 19 you, sir.
- 20 MS. SCUDDER: And I heard Mr. Brown say that
- 21 the traffic study that Mr. Banks just put in the chat
- 22 was not relevant. So our --
  - MS. MCNEIL: We didn't even see it. So, yeah.
- What's in the chat is not in exhibits. So -- and I
- sustained his objection.
- MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Got you. Thank you.
- 5 MS. MCNEIL: Are you ready?
- MS. SCUDDER: I am.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay.
- 8 MS. SCUDDER: We --
- 9 MS. MCNEIL: Are you going to do the --? Okay. 10 Go.
- 11 MS. SCUDDER: So, I'm -- I'm going to call my 12 next witness, Mr. Ben Simasek.
- 13 MS. MCNEIL: Simasek. Mr. Simasek, do you
- 14 swear or affirm under the penalties of perjury that the
- 15 testimony you shall give will be the truth and nothing
- 16 but the truth?
- 17 MR. SIMASEK: Yes. I do.
- 18 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you.
- MS. SCUDDER: Okay, Mr. Simasek. And I know 19 will be exhibit 24. And --
- 20 you just stated your name for the record. Can you also
- 21 state your address for the record?
- MR. SIMASEK: My name is Ben Simasek. I live 22

- 1 at 3304 Gumwood Drive, Hyattsville, Maryland 20783.
- MS. SCUDDER: And are you the person that is
- responsible for pursuing this special exception for
- Espirales Montessori Bilingual, LLC?
- MR. SIMASEK: Yes. In -- in collaboration with
- Claudia and -- and in her support, I have taken the
- lead on navigating this process with the Prince
- George's County Planning Department.
- 9 MS. SCUDDER: And does Espirales Montessori
- 10 Bilingual, LLC own the subject property?
- MR. SIMASEK: No. As we heard from one of the
- 12 members of HPL Holdings, LLC, that is formed from four
- 13 of our neighbors, Joe Luebke, Tom Wright, and Ron and
- 14 Elizabeth Pedone. They are the owners of the property
- 15 through that LLC.
- MS. SCUDDER: And, Mr. Simasek, is Espirales 16
- 17 Montessori Bilingual, LLC currently operating as a
- 18 daycare?
- 19 MR. SIMASEK: Yes. It is operating out of our
- 20 home at 3304 Gumwood Drive, as it has been for the last
- 21 se- -- about seven years -- six, sorry.
- MS. SCUDDER: And how many kids do you all
- 78 1 currently care for at the daycare?
  - MR. SIMASEK: Claudia currently has seven
  - children in her care, including our own daughter. Her
  - 4 license is for six children, but the state department
  - of early -- Maryland State Department of Early
  - 6 Childhood Education allows for two family members to --
  - to be under the care of the daycare in addition to the
  - license.
  - 9 MS. SCUDDER: And do you have a certificate of
  - 10 occupancy for your current daycare center?
  - 11 MR. SIMASEK: Yes. We do.
  - 12 MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner, I would like to
  - 13 submit into the record a copy of the certificate of
  - 14 occupancy for the current daycare center. And I would
  - 15 also like to submit a copy of their certificate of
  - 16 registration, which is their license that they have
  - 17 through the State of Maryland.
  - MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Certificate of occupancy

  - 20 MS. SCUDDER: The certificate of registration.
  - 21 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. Will be exhibit 25.
  - 22 MS. SCUDDER: Thank you.

	·
MR. BROWN: So, Ms. Scudder, are you e-mailing	83 1 [break]
2 this to us now?	2 MS. MCNEIL: I'm sorry, I didn't get a chance
3 MS. MCNEIL: Yeah.	3 to see it. So, everything's been emailed now?
4 MS. SCUDDER: Yes, sir.	4 MS. SCUDDER: Yes, ma'am.
5 MR. BROWN: In the future, please submit as	5 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. I I see it. All right.
6 many of these documents as you have prior to the	6 Okay, we were continuing with Mr. Simasek.
7 hearing. It is just impossible to review documents and	7 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Yes, and I think I left
8 listen to testimony at the same time.	8 off with asking how many kids and you you mentioned
9 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. I definitely will do that.	9 your certificate of occupancy and the Maryland state
10 I I wasn't sure. Because I didn't know if miss	10 license and we sent that in. Is is Espirales
11 Madam Examiner needed to approve them to be entered	11 Montessori Bilingual LLC, is that the entity that
12 into the record before I submitted them. But	12 you're going to be conducting business under if this
MS. MCNEIL: Oh, okay. So so, ye okay.	13 special exception were to be approved?
14 So, they're supposed to be submitted, if possible, the	MR. SIMASEK: Yes, that's the entity that
15 Wednesday before the hearing, so last Wednesday. And	15 Claudia will be conducting business under.
16 what would happen is we would could still voir dire	MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And and is that LLC in
17 and object today, but at least everyone would've been	17 good standing with the state of Maryland?
18 able to see it. So, we're clear for the next time.	MR. SIMASEK: Yes, it is.
MS. SCUDDER: Duly noted. Thank you very much.	MS. SCUDDER: And again, can you just
20 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. And in fact, do you have	20 reconfirm the address of the proposed daycare center?
21 many more exhibits? I don't mean to	MR. SIMASEK: 7207 Hitching Post Lane,
22 MS. SCUDDER: Not that many.	22 Hyattsville, Maryland 20783.
82	84
1 MS. MCNEIL: I don't mean I know I know	MS. SCUDDER: Okay, and can you describe the
2 there's some pictures, right? Or did they?	2 property and just also familiarize the zoning hearing
3 MS. SCUDDER: Right. There's some photos.	3 examiner with exactly where that's located in
4 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Then why don't we, because	4 Hyattsville, maybe kind of talk about where your
5 it's time anyway, just take a five minute break and	5 neighborhood is located.
6 that would allow you the time to e-mail everything and	6 MR. SIMASEK: Sure. So, we live in the
7 then discuss the others after exhibit 25 on the record	7 University Hill subdivision, which is part of
8 when we come back? So, everybody can just stay here,	8 incorporated Hyattsville. It's just off of Adelphi
9 but we're taking a five minute break.	9 Road.
MR. BROWN: And e-mail Mr. Perry as well all	That's the main county road. And Hitching Post
11 of	11 Lane Hitching Post Lane, as you might infer from
MS. MCNEIL: Yes.	12 from earlier testimony is a dead dead end street
MR. BROWN: exhibits.	13 that branches off of Gumwood Drive.
MS. MCNEIL: Thank you.	So, from Adelphi, we have Wells Parkway that
15 MR. BROWN: Did you understand? Or never	15 turns into Wells Boulevard. Gumwood drive is one of the
16 mind.	16 main through streets of the neighborhood, although I
MS. SCUDDER: Yes, Mr. Brown. I think my	17 I shouldn't say through street, it does not it ends
18 computer froze, but I did hear that we're going to take	18 in a dead end at the end of Gumwood, but Hitching Post
19 a break so that I can e-mail in any other pictures.	19 Lane is is just adjacent to that.
MR. BROWN: All right. Great. Thanks.	FEMALE: Can you give me some water? One

21 minute. One minute.

MS. MCNEIL: Excuse me, someone is not muted.

22

21

22

MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Doing that now. Thank you.

AUTOMATED VOICE: Recording stopped.

# Transcript of Hearing

Conducted on March 19, 2024

1 Thank you. Mr. Simasek, I actually went to University

2 of Maryland. I was trying to picture this. So, if I'm

3 headed your way from the university, it's a left before

4 or after the library? Is it after that library on the

right?

MR. SIMASEK: So, if you're headed from the 6 university south on Adelphi road, it would be a right

8 before you get to the library. It's --

MS. MCNEIL: The wrong side of the street. 10 Thank you. All right. Okay. I have it. Thank you so 11 much.

12 MR. SIMASEK: So, it's adjacent to

13 Northwestern High School or very close to there.

MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And Mr. Simasek, did --15 are you the person that posted the property for this 16 hearing?

17 MR. SIMASEK: Yes.

18 MS. SCUDDER: And -- and you are the person

19 that took the pictures associated with that posting?

20 MR. SIMASEK: Yes.

21 MS. SCUDDER: And I think we mentioned that

22 earlier, Ms. Madam Examiner, that was on -- it's on

1 your exhibit listed as exhibits number 5 and 6. And Mr.

Simasek, what are you and Ms. Claudia seeking to do

under this special exception application?

MR. SIMASEK: So, as you can infer, we are

hoping to lease the property for use as a small

childcare center. As we have mentioned, so Claudia has

run the daycare out of our home for several years.

And our -- when our neighbors purchased the

home, just across the street, it's -- it's literally a

10 stone's throw from our house, although I wouldn't throw

11 any rocks, Claudia was excited for the opportunity to

12 potentially lease the space to -- to operate -- to move

13 our daycare out of our home.

You know, it's -- it's been a blessing to have

15 the daycare within our home for the last several years,

16 especially during the pandemic and having our children

17 with us.

18 However, now that our children are growing, we

19 have two kids, we're hoping to open up a little bit

20 more space within our own house to, you know, we sit on

21 the floor at a little kiddie table, rather than having

22 a -- an adult size table, and you know, our daughter's

1 bedroom has -- has cribs in it. So, what -- that's a

little bit of background context.

3 We have been seeking, or looking for

opportunities to lease a space for a while; however,

the commercial space available and -- safe and adequate

for childcare in this part of Prince George's County,

the commercial spaces are few and far between.

We are hoping that in -- in approving this

9 special exception, you will be giving us the

10 opportunity to move the daycare literally across the

11 street and, you know, within our own neighborhood. And

12 we're intending to make very few changes to the

13 property, only what's required, you know, according to

14 the zoning ordinance.

MS. SCUDDER: Okay. That was one of the 16 upcoming questions I was going to ask, but let me first

17 just back you up a little bit. Are you going to be

18 proposing a sign for the daycare?

MR. SIMASEK: No, there will be no sign posted

20 on the property.

21 MS. SCUDDER: And -- and with regard to the

22 new daycare center at the new location, what changes

86

1 are you proposing to make to that -- that single family

house that's there?

MR. SIMASEK: So, we're proposing four basic 3

changes. One will be additional plantings along the --

the edges of the property line to meet the buffer yard

requirements. So, that will include some shade trees

and shrubs.

An additional change will be a 4 foot wooden 8

9 fence within the property line to provide the

10 requirement for a fenced outdoor play area that will be

11 well shaded and -- and safe for the children. Another

12 change will be to pave the driveway and include an ADA

13 compliant access aisle from that -- from that driveway.

And along the lines of ADA compliance to build

15 a wooden ramp up to the stoop, there are 2 steps up to

16 the door of the -- the property, so to enable somebody

17 in a wheelchair, or you know, even families pushing a

18 stroller to be able to get in the door, there will be a

19 wooden ramp that will come out and right from the

20 driveway in the walkway. They'll be able to enter the

21 house. So, those are the four basic changes.

22 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Thank you. And I think

92

### Transcript of Hearing

Conducted on March 19, 2024

1 this next question has been alluded to earlier, and it

2 may have been covered, but just for the record again,

3 what is the reason or reasons that you all decided to

4 pursue the special exception for up to 16 children?

MR. SIMASEK: So, yes, as -- as mentioned,

Claudia, currently she -- she has had 8 children under

7 her care, including our own and currently 7, and in the

8 past it's been 8 with our own children, but we're

9 seeking to expand just slightly because she has had a

10 wait list since she opened the daycare, as we heard

11 from several parents.

And she receives inquiries every week from

13 families in the area who are looking for childcare and,

14 you know, she maintains that wait list and -- and tries

15 to make space available, but in -- in seeking the --

16 the license for 16 children, in this space, the hope is

17 to be able to meet some of that need from, you know,

18 existing families who are having maybe, you know,

19 second children, as well as, you know, new families who

20 are moving to the area.

21 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. So, Mr. Simasek, you're

22 sort of the technical person that helped shepherd this

1 special exception application through the planning

2 process, but Ms. Claudia is going to be the one who

3 actually manages the day to day operations of the

4 daycare. Is that correct?

MR. SIMASEK: Correct, although I don't know

6 if I would call myself a technical person. This is a

learning process for me.

MS. SCUDDER: So, what are your next steps if

9 this application is approved?

10 MR. SIMASEK: So, we currently have a pending

11 application for the use and occupancy permit at the --

12 at the subject property. Following that, we -- we will

13 contract to do the work of paving the driveway and

14 putting up the fence and -- and installing the ramp.

And additionally, Claudia will need to pass

16 through the state inspections, you know, the fire

17 inspection, the Maryland State Department of Education

18 Early Childhood Division. We'll have several

19 requirements and -- and steps that she's passed through

20 with her -- her current daycare that will need to pass

21 through for this new space.

22

MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And with regard to the

1 layout of the proposed daycare center on Hitching Post,

are you proposing to make any, you know, interior

renovations or changes to the layout of the house?

4 MR. SIMASEK: No, no interior changes to the

house.

6 MS. SCUDDER: Okay, Madam Examiner, one of the

exhibits that I've just emailed in is a floor plan. So,

I would ask that floor plan be made an exhibit in this

9 case. Madam Examiner, you're muted.

10 MS. MCNEIL: Sorry about that. I'm just trying

11 to see which one is the floor plan from the emails. So,

12 we're up to 29, and I'm only up to 25, so.

MS. SCUDDER: So, I have the --

14 FEMALE: Twenty-seven.

15 MS. MCNEIL: So, 27, thank you. So, can you

16 pull it up for everyone to see Ms. Scudder?

17 MS. SCUDDER: I'm going to defer to my

18 talented legal assistant, Ms. Myers, if she could pull

19 that up for us.

20 MS. MYERS: Hello, Madam Examiner, this is

21 Terry.

90

MS. MCNEIL: Hi, Terry. How are you?

1 MS. MYERS: I'm good. I need permission to

2 share.

3 MS. BAH: I just gave you permission, Terry.

4 MS. MYERS: Thank you.

5 MS. BAH: You're welcome.

6 MS. SCUDDER: Okay, Mr. Simasek, since we have

this up on the screen now for everyone to see, if you

could just maybe just speak to it and describe, you

know, describe what we're looking at here.

MR. SIMASEK: Sure. And apologies, this is a

11 very rough sketch of the floor plan, but essentially,

12 there's one floor of this house, and most of the area

13 is the main room. The childcare space will include the

14 entire first floor. So, both bedrooms, as well as the

15 main room. I believe the -- it's 966 square feet.

16 There is a -- the door in the bottom right

17 corner is the main entrance and that's the door that

18 the ramp will be to. There are several windows

19 throughout, both in the bedrooms and in the main room.

There is a bathroom and a kitchen, and there

21 is a staircase down to the basement. However, that --

22 that space will be off limits to the children. That

96

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

1

1 door will remain closed and it'd be, you know, it'll

- 2 only be on the first floor of the house that the
- childcare use will be.
- MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And I -- I know you
- mentioned that there are -- are our windows. Is that
- what I see? Is that reflected by these sort of
- rectangular squares in each of the rooms?
- MR. SIMASEK: Yeah, the blue boxes represent
- 9 windows, yes.
- 10 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. So, there will be adequate
- 11 light coming in to all the various rooms that the
- 12 children will be utilizing.
- 13 MR. SIMASEK: Lots of beautiful natural light 14 in that space.
- MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And do you also have 16 photographs of the house and the yard?
- 17 MR. SIMASEK: Yes, I believe I submitted them 18 to you and Terry.
- MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner, we did send in 20 photographs.
- 21 MS. MCNEIL: Okay.
- 22 MS. SCUDDER: And I believe those are exhibit

- MS. SCUDDER: Mr. Simasek, do you recognize
- this photograph? Mr. Simasek, we're going to now start
- going through the photos so that you can identify what
- we're looking at and describe what is depicted in each
- of the photos. Are you still there?
- MS. MCNEIL: Ms. Scudder, this is Terry. The
- photos that I'm currently showing are from your site
- 8 visit, Mr. Simasek sent additional photos that I would
- 9 have to send as a separate exhibit. Which ones would
- 10 you want me to start with?
- MS. SCUDDER: I would -- I guess I would just
- 12 maybe ask Ms. Madam Examiner. Ms. Myers is correct. I
- 13 did a site visit. I took the next series of pictures
- 14 that are exhibit 26.
- 15 MS. MCNEIL: You don't want to be the witness.
- 16 If you don't want to be the witness. Have you seen Mr.
- 17 Simasek's photos and we can just use those, whichever
- 18 you prefer.

94

- 19 MS. SCUDDER: Ms. Myers, are you able to pull
- 20 them up right now?
- MS. MYERS: Yes. 21
- 22 MS. SCUDDER: If you could use the ones that

1 26.

- 2 MS. MCNEIL: You didn't have to --
- MS. SCUDDER: And I think you normally --
- don't you normally order -- order them like A, B, C, D,
- E. F. G?
- 6 MS. MCNEIL: Yes.
- 7 MS. SCUDDER: Okay.
- MS. MCNEIL: I can't get to them because of
- 9 this document still being up. Can the floor plan go
- 10 down Ms. Myers? So, now I can make you all small.
- 11 Thanks. So, will Ms. Myers be showing the photos or do
- 12 you want us to do that?
- MS. SCUDDER: Ms. Myers, do you want to start 13
- 14 pulling up the photos one by one, so that we can allow
- 15 Mr. Simasek to describe each photo and what they 16 depict?
- MS. MCNEIL: And you can describe them as. 27- 17
- 18 A, whichever the first one is all the way to the last 19 letter.
- 20 MS. SCUDDER: Wouldn't that be 26, Madam
- 21 Examiner?
- 22 MS. MCNEIL: 26, yes. Floor plan was 27.

- 1 Mr. Simasek sent in, that would probably be better.
- 2 MS. MYERS: Okay.
- 3 MS. SCUDDER: So, Madam Examiner, would we
- want to replace my -- the pictures that I took?
- MALE: It doesn't make a difference, Mr.
- Simasek can testify and authenticate that the building
- is in its current form, it's consistent with the
- photograph, so that's fine. Whether you use your --
- 9 MS. MCNEIL: Yeah, I was -- I was just saying 10 that in the event he couldn't.
- 11 MALE: Right, right, right.
- 12 MS. MCNEIL: So, you can --
- MALE: Sorry about that.
- 14 MS. MCNEIL: So, let's see.
- 15 MALE: Whatever photographs you have, let's
- 16 just put them up and run through them.
- MS. SCUDDER: Okay, Mr. Simasek, as Terry puts
- 18 up the photographs, let's go through these pretty
- 19 quickly. As she puts up the photographs, can you just
- 20 describe, you know, what we're looking at?
- MR. SIMASEK: Okay. This is the front bay 21
- 22 window. As you can see, there are 3 windows letting in

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

1 lots of natural light. I'm sorry, I'm going camera off

just for a moment to make sure our connection is okay.

MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Next picture.

MR. SIMASEK: This is the side entrance, as I

mentioned, 2 steps up to the front door. And you can

see the side of the house. There are 3 windows along

the side. 2 of those are for the main area and then 1

8 is in the back bedroom all the way on the right side of

9 this photo. There's an existing concrete pad. That's

10 kind of, you know, after the stoop.

MS. MCNEIL: One second, Ms. Scudder, before 12 we leave, this is 26-B. Let's call them each what they

13 are, for the record.

14 MR. SIMASEK: Okay.

15 MS. MCNEIL: So, we've seen 26-A and B. Now,

16 what's the next one?

MR. SIMASEK: This is the back of the house.

18 So, this -- this part of the yard will include the

19 fenced play area. The fence will come right off the

20 edge of -- the right side edge of the house and around

21 to this side -- to the left side. That door that we see

22 at the bottom, that's the off limits basement area.

98

The 2 windows above are to the -- the 2 back bedrooms. So, there's a gently sloping grass -- grassy

area, that will be the play area.

4 MS. SCUDDER: Next photo, this is 26-D coming

5 up.

6 MR. SIMASEK: Now, this is the north side, and

7 that door comes out of the kitchen onto those steps.

8 Mostly the children will not be using this. It would be

9 an emergency exit if needed, but that -- that will be

10 outside of the fenced play area, and that's, you can

11 see the utility box there. And the windows that are

12 above those steps are to the kitchen and bathroom.

13 MS. SCUDDER: Next photo. This will be 26-E.

14 MS. MYERS: That's all I have.

15 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. I may want to put up

16 additional photos that I took at the site visit, Madam

17 Examiner, a little bit later into the hearing, but I

18 think for now these, unless you feel differently and

19 want me to go ahead and go through the additional set.

20 Because I think that the -- the set that I

21 took at my site visit show different aspects of the

22 property, completely different from what Mr. Simasek

1 showed, so we're happy to put those up next.

MS. MCNEIL: It's on you to present your case.

We don't need to be redundant though. So, I'd

appreciate if you went through them, if you don't think

you need 10 or 15, but might need 4 or 5, or you can do

6 them all, but they can continue with 26 if you'd like,

picking up with E. Or you can --

MS. SCUDDER: Ms. Myers, let's pick up with E

9 and let's go -- let's switch over to my photos, but to

10 the extent if they are redundant, we don't necessarily

11 need to show them. I don't know if you can tell before

12 you put them up if it's a sort of a duplicate, but if

13 you could just do the best you can.

14 MR. SIMASEK: So, this photo is from Hitching

15 Post Lane, you can see those permeable pavers there and

16 the -- the side yard. So, part of that side yard will

17 be fenced and the buffer yard, the additional plantings

18 will also go along between the fence and the property

19 line. And those permeable pavers will be used for

20 parking, as well as egress from the driveway.

21 MS. SCUDDER: Next photo.

22

MS. MCNEIL: 26-F. Is that right?

100

MS. SCUDDER: Yes. I think this is kind

redundant, Madam Examiner. I would strike this one. Go

to the next photo, please, Ms. -- okay.

MR. SIMASEK: Okay, this is just another angle from the pavers to the main entrance of the house and

the side yard. You can see the driveway just on the

other side of that tree and the gravel.

MS. SCUDDER: Next photo. This will be G. I'll

strike this one, Madam Examiner. It's sort of a

10 duplicate.

MR. SIMASEK: You can see the driveway apron,

12 but it's the same, yeah.

MS. SCUDDER: I'll strike this one as well. 13

14 Next photo.

15 MR. SIMASEK: This is the adjacent property. I

16 believe that would be a 7211 Hitching Post, or no,

17 7205. Sorry. But yes, this is just the property line.

18 You can see there's a -- blocks, kind of a small wall

19 there and some planters.

20 MS. SCUDDER: Okay, let's go to H.

21 MR. SIMASEK: Another angle of 7205 from --

22 from the driveway, and you can see the wall there.

104

### Transcript of Hearing

Conducted on March 19, 2024

MS. SCUDDER: Next photo. Let's strike this

2 one, it's redundant.

3 MR. SIMASEK: So, here we can see on the

- 4 bottom left corner that's part of the driveway apron.
- And again, this is a side view of the house and the

yard and the pavers.

- MS. SCUDDER: And it looks like there's a
- 8 specimen tree there in the very front. What are we
- 9 looking at there? Are you familiar with that type of 10 tree? Do we know what that is?
- MR. SIMASEK: Yes, I believe that is a -- it's
- 12 an -- well, it's on -- it's on our site plan. I know
- 13 Kelly -- Kelly would know this. I'm forgetting what --14 it is a specimen tree.
- MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Next photo. Let's strike 16 this one, it's redundant. Next photo.
- 17 MS. MCNEIL: So, if Mr. Wright tells you it's 18 a maple tree, do you all agree?
- 19 MR. SIMASEK: Thanks. I trust Mr. Wright on 20 that.
- MS. SCUDDER: So, exhibit H shows the maple 21 22 tree and this one's redundant. Let's strike this one

102

1 and not make it an exhibit. Next photo. This one does

- show, though, that -- I'm sorry, Terry, if you can go
- 3 back to that previous one, because I think this -- go
- ahead, Mr. Simasek.
- MR. SIMASEK: Yes, it does show the end of the
- 6 cul de sac there, or the end of the dead end street at
- Hitching Post Lane. And there's a small -- a right -- a
- right of way that pedestrians can walk through.
- MS. SCUDDER: I think it is actually. Thank 10 you. Okay. So, this is exhibit G. [Talking over each 11 other]
- 12 MS. MCNEIL: Who is that? Is this 26-J?
- 13 MS. SCUDDER: This is -- this is 26-G, as in 14 Greg.
- 15 MS. MCNEIL: You sure?
- MS. SCUDDER: Yes, because I think the maple
- 17 tree was H. And before that, oh, wait a minute, F, G,
- 18 H, I, you're right. I'm sorry. I got my --
- 19 MS. MCNEIL: The mape, I was going to tell
- 20 you, I think the maple tree was I, because I talked
- 22 the driveway, G showing 7205 property line and
- 21 about specimen. H should have been showing 7205 from

- 1 plantings. Okay, so let's say it every time so we'll
- stay up. So, now we are at J. This is showing the end
- of the dead end street and the pavers.
- 4 MS. SCUDDER: Next photo. And this will be K.
- MR. SIMASEK: Okay. So, we can see the
- signposting here. This is basically from the driveway
- looking down towards Gumwood Drive. Our house is just
- out of frame here to the left, and the near side of
- 9 Gumwood Drive has this sidewalk that was -- was
- 10 referenced, and on the other side of that existing
- 11 fence, that's our -- our neighbors, Joe and Tom at 7209
- 12 Hitching Post.
- 13 MS. SCUDDER: And this photo you said is
- 14 showing the north -- going north on Hitching Post?
- 15 MR. SIMASEK: Correct.
- MS. MYERS: And that's the last photo. 16
- 17 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Thank you.
- 18 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you. So, A through K.
- 19 MS. SCUDDER: So, Ms. Myers, you can -- you
- 20 can stop sharing your screen now.
- MS. MCNEIL: 11 photos. 21
  - MS. SCUDDER: Mr. -- Mr. Simasek, I just have

1 a few more questions for you. Are you pursuing any

- other requests as part of this special exception?
- 3 MR. SIMASEK: We are not.
- MS. SCUDDER: And have you had an opportunity
- to review the technical staff report in this case?
- MR. SIMASEK: Yes, of course.
- MS. SCUDDER: And do you agree with all the
- conditions and findings that have been recommended by 8
- 9 staff?
- 10 MR. SIMASEK: Yes, we do.
- 11 MS. SCUDDER: And do you agree to implement
- 12 all of the conditions of approval?
- MR. SIMASEK: Yes. 13
- MS. SCUDDER: Okay, and to your knowledge,
- 15 have any of those conditions been addressed on your
- 16 site plan at this time?
- MR. SIMASEK: We did meet with Kelly. I -- I
- 18 saw a revised site plan that she presented earlier. I
- 19 believe some of those conditions we discussed with
- 20 Kelly last weekend. So, I believe that some of them,
- 21 but not all, have been implemented so far.
- 22 MS. SCUDDER: And Madam Examiner, I think I

### Transcript of Hearing

Conducted on March 19, 2024 105

1 did request earlier if we could leave the record be

2 left open so that we could put in the revised site

3 plan. But Mr. Simasek, I have no further questions for

you. I would like to call Ms. Claudia and just ask her

6 MS. MCNEIL: Well first, we have to cross

examine him. Mr. Brown, do you have any questions?

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes. Good afternoon or good

morning, Mr. Simasek, how are you?

10 MR. SIMASEK: Doing well. Thank you, Mr.

11 Brown.

12 MR. BROWN: Good. I'm sure this is a stressful

13 situation and you're learning as you go, but you're

14 doing a good job based upon what you found already. But

15 my only questions are really very basic. One your wife,

16 is she the only person who will be "employed" at the

17 daycare center?

MR. SIMASEK: No, and she can speak to that.

19 She currently has one employee, and depending on the

20 staff to child ratio, she may need to hire additional

21 employees, depending on how many children she has under

22 her care at any time.

106

MR. BROWN: Yeah, that's what I thought. The

state guidelines require, I believe at least one, maybe

two more personnel. And so, my question was, I

4 understand you live in your current home where you are

operating that daycare there. Is it your intent when

6 this new daycare is open to completely close the

daycare at your existing home?

MR. SIMASEK: Yes.

MR. BROWN: All right. And with regards to

10 parking, you're required to have 1 space per 10

11 children. Assuming you're at full capacity of 16

12 children, you're required to have 2 parking spaces

13 here. Just for the record, most of the parents who drop

14 kids off at your existing daycare, how do they arrive?

15 Do they come by car or do they walk?

16 MR. SIMASEK: Most of them come by car. You

17 know, it's weather dependent and -- and also location

18 dependent. We do have some who bike and walk as well, 18

19 especially on nicer days.

20 MR. BROWN: And so, at the new facility, let's 21 assume you have two additional employees in addition to

22 your wife, there will be 2 cars parked at least off

1 street at that site. Correct?

2 MR. SIMASEK: We -- we have -- in front of our

own home and we encourage one -- one of our employees

gets dropped off, so she doesn't -- she doesn't park

[inaudible] employees.

It's her business. I'm sorry. But -- so -- so,

her current employee does not park, but a future

employee, we'd encourage them to park in front of our

9 house rather than at 7207 Hitching Post to leave space

10 for the families.

MR. BROWN: Okay. And your landscape

12 architect, I'm going to assume, so I'm saying this for

13 her benefit, will tell me where those parking spaces

14 are. But the last question I have is you were asked

15 whether or not you will have signage and you indicated

16 you would not, and the staff reports there's -- no

17 signage is proposed.

If you want signage in the future, the time to

19 request it is now so you don't have to go through this

20 process again. It would be a simple matter of, since

21 you're revising your site plan already, to put a

22 monument sign or freestanding sign of some nature in

108

1 the front yard. Is there a particular reason that you

do not want a sign?

3 MR. SIMASEK: Thank you for advising us of

that. Part of the reason is that we want to retain the

existing character of the residential neighborhood and,

you know, have minimal -- minimal changes to the

existing property as it is.

8 We -- Claudia does not need to advertise her -

9 - her daycare with a sign, given, you know, spreads by

10 word of mouth, and she's -- she already has quite --

11 quite a wait list.

12 MR. BROWN: All right. Thank you. No other

13 questions.

MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry, do you have questions

15 of this witness?

MR. PERRY: No questions. Thank you. 16

17 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you, sir.

MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner, if it's time,

19 then I would call Ms. Claudia Simasek.

MS. MCNEIL: Ms. Claudia Simasek, do you swear

21 or affirm under the penalties of perjury that the

22 testimony you shall give will be the truth and nothing

112

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

109

- but the truth?
- 2 MS. SIMASEK: I do.
- 3 MS. SCUDDER: Hi, Ms. Claudia. Can you please
- just restate your name and address for the record?
- MS. SIMASEK: Yes, my name is Claudia Simasek,
- and my address is 3304 Gumwood Drive, Hyattsville with
- the zip code 20783.
- MS. SCUDDER: And you -- you are the person
- that will be operating the daycare on a day to day
- 10 basis. Correct?
- 11 MS. SIMASEK: I do.
- 12 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And are you currently
- 13 licensed to operate daycare centers by the state of
- 14 Maryland and Prince George's county.
- 15 MS. SIMASEK: Yes, I am.
- MS. SCUDDER: And Madam Examiner, we did 16
- 17 submit the copy of her certificate of registration,
- 18 which is exhibit 25 and a copy of her county permit,
- 19 which is the Certificate of Occupancy, which is exhibit
- 20 24. And what's -- what's your professional background,
- 21 Ms. Claudia?
- 22 MS. SIMASEK: Yeah, I studied general
- 1 psychology, and then I went and I did my post grade
- 2 with Montessori, with the IMS, which is American
- 3 Montessori Society for primary ages. And then in 2015,
- 4 I did the training from 0 to 3 with -- in Florida, in
- an AMS Center as well, America Montessori Society
- 6 Center.
- And I also, I'm a Reiki practitioner
- [inaudible]. I'm looking for my certification right
- 9 now. I am a belly dancer. I'm also folkloric dance,
- 10 Dominican folkloric dance. So, I'm trying to educate
- 11 myself holistic to give the best care that I can for my
- 12 -- for my kids.
- 13 MS. SCUDDER: And how many years would you say
- 14 that you have been caring for children?
- 15 MS. SIMASEK: In the daycare, from 2017, but I
- 16 have been a teacher since I am 18. Because when I went
- 17 to college, I started working in schools as a profit,
- 18 but also to learn.
- 19 MS. SCUDDER: Thank you. And I -- I think we
- 20 can assume that since you do have your state license
- 21 for your current daycare center that you're fully in
- 22 conformance with your state licensing requirements.

- If -- if this case were to be approved for the 1
- additional children, would you continue to keep those
- licenses current and -- and work in accordance with
- those regulations?
- MS. SIMASEK: Yes, I do. And I want to add
- 6 that Maryland is very specific and very organized with
- all the things that you need to run a daycare center,
- 8 because they always run -- they show up whenever they
- 9 want, they will review your paperwork. So, it's kind of 10 tricky once you open a daycare.
- [Inaudible] just be out of the way and do it
- 12 illegally, and they encourage to everybody that open a
- 13 childcare in their houses, even if it's informal, to be
- 14 licensed. So, they are very specific and very organized
- 15 with many requests, and they are on top of everything, 16 always.
- 17 MS. SCUDDER: Thank you.
- 18 MS. MCNEIL: Ms. Scudder, if I may, and I
- 19 apologize profusely, he may be gone, but there's a Mr.
- 20 Manassian that said he had been waiting to testify and
- 21 has to leave. Mr. Manassian, are you still here?
- 22 MS. SCUDDER: I don't see anything in the

1 chat.

6

- MS. MCNEIL: I think he emailed staff. So, he
- wanted to know if he could submit his testimony in
- writing and Mr. Brown doesn't have a problem with it.
- 5 MR. BROWN: I don't have any objection. That's
  - fine.
- 7 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Continue you all. I'm sorry
- about that. 8
- 9 MS. SCUDDER: No problem. Ms. Claudia, have
- 10 you had an opportunity to review the technical staff
- 11 report that park and planning repaired prepared in your 12 case?
- 13 MS. SIMASEK: Yes, I do.
- MS. SCUDDER: And if this special exception
- 15 were to be approved, would you abide by all the
- 16 conditions that they have recommended for approval?
- 17 MS. SIMASEK: I do.
- 18 MS. SCUDDER: And what are -- what are the
- 19 ages of the children that you're going to be caring for
- 20 at the daycare center on Hitching Post?
- MS. SIMASEK: From -- from 3 months until 4
- 22 usually, because you always -- they transition when

1 they are in pre-K or primary. And my experience has

- 2 been like, even when mom's wants to, they care for the
- kids when they are 5 or 4 months.
- They have to work like, with the grandparents
- and with paternity leave, including the parents. But
- most of the time, my experience is that they're
- entering when they are 3 months, because the maternity
- leave is not enough for many of my moms.
- MS. SCUDDER: And thank you. And what are your 10 hours of operation going to be?
- MS. SIMASEK: What -- what are going to be --
- 12 how they are right now.
- MS. SCUDDER: At your new daycare on Hitching
- 14 Post, what will the hours be there?
- MS. SIMASEK: 7:00 to 6 p.m. 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 16 p.m.
- 17 MS. SCUDDER: Will you be providing any after 18 care services?
- MS. SIMASEK: That is part of the after care.
- 20 My -- the idea is like 5:00 to 6:00 will be after care
- 21 and pre-care will be 7:00 to 7:30.
- MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner, I have no

1 further questions of this witness.

- MS. MCNEIL: There was some testimony earlier
- about a playground somewhere else in the neighborhood,
- and I was just wondering would you be limiting the use
- of that playground if this use were approved?
- 6 And I ask that, I guess you could have
- occasional outings, but I ask that because one of the
- 8 requirements for this special exception would be that
- 9 we discuss the off premises outdoor play or activity
- 10 area and that it be in proximity to your center, and
- 11 that it's safely accessible by the children.
- 12 So, are you going to continue that practice or
- 13 will the daycare use primarily be the one on site?
- MS. SIMASEK: I think that I will continue
- 15 using it, because Montessori has a whole curriculum of
- 16 nature and the park that we're going provides a
- 17 beautiful walk around a pond where there are dogs and
- 18 [inaudible] and we can see the change of seasons. It
- 19 also has a playground area.
- Also, has a trail that connects with another
- 21 playground, just 4 minutes walking, and it's just 5
- 22 minute walking distance, or 6 minute walking distance

1 with the kids.

2 Of course, I will someday use the area of the

playground back area, because I'm also thinking to have

4 like painting outside and do many things outside, but

we don't have to use it every day. But definitely, I

will continue using it some days during the week.

MS. MCNEIL: And do you have to cross a driveway or street to get there.

MS. SIMASEK: Yes. The things like with the --10 with the sidewalk it's easier, because we have sidewalk

11 to go down and then cross, and usually people stop

12 there pretty much.

13 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Well, I -- I think there's

14 a difference between that being your play area and that

15 being a place that you take children.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, I believe the rule requires,

17 and it's listed on page 11, if they have an onsite play

18 area, the off premises play area is really not

19 applicable. So, we don't have to --

20 MS. MCNEIL: That's the way I want it to be.

21 Yes.

22 MR. BROWN: Right, right. So, we don't really

114 116

1 need to regulate when she takes kids off sites and she

does have a proposed play area on site.

MS. SIMASEK: And I want to add that is one of

the requirements when you find a place in under the

Department of Education of Maryland. Every place that

6 you rent has to have a green area. That's why it's also

so hard to find places to rent for the use of

childcare, because it's in -- in DC or Virginia is not

9 demand.

10 But under the regulations of the Department of

11 Education of Maryland, you need to have a green area in

12 the -- in the place. So, that delimitates all the

13 options that many people have to open childcare

14 centers.

15 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. And again, I only brought

16 this up because it was testimony elicited earlier. And

17 Mr. Brown's reading is not quite what the code says. I

18 don't know what the staff report said.

19 But as long as we're making it clear that the

20 primary play area is the one on site, I'm sure that

21 doesn't mean that occasionally children can't be taken

22 elsewhere in a safe supervised manner. Okay. So, Mr.

120

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

117

Brown, did you have questions?

2 MR. BROWN: Yes, just wanted to -- okay. Ms.

3 Simasek, I'm a little bit impressed. I mean, you

4 indicated that you are a doula, you're a dancer.

MS. SIMASEK: Yes, I'm doing my training for a

6 doula. It takes like two years to get the

7 certification. But yes, so far Ms. Sindy has been my

8 first client. And yes, I'm pursuing that.

MR. BROWN: All right. So, you're going to

10 take the kids from pre-birth to birth to four years

11 old, and then you're going to kick them out.

MS. SIMASEK: The thing is I feel that I need

13 to prepare for everything because many of my clients

14 are first moms.

15 MR. BROWN: Right.

MS. SIMASEK: And -- and also, I don't see

17 myself like, doing childcare forever. There is a time

18 for everything. And once I be a grandma, I will be

19 ready to move to work with -- with ladies.

And now is the time to go step by step, but

21 also give me so much knowledge that I wish I would have

22 when I was pregnant with my moms, because when I take

1 care of their kids, I'm taking care of my moms too. I'm

2 dealing with anxiety of separation. I'm dealing with

3 guilty.

4 Their bodies are not completely healed to come

5 back to work at 3 months, and I'm dealing with all

6 that. And I have to understand their side of the -- of

7 the story, not just because I have been pregnant or I -

8 - or I am a mom, but scientifically and holistically

9 what is happening with them and their children.

10 So, I have to come back from the beginning

11 because also Maria Montessori is start -- didn't do the

12 -- that training 0 to 3, where the teachers that were

13 after her that say we have to start 0 to 3, but we have

14 to start from the pregnancy of the mom, understanding

15 the whole development inside of the room, and then the 16 baby.

17 So, that's the closer thing that I can take,

18 because at the beginning, they used to work with nurses 18

19 that were in the delivery rooms. Wait a second, I'm

20 going to end. And now that's the closer thing that I

21 have to click and connect that knowledge.

MR. BROWN: Thank you so much. I appreciate 22

1 that. No other questions.

2 MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Perry, do you have any

3 questions?

4 MR. PERRY: No. Thank you.

5 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you.

6 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. With that, then Madam

7 Examiner, I would like to recall Kelly Oklesson, the

8 landscape architect and pick back up with where she

9 left off in her testimony.

10 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. And so, you're still under 11 oath.

MS. SCUDDER: Ms. Oklesson, are you ready?

MS. OKLESSON: I'm ready.

MS. SCUDDER: Okay, I think where we left off,

15 and if you don't mind sharing, thank you very much,

16 you're marked up plan. Thank you. So, I think where we

17 left off is we were about to start, I wanted to ask you

18 about the landscaping and buffering. Are you showing

19 the landscaping and buffering on the site plan?

MS. OKLESSON: Yes, we are. Let me zoom in

21 here. So, on the south side of the property, where my

22 cursor is, we have a 20 foot yard buffer.

118

1 MS. SCUDDER: Okay.

MS. OKLESSON: On the east side of the

3 property, we have over 40 foot for the buffer yard. And

4 on the north side, we have 19 feet.

5 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And Ms. Oklesson, did you

6 need to request any amendments to the landscaping

7 buffering or any screening requirements as part of this

8 application?

9 MS. OKLESSON: No, we were able to meet all of

10 the requirements.

11 MS. SCUDDER: Are you aware that in the zoning

12 ordinance, under section 275402X, as in x-ray, there

13 are additional requirements for specific special

14 exception uses and that there are some additional

15 requirements for daycare centers.

MS. OKLESSON: Yes, correct. And our plan is

17 compliant.

MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And so, I guess the next

19 few questions I'm going to ask you kind of go to those 20 additional --

MS. MCNEIL: Okay, go ahead.

MS. OKLESSON: Yes.

### Transcript of Hearing

Conducted on March 19, 2024

MS. MCNEIL: I had a question about it, but

2 you may get to that. Go ahead.

MS. SCUDDER: Okay. So, first, have you noted

- on the site plan the number of children that are going
- to be enrolled at the proposed daycare?
- MS. OKLESSON: Yes, I have. I'm going to zoom 6
- in for everybody here. So, right here on the site plan,
- we have the enrollment of 16 children.
- MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And are you aware of the
- 10 requirements related to outdoor play areas and space
- 11 requirements?
- 12 MS. OKLESSON: Yes, we are aware.
- MS. SCUDDER: And with regard to the proposed 13
- 14 play area, if you can show us where that is, what does
- 15 your plan show?
- 16 MS. OKLESSON: Yes. Okay. So, our proposed
- 17 play area is outlined here in gray. It is a total area
- 18 of 3,480 feet, 80 square feet.
- 19 MS. SCUDDER: Yes, correct. And so, that
- 20 amounts to what, how many square feet per child?
- MS. OKLESSON: I believe that is 200 -- see --
- 22 I'll do some quick math for us. I have -- 217. 5 square
- 1 feet per child.
- MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And does your site plan
- show the location and use of all the buildings that are
- located on the adjoining lots?
- MS. OKLESSON: Yes, we do. The adjoining
- buildings that are on the south, the east and the north
- are written on the site plan. They are residential
- homes in character of the neighborhood. They are under
- 9 zone RSF-95, all three of said homes. So, the southern
- 10 home here, the home that is on the east here, and the
- 11 home that is on the north side here.
- 12 MS. SCUDDER: Can you go back up to the top?
- 13 It looks like you might need to label that adjacent
- 14 house, right?
- 15 MS. OKLESSON: Adjacent property, zone RSF-95.
- MS. SCUDDER: Okay. But you don't have it as a 16
- 17 house like you do the other two.
- MS. OKLESSON: Yes, it's the back -- it's the
- 19 rear of the property. So, the house --
- 20 MS. SCUDDER: Oh, okay.
- 21 MS. OKLESSON: It's approximately 80, yeah, 80
- 22 feet from this property line.

- 1 MS. SCUDDER: Understood. Gotcha. Okay.
- MS. MCNEIL: Wait, wait, excuse me a second.
- All outdoor play areas shall be located at least 25
- feet from any dwelling on an adjoining block. And I
- know that you're showing me -- I know it's probably
- more than 25 feet, but if it were possible to put that
- on this site plan, I think that would be great. The
- property to the -- what is it?
  - MS. SCUDDER: North, the north and the south.
- 10 MS. MCNEIL: And the reason I said that as
- 11 well, I need you Ms. Oklesson, because that just told
- 12 me it meets everything. And I hate to be technical, but
- 13 I need to know how it meets. I need to know how many 14 feet exactly.
- 15 MS. OKLESSON: Examiner, as you can see right
- 16 here, it's 39.16 feet from the corner of the house on
- 17 the south side from the proposed fence play space,
- 18 39.16, which is indicated right here on the plan.
- 19 MS. MCNEIL: Okay.
- 20 MS. OKLESSON: 66.25 feet from the fence line
- 21 to the rear property line on the east right here, as
- 22 you can see the dimension line. And on the north side,
- 122

1 the dimension line is right here. It says 28 feet and

- it's indicating that is from the back corner of the
- north home to the proposed play space.
- MR. BROWN: Ms. Oklesson, go back to the east
- measurement. That's not being measured from the back of
- the property line to the property. You've got 66.25
- inches. It should be measured to the back of the play
- area, not to the front of the building.
- 9 MS. OKLESSON: No, it is actually not in
- 10 inches. It is 66.25 feet, and the hatch line here is at
- 11 the back fence of the play space to the back of the
- 12 property -- of the current property. If you're asking
- 13 to have it to the back of the rear property house, we
- 14 would be happy to do so.
- 15 MR. BROWN: I see what you've done there, but
- 16 yeah, usually it would be moved over to the right
- 17 somewhat, so it's back of the play area, but all right,
- 18 I see the distinction.
- 19 MS. OKLESSON: Okay.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay, but not to -- not to
- 21 belabor this, the requirement for the special exception
- 22 site plan itself that's in section 273604 states that

128

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

1 the site plan shall show the location and types of

- major improvements that are within 50 feet and all land
- uses on adjacent properties. So, if there's a house to
- the north, it's supposed to be shown.
- MS. OKLESSON: There's a house to the north
- right here and it's shown.
- MS. MCNEIL: Not the north, I mean --
- 8 MS. OKLESSON: The east.
- MS. MCNEIL: Yeah. Up there. So, we don't have
- 10 to talk about it today, but if that were a requirement,
- 11 it wouldn't be hard to amend this site plan to show it.
- MS. OKLESSON: No, not hard at all. And I
- 13 think the planning is actually recommended approval of
- 14 the current site plan, but we're happy to do so.
- MS. MCNEIL: Okay, and one more thing, not to
- 16 be labored, they're making a recommendation. The ZAG is
- 17 the one that will approve or not and then appeal to the
- 18 council. I just -- I've noticed a lot of people talking
- 19 about it that are here today, so I just wanted to
- 20 clarify that for the record. Okay, continue Ms.
- 21 Scudder.
- 22 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And this kind of goes back
- 1 to an issue we were just talking about that Madam
- 2 Examiner and Mr. Brown was just talking about, but Ms.
- 3 Oklesson, is the outdoor play area able to be safely
- accessible without crossing any hazardous area, such as
- a street or driveway.
- MS. OKLESSON: Yes, the place space is -- is safely accessible.
- MS. SCUDDER: And will the play area have
- shade to afford protection from the sun.
- 10
- 11 landscape architect, but I am also a certified arborist
- 12 of 15 years, and I personally identified each tree on
- 13 the site that is existing.
- And to meet the county requirements, we've 15 also offered a list of all the proposed plantings here
- 16 as part of the plant schedule, and so on both the south
- 17 side of the property, the east and the north, we have a
- 18 mixture of shrubs, flowering trees and shade trees, all
- 19 of which will be providing comfortable, safe, shaded
- 20 atmosphere for the children.
- MS. SCUDDER: And there's also some trees
- 22 within the play area as well. Is that correct?

- MS. OKLESSON: That is correct. 1
- 2 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. And I just have a couple
- of more questions for you. Are you showing any lighting
- in the play area? Or is it just -- or is the play area
- just going to be used during daylight hours?
- MS. OKLESSON: It'll be just used during
- daylight hours.
- 8 MS. SCUDDER: And are you -- and so what areas
- 9 of operation for the play area are you showing on your
- 10 plan? That should be limited to, what areas of
- 11 operation for the play area are you showing on your
- 12 plan, because I believe it has to be limited to the
- 13 hours of 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- 14 MS. OKLESSON: Yes, I believe the hours of
- 15 operation will be from 9:00 to 5:00.
- MS. SCUDDER: I believe that according to the
- 17 staff report, it's actually 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Do
- 18 you have that in your notes? Can you go over to your
- 19 notes? I just want to make sure you're showing the
- 20 hours of the play area on your plan, because if you're
- 21 not, we need to make sure that gets added.
- MS. OKLESSON: I believe we need to add the
- 1 hours of operation.

- MS. SCUDDER: Which would, yes, we have no
- problem adding that. Okay. I'm making a note. Okay. And
- finally, let's talk about the parking a little bit.
- Let's go to the parking, the 2 parking spaces that we
- are -- now, Madam Examiner, this is -- this is going to
- represent a change from what staff was approved with
- regard to the parking.
- 9 We're still showing. 2 parking spaces, but Ms.
- MS. OKLESSON: Absolutely. So, not only am I a 10 Oklesson, if you could talk about the 2 parking spaces
  - 11 and -- and the change that needed to be made under this
  - 12 marked up plan, based on what staff previously reviewed
  - 13 and what we're proposing today.
  - MR. BROWN: Ms. Scudder, I'm going to have to
  - 15 object. I've tried to give Ms. Oklesson some leeway
  - 16 here; however, you have not qualified her as an expert
  - 17 in anything. She has testified that she's a landscape
  - 18 architect and an arborist.
  - 19 Talking about parking and bearings and
  - 20 distances and all these other issues are not within her
  - 21 wheelhouse, unless you want to qualify her as some type
  - 22 of an expert. And also, if you go back up to the top of

100	
129 1 this plan here, take the plan to the very top where it	131 1 do you have any other questions?
2 says it's prepared by whom.	2 MR. BROWN: Yeah, just one or two. Ms.
3 All right. This company, Ms. Oklesson, you	3 Oklesson, did you put in this file, it may be there, I
4 said you're employed by Groundsmith Collective, is that	4 just haven't seen it, a topography map?
5 correct?	5 MS. OKLESSON: No.
6 MS. OKLESSON: That is the company that I own.	6 MR. BROWN: Has anyone looked at the
7 MR. BROWN: You're employed by, correct?	7 topography for the play area? I mean, just looking at
8 MS. OKLESSON: Yes, I am the employer myself.	8 the photographs that were put into the record earlier,
9 MR. BROWN: All right, so that's your your	9 it looks to me to be relatively flat, as though it's
10 business?	10 sloping down toward the east. Is that accurate?
11 MS. OKLESSON: Correct.	11 MS. OKLESSON: That is accurate.
12 MR. BROWN: All right. Who actually prepared	12 MR. BROWN: And so, will the play area be
13 this plan?	13 graded?
14 MS. OKLESSON: I prepared this plan.	14 MS. OKLESSON: Whatever necessary measures to
15 MR. BROWN: Did you prepare all facets of this	15 meet the county standards, but we're not indicating
16 plan or just as it relates to landscape architecture?	16 such on this plan.
17 MS. OKLESSON: As it relates to landscape	17 MR. BROWN: Mr. and Ms. Simasek, if you could
18 architecture.	18 just turn on your mic for a moment.
19 MR. BROWN: Right, as it relates to landscape	19 MR. SIMASEK: No, we don't intend to grade the
20 architecture. I mean, just looking at this, Ms.	20 play area or any other part of the property.
21 Scudder, I think you're going to need to qualify her as	21 MR. BROWN: All right, so the kids will
22 an expert for her to talk about all of these other	22 primarily be playing in that play area in its existing
130	132
1 issues outside of landscape architecture and the field	1 format?
2 of being an arborist.	2 MR. SIMASEK: Yes.
3 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Mr. Brown, would that be	3 MR. BROWN: Ms. Scudder, I think that you need
4 the case even if she was just going to point out where	4 to have someone put an overlay of this map to show the
5 the 2 parking spaces are located on the plan.	5 topography of the site so that it's clear that play
6 MR. BROWN: If that's all you want to ask her,	6 area is functional for kids to play on.
7 then fine. We don't need to qualify her, but. I just	7 And I think it is from the photographs, it
8 didn't want you to get too far afield and get into all	8 doesn't look like it's sloping that much so we are
9 these other issues.	9 clear that this site, play area site will not be
10 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. I won't go too deep. I'll	10 graded, because if it's graded, of course, that
11 just let her show point out where the 2 parking	11 requires several other requirements under the zoning
12 spaces are proposed to be located. If you can just	12 ordinance.
13 simply point them out, Ms. Oklesson.	13 MS. SCUDDER: So, an overlay on top of the
MS. OKLESSON: Yes, the ADA parking space with	14 site plan that shows the topography of the play area?
15 a 5 foot access aisle is right here. The ADA ramp at a	15 MR. BROWN: Yes.
16 7.3 percent slope is here. And the second parking spot	16 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Got it.
17 is just here on the south side.	MR. BROWN: And I'm sure Ms. Oklesson can get
18 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Well with that, Mr. Brown	18 someone to do that for her. The other issue I had, all
19 Madam Examiner and Mr. Brown, that concludes the	19 right so that that all right, I guess
20 presentation from Ms. Oklesson and I'm ready to call	20 those are the only questions I have. No other
To proceed the state of the sta	20 11300 at one only questions that of the other

22

21 questions. Thank you.

MS. SCUDDER: All righty. You're muted, Madam

21 our next witness. You're on mute, Madam Examiner.

MS. MCNEIL: For years now. Okay. Mr. Brown,

	viaicii 19, 2024
133 1 Examiner.	135 1 MS. MCNEIL: Oh, 1230.
2 MS. MCNEIL: In fairness to the witness, it	2 MS. SCUDDER: Okay, 1230. Thank you.
3 looks like they changed the law and left out	3 MR. PERRY: Thank you.
4 topography, so I'm glad we're having this hearing.	4 MS. BAH: Thank you. Recording stopped.
5 Since we're reviewing the zoning ordinance, I would	5 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you.
6 think they want that back in there. Okay, I have no	6 RECORDING: Recording in progress.
7 questions. Mr. Perry, do you have questions of the	7 MS. MCNEIL: All right, Ms. Scudder oh,
8 witness?	8 wait. Is Mr. Brown back?
9 MR. PERRY: No, they were barred earlier.	9 MS. SCUDDER: I believe he is. And I just want
10 Thank you.	10 to make sure I see my my land planner.
	11 MR. GASKINS: I'm here, Traci.
MS. OKLESSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.	MS. SCUDDER: Okay, great. Okay, there you
MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner, it's I'm	13 are, sir.
14 looking at the clock and it's 12:07, and I just wanted	MR. GASKINS: I muted myself when I I muted
15 to know before I get to my next witness who I'm going	15 the video.
16 to attempt to qualify as our expert land planner, I	MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Madam Examiner, are you
17 mean, I could use a restroom break. I don't know about	17 ready for us to begin?
18 anyone else, but would you want us to go ahead and	MS. MCNEIL: I don't see Mr. Brown. I know
MS. MCNEIL: No, no, that's fine. And do you	19 MS. SCUDDER: I see Mr. Brown. His
20 have any other witnesses? This is your last	20 MS. MCNEIL: There he is. We're ready to
21 MS. SCUDDER: He would be my last.	21 begin.
MS. MCNEIL: And then Mr. Perry, you're going	22 MS. SCUDDER: Okay. Mr. Gaskins, can you
134	136
1 to want to testify, correct?	1 please state your name and address for the record? Your
2 MR. PERRY: At this point, it's a mute issue	2 business address?
3 because the testimony was successfully objected to by	3 MS. MCNEIL: And just before you do, Mr.
4 Mr. Brown, so.	4 Gaskins, do you swear or affirm under the penalties of
5 MS. MCNEIL: No, no. No, I'm sorry you felt	5 perjury that the testimony you shall give will be the
6 that way. He wanted it to be at the proper time.	6 truth and nothing but the truth?
7 Normally applicant's case is first and then you	7 MR. GASKINS: Yes, I do.
8 testify, and you will be given a full opportunity to do	8 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you.
9 so. I'm just trying to decide if this might be the best	9 MS. SCUDDER: Okay, Mr Gaskins, can you please
10 time to break for a short lunch.	10 state your name again and your business address for the
MR. PERRY: Yeah, we can go ahead and break.	11 record?
12 I'm not trying to be overly verbose. I just have some	MR. GASKINS: Yeah, my name is Steven C.
13 very direct questions and they've never been answered	13 Gaskins. My business is run out of Waldorf, 150 Post
14 by both the former councils, Tom and Ben. But I'll make	14 Office Road, #1763, Waldorf, Maryland.
15 a decision quickly as to whether or not testimony is	MS. SCUDDER: And what is your occupation?
16 actually going to be useful. Thank you.	16 MR. GASKINS: I am a licensed land surveyor
17 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. So, is 20 minutes enough	17 and I'm a land planner.
18 for everyone?	MS. SCUDDER: And Mr. Gaskins, are you licensed in the state of Maryland?
10 MC CCUDDED, It's an areal for ma	
MS. SCUDDER: It's enough for me.  MS. MCNEH : Okay wa will take a 20 minute.	·
MS. MCNEIL: Okay, we will take a 20 minute	20 MR. GASKINS: Yes, I am.
_	·

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner, we did submit a

- 2 copy of Mr. Gaskin's resume and his Maryland surveyor's
- 3 license, and it is, I believe, exhibits 28 and 29 on
- 4 your list. And I don't know if you're speaking or not,
- 5 but you're muted.
- 6 MS. MCNEIL: Okay, I'll look for your 28 and 7 29.
- 8 MS. SCUDDER: Okay, so they are on your list
- as 28 and 29? The resume 28, the surveyor's license 29.
   MS. MCNEIL: I'm actually looking for the
- 11 exhibits in the email.
- 12 MS. SCUDDER: Oh, okay.
- MS. MCNEIL: Because I don't seem --
- 14 MS. SCUDDER: Ms. Myers, perhaps you could
- 15 just quickly email those two items to Ms. -- to Madam 16 Examiner real quick.
- 17 MS. MCNEIL: Here -- here they are.
- 18 MS. SCUDDER: Okay.
- 19 MS. MCNEIL: So, does Mr. Brown have them as 20 well?
- 21 MS. SCUDDER: I believe so. Mr. Brown, do you 22 have those readily available? You're mute.
  - 138
- 1 MR. BROWN: Oh, his resume?
- 2 MS. SCUDDER: And his license?
- 3 MR. BROWN: Yes, I have it.
- 4 MS. SCUDDER: Okay.
- 5 MS. MCNEIL: Okay, go ahead, Ms. Scudder.
- 6 MS. SCUDDER: Mr. Gaskins, I would -- I would
- 7 like to go through your background and qualifications.
- 8 What is your educational background?
- 9 MR. GASKINS: My educational background is a 10 high school diploma, but I've taken many years, over 20 11 years of educational specialized for land surveying and
- 11 years of educational specialized for land surveying and 12 land planning.
- MS. SCUDDER: Mr. Gaskins, as you know, the
- 14 county's zoning ordinance requires that an expert land
- 15 planner testify at a special exception hearing as to
- 16 the zoning and special exception requirements in a
- 17 special exception case.
- Your resume is heavily weighted towards land
- 19 surveying. Can you please describe your professional
- 20 training and work experience that you believe is most
- 21 relevant to the area of land planning?
- MR. GASKINS: Yes. As a land surveyor, the

- 1 majority of the things that we do are land surveying,
- 2 but we also do subdivision and subdivision is a
- 3 planning matter. And the plans of a subdivision require
- 4 a license surveyor to go through the code and to make
- 5 sure everything is done in accordance with the zoning
- 6 subdivision and other codes of the -- of the
- 7 profession.
- 8 MS. SCUDDER: In addition to your experience
- 9 in subdivisions, can you speak to any other work
- 10 history and work experience that you have that would
- 11 lend itself to the area of land planning?
- MR. GASKINS: Yes, I started back in 1978, 77-
- 13 78 -- 1977, 78. I started as a draftsman. I worked my
- 14 way up to a designer draftsman, I'd say about 1983,
- 15 when I worked with Kaz Bases as an associate. I was a
- 16 designer draftsman, so you step your way up with
- 17 experience. I became licensed in 1990, and I've done
- 18 two or three site plans every single year since then.
- MS. SCUDDER: And just given some of the -- I 20 know you have a very extensive resume in terms of, you
- 21 know, you've worked at a number of not only civil
- 22 engineering firms in the county, you've worked at law

1 firms, and you've worked at surveying companies.

- Can you go into a little bit more detail about
- 3 some of the things that you were doing at these, you
- 4 know, say at the civil engineering firms that are the
- 5 law offices, that again, sort of speak to your
- extensive experience in land planning?
- MR. GASKINS: Yes, I worked for some of the
- 8 biggest firms around. If you remember Lorman -- Lorman
- now, and it's called Focez, but it used to be called
- 10 Lorman, and I worked with them. I worked for Ben Dyer
- 11 Associates when the originals were there. Now they call
- 12 it Atwell. I worked for DH Steffens, Bolton and
- 13 Associates, and Bolton and Latham.
- 4 These are firms where I did a lot of support
- 15 work and a lot of design work to get my license, as
- 16 well as to further the arrangement that we had with
- 17 them. I've done site plans, sediment control plans,
- 18 stormwater management concept plans, stormwater
- 19 management design technical plans and settlement 20 control.
- These are all planning issues, but I don't
- 22 recall anything in the code about a license planner. I

144

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

1 didn't see that in the Prince George's County code. You planning board? 2 mentioned that as -- as the hearing examiner. There's MR. GASKINS: The planning board, yes. 3 no license for a planner in the state of Maryland. I 3 MS. MCNEIL: So, and you were accepted as an don't -- I don't recall seeing that. expert land use planner, not surveyor or some other The planning boards up at the board of the man? state, the design boards, we never mentioned anything 6 MR. GASKINS: Well, surveyors, there's no about a licensed planner. subdivision. It doesn't involve a surveyor as an MS. SCUDDER: Well, I think it's more as to expert. We determine the property lines. No one else 9 your experience and your work history and your training 9 can do that. And we're the ones who do all the 10 and your educational background, but Ms. Madam 10 divisions of all land that's done, whether it be for a 11 Examiner, Mr. Gaskins is someone who has been working 11 condo plat, whether it be for a big apartment complex, 12 in the land use business for probably close to 50 12 a commercial property, industrial. 13 years. 13 We are the main ones who do the planning of 14 And although his resume is heavily weighted 14 that division. Those things are definitely a planning 15 towards surveying, he has developed an extensive 15 matter for a land surveyor. And land surveyors have 16 background in other areas as well that I believe lend 16 been planning a long time. It's in the code that we can 17 himself to be capable of qualifying as an expert in 17 continue to do that. And the state's attorney has sent 18 this case, because it is a small case. 18 a letter to George's County regarding some of the 19 We're talking about one lot and it's a small 19 things that they said that we cannot do. 20 daycare center, and I believe he has developed over the 20 MS. SCUDDER: Madam Examiner, also, if I --21 years enough training and experience to be able to 21 MS. MCNEIL: But could I just get the answer 22 judge whether this daycare center is meeting the zoning 22 to my question, though? I asked were you accepted as an 142 1 requirements and special exception requirements in 1 expert in the area of land use planning in those courts? Prince George's County. And so, I would ask that he be admitted in 3 MR. GASKINS: Land use planning or land 4 this particular case as an expert in the field of land planning? planning. MS. MCNEIL: Either one. 6 6 MR. GASKINS: Yes. MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Brown. MR. BROWN: Yeah, I mean unfortunately, I MS. MCNEIL: Land planning? disagree. Mr. Gaskins, I'm going to have to ask you a MR. GASKINS: Yes. couple of questions here. I mean, your resume. Can give MS. SCUDDER: Very recently, Madam Examiner, 10 us 2 seconds Madam Examiner? One second. 10 he was accepted as a land planner in a Charles County MS. MCNEIL: While he's doing that, Mr. 11 circuit court case that I was actually involved in. 12 Gaskins, have you ever been accepted as an expert in 12 And even though that case was a land dispute 13 case, I pushed very hard for him to be deemed an expert 13 the area of land use planning in Maryland? 14 in land planning as well, because I could -- I foresaw 14 MR. GASKINS: Yes, I have. 15 MS. MCNEIL: You have? Where? 15 that I would. want to try to get him admitted before 16 you, Madam Examiner, so he has been recently deemed an MR. GASKINS: I've been accepted in Prince 17 George's County Circuit Court and Charles County 17 expert land planner in a court case. 18 Circuit Court. I've been also accepted in other MR. BROWN: Let me just ask him some 19 counties in the state of Maryland, and I've also 19 questions, if I could. 20 testified before the board of planning in Prince 20 MS. MCNEIL: Yes.

21 George's County.

MS. MCNEIL: That's the board of planning The

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MR. BROWN: Mr. Gaskins, first of all, looking

22 at your resume, and the reason we're asking you these

## Transcript of Hearing

Conducted on March 19, 2024 145

- 1 questions, it's required to qualify someone as an
- 2 expert in a particular field in an administrative
- 3 zoning case such as this, so we're not trying to
- 4 tarnish your character or anything like that.
- But looking at your resume, I think I saw in
- here your education, you had a bachelor's degree from
- where?
- 8 MR. GASKINS: No, I don't have a bachelor's
- 9 degree.
- 10 MR. BROWN: You don't have a bachelor's
- 11 degree. All right. Do you have any education or
- 12 training in the field of land use planning?
- 13 MR. GASKINS: Yes, we take a lot of those
- 14 classes and get specialized training.
- MR. BROWN: Make sure that you understand my 15 qualifications in the field of land use planning. Have 16 question.
- 17 MR. GASKINS: Okay.
- 18 MR. BROWN: There is no doubt in looking at
- 19 your resume that you would qualify as a land surveyor.
- 20 Land surveying is distinct and separate from land use
- 21 planning. They are two completely different
- 22 disciplines.

- 146
- For example, the case that you testified in
- the last six months, the Butler case down in Charles
- 3 County, I was aware of that before your client, or your
- 4 attorney, Ms. Scudder had that case. That case was a
- boundary dispute between two adjacent property owners. 5
- 6 It had absolutely nothing to do with land use
- 7 planning in Charles County. So, whatever testimony you
- gave was related to surveying, not land use planning.
- 9 Okay?
- 10 MR. GASKINS: May I -- may I answer that?
- 11 MR. BROWN: Yes, please.
- 12 MR. GASKINS: Okay, the land use planning part
- 13 of that case had to do with the subdivision of the
- 14 property where they annexed the road to a subdivision
- 15 process. And that subdivision process is a planning
- 16 related matter and the attorney on the other side 17 agreed.
- 18 MR. BROWN: He's wrong. That's land use
- 19 surveying, sir. And let me ask you --
- 20 MR. GASKINS: Is there a license for land
- 21 planning?
- 22 MR. BROWN: Actually --

- MS. MCNEIL: Certifications and degrees. I'm 1
- 2 sorry, go ahead.
- MR. BROWN: Do you have a certification by the 3
- American Institute of Certified Planners?
- MR. GASKINS: And that's recognized by the
- state as a certified licensed --
- 7 MR. BROWN: Do you have --
- 8 MR. GASKINS: No, I don't. No, I don't. But
- 9 not -- not -- not belittling what you're saying. If
- 10 they want a land planner certification, that should be
- 11 brought up with the design boards at the state. They're
- 12 the ones who issue the different disciplines.
- 13 MR. BROWN: I'm not asking you what the state
- 14 licenses board does. What I'm asking you is about your
- 16 you written any articles on land use planning?
- 17 MR. GASKINS: No, I haven't.
- MR. BROWN: All right. Approximately how many
- 19 cases have you stated that you have testified in
- 20 concerning land use planning, not surveying, land use
- 21 planning?
- 22 MR. GASKINS: I think about five or six.

148

- MR. BROWN: All right. And what jurisdictions
- did you testify? And were those court hearings?
- MR. GASKINS: Yes. One was a court hearing 3
- here in Prince George's County. The other ones were in
- Charles County and other ones in Frederick and
- different other matters in administrative court.
- MR. BROWN: All right. And tell me what was
- 8 the name of those five cases?
- 9 MR. GASKINS: Well, I don't have them on the
- 10 top of my head right now? I mean it's -- it's been a
- 11 long -- like the last project that I did for a daycare
- 12 center was in 2006, and it was [inaudible].
- MR. BROWN: But you've never testified before
- 14 a zoning hearing examiner in Prince George's County,
- 15 have you?
- 16 MR. GASKINS: Never had a need to.
- 17 MR. BROWN: All right. The planning board case
- 18 that you said you testified in, when was that case?
- 19 What year?
- MR. GASKINS: I think if I remember it was in
- 21 the nineties and it was regarding a subdivision with
- 22 flag lots. I've done two of them. We would -- last flag

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

150

1

1 lot to be approved in the state of Maryland. That was a planning project

MR. BROWN: All right. So, in that case you drew up a survey of the property to identify the flag lots, correct?

MR. GASKINS: I drew up a design of the lots, the flag lot design, yes.

MR. BROWN: Right. Okay. And you say you 9 testified before the planning board.

10 MR. GASKINS: Yes.

11 MR. BROWN: And a lawyer as a witness.

12 MR. GASKINS: Yes, as a witness.

13 MR. BROWN: But you do understand that the 14 planning board is not an evidentiary hearing.

MR. GASKINS: Well, they -- they run it like 16 an evidentiary hearing.

17 MR. BROWN: It is not. Madam Examiner, with 18 all due respect to Mr. Gaskins, I mean, he is not 19 qualified in the field of land use planning by 20 education or experience, and I would object to his 21 qualification in the field of land use planning.

I have no problem with him testifying about

issues with the site plan.

And I think that right there demonstrates that 3 in a small case like this, dealing with a single lot, I think he does have the expertise to evaluate whether this site plan is meeting the requirements for special

6 exception and is meeting things like setbacks and

buffering and landscape requirements as required under

MS. MCNEIL: Okay, if I may. It's been our

the zoning ordinance.

10 administrative practice before I had this position, and 11 I've had the position a very long time, that we 12 recognize first, you need an expert witness if it's a

13 matter of their expertise that the regular lay person 14 can't understand, that's number one.

And then if you need this expert in land use 16 planning, we have required them to have a degree in one 17 of the areas, such as urban planning or GIS training, 18 or there are several that it could be, or you need to

19 be a member of the AICP, the -- I wrote it down because 20 I never say the whole thing, but.

21 MR. GASKINS: American Institute of Certified 22 Planners.

1 the site plan in this case; however the landscape

2 architect has already testified to those issues, so it

3 would be duplicative and that -- his testimony on that

4 issue would be unnecessary. He's just not a land use

planning expert.

MR. GASKINS: Well, I caught a lot of things on their planning, gave it red line recommendations, so if you're saying I'm not a land planner.

MS. MCNEIL: If I may, as I recall, I think 10 Mr. Brown, you had a question about the plan and that's

11 why they wanted to bring him because the other, Ms.

12 Oklesson said she didn't do a certain portion. Is that

13 the proffer as to why you need Mr. Gaskins, Ms.

14 Scudder?

15 MS. SCUDDER: Well, Mr. Gaskins is actually 16 the one who recently did a site visit and caught a

17 major issue with the plan that Ms. Oklesson prepared.

18 He was able to immediately spot the fact that the 19 boundaries were off.

And -- and so, that's one of the reasons we're

21 going to have to give you a revised site plan, Madam

22 Examiner, is because he caught -- he's caught some

MS. MCNEIL: Yes. Thank you, sir. And we do

that with a mix of experience. So, if you only had one,

and you show the experience, etc., you've been

accepted. Now, while we have said in the past that we

may consider the fact that you've been accepted

elsewhere, it does really seem like the expertise he

needed was leaning toward surveying the land, the

boundaries of the land, etc.

9 And you can call him if you believe we need to 10 know about that problem on site. But what is the 11 expertise in explaining the various provisions of the 12 zoning ordinance and how they're met?

13 I don't see it. I'm not going to recognize him 14 as an expert in this case. And again, Mr. Gaskins, it's 15 not about you personally, it's about holding up our 16 regular administrative practice.

MR. GASKINS: May you, Madam Examiner, may you 18 tell me what law bars me from doing that? I know y'all 19 mentioned these things that you have by practice, but 20 it's not --

21 MS. MCNEIL: If I may, the law itself allows 22 reasonable administrative practice for us to rely on 152

#### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

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154

1 our administrative practice and in reaching decisions.

2 So, that's -- that's part of it. So, the law is not

3 clear, sort of like, you don't know -- well, this is an

4 old case, I don't know why I'm bringing it up.

You can't describe pornography, but you know

6 it when you see it. It's sort of like that. There's

7 different degrees you could have, education you could

- 8 have, and there's certified planning licensing. And we
- 9 look at all of that and the types of cases you've had 10 before.
- 11 MR. GASKINS: So, the land surveyor is left 12 out of the whole ordeal, I see.
- 13 MS. MCNEIL: No, no. She could call you as a 14 land surveyor.
- MR. GASKINS: I'm talking about any code that 16 says architects, landscape architects, civil engineers, 17 and it also says urban planner, whichever what that is, 18 but a surveyor is not listed, they took it out of the
- 19 code. So, I don't know why they did that, but we will
- 20 see how that works out because that seems like an odd 21 situation, a very odd one. I did one in 2006.
- 22 It's called -- let me get the plan right now.
- 1 Early learning, but you made your decision, so
- 2 therefore, I -- I bail out and I respectfully, have
- 3 [inaudible] your decision. I disagree with it, but I do
- 4 respect it.
- 5 MS. MCNEIL: Thank you, sir. Ms. Scudder, Do
- 6 you have other questions Mr. Gaskins?
- 7 MS. SCUDDER: Well, I was going to use him for
- 8 the purposes of demonstrating that this site plan meets
- 9 the requirements of the zoning ordinance as to setbacks
- 10 and buffering and parking, and I have met with him on
- 11 several occasions and he has demonstrated to me that he
- 12 is very knowledgeable about those areas and could --
- 12 is very knowledgeable about those areas and could
- 13 could -- could testify about those things.
- I agree with Mr. Brown and you that, his you
- 15 know, extensive background is in the area of surveying.
- 16 But I think when you're someone who has worked in land
- 17 use industry for close to 50 years, I think you can
- 18 develop an expertise in other areas, even though he
- 19 doesn't have the education.
- I think one can pick up on things through
- 21 experience and training, just like similar to a zoning
- 22 attorney like myself, who, you know, obviously I've

1 sort of have developed a boutique practice in the

- 2 planning side of this -- of zoning, but also I have --
- 3 I think I've been working in permitting, for example,
- 4 for as long as I've been doing zoning.

And I think I've learned that process inside

and out, even though it's not the highlight of my

resume. So, I just would ask, you know, in just the

8 final comments I have, I would just ask a couple of

9 things that you consider the burden it's going to place

10 on the applicant to now have to bring in a new planner,

11 because he's going to essentially be forced to pay for

12 the same services twice.

I would ask that you consider the scale of this case. It's on a small scale. It's not complex.

15 It's not a large scale mixed use transit oriented

16 development project.

17 Consider that these decisions are on a case by 18 case basis, and so maybe you might consider him an 19 expert or someone capable of judging this type of small 20 special exception, but maybe not a large scale project.

21 I'd also like to ask you to consider that we

22 have a shortage of expert land planners in Prince

156

1 George's County that we're experiencing right now. And

2 the ones that are available at these big firms, I mean,

3 they turn down cases like this because it's just too

4 small for them. So, we just need --

5 MS. MCNEIL: Mr. Brown -- not to cut you off.

6 Mr. Brown may disagree, but you have to your benefit in

7 this particular case, the experts recognized in park

8 and planning telling me X about the case. You have an

9 individual that I swore as a witness and has told me

10 what the setbacks, etc. were on that site plan. You

11 have the owners. I mean, Mr. Brown, are you going to?

MR. BROWN: No. I -- I mean, I agree. I mean,

13 no one is going to make Mr. and Ms. Simasek spend, you

 $14\ know,\,\$10,\,000$  for a land planner, but usually that is

15 what is required, Ms. Scudder, but I agree with the

16 examiner. The planners in the park and planning

17 commission have evaluated this case.

They have concluded that it complies with all

19 of the land planning analysis in the zoning ordinance.

20 Now, that's sufficient for me. But unfortunately, you

21 know, we just could not qualify Mr. Gaskins to do that

22 because he is not a land planner under the code.

# Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

And so, if you don't have a land planner, 2 that's fine with me, Madam Examiner. I'm not going to object to it. And we can just go forward. MR. GASKINS: Sir. May I ask you one question? You said land planner under the code. What code is that? MR. BROWN: Well, it's case law, Mr. --7 8 MR. GASKINS: Okay. I can accept case law. MR. BROWN: Basically case law. 10 MR. GASKINS: I'll come by and see you, so I 11 can get that case law. MR. BROWN: Sure. I mean, I think that's 13 something that you should do and that way in the future 14 in all of the type of work that you do, you can make 15 sure that you do things related to land use planning so 16 that you can then come back later and say, hey, 17 quantitatively, these are how many cases I've done. And this is what I've done in each one of 19 those cases, A, B, C, D, E, F and G, and I did some 20 land survey. That is how you become qualified by 21 experience without education in a particular expert

22 field. 158 MR. GASKINS: Yes, that's what I've done. 2 MR. BROWN: All right. MR. GASKINS: I come from the ghettos of DC. 3 Raised myself all the way up. MR. BROWN: I'm from southeast DC myself. It 5 don't look like it right now, but that's where I'm from. 8 MR. GASKINS: Yeah, that's it. 9 MS. MCNEIL: Well, I'm from --10 MS. SCUDDER: I'm from southeast DC too. MR. GASKINS: Oh my goodness. 11 12 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Back to this hearing. Ms. 13 Scudder, anything else?

MS. SCUDDER: What I heard -- I just want to

15 make sure I'm clear on what I heard Mr. Brown saying

17 have the technical staff report recommending approval

16 is, are we based on the fact that the, you know, we

18 of this case, is he's saying that no further testimony

20 with a -- with a second land planner, is that what I

21 heard?

22

19 is -- we don't need to come back for another hearing

MS. MCNEIL: If you believe it's sufficient to

159 1 have made your case, yes, that's what you heard. MS. SCUDDER: Okay. I believe -- well, we would -- I would. Yes, I do. I believe that we have --MS. MCNEIL: Okay, then wait, we still have Mr. Perry. I was just trying to see were you finish with your witnesses. MS. SCUDDER: Okay. I am. 8 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. All right. Mr. Perry. 9 Anybody see Mr. Perry? 10 MALE: Ma'am, I don't see him in the 11 participants pane. I do see an indication that he left 12 the chat. 13 MS. MCNEIL: Oh, did he say -- he just left. 14 He didn't say goodbye or anything. I can't see in the 15 chat. 16 MALE: Well, at the lunch, I don't think he 17 came back from the lunch break. MS. MCNEIL: Okay. All right. Do you have 19 anything further Ms. Scudder? You're muted. 20 MS. SCUDDER: I don't have any -- I don't have 21 anything further, Mr. Simasek, Ms. Claudia, do you all

testimony today?

MR. SIMASEK: I just want to thank you all,

Madam Examiner, Mr. Brown, for your time, for your

consideration, understanding that we are a -- Claudia

has a small business that she has started. We're doing

our best to navigate this process and comply with -
with all of the applicable regulations.

We worked very closely with planning staff

22 have anything that you would like to add to the

We worked very closely with planning staff
over the last year to make sure that we were, you know,
reading the zoning ordinance correctly and adhering to
really do appreciate your time and consideration today.
And I'll pass it to Claudia. But I also want to say
happy birthday to Ms. McNeil this week.

MS. MCNEIL: Than you very much.
MS. SIMASEK: Yes, and all the testimonies and
all the consideration has been very [inaudible]. So, I
hope that you can see that and more power.
MS. MCNEIL: Okay. And I thank everyone for

19 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. And I thank everyone to 20 being here. I let the record reflect that Mr. Perry did 21 not return after lunch, so I'm assuming he didn't 22 intend to testify, and I don't think that we need the

### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

161 record open for anything. 2 MS. SCUDDER: Yes, we did. 3 MS. MCNEIL: Site plan.

MS. SCUDDER: Yes, we did. It was the revised site plan and it was the items that Mr. Brown

mentioned, which was the ethic affidavits for members

of that HPL LLC. And yes, I think that was it.

MS. MCNEIL: [Inaudible] affidavits for

9 everyone, revised site plan. Okay, then the record will

10 close as soon as those items come in. I thank you all

11 for being here and a decision will be filed at some

12 point after that. Not too delayed after that.

13 MS. SCUDDER: Thank you, Madam Examiner, Mr.

14 Brown.

15 MS. SIMASEK: I'm sorry.

MS. MCNEIL: Wait, somebody said I'm sorry. 16

17 What?

18 MR. BROWN: Good. Matt, do you have a

19 question?

20 MR. PALUS: Yeah. I -- I wondered if you were

21 going to come back around to --

MS. MCNEIL: Oh, the others? I thought we had

162

everyone. I'm sorry.

MR. PAULUS: That's okay. That's okay.

3 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. So, would you like to

testify?

5 MR. PLUS: I would.

6 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. Do you swear or affirm

under the penalties of perjury that the testimony you

shall give will be the truth and nothing but the truth?

9 MR. PALUS: I do.

10 MS. MCNEIL: Okay. State your name and address

11 for the record.

12 MR. PALUS: Yeah, my name is Matthew Paulus,

13 P-A-L-U-S, and I reside at 7101 Pony Trail Lane in

14 Hyattsville. So, that's about -- that's my residence of

15 about 10 years. It's about three blocks away from the

16 proposed exception. So, I'm a neighbor to the property.

And I've also worked in cultural and historic

18 resources management in Prince George's County for more

19 than 20 years as a private sector consultant. I'm

20 speaking only as a neighbor, but I bring that sort of

21 expertise to the hearing, I guess.

So, I echo the points made in other testimony 22

1 at the beginning of the hearing about the urgent need

2 for local childcare, the value of having this business

in the neighborhood, the value of supporting this woman

owned business and Ms. Claudia's contributions to the

community. I can't say it any better than it's already

been said.

I can also see the daycare requiring the zoning exception as adaptive reuse of a hundred plus

9 year old house that would be torn down for

10 redevelopment of the property in other circumstances.

So, allowing this nonresidential use of the

12 house is a sustainable alternative and alleviates some

13 pressure to redevelop that lot for a larger modern

14 residence, and the neighborhood keeps a historic

15 building. So, the house on the property was constructed

16 in 1917, according to county land records.

The land was platted around the house in 1947

18 in the context of University Hills subdivision, so the

19 house is situated in a post war residential subdivision

20 and all the neighboring houses are constructed in the

21 1940s and the 50s and the 60s. Using PT Atlas, you

22 could review aerial photography.

164

The earliest one published is from 1938, and

it shows that the house at 7207 Hitching Post Lane is

one of only three or four dwellings throughout the area

of University Hills today that were built by that year,

by 1938. And none of those other houses are still

standing.

So, 7207 Hitching Post Lane really is the only pre-war house and the oldest house in University Hills,

other than Ash Hill nearby, constructed in 1840. So,

10 the existing house has 920 square feet of interior

11 space on an approximately four tenths of an acre lot.

12 So, this very modest square footage of the house makes

13 the property a target for tear down and redevelopment.

And as I say that, I want to note that there

15 is no plan to redevelop the property. And the present

16 owners have invested in saving the house and averting

17 the tear down and redevelopment of the property through

18 -- through their actions and what they're pursuing here

19 today.

20 So, by adapting the building for use as a

21 neighborhood daycare, the proposed use retains the

22 existing building and the neighborhood does not lose

### Transcript of Hearing Conducted on March 19, 2024

	March 19, 2024
165	167
<ul><li>this diversity of housing built in different historical</li><li>periods, which I believe is a dividend paid to the</li></ul>	1 MR. WRIGHT: No, I I I just kept this 2 session open as I had my other meeting so I could hear,
4 the existing building. And and it's the definition	4 MS. MCNEIL: All right. Thank you all. Have a 5 good day.
5 of adaptive reuse that I'm happy to see. So, for these	
6 and other reasons, I support the proposed exception and 7 I just wanted to say that. Thank you.	
	7 MS. MCNEIL: Bye-bye. 8 MR. SIMASEK: Thank you.
MS. SCUDDER: Thank you. Madam Examiner, I found my notes about the items that we're going to be	9 RECORDING: Recording stopped.
11 submitting and I left a couple of things out. So, the	11
12 first thing was the revised site plan. The second thing	12
13 was the affidavits for the LLC, The HPL holdings LLC.	13
13 was the arridavits for the LLC, the HPL holdings LLC.  14 The third item was the affidavits, the ethics	14
15 affidavits for Mr. and Ms. Simasek.	15
16 And then Mr. Brown had asked for, or maybe it	16
17 was you, someone asked for an overlay of a map to show	17
18 the topography. Mr. Brown asked for that. So, we'll	18
19 we'll get that in as well. And then we were going to	19
20 add hours of operation to the play area of the play	20
21 area to the site plan. But those are the things I have	21
22 on my list.	22
166	168
1 MS. MCNEIL: And all adjacent uses.	1 CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER
2 MS. SCUDDER: All adjacent uses to the site	I, Chris Naaden, a transcriber, hereby declare
3 plan, yes.	3 under penalty of perjury that to the best of my ability
4 MS. MCNEIL: And you know, if you want, you	4 from the audio recordings and supporting information;
5 can just put topography on the revised site plan unless	5 and that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor
6 that's too too much. Instead of just	6 employed by any of the parties to this case and have no
7 MS. SCUDDER: If that's okay with Mr. Brown	7 interest, financial or otherwise, in its outcome, the
8 MS. MCNEIL: That's what you meant, right?	8 above 167 pages contain a full, true and correct
9 MS. SCUDDER: If that's okay	9 transcription of the tape-recording that I received
MS. MCNEIL: He doesn't mean a real overlay.	10 regarding the event listed on the caption on page 1.
MR. BROWN: No, no exactly. It can be on the	11
12 existing site plan.	I further declare that I have no interest in
MS. SCUDDER: Okay.	13 the event of the action.
MS. MCNEIL: All right, then thank everyone	14
15 else that's testified and I thank you all and make sure	15
16 you Mr. Wright did come back. Somebody was coming	16
17 back. And I said for him to contact you to see if we'd	17 March 27, 2024
18 still be here, and we are still here, but we're going	18 Chris Naaden
19 now, Mr. Wright, you have no more to say.	19
20 MR. WRIGHT: No.	20 (531111, Espirales Montessori Bilingual LLC, 3-19-24)
21 MS. MCNEIL: Do you do you have more to 22 say?	21 22

7.	119:18, 121:1,	accurately	adding
A	125:10, 125:19,	33:3	128:3
a-c-h	126:1, 126:2,	acquainted	addition
47:13	128:4, 128:10,	39:5	61:10, 80:7,
abide	128:19, 129:22,	acquired	106:21, 139:8
112:15	133:17, 139:14,	57:8	additional
ability	140:2, 140:22,		53:15, 53:16,
6:18, 7:3, 7:8,	141:7, 141:19,	acre	62:19, 69:19,
168:3	147:14, 147:22,	164:11	88:4, 88:8,
able	149:22, 150:10,	across	95:8, 98:16,
6:1, 6:8, 17:2,	152:10, 152:15,	28:4, 46:9,	98:19, 99:17,
28:2, 28:5,	153:15, 154:12,	86:9, 87:10	•
37:5, 50:10,	154:13, 156:8,	action	105:20, 106:21, 111:2, 120:13,
50:17, 50:21,	162:14, 162:15,	168:13	120:14, 120:20
54:9, 55:4,	163:1, 165:10	actions	•
57:11, 57:12,	<b>above</b>	164:18	additionally
81:18, 88:18,	98:1, 98:12,	active	90:15
88:20, 89:17,	168:8	71:1	address
95:19, 120:9,	absolutely	activities	3:7, 8:21,
126:3, 141:21,	57:14, 73:13,	16:20	10:20, 11:1,
150:18	126:10, 146:6	activity	13:2, 15:17,
about	accept	114:9	19:13, 19:15,
8:6, 9:8, 13:9,	157:8	actual	22:6, 25:7,
14:13, 15:19,		60:10	26:18, 26:20,
19:18, 22:12,	accepted 142:12, 142:16,	actually	28:18, 35:20,
26:19, 29:1,		4:21, 7:8,	39:1, 40:22,
29:22, 32:4,	142:18, 143:3,	33:1, 33:7,	44:17, 47:7,
32:13, 33:2,	143:22, 144:10, 152:4, 152:5	33:9, 41:10,	49:4, 52:6,
33:3, 35:22,	access	56:15, 71:8,	56:13, 66:21,
37:17, 39:8,	51:11, 52:16,	85:1, 90:3,	78:21, 83:20,
39:12, 39:13,	72:8, 88:13,	102:9, 124:9,	109:4, 109:6, 136:1, 136:2,
39:14, 39:16,	130:15	125:13, 127:17,	136:10, 162:10
39:17, 39:18,	accessible	129:12, 134:16,	addressed
42:7, 45:10,	114:11, 126:4,	137:10, 144:11,	
46:11, 47:16,	126:7	146:22, 150:15	12:13, 104:15 adelphi
49:5, 52:10,	accidents	ada	34:10, 47:10,
52:14, 59:9,	70:10	88:12, 88:14,	84:8, 84:14,
60:16, 60:21,	acclimate	130:14, 130:15	85:7
67:1, 67:11,	14:2	adapting	adequate
68:2, 68:3,	accommodate	164:20	87:5, 93:10
68:4, 69:5,	41:3, 42:16	adaptive	adhering
69:9, 69:16,	accordance	163:8, 165:5	160:10
71:20, 72:6,		add	adjacent
74:15, 77:4,	111:3, 139:5	46:7, 49:14,	56:15, 56:21,
79:21, 84:4,	according 87:13, 127:16,	64:14, 111:5,	84:19, 85:12,
91:10, 96:13,	8/:13, 12/:16, 163:16	116:3, 127:22,	100:15, 122:13,
102:21, 112:8,		159:22, 165:20	122:15, 125:3,
114:3, 119:17,	accurate	added	146:5, 166:1,
	131:10, 131:11	127:21	140.5, 100.1,

	Conducted on iv	<u> </u>	,
166:2	27:5, 27:8,	agrees	along
adjoining	29:21, 36:13,	13:1, 13:4	35:2, 53:22,
122:4, 122:5,	52:20	ahead	55:6, 55:11,
123:4	afield	6:7, 7:22, 9:1,	72:8, 72:22,
administrative	130:8	14:8, 16:9,	77:7, 88:4,
145:2, 148:6,	after	18:22, 19:2,	88:14, 97:6,
151:10, 152:16,	3:2, 12:17,	19:3, 28:19,	99:18
152:22, 153:1	14:16, 16:9,	33:11, 39:1,	already
admitted	23:12, 36:20,	66:14, 72:3,	5:10, 5:13,
5:9, 142:3,	42:1, 53:14,	73:8, 98:19,	38:2, 45:10,
144:15	58:5, 66:5,	102:4, 120:21,	61:9, 67:5,
adult	82:7, 85:4,	121:2, 133:18,	74:12, 76:20,
86:22	97:10, 113:17,	134:11, 138:5,	105:14, 107:21,
advertise	113:19, 113:20,	147:2	108:10, 150:2,
108:8	118:13, 160:21,	aicp	163:5
advised	161:12	151:19	also
60:17	afternoon	aim	2:16, 7:20,
advisement	57:20, 58:9,	24:7	8:3, 13:16,
60:20	105:8	aisle	18:4, 25:18,
advising	again	88:13, 130:15	30:8, 37:11,
108:3	2:3, 2:6, 2:15,	alex	39:10, 39:21,
aerial	3:4, 3:9, 4:9,	26:9, 28:13	45:14, 46:6,
163:22	10:20, 16:5,	alexandra	46:7, 48:1,
affidavit	18:14, 43:11,	28:20	48:2, 49:21,
60:3, 60:4,	60:6, 61:12,	alexis	53:10, 56:16,
61:8, 64:12,	61:15, 83:19,	44:18, 64:6	56:21, 60:9,
65:10	89:2, 101:5,	alive	64:11, 67:8,
affidavits	107:20, 116:15,	4:1	68:18, 69:3,
5:12, 60:8,	136:10, 140:5,	alleviates	69:7, 69:10,
64:10, 65:5,	152:14	163:12	70:7, 78:20,
161:6, 161:8,	age	allow	80:15, 84:2,
165:13, 165:14,	50:2, 52:19,	15:3, 17:14,	93:15, 99:18,
165:15	55:3	18:6, 45:6,	106:17, 110:7,
affirm	ages	46:5, 57:1,	110:9, 110:18,
10:6, 15:13,	50:22, 55:3,	57:22, 75:11,	114:19, 114:20,
19:8, 22:2,	110:3, 112:19	82:6, 94:14	115:3, 116:6,
26:7, 26:14,	aging	allowing	117:16, 117:21,
28:14, 35:16,	24:3	15:6, 17:5,	118:11, 126:11,
38:18, 40:17,	ago	24:2, 41:4,	126:15, 126:21,
44:12, 47:2,	36:14, 60:21,	163:11	128:22, 139:2,
48:22, 52:1,	72:1, 76:2	allows	142:18, 142:19,
56:8, 66:16,	agree	24:14, 53:20,	143:20, 153:17,
78:14, 108:21,	70:16, 101:18,	80:6, 152:21	155:2, 155:21,
136:4, 162:6	104:7, 104:11,	alluded	160:13, 162:17,
afford	154:14, 156:12,	89:1	163:7
126:9	156:15	almost	alternative
affordable	agreed	69:10	163:12
17:4, 21:7,	146:17	alone	although
		55:4	42:16, 75:5,

	Conducted on	, .	-
84:16, 86:10,	28:10, 30:19,	apartment	appropriate
90:5, 141:14	33:8, 33:20,	32:10, 143:11	66:5, 76:5,
always	34:2, 35:10,	apologies	165:3
29:16, 111:8,	38:9, 38:11,	92:10	approval
111:16, 112:22	40:2, 40:5,	apologize	12:7, 16:13,
amazing	42:8, 43:4,	60:5, 61:12,	28:7, 51:9,
39:9	43:7, 43:15,	111:19	70:22, 104:12,
amend	46:12, 46:15,	appeal	112:16, 125:13,
125:11	48:8, 48:12,	125:17	158:17
amendments	51:14, 51:16,	appearance	approve
120:6	54:14, 54:17,	53:18	27:4, 38:6,
america	70:18, 71:4,	applaud	46:4, 54:12,
110:5	71:6, 73:10,	53:3	81:11, 125:17
american	73:22, 74:7,	applicable	approved
110:2, 147:4,	74:11, 74:20,	13:2, 115:19,	30:6, 57:17,
151:21	75:2, 76:11,	160:7	62:9, 62:13,
among	76:13, 77:5,	applicant	83:13, 90:9,
41:14	82:19, 86:11,	4:12, 4:15,	111:1, 112:15,
amount	91:2, 104:1,	4:17, 13:1,	114:5, 128:7,
70:13	104:15, 105:7,	13:4, 61:10,	149:1
amounts	105:22, 112:5,	61:14, 75:1,	approving
121:20	113:17, 119:2,	155:10	87 <b>:</b> 8
ams	120:6, 120:7,	applicant's	approximately
110:5	123:4, 126:4,	134:7	32:16, 122:21,
anacostia	127:3, 131:1,	applicants	147:18, 164:11
24:7	131:20, 133:20,	2:17, 61:13	apron
analysis	139:9, 145:11,	application	100:11, 101:4
156:19	147:16, 153:15,	4:13, 4:15,	arborist
angle	159:20, 163:5,	4:18, 15:19,	126:11, 128:18,
100:4, 100:21	168:6	26:19, 29:4,	130:2
annexed	anybody	30:16, 35:22,	architect
146:14	159:9	47:16, 52:16,	5:18, 6:4,
another	anyone	56:13, 59:12,	10:3, 11:5,
18:3, 57:18,	8:12, 8:14,	68:20, 86:3,	107:12, 119:8,
75:9, 88:11,	18:6, 37:21,	90:1, 90:9,	126:11, 128:18,
100:4, 100:21,	62:13, 64:22,	90:11, 120:8	150:2
114:20, 158:19	131:6, 133:18	appreciate	architects
answer	anything	17:10, 30:17,	153:16
44:2, 71:4,	62:21, 65:4,	53:10, 65:14,	architecture
76:11, 143:21,	72:5, 111:22,	99:4, 118:22,	129:16, 129:18,
146:10	128:17, 140:22,	160:12	129:20, 130:1
answered	141:6, 145:4,	appreciated	area
134:13	158:13, 159:14,	49:17, 49:22	20:16, 21:8,
anxiety	159:19, 159:21,	approach	27:7, 36:12,
36:17, 118:2	159:22, 161:1	74:1	39:21, 45:14,
•	anyway	approached	45:19, 69:12,
any 8:15, 13:11,	82:5	57:10	73:15, 76:7,
8:15, 13:11, 24:22, 25:2,	anywhere	approaches	88:10, 89:13,
24.22, 2J;2,	42:10	45:8	,

	Conducted on ive	<u> </u>	
89:20, 92:12,	artists	attest	baby
97:7, 97:19,	20:21, 22:20	36:8	27:16, 39:7,
97:22, 98:3,	arts	attorney	39:22, 118:16
98:10, 114:10,	22:18, 22:22	3:2, 60:18,	bachelor's
114:19, 115:2,	ash	60:20, 143:17,	145:6, 145:8,
115:3, 115:14,	164:9	146:4, 146:16,	145:10
115:18, 116:2,	asked	154:22	back
116:6, 116:11,	34:3, 35:8,	attorneys	9:20, 14:9,
116:20, 121:14,	42:7, 62:22,	3:2	14:16, 29:15,
121:17, 124:8,	76:6, 107:14,	attracts	31:5, 32:15,
124:17, 126:3,	143:22, 165:16,	69:19	57:20, 58:4,
126:4, 126:8,	165:17, 165:18	atwell	58:9, 58:16,
126:22, 127:4,	asking	140:12	65:16, 70:9,
127:9, 127:11,	25:4, 25:15,	audio	73:15, 82:8,
127:20, 131:7,	83:8, 124:12,	168:4	87:17, 97:8,
131:12, 131:20,	144:22, 147:13,	audio-recorded	97:17, 98:1,
131:22, 132:6,	147:14		102:3, 115:3,
132:9, 132:14,	aspects	1:8	118:5, 118:10,
138:21, 139:11,	98:21	august	119:8, 122:12,
142:13, 144:1,	assistant	49:16	122:18, 124:2,
154:15, 164:3,	91:18	authenticate	124:4, 124:5,
165:20, 165:21		9:9, 96:6	124:7, 124:11,
areas	associate	authenticated	124:13, 124:17,
121:10, 123:3,	139:15	9:7	125:22, 128:22,
127:8, 127:10,	associated	authenticating	133:6, 135:8,
141:16, 151:17,	85:19	9:8	139:12, 157:16,
154:12, 154:18	associates	automated	158:12, 158:19,
around	140:11, 140:13	2:9, 82:22	159:17, 161:21,
39:20, 66:8,	assume	avail	166:16, 166:17
69:10, 69:16,	106:21, 107:12,	50:17	background
70:9, 70:12,	110:20	available	13:12, 87:2,
75:17, 97:20,	assuming	68:9, 74:10,	109:20, 138:7,
114:17, 140:8,	60:11, 62:12,	87:5, 89:15,	138:8, 138:9,
161:21, 163:17	106:11, 160:21	137:22, 156:2	141:10, 141:16,
arrangement	atlas	avenue	154:15
140:16	163:21	19:15, 26:21,	backseat
arrive	atmosphere	36:2, 44:19,	43:18
106:14	126:20	53:7, 67:2	backup
art	atta	averting	4:4
23:5	69:19	164:16	bah
arteries	attempt	aware	5:4, 5:9,
73:17	133:16	62:11, 120:11,	
articles	attend	121:9, 121:12,	46:18, 63:14,
147:16	36:7, 42:17,	146:3	63:20, 92:3, 92:5, 135:4
artist	45:1	away	bail
22:9, 22:17	attended	27:13, 47:22,	154:2
	16:16, 23:15,	50:19, 52:14,	
artistic	49:15, 53:1	162:15	banks
22:21	attending	В	44:9, 44:11,
	50:13	<u></u>	
		97:12	
		J / • ± ∠	

44:15, 44:18,	basis	bedrooms	30:18
46:19, 46:21,	33:2, 109:10,	92:14, 92:19,	being
55:20, 56:1,	155:18	98:2	3:4, 50:21,
56:2, 63:18,	bathroom	been	53:19, 54:9,
64:5, 64:6,	92:20, 98:12	12:13, 12:15,	68:20, 69:1,
64:8, 65:19,	bay	23:8, 24:9,	73:12, 94:9,
65:20, 65:22,	96:21	29:6, 39:5,	115:14, 115:15,
66:2, 66:11,	bearings	39:10, 50:16,	124:5, 130:2,
66:13, 66:19,	128:19	73:14, 73:22,	160:20, 161:11
66:22, 67:2,	beautiful	79:20, 81:17,	belabor
67:5, 71:9,	93:13, 114:17	83:3, 86:14,	124:21
71:11, 71:16,	became	87:3, 89:1,	belief
71:18, 71:20,	139:17	89:2, 89:8,	35:5
72:1, 72:3,	because	102:21, 104:8,	believe
72:12, 72:18,	8:1, 8:15,	104:15, 104:21,	5:10, 5:12,
72:20, 72:22,	14:21, 18:10,	110:14, 110:16,	7:15, 8:6, 17:6,
73:4, 73:6,	18:18, 32:5,	111:20, 113:2,	30:8, 33:4,
73:9, 73:13,	34:16, 34:20,	117:7, 118:7,	43:11, 63:10,
74:3, 74:5,	35:3, 39:19,	134:13, 141:11,	63:12, 63:14,
74:10, 74:14,	41:11, 43:11,	142:12, 142:16,	64:11, 73:19,
74:18, 75:5,	43:16, 50:14,	142:18, 143:16,	73:21, 92:15,
75:14, 75:19,	55:2, 55:3,	144:16, 148:10,	93:17, 93:22,
75:21, 76:9,	72:16, 76:6,	151:9, 152:3,	100:16, 101:11,
76:11, 76:17,	81:10, 82:4,	152:5, 155:3,	104:19, 104:20,
76:18, 77:1,	89:9, 94:8,	155:4, 160:17,	106:2, 115:16,
77:3, 77:6,	98:20, 102:3,	163:6	121:21, 127:12,
77:10, 77:13,	102:16, 102:20,	before	127:14, 127:16,
77:17, 77:21 banter	110:16, 111:8,	7:14, 10:17,	127:22, 135:9,
	112:22, 113:7,	11:13, 11:16,	137:3, 137:21,
54:6	114:7, 114:15,	13:13, 18:9,	138:20, 141:16,
barred	115:3, 115:10,	42:1, 81:12,	141:20, 152:9,
133:9	116:8, 116:16,	81:15, 85:3,	158:22, 159:2,
barriers	117:13, 117:22,	85:8, 97:11,	159:3, 165:2
68:10, 72:9	118:7, 118:11,	99:11, 102:17,	belittling
bars	118:18, 123:11,	133:15, 136:3,	147:9
152:18	127:12, 127:20,	142:20, 144:15, 146:3, 148:13,	belly
based	132:10, 134:3,	140:3, 148:13, 149:9, 151:10,	110:9
22:10, 34:3,	137:13, 141:18,	153:10	ben
105:14, 128:12,	144:14, 150:11,		2:18, 4:16,
158:16	150:22, 151:19,	began	5:20, 14:8,
basement	153:20, 155:11,	23:12 <b>begin</b>	57:2, 57:10,
92:21, 97:22	156:3, 156:22		78:12, 78:22,
bases	become	135:17, 135:21 <b>beginning</b>	134:14, 140:10
139:15	63:19, 67:15,		ben's
basic	157:20	118:10, 118:18, 163:1	20:2
68:22, 88:3,	becoming	behalf	benefit
88:21, 105:15	20:12		17:15, 21:10,
basically	bedroom	15:22, 16:11,	24:13, 28:3,
103:6, 157:9	87:1, 97:8		

		1 17, 2024	
29:7, 37:5,	birth	boundary	building
45:6, 107:13,	117:10	146:5	67:7, 96:6,
156:6	birthday	boutique	124:8, 163:15,
benefited	58:3, 58:21,	155:1	164:20, 164:22,
16:14	59:1, 160:14	box	165:4
benefits	bit	98:11	buildings
67 <b>:</b> 9	34:15, 61:13,	boxes	122:3, 122:6
best	75:1, 86:19,	93:8	built
99:13, 110:11,	87:2, 87:17,	boy	164:4, 165:1
134:9, 160:6,	98:17, 117:3,	39:7	burden
168:3	128:4, 140:2	branches	155:9
better	blessing	84:13	bureaucratic
27:15, 30:10,	86:14	break	70:21
37:22, 43:2,	block	82:5, 82:9,	bus
65:22, 96:1,	50:19, 123:4	82:19, 83:1,	53:22, 54:19,
163:5	blocks	133:17, 134:10,	55:1, 55:8
between	52:14, 100:18,	134:11, 134:21,	business
34:7, 42:6,	162:15	159:17	10:20, 21:3,
45:20, 87:7,	blossomed	breaking	28:6, 29:20,
99:18, 115:14,	16:22, 36:22,	56:2	30:4, 39:19,
146:5	50:5	brian	63:22, 83:12,
bicultural	blue	65:19, 67:2	83:15, 107:6,
41:17	93:8	bridle	129:10, 136:2,
bicycle	board	31:19, 33:6,	136:10, 136:13,
53:21	141:5, 142:20,	55:11, 74:21	141:12, 160:5,
big	142:22, 143:1,	bring	163:2, 163:4
47:20, 143:11,	143:2, 147:14,	7:19, 23:3,	businesses
156:2	148:17, 149:9,	23:13, 53:9,	45:14, 53:6
biggest	149:14	54:10, 150:11,	busy
140:8	boards	155:10, 162:20	43:15
bike	141:5, 141:6,	bringing	butler
106:18	147:11	153:4	146:2
bilingual	bodies	brother	butternut
1:10, 16:11,	118:4	37 <b>:</b> 7	39:4
20:1, 20:12,	bolton	brought	bye-bye
21:2, 22:13,	140:12, 140:13	57:7, 116:15,	167:6, 167:7
23:8, 23:15,	both	147:11	C
24:5, 24:8,	26:6, 26:12,	brown's	caliber
24:19, 27:3,	63:8, 67:7,	76:2, 116:17	70:20
41:7, 44:21,	72:6, 92:14,	buffer	call
48:3, 49:20,	92:19, 126:16,	88:5, 99:17,	5:20, 5:21,
52:12, 54:5,	134:14	119:22, 120:3	6:6, 7:7, 10:2,
57:3, 61:11,	bottom	buffering	13:22, 14:4,
61:17, 64:20,	92:16, 97:22,	119:18, 119:19,	13:22, 14:4, 14:8, 78:11,
79:4, 79:10,	101:4	120:7, 151:7,	90:6, 97:12,
79:17, 83:11,	boulevard	154:10	105:4, 108:19,
168:20	34:9, 84:15	build	130:20, 140:11,
billion	boundaries	88:14	130.20, 140.11,
69:5	150:19, 152:8		
	·		
	•		•

	Conducted on W		
152:9, 153:13	118:1	151:3, 152:14,	61:20, 80:9,
called	cared	153:4, 155:14,	80:13, 80:15,
37:4, 140:9,	27:17	155:17, 155:18,	80:18, 80:20,
153:22	cared-for	156:7, 156:8,	83:9, 109:17,
came	29:11	156:17, 157:7,	109:19, 168:1
37:2, 41:21,	caregivers	157:8, 157:9,	certificates
159:17	54:3	157:11, 158:18,	63:8, 63:19
camera	careless	159:1, 168:6	certification
8:13, 31:1,	30:13	cases	110:8, 117:7,
31:3, 35:13,	caretakers	147:19, 148:8,	147:3, 147:10
38:16, 40:9,	23:21	153:9, 156:3,	certifications
76:20, 97:1	caring	157:17, 157:19	147:1
can't	27:20, 55:6,	cater	certified
15:3, 25:3,	110:14, 112:19	45 <b>:</b> 15	126:11, 147:4,
31:2, 43:15,	cars	caught	147:6, 151:21,
50:14, 52:20,	43:22, 69:15,	150:6, 150:16,	153:8
54:21, 64:5,	69:20, 69:21,	150:22	chair
66:8, 69:21,	70:2, 70:4,	center	133:12
70:11, 77:14,	70:17, 106:22	2:22, 4:13,	challenge
94:8, 116:21,	carter	14:5, 29:6,	52:19
151:14, 153:5,	25:5, 26:6,	29:8, 30:8,	chance
159:14, 163:5	26:17, 26:20,	31:21, 36:16,	40:1, 46:20,
cannot	28:13, 28:17,	36:18, 39:22,	54:3, 83:2
8:18, 37:17,	28:20, 31:2,	41:12, 41:13,	change
45:3, 143:19	31:7, 31:13,	44:21, 53:17,	46:11, 88:8,
capable	31:17, 31:20,	62:2, 62:12,	88:12, 114:18,
141:17, 155:19	31:22, 32:8,	62:14, 80:10,	128:7, 128:11
capacity	33:18, 34:2,	80:14, 83:20,	changed
106:11	34:5, 35:5	86:6, 87:22,	133:3
caption	case	91:1, 105:17,	changes
168:10	4:12, 6:2,	110:5, 110:6,	13:18, 87:12,
car	6:17, 8:10,	110:21, 111:7,	87:22, 88:4,
69:22, 106:15,	12:3, 12:20,	112:20, 114:10,	88:21, 91:3,
106:16	13:9, 22:16,	141:20, 141:22,	91:4, 108:6
care	60:3, 60:4,	148:12	character
16:15, 17:1,	61:15, 65:16,	centers	108:5, 122:8,
20:2, 36:10,	73:22, 91:9,	54:6, 68:7,	145:4
36:22, 37:5,	99:2, 104:5,	68:8, 71:10,	charles
39:7, 41:9,	111:1, 112:12,	76:7, 109:13,	142:17, 144:10,
45:4, 45:20,	130:4, 134:7,	116:14, 120:15	146:2, 146:7,
50:4, 51:4,	138:17, 141:18,	certain	148:5
51:7, 51:11,	142:4, 144:11,	150:12	chat
68:16, 72:6,	144:12, 144:13,	certainly	8:21, 18:2,
80:1, 80:3,	144:17, 145:3,	51:5	18:4, 21:18,
80:7, 89:7,	146:1, 146:2,	certi	71:12, 72:4,
105:22, 110:11,	146:4, 146:13,	61:20	72:16, 77:21,
113:2, 113:18,	148:17, 148:18,	certificate	78:2, 112:1,
113:19, 113:20,	149:3, 150:1,	61:6, 61:16,	159:12, 159:15

		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
chi	54:3, 54:19,	claudia	47:18, 85:13,
20:6	55:1, 80:3,	2:18, 5:21,	106:6, 141:12,
chief	80:4, 86:16,	14:17, 16:15,	154:17, 161:10
65:16	86:18, 88:11,	16:19, 20:2,	closed
child	89:4, 89:6,	20:4, 20:15,	93:1
27:1, 37:13,	89:8, 89:16,	20:17, 23:17,	closely
37:14, 105:20,	89:19, 92:22,	27:19, 29:17,	160:8
121:20, 122:1	93:12, 98:8,	36:9, 36:12,	closer
child's	105:21, 106:11,	36:14, 36:19,	118:17, 118:20
36:10	106:12, 110:14,	36:22, 39:6,	co-own
child-led	111:2, 112:19,	39:14, 41:14,	56:17
20:6	114:11, 115:15,	41:16, 42:7,	co-owner
childcare	116:21, 118:9,	45:4, 48:4,	56:20
17:4, 17:10,	121:4, 121:8,	50:4, 51:4,	code
21:8, 27:9,	126:20	51:7, 53:3,	
29:6, 36:13,	children's	54:8, 57:2,	109:7, 116:17, 139:4, 140:22,
39:20, 44:21,	53:22	57:10, 79:6,	141:1, 143:16,
52:16, 53:6,	chris	80:2, 83:15,	153:15, 153:19,
53:17, 67:19,	168:2, 168:18	86:2, 86:6,	156:22, 157:5
68:5, 68:7,	christian	86:11, 89:6,	150:22, 157:5 codes
68:9, 68:11,	1:22	90:2, 90:15,	139:6
68:14, 68:16,	circuit	105:4, 108:8,	cofounder
68:21, 69:3,	142:17, 142:18,	108:19, 108:20,	22:10
69:4, 69:6,	144:11	109:3, 109:5,	
70:19, 71:10,	circumstances	109:21, 112:9,	cognizant
72:8, 86:6,	163:10	159:21, 160:4,	66:2
87:6, 89:13,	citizen	160:13	collaborate
92:13, 93:3,	35:10	claudia's	23:19
111:13, 116:8,	citizens	24:11, 39:22,	collaborated
116:13, 117:17,	67:8, 67:22	45:10, 48:2,	24:6
163:2	city	163:4	collaborating
childhood	23:12, 32:18,	clean	20:20
50:22, 80:6,	67:17, 73:18,	29:9	collaboration
90:18	73:20	cleanup	79:5
children	civil	67 <b>:</b> 18	collective
		clear	11:1, 129:4
2:22, 4:13, 16:20, 17:3,	139:21, 140:4, 153:16	81:18, 116:19,	college
17:6, 21:10,	clarification	132:5, 132:9,	36:2, 110:17
27:21, 29:10,	13:7	153:3, 158:15	come
29:13, 29:18,		click	8:13, 15:11,
30:10, 34:6,	clarify	118:21	18:17, 24:9,
36:6, 37:9,	5:4, 35:7,	client	25:13, 31:1,
37:18, 38:4,	43:10, 59:20,	117:8, 146:3	35:13, 58:16,
39:9, 39:14,	65:3, 125:20 classes	clients	63:21, 82:8,
39:16, 45:1,		24:14, 117:13	88:19, 97:19,
45:9, 45:12,	145:14	clock	106:15, 106:16,
45:15, 46:2,	classmates	133:14	118:4, 118:10,
51:6, 53:1,	20:6	close	157:10, 157:16,
	clau	2:19, 17:10,	158:3, 158:19,
	37:4, 37:18	2.19, 17.10,	

161:10, 161:21,	community-buildi-	conducted	contract
166:16	ng	23:20	90:13
comes	20:18	conducting	contracted
68:15, 98:7	commute	83:12, 83:15	23:13
comfortable	27:13	confident	contrast
126:19	companies	20:10, 37:1	69:18
coming	23:19, 140:1	conformance	contributions
29:15, 38:16,	company	110:22	23:1, 163:4
43:19, 93:11,	23:13, 129:3,	confused	control
98:4, 166:16	129:6	34:21	140:17, 140:20
comment	compassionate	connect	conveniently
30:2	37:11	118:21	42:18
comments	completely	connection	conversation
155:8	98:22, 106:6,	97:2	23:17
commercial	118:4, 145:21	connects	conversations
87:5, 87:7,	complex	114:20	29:22
143:12	32:10, 143:11,	consider	copy
commission	155:14	60:18, 70:4,	8:18, 80:13,
16:2, 156:17	compliance	152:5, 155:9,	80:15, 109:17,
commitment	13:19, 88:14	155:13, 155:17,	109:18, 137:2
19:20, 67:14	compliant	155:18, 155:21	corner
committed	88:13, 120:17	consideration	55:13, 92:17,
37:10	complies	160:4, 160:12,	101:4, 123:16,
committee	156:18	160:17	124:2
17:13	comply	considering	correct
communication	160:6	17:11	10:11, 10:12,
24:15	computer	consistent	59:22, 60:1,
community	82:18	96:7	60:13, 62:3,
17:8, 17:14,	concept	constructed	62:16, 74:10,
19:21, 20:17,	140:18	163:15, 163:20,	77:2, 77:12,
22:19, 22:22,	concerning	164:9	90:4, 90:5,
23:4, 24:13,	75:3, 75:9,	consultant	95:12, 103:15,
24:16, 27:7,	147:20	162:19	107:1, 109:10,
28:3, 29:7,	concluded	contact	120:16, 121:19,
29:21, 30:4,	156:18	25:8, 58:12,	126:22, 127:1,
36:8, 37:19,	concludes	58:15, 166:17	129:5, 129:7,
38:3, 38:6,	130:19	contain	129:11, 134:1,
41:14, 45:6,	concrete	168:8	149:5, 168:8
45:9, 45:17,	97:9	context	correctly
51:12, 52:21,	conditions	87:2, 163:18	160:10
54:7, 54:10,	12:7, 12:10,	continue	cost
57:13, 67:7, 67:20, 68:4,	12:12, 12:15,	14:19, 51:10,	68:14, 68:15
163:5, 165:3	12:16, 13:2,	67:9, 99:6,	costs
community's	13:4, 13:19,	111:2, 112:7,	69:5, 72:6 <b>could</b>
23:11	104:8, 104:12,	114:12, 114:14,	10:19, 12:20,
community-based	104:15, 104:19,	115:6, 125:20,	18:6, 18:17,
20:21	112:16	143:17	27:11, 27:15,
	condo	continuing	21.11, 21.17,
	143:11	83:6	
	<u> </u>	I .	I .

	Conducted on iv	<u> </u>	-
42:2, 50:1,	couple	cultural	day
54:18, 57:20,	50:9, 127:2,	162:17	50:10, 90:3,
63:1, 67:11,	142:9, 155:8,	culture	109:9, 115:5,
72:16, 73:6,	165:11	39:15, 39:16	167:5
81:16, 91:18,	course	curious	daycare
92:8, 95:22,	69:2, 104:6,	20:10	2:22, 4:13,
99:13, 105:1,	115:2, 132:10	current	13:11, 14:5,
105:2, 112:3,	court	11:10, 11:11,	16:12, 20:1,
114:6, 128:10,	142:17, 142:18,	46:10, 80:10,	20:12, 20:16,
131:17, 133:17,	144:11, 144:17,	80:14, 90:20,	21:11, 27:4,
137:14, 143:21,	148:2, 148:3,	96:7, 106:4,	27:6, 27:8,
144:14, 144:19,	148:6	107:7, 110:21,	28:2, 30:8,
151:18, 153:7,	courts	111:3, 124:12,	31:21, 34:22,
153:13, 154:12,	144:2	125:14, 136:21	35:2, 36:5,
154:13, 156:21,	covered	currently	36:7, 36:15,
163:22, 167:2	63:5, 63:9,	36:7, 61:7,	36:16, 36:18,
couldn't	89:2	68:14, 79:17,	37:6, 39:16,
96:10	create	80:1, 80:2,	41:3, 41:7,
council	24:1, 51:5	89:6, 89:7,	41:11, 41:15,
67:18, 125:18	created	90:10, 95:7,	41:18, 42:7,
councils	20:5	105:19, 109:12	42:11, 42:15,
134:14	creates	curriculum	42:18, 46:1,
counsel	37:19, 41:14	20:7, 24:12,	47:19, 47:20,
3:11, 3:17,	creating	114:15	49:20, 50:5,
18:12, 168:5	23:4, 37:8,	cursor	50:16, 50:21,
counties	60:18, 72:9	7:9, 119:22	51:2, 51:5,
142:19	creative	cut	52:17, 52:20,
counts	20:10, 20:19	68:6, 156:5	54:6, 57:8,
74:1	cribs	D	62:2, 62:12,
county	87:1		62:14, 68:8,
1:12, 11:19,	crippling	<b>d</b>	69:10, 76:7,
11:22, 61:3,	52:19	98:4	77:16, 77:18,
67:21, 68:1,	critical	daily	79:18, 80:1,
68:18, 70:18,	20:13, 37:15,	33:2, 42:22,	80:7, 80:10,
71:3, 79:8,	52:17	69:8	80:14, 83:20,
84:10, 87:6,	cross	dance	86:7, 86:13,
109:14, 109:18,	105:6, 115:7,	110:9, 110:10	86:15, 87:10,
126:14, 131:15,	115:11	dancer	87:18, 87:22,
139:22, 141:1,	cross-examine	110:9, 117:4	89:10, 90:4,
142:2, 142:17,	8:18	dangerous	90:20, 91:1,
142:21, 143:18,	crossing	70:15	105:17, 106:5,
144:10, 146:3,	126:4	daughter	106:6, 106:7,
146:7, 148:4,	126:4 cul	20:2, 20:5,	106:14, 108:9,
148:5, 148:14,	102:6	20:9, 20:14,	109:9, 109:13,
156:1, 162:18,	cul-de-sac	27:10, 27:17,	110:15, 110:21,
163:16	46:9	37:4, 41:22,	111:7, 111:10,
county's	40:9 cul-de-sacs	42:3, 80:3	112:20, 113:13,
138:14	69:13	daughter's	114:13, 120:15,
	09:13	86:22	
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	

121:5, 141:20,	deep	describe	165:1
141:22, 148:11,	19:20, 130:10	32:4, 33:3,	differently
163:7, 164:21	defer	54:19, 54:22,	98:18
daycares	91:17	84:1, 92:8,	difficult
45:19	definitely	92:9, 94:15,	6:16, 23:7,
daylight	81:9, 115:5,	94:17, 95:4,	43:21
127:5, 127:7	143:14	96:20, 138:19,	difficulties
days	definition	153:5	17:2
75:14, 106:19,	21:3, 165:4	described	digital
115:6	degree	61:11	23:7
dc	30:9, 145:6,	deserving	dimension
39:5, 116:8,	145:9, 145:11,	38 <b>:</b> 5	123:22, 124:1
158:3, 158:5,	151:16	design	diploma
158:10	degrees	140:15, 140:19,	138:10
de	147:1, 153:7	141:6, 147:11,	dire
73:13, 102:6	delayed	149:6, 149:7	81:16
dead	161:12	designer	direct
32:5, 32:9,	delighted	139:14, 139:16	134:13
70:3, 70:15,	29:3, 30:3,	desperate	disabled
74:20, 74:21,	47:18, 54:1	36:18	10:15
84:12, 84:18,	delimitates	despite	disagree
102:6, 103:3	116:12	74:7	44:2, 44:5,
dealing	delivering	detail	142:8, 154:3,
36:16, 118:2,	36:12	140:2	156:6
118:5, 151:3	delivery	details	disciplines
decade	118:19	14:5	145:22, 147:12
53:14	demand	determine	disclosure
decide	45:20, 116:9	143:8	59:12
134:9	demonstrated	develop	discuss
decided	67:17, 154:11	24:14, 50:1,	9:10, 82:7,
89:3	demonstrates	154:18	114:9
decision	151 <b>:</b> 2	developed	discussed
21:9, 134:15,	demonstrating	141:15, 141:20,	104:19
154:1, 154:3,	72:9, 154:8	155:1	dispute
161:11	denying	development	144:12, 146:5
decisions	68:19	16:22, 36:10,	distance
153:1, 155:17	department	37:14, 118:15,	53:21, 114:22
declare	79:8, 80:4,	155:16	distances
168:2, 168:12	80:5, 90:17,	developmental	128:20
decline	116:5, 116:10	16:21	distant
68:7	dependent	<b>dh</b>	23:5
decreasing	106:17, 106:18	140:12	distinct
68:13, 69:15,	depending	difference	145:20
72:6	105:19, 105:21	96:5, 115:14	distinction
<b>dedicated</b> 27:19, 36:12	depict	different	124:18
27:19, 36:12 <b>deemed</b>	94:16	98:21, 98:22,	diversity
	depicted	145:21, 147:12,	165:1
144:13, 144:16	95:4	148:6, 153:7,	dividend
			165:2

	Conducted on 1V		
division	29:14, 32:20,	drop-off	each
90:18, 143:14	34:8, 34:9,	69:9, 69:17	37:12, 93:7,
divisions	41:6, 55:11,	drop-offs	94:15, 95:4,
143:10	55:12, 92:21,	53:20	97:12, 102:10,
document	94:10, 103:7,	dropped	126:12, 157:18
25:5, 76:5,	115:11, 131:10,	107:4	earlier
94:9	146:2, 151:19,	dropping	18:4, 49:11,
documents	156:3, 163:9,	70:8	50:3, 51:8,
8:16, 8:19,	164:13, 164:17	duck	84:12, 85:22,
9:13, 62:19,	dozens	33:7, 45:11	89:1, 104:18,
81:6, 81:7	69:18	due	105:1, 114:2,
dogs	dpie	34:14, 75:2,	116:16, 131:8,
114:17	73:10, 74:8	149:18	133:9
doing	draftsman	duly	earliest
27:5, 41:22,	139:13, 139:14,	81:19	164:1
42:1, 69:8,	139:16	duplicate	early
82:21, 105:10,	drama's	99:12, 100:10	20:14, 23:21,
105:14, 117:5,	23:9	duplicative	37:16, 42:17,
117:17, 140:3,	dramas	150:3	50:2, 50:22,
142:11, 152:18,	22:10, 45:11	during	57:20, 58:2,
155:4, 160:5	dramatically	17:1, 41:12,	58:8, 59:1,
dominican	69:15	41:20, 86:16,	80:5, 90:18,
110:10	dream	115:6, 127:5,	154:1
done	24:9	127:6	earnest
60:21, 73:14,	drew	dwelling	36:3
73:22, 124:15,	149:4, 149:6	123:4	ease
139:5, 139:17,	drive	dwellings	36:19
140:17, 143:10,	11:2, 28:21,	164:3	easier
148:22, 157:17,	32:8, 41:2,	dyer	42:19, 115:10
157:18, 158:1	42:3, 44:1,	140:10	easily
door	79:1, 79:20,	E	37:1
37:13, 56:17,	84:13, 84:15,	<u> </u>	east
59:21, 88:16,	103:7, 103:9,	5:2, 6:7,	120:2, 122:6,
88:18, 92:16,	109:6	46:18, 98:13	122:10, 123:21,
92:17, 93:1,	driveway	e-mail	124:4, 125:8,
97:5, 97:21,	88:12, 88:13,	3:9, 5:8, 7:12,	126:17, 131:10
98:7	88:20, 90:13,	7:21, 8:21,	echo
doors	99:20, 100:6,	25:5, 25:7,	162:22
29:1	100:11, 100:22,	25:22, 26:2,	edge
double-check	101:4, 102:22,	46:6, 63:1,	97:20
46:17, 46:18	103:6, 115:8,	72:17, 72:18,	edges
doubt	126:5	72:22, 82:6,	88:5
16:17, 145:18	driving	82:10, 82:19	educate
doubted	20:17, 30:14	e-mailed	110:10
50:4	drop	25:14	education
doula	42:2, 42:3,	e-mailing	22:22, 80:6,
117:4, 117:6	69:21, 72:3,	81:1	90:17, 116:5,
down	106:13		116:11, 145:6,
15:10, 29:1,			

		- 1 Waren 19, 2024	
145:11, 149:20,	emphasize	37:17, 45:3,	29:9, 37:9,
153:7, 154:19,	37:15	113:8, 134:17,	37:20, 49:17,
157:21	employed	134:19, 141:21	49:19, 49:22,
educational	129:4, 129:7,	enriches	51:1, 51:5
22:19, 138:8,	168:6	24:16	escort
138:9, 138:11,	employee	enriching	54:19, 54:22,
141:10	105:19, 107:7,	16:20, 27:20	55:2
effort	107:8	enrolled	especially
67 <b>:</b> 15	employees	36:20, 121:5	27:7, 32:11,
efforts	105:21, 106:21,	enrollment	47:21, 70:19,
24:1, 67:18	107:3, 107:5	121:8	86:16, 106:19
egress	employer	ensure	espirale
99:20	53:5, 129:8	16:20, 21:9,	20:11
eight	enable	37:4	espirales
70:6		enter	1:10, 16:11,
either	88:16		16:16, 17:5,
	encourage	72:4, 74:12,	17:9, 17:14,
18:7, 35:9,	27:3, 28:7,	88:20	
64:12, 144:5	46:4, 107:3,	entered	20:1, 20:12, 21:1, 21:5,
elementary	107:8, 111:12	81:11	
52:18	end	entering	22:13, 23:8,
elicited	12:7, 12:10,	113:7	23:15, 23:22,
116:16	32:6, 32:9,	enterprises	24:5, 24:8,
elizabeth	41:8, 55:12,	53:9	24:18, 27:2,
59:18, 60:6,	70:3, 70:15,	enthusiastic	27:3, 27:14,
60:16, 79:14	74:21, 84:12,	16:12	27:17, 28:1,
else	84:18, 102:5,	enthusiastically	28:4, 28:5,
8:14, 18:16,	102:6, 103:2,	29:4, 30:6,	29:1, 29:19, 30:16, 32:15,
37:21, 65:2,	103:3, 118:20	30:15, 51:9,	30:16, 32:15, 32:20, 36:4,
65:4, 114:3,	endeavors	57:1	36:10, 37:6,
133:18, 143:8,	54:9	entire	37:8, 37:17,
158:13, 166:15	endorsement	92:14	38:2, 38:7,
elsewhere	36:4	entirely	41:6, 41:8,
116:22, 152:6	ends	57:21	42:6, 44:21,
email	84:17	entities	45:2, 45:6,
137:11, 137:15	energy	63:22	
emailed	29:16	entity	45:8, 45:12, 45:16, 45:18,
83:3, 91:7,	engaged	83:11, 83:14	
112:2	67 <b>:</b> 8	entrance	46:3, 46:5, 49:15, 50:10,
emails	engineering	92:17, 97:4,	· ·
91:11	139:22, 140:4	100:5	50:14, 51:11, 52:12, 53:1,
embraced	engineers	entrances	
30 <b>:</b> 7	153:16	73 <b>:</b> 17	54:1, 57:2, 57:6, 57:12
emergency	enhance	entrepreneurship	57:6, 57:12,
98:9	23:7	53:7	61:11, 61:16, 62:17, 64:20,
emily	enormous	entry	67:6, 79:4,
52 <b>:</b> 7	29:7	68:10	
emotions	enough	environment	79:9, 79:16,
23:7	16:2, 19:22,	16:18, 27:21,	83:10, 168:20
	1		

7:4, 67:19,	essential	everybody	109:16, 113:22,	excited
### ### ### ### ### ### ### ### ### ##				
		•	•	
### 133:11, 133:13, 13			•	
### ### ### ### ### ### ### ### ### ##	<u> </u>			
18:8, 26:22,   137:16, 141:2,   execute	-		•	
14   11   142   10   143   10   143   10   144   144   1			The state of the s	
Second   S		-		
#te				
149:17, 150:22,   2xercising   150:19, 161:19, 161:19, 161:19, 161:19, 161:19, 161:19, 161:19, 161:19, 161:19, 161:19, 161:19, 161:10, 161:14   2verything   161:13, 165:9   5:5, 5:9, 5:13, example   6:13, 15:9, 16:30:8, 61:8, 111:15, 117:13, 155:3   77:2, 77:12, 77:12, 160:3, 161:10, 146:1, 16:8, 46:20, 17:38, 163:10, 146:1, 16:8, 46:20, 17:39, 17:18   80:21, 82:7, 17:13, 80:19, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 18:19, 18:18, 18:18, 18:19, 18				•
160:19, 161:9, 161:9, 152:17, 156:16, 162:12, 166:14 157:2, 160:3, exhibit 161:6 everything 161:13, 165:9 5:5, 5:9, 5:13, example 6:13, 15:9, 45:10, 164:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:13, 80:19, 37:18 80:21, 82:7, excellent 8:51:4 83:3 41:9 93:22, 95:9, example 6:1, 91:8, 18:14, 19:16 excellent 95:14, 101:21, 102:10, excellent 102:11, 102:10, excellent 103:18, 103:19, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 123:12, 17:18, 17:18, 17:18, 17:18, 17:18, 17:18, 17:18, 18:17, 11:13, 16		•		
## 162:1, 166:14   157:2, 160:3,		· ·		1
### 161:16 #### 222, 39:15, #### 39:22, 39:15, ### 39:22, 39:15, ### 39:26, 45:10, 146:1, ### 161:13, 165:9 ### 6:13, 15:9, ### 6:13, 15:9, ### 17:18, 123:12, ### 17:18, 123:12, ### 17:18, 123:12, ### 17:18, 123:12, ### 18:10, 165:14 ### 18:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 165:14 ### 19:10, 166:10 ### 19:10, 168:10 ### 10:20 ##				
## systal				
\$\frac{1}{3}\text{ 60:4}\$, \$ \text{ 49:13, 82:6, }    \text{ 49:13, 82:6, }				
155:3   155:3   77:2, 77:12,	ethics	-	_	
	60:3, 60:4,	•		
139:5, 160:11   139:5, 160:11   37:18   80:21, 82:7,   80:21   80:22   95:14, 101:21,   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:21   93:22, 95:9,   80:20   80:81   93:8,   80:21   80:22   80:21	60:8, 61:8,			
Avaluate         everything's         excellent         86:1, 91:8,           .51:4         83:3         41:9         93:22, 95:9,           .56:17         74:12         37:8         102:1, 102:10,           .50:4,         evidentiary         except         109:18, 109:19           .80:4, 23:22,         149:14, 149:16         42:20         exhibition           .80:5, 70:4,         exact         exception         16:3           .80:17, 111:13,         exactly         4:18, 5:16,         5:13, 8:22,           .13:2, 130:4,         84:3, 123:14,         11:13, 16:13,         63:11, 78:2,           .13:2, 130:4,         84:3, 123:14,         11:13, 16:13,         63:11, 78:2,           .14:12, 154:18,         166:11         22:15, 24:18,         81:21, 82:13,           .105:7         38:6, 41:3,         81:21, 82:13,         86:1, 91:7,           .106:10, 168:10,         examine         29:5, 30:16,         86:1, 91:7,           .68:13         1:13, 3:13,         51:10, 52:11,         34:22, 68:11,           .80:20         6:5, 7:20, 8:8,         71:2, 75:4,         103:10, 106:7,           .80:10, 168:10         6:5, 7:20, 8:8,         75:10,         106:14, 108:5,           .80:10, 18, 19         11:4,				
## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ##	•			•
Examinated         evidence         except         95:14, 101:21, 102:10, 109:18, 109:19           Even         evidentiary         except         102:1, 102:10, 109:18, 109:19           Even         evidentiary         except         109:18, 109:19           Even         exact         exception         16:3           Event         28:6, 75:16         2:17, 4:12, exhibits         exhibits           Event         42:20         exhibits         exhibits           Event         16:3         exactly         4:18, 5:16, 5:13, 8:22, 63:11, 78:2, 75:13, 8:22, 75:14, 78:2, 78:2, 78:2, 78:2, 78:3, 78:2, 78:2, 78:3, 78:3, 78:2, 78:3, 78	evaluate			
## 10:10	151:4			
evidentiary 20:4, 23:22, 88:5, 70:4, 88:5, 70:4, 88:17, 111:13, 88:17, 111:13, 84:3, 123:14, 16:11 89:10, 168:10, 16:81 89:10, 168:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:20 89:10, 169:10 89:10, 169:10 89	evaluated			
## 149:14, 149:16	156:17			· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ##	even	<u> </u>		•
28:6, 75:16	20:4, 23:22,	•		
## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ##	58:5, 70:4,		_	
### 13:2, 130:4,	70:5, 78:1,	•	•	
1. 14. 12. 154. 18, examine 1. 105. 7 2. 11. 13, 3. 13, as incomplete to the property of the p	88:17, 111:13,	-		
examine 105:7 105:6 20:10, 168:10, 20:10, 168:10 20:10, 168:10 20:10, 168:10 20:10, 168:10 20:11, 20:11 20:10, 168:10 20:11, 3:13, 3:13, 20:11, 3:13, 3:13, 20:12, 3:14 20:12 20:13, 3:14 20:14, 11:16 20:14, 108:5, 20:12 20:14, 20:14 20:15, 30:16 20:11, 38:6, 41:3, 20:11, 43:1, 20:11, 43:1, 20:12, 75:1, 20:10, 69:20, 20:10,	113:2, 130:4,	•		
## 105:7 ## 106:10, 168:10, ## 1:13, 3:13, ## 1:13, 3:13, ## 1:13, 3:13, ## 1:14, 11:16, ## 1:19, 17:22, ## 1:19, 17:22, ## 1:19, 17:22, ## 1:10, 52:11, ## 1:	144:12, 154:18,			
26:10, 168:10,       examiner       42:15, 43:1,       existing         3:20, 4:9, 4:22,       54:12, 57:1,       89:18, 97:9,         30:20       6:5, 7:20, 8:8,       71:2, 75:4,       103:10, 106:7,         40:20       11:14, 11:16,       75:8, 75:10,       106:14, 108:5,         50:6       12:19, 17:22,       79:3, 83:13,       108:7, 126:13,         60:6       59:7, 63:9,       86:3, 87:9,       131:22, 164:10,         60:6       64:2, 76:22,       89:4, 90:1,       164:22, 165:4,         60:6       80:12, 81:11,       104:2, 112:14,       166:12         60:4       80:12, 81:11,       104:2, 112:14,       166:12         60:1       80:12, 81:11,       104:2, 112:14,       166:12         60:1       80:10, 91:9,       138:16, 138:17,       98:9         60:10, 69:20,       94:21, 95:12,       138:16, 138:17,       98:9         60:10, 69:20,       94:21, 95:12,       155:20, 162:16,       155:20, 162:16,         10:55, 116:5,       104:22, 100:9,       163:8, 165:6       17:6, 28:2,         10:50, 39:18       104:22, 108:18,       104:22, 108:18,       104:22, 108:18,	155:6			
1:13, 3:13, 2:20, 4:9, 4:22, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 4:9, 4:22, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 4:9, 4:22, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 8:9, 3:20, 8:8, 3:20, 8:9, 3:20, 8:9, 3:20, 8:9, 3:20, 8:9, 3:20, 8:9, 3:20, 8:9, 3:20, 8:9, 3:20, 8:9, 3:20, 8:9, 3:20, 8:11, 34:22, 68:11, 89:18, 97:9, 103:10, 106:7, 106:14, 108:5, 108:7, 126:13, 108:7, 126:13, 108:7, 126:13, 108:7, 126:13, 108:7, 126:13, 108:7, 126:13, 108:7, 126:13, 108:7, 126:13, 108:7, 126:13, 104:22, 165:4, 104:2, 112:14, 104:2, 112:14, 114:8, 120:14, 114:8, 120:14, 114:8, 120:14, 114:8, 120:14, 114:8, 120:14, 115:5, 116:5,	event			· ·
3:20, 4:9, 4:22, 57:1, 71:2, 75:4, 103:10, 106:7, 11:14, 11:16, 75:8, 75:10, 106:14, 108:5, 12:19, 17:22, 8ver  42:12  42:12  42:12  43:20, 4:9, 4:22, 76:22, 89:4, 90:1, 131:22, 164:10, 164:22, 165:4, 12:12  44:3, 85:22, 91:6, 91:9, 91:20, 93:19, 91:20, 93:19, 91:20, 93:19, 94:21, 95:12, 96:3, 98:17, 100:2, 100:9, 100:2, 100:9, 104:22, 108:18, 104:22, 108:18, 106:16  43:20, 4:9, 4:22, 75:4, 71:2, 75:4, 103:10, 106:7, 106:14, 108:5, 106:14, 108:5, 108:7, 126:13, 122, 164:10, 164:22, 165:4, 104:2, 112:14, 126:14, 12	96:10, 168:10,			1
6:5, 7:20, 8:8,  11:14, 11:16,  12:19, 17:22,  20:20  20:6  20:6  20:7  20:6  20:7  20:7  20:8  20:9  20:9  20:8  20:8  20:8  20:8  20:9  20:9  20:8  20:8  20:8  20:8  20:9  20:9  20:8  20:8  20:8  20:9  20:9  20:9  20:8  20:8  20:8  20:9  20:9  20:9  20:9  20:10  20:	168:13			
## Properties of the propertie	events			
12:19, 17:22, 50:6  12:19, 17:22, 59:7, 63:9, 64:2, 76:22, 80:12, 81:11, 84:3, 85:22, 91:6, 91:9, 91:20, 93:19, 69:10, 69:20, 89:14, 90:1, 104:2, 112:14, 114:8, 120:14, 124:21, 138:15, 138:16, 138:17, 138:16, 138:17, 142:1, 151:6, 155:5, 116:5, 100:2, 100:9, 104:22, 108:18,  108:7, 126:13, 108:7, 126:13, 131:22, 164:10, 164:22, 165:4, 166:12  exit 98:9  exits 73:17  exits 73:17 155:20, 162:16, 163:8, 165:6 17:6, 28:2, 29:5, 30:5,	20:20			, ,
59:7, 63:9, 64:2, 76:22, 80:12, 81:11, 84:3, 85:22, 91:6, 91:9, 91:20, 93:19, 91:20, 93:19, 91:20, 93:19, 91:21, 103:1, 69:12, 103:1, 100:2, 100:9, 100:2, 100:9, 104:22, 108:18,  86:3, 87:9, 89:4, 90:1, 104:22, 164:10, 164:22, 165:4, 104:22, 112:14, 104:2, 112:14, 114:8, 120:14, 124:21, 138:15, 138:16, 138:17, 142:1, 151:6, 155:20, 162:16, 163:8, 165:6 17:6, 28:2, 29:5, 30:5,	eventually	•		
42:12 64:2, 76:22, 89:4, 90:1, 164:22, 165:4, 104:2, 112:14, 11:2 84:3, 85:22, 91:6, 91:9, 91:20, 93:19, 91:20, 93:19, 91:20, 93:19, 94:21, 95:12, 96:3, 98:17, 100:2, 100:9, 100:2, 100:9, 104:22, 108:18,  89:4, 90:1, 104:21, 112:14, 114:8, 120:14, 124:21, 138:15, 138:16, 138:17, 142:1, 151:6, 155:20, 162:16, 163:8, 165:6 17:6, 28:2, 29:5, 30:5,	50:6			
80:12, 81:11, 84:3, 85:22, 91:6, 91:9, 91:20, 93:19, 91:20, 93:19, 94:21, 95:12, 96:3, 98:17, 104:2, 112:14, 114:8, 120:14, 124:21, 138:15, 138:16, 138:17, 142:1, 151:6, 155:20, 162:16, 155:20, 162:16, 163:8, 165:6 17:6, 28:2, 29:5, 30:5,	ever			
84:3, 85:22, 91:6, 91:9, 91:20, 93:19, 91:20, 93:19, 94:21, 95:12, 96:3, 98:17, 100:2, 100:9, 100:2, 108:18, 114:8, 120:14, 124:21, 138:15, 138:16, 138:17, 142:1, 151:6, 155:20, 162:16, 163:8, 165:6 17:6, 28:2, 29:5, 30:5,	142:12			
91:6, 91:9, 91:21, 138:15, 98:9 91:10, 91:10	eversfield			
91:20, 93:19, 94:21, 151:6, 138:17, 96:3, 98:17, 100:2, 100:9, 104:22, 108:18, 104:22, 108:18, 105:5, 116:5, 106:5, 104:22, 108:18, 105:5, 106:5, 106:5, 106:20, 106:18, 106:20, 106:18, 106:20, 106:2	11:2		•	
94:21, 95:12, 96:3, 98:17, 155:5, 116:5, 106:2, 108:18, 96:3, 98:18, 96:3, 98:18, 96:3, 98:18, 96:3, 98:18, 96:3, 98:18, 96:3, 98:18, 96:3, 98:17, 100:2, 100:9, 104:22, 108:18, 96:3, 98:18, 165:6 exceptionally	every			
99:10, 69:20, 99:12, 103:1, 15:5, 116:5, 100:2, 100:9, 104:22, 108:18, 94:21, 95:12, 155:20, 162:16, 163:8, 165:6 exceptionally  73:17 expand 17:6, 28:2, 29:5, 30:5,	27:11, 29:13,			
100:2, 100:9, 103:1, 100:2, 100:9, 163:8, 165:6 17:6, 28:2, 29:5, 30:5, 104:22, 108:18, 165:6	69:10, 69:20,			
15:5, 116:5, 100:2, 100:9, 163:8, 165:6 17:6, 28:2, 29:5, 30:5,	89:12, 103:1,			
39.18   104:22, 108:18,   <b>exceptionally</b>   29:5, 30:5,	115:5, 116:5,			
36:12	139:18	104:22, 108:18,		29:5, 30:5,
			36:12	

	e onducted on iv	,	
45:7, 46:1,	explaining	20:16, 21:10,	18:20, 18:22,
51:11, 54:9,	152:11	27:22, 28:5,	19:2, 25:17,
57:2, 57:12,	express	36:11, 36:13,	25:20, 84:20,
89:9	36:3, 44:20	38:4, 41:15,	91:14
expanding	extends	42:5, 45:17,	fence
39:18, 68:11	32:9	46:2, 50:13,	88:9, 90:14,
expansion	extensive	52:17, 52:22,	97:19, 99:18,
21:5, 23:10,	139:20, 140:6,	68:20, 88:17,	103:11, 123:17,
23:11, 30:1,	141:15, 154:15	89:13, 89:18,	123:20, 124:11
36:4, 38:7	extent	89:19, 107:10	fenced
expect	99:10	family	88:10, 97:19,
68:6	extreme	16:14, 27:18,	98:10, 99:17
expensive	36:17	41:18, 45:1,	few
27:12	extremely	62:1, 67:17,	10:18, 39:19,
experience	68:13	70:3, 80:6, 88:1	76:2, 87:7,
23:6, 24:9,	eyes	fantastic	87:12, 104:1,
34:6, 113:1,	43:17	24:9, 49:17	120:19
113:6, 138:20,	F	far	fewer
139:8, 139:10,	f	65:4, 70:14,	70:4, 70:6,
139:17, 140:6,	99:22	87:7, 104:21,	70:16
141:9, 141:21,	<b>fa</b>	117:7, 130:8	field
149:20, 152:2,	75 <b>:</b> 12	faster	130:1, 142:4,
152:3, 154:21,	fabulous	76:3	145:2, 145:12,
157:21	50:16	favorable	147:15, 149:19,
experiences	faces	21:8, 21:9	149:21, 157:22
22:19, 23:4,	54:5	feel	file
37:16	facets	34:16, 50:22,	59:12, 60:8,
experiencing	129:15	58:11, 98:18,	64:12, 64:13,
156:1	facility	117:12	131:3
expert	32:22, 53:2,	feet	filed
6:1, 128:16,	106:20	32:16, 92:15,	4:15, 4:17,
128:22, 129:22,	fact	120:4, 121:18,	60:2, 61:9,
133:16, 138:14,	38:3, 49:20,	121:20, 122:1,	161:11
141:17, 142:4,	66:3, 71:13,	122:22, 123:4,	filled
142:12, 143:4,	74:7, 81:20,	123:6, 123:14,	54:4
143:8, 144:1,	150:18, 152:5,	123:16, 123:20,	final
144:13, 144:17,	158:16	124:1, 124:10, 125:2, 164:10	75:12, 155:8
145:2, 150:5, 151:12, 151:15,	fairly	felt	finalized
151:12, 151:15, 152:14, 155:19,	8:18, 32:11	36:19, 41:12,	61:1
155:22, 157:21	fairness	57:14, 67:9,	finally
expertise	8:15, 133:2	134:5	128:4
24:11, 151:4,	familiar	female	<pre>financial 168:7</pre>
151:13, 152:6,	12:6, 12:9,	2:3, 2:5, 2:7,	find
152:11, 154:18,	69:12, 101:9	2:11, 2:13,	
162:21	familiarize	2:14, 5:6, 9:12,	19:22, 27:11, 36:18, 37:21,
experts	84:2	9:16, 9:18,	40:13, 52:20,
156:7	families	13:6, 15:8,	116:4, 116:7
	17:5, 17:15,		110.4, 110./
L	1		

£:4:		<b>6</b>	107 0 100 1
findings	69:14, 75:14,	forever	107:8, 108:1,
104:8	82:5, 82:9,	20:11, 117:17	124:8
fine	147:22, 148:8	forfeited	froze
2:4, 96:8,	flag	61:18	3:20, 82:18
112:6, 130:7,	148:22, 149:4,	forgetting	full
133:19, 157:2	149:7	101:13	27:2, 29:16,
finish	flat	forgive	47:7, 106:11,
159:5	131:9	2:18	134:8, 168:8
fire	floor	form	fully
90:16	66:4, 86:21,	59:12, 96:7	21:5, 54:11,
firms	91:7, 91:8,	format	56:22, 57:16,
139:22, 140:1,	91:11, 92:11,	132:1	110:21
140:4, 140:8,	92:12, 92:14,	formed	functional
140:14, 156:2	93:2, 94:9,	79:12	132:6
first	94:22	former	further
5:17, 8:13,	florida	134:14	53:17, 62:19,
10:3, 14:2,	110:4	forward	105:3, 114:1,
15:6, 26:13,	flourished	48:5, 157:3	140:16, 158:18,
27:9, 28:22,	20:3	found	159:19, 159:21,
36:14, 37:16,	flow	27:14, 37:3,	168:12
47:17, 63:21,	70:9	105:14, 165:10	future
64:5, 87:16,	flowering	four	67:8, 67:10,
92:14, 93:2,	126:18	56:18, 60:11,	81:5, 107:7,
94:18, 105:6,	fluent	60:15, 61:8,	107:18, 157:13
117:8, 117:14,	41:17, 61:13	64:10, 69:14,	G
121:3, 134:7,	focez	70:3, 79:12,	g
144:21, 151:12,	140:9	88:3, 88:21,	102:13
165:12	focused	117:10, 164:3,	gap
fischer	20:7	164:11	45:19
15:4, 15:6,	folkloric	frame	gaskin's
15:11, 15:12,	110:9, 110:10	103:8	137:2
15:16, 15:20,	folks	frederick	gaskins
16:10, 17:18,	29:17	148:5	5:22, 135:11,
17:21, 18:13,	follow	free	135:14, 135:22,
18:15, 48:17,	11:18, 11:21	18:13, 23:20,	136:4, 136:7,
48:18, 48:20,	following	35:9, 58:11	136:9, 136:12,
49:3, 49:6,	90:12	freestanding	136:13, 136:16,
49:8, 49:9, 64:2	foot	107:22	136:18, 136:20,
fischer's	88:8, 119:22,	freeze	136:22, 138:6,
63:16, 64:2	120:3, 130:15	4 <b>:</b> 5	138:9, 138:13,
fish	footage	friday	138:22, 139:12,
35:12, 35:14,	164:12	58:3	140:7, 141:11,
35:15, 35:16,	force	friends	142:8, 142:12,
35:19, 36:1,	20:18, 67:6	27:18	142:14, 142:16,
38:15	forced	front	143:2, 143:6,
fit	68:20, 69:3,	6:9, 39:15,	144:3, 144:6,
57:14	155:11	96:21, 97:5,	144:8, 144:21,
five	foresaw	101:8, 107:2,	
36:14, 47:21,	144:14		

```
145:8, 145:13,
                     gis
                                          96:18, 98:19,
                                                               155:9, 155:11,
145:17, 146:10,
                                          99:9, 99:18,
                                                               156:11, 156:13,
                     151:17
146:12, 146:20,
                                          100:2, 100:20,
                                                               157:2, 161:21,
                     give
147:5, 147:8,
                                          102:2, 102:3,
                                                               165:10, 165:19,
                     3:19, 10:7,
147:17, 147:22,
                                          105:13, 107:19,
                                                               166:18
                     15:15, 19:9,
148:3, 148:9,
                     22:3, 26:8,
                                          115:11, 117:20,
                                                               gone
                                          120:19, 120:21,
148:16, 148:20,
                     26:15, 28:15,
                                                               27:2, 111:19
                                          121:2, 122:12,
149:6, 149:10,
                     35:17, 38:19,
                                                               good
149:12, 149:15,
                                          124:4, 127:18,
                     40:18, 44:14,
                                                               3:13, 3:16,
149:18, 150:6,
                                          128:5, 128:22,
                     47:3, 49:2,
                                                               3:18, 4:8, 5:14,
150:13, 150:15,
                                          130:10, 133:18,
                     52:2, 56:9,
                                                               26:21, 32:13,
151:21, 152:14,
                                          134:11, 138:5,
                     66:17, 78:15,
                                                               40:10, 41:11,
                     84:20, 108:22,
152:17, 153:11,
                                          138:7, 139:4,
                                                               46:22, 47:1,
153:15, 154:6,
                                          140:2, 147:2,
                                                               61:6, 61:7,
                     110:11, 117:21,
                                          157:3
156:21, 157:4,
                     128:15, 136:5,
                                                               61:16, 61:21,
                                                               67:6, 71:14,
157:8, 157:10,
                     142:9, 150:21,
                                          goes
158:1, 158:3,
                                          37:13, 75:10,
                     162:8
                                                               76:14, 76:15,
158:8, 158:11
                                          125:22
                     given
                                                               83:17, 92:1,
                                                               105:8, 105:12,
gave
                                          going
                     10:16, 13:11,
72:14, 92:3,
                                          5:16, 5:17,
                                                               105:14, 161:18,
                     21:7, 76:5,
146:8, 150:7
                                          6:15, 6:17, 7:4,
                     108:9, 134:8,
                                                               167:5
gem
                     139:19
                                          7:15, 9:9, 9:10,
                                                               goodbye
                                          14:3, 29:14,
                     gives
45:5
                                                               159:14
                                          29:18, 33:14,
general
                                                               goodness
                     58:2
109:22
                     giving
                                          43:20, 44:1,
                                                               158:11
                                          51:19, 56:3,
                                                               gotcha
gently
                     87:9
                                          57:20, 58:16,
98:2
                                                               123:1
                     glad
                                          58:17, 74:16,
george's
                     27:14, 64:7,
                                                               grab
                                          75:8, 76:1,
1:12, 11:18,
                     133:4
                                                               73:16
                                          77:5, 78:9,
11:19, 11:22,
                     go
                                                               grade
                                          78:11, 82:18,
70:18, 71:3,
                                                               110:1, 131:19
                     4:14, 6:5, 6:7,
                                          83:12, 87:16,
79:8, 87:6,
                     7:22, 9:1, 9:7,
                                                               graded
                                          87:17, 90:2,
109:14, 141:1,
                     14:4, 14:7,
                                                               131:13, 132:10
                                          91:17, 95:2,
142:2, 142:17,
                     14:11, 14:22,
                                                               grandma
                                          95:3, 97:1,
142:21, 143:18,
                     15:6, 16:9,
                                                               117:18
                                          102:19, 103:14,
148:4, 148:14,
                     18:13, 18:22,
                                                               grandparents
                                          107:12, 112:19,
156:1, 162:18
                     19:2, 19:3,
                                                               113:4
                                          113:10, 113:11,
getting
                     21:20, 26:12,
                                                               granicus
                                          114:12, 114:16,
3:1, 63:13,
                     28:19, 33:11,
                                                               9:19
                                          117:9, 117:11,
71:9, 73:7
                     33:17, 35:9,
                                                               grant
                                          118:20, 120:19,
ghettos
                     39:1, 39:3,
                                                               22:14, 24:18
                                          121:4, 121:6,
158:3
                     42:6, 42:10,
                                                               grass
                                          127:5, 128:6,
                     43:14, 43:15,
gi
                                                               98:2
                                          128:14, 129:21,
                     50:10, 58:18,
56:12
                                                               grassy
                                          130:4, 133:15,
                     63:13, 65:16,
qift
                                                               98:2
                                          133:22, 134:16,
                     66:14, 69:2,
57:6, 57:12
                                                               grateful
                                          142:8, 150:21,
                     72:3, 73:8,
girl
                                                               22:12
                                          152:13, 154:7,
                     78:10, 94:9,
27:16
                                                               gravel
                                                               100:7
```

	Conducted on ivi	, .	
gray	half	31:12, 31:14,	here
121:17	68 <b>:</b> 7	35:4, 38:1,	2:16, 4:2,
great	half-year-old	54:21, 66:2,	5:15, 8:12,
54:10, 68:1,	20:11	82:18, 167:2	12:15, 13:7,
82:20, 123:7,	handing	heard	13:13, 18:6,
135:12	51:6	30:1, 31:9,	40:15, 58:5,
greatest	handled	35:1, 45:10,	61:10, 68:17,
29:12, 54:8	4:20	67:5, 77:20,	82:8, 92:9,
green	happen	79:11, 89:10,	101:3, 103:6,
116:6, 116:11	4:3, 70:22,	158:14, 158:15,	103:8, 106:13,
greg	71:1, 81:16	158:21, 159:1	111:21, 119:21,
102:14	-	hearing	121:7, 121:17,
	happening	1:9, 1:12,	122:10, 122:11,
groundsmith	118:9	4:17, 6:3, 8:10,	123:16, 123:18,
11:1, 129:4	happy	11:14, 11:16,	123:10, 123:10,
growing	13:21, 14:7,	12:18, 15:3,	124:10, 125:6,
48:4, 86:18	29:10, 29:16,	18:9, 54:5,	125:19, 126:15,
growth	48:20, 58:21,	57:4, 58:1,	128:16, 129:1,
23:10, 23:11,	59:1, 66:4,	65:7, 81:7,	130:15, 130:16,
37:12	74:3, 76:11,	81:15, 84:2,	130:17, 135:11,
guess	77:6, 99:1,	85:16, 98:17,	137:17, 142:9,
65:6, 72:14,	124:14, 125:14,	133:4, 138:15,	145:6, 148:4,
95:11, 114:6,	160:14, 165:5	141:2, 148:3,	160:20, 161:11,
120:18, 132:19,	hard	148:14, 149:14,	164:18, 166:18
162:21	16:19, 18:18,	149:16, 158:12,	hereby
guidelines	37:20, 68:1,	158:19, 162:21,	168:2
53:4, 106:2	70:18, 116:7,	163:1	hey
guilty	125:11, 125:12,	hearing's	157 <b>:</b> 16
118:3	144:13	57:19	hi
gumwood	hard-pressed	hearings	91:22, 109:3
28:20, 30:11,	37:21	67:12, 148:2	high
32:5, 32:7,	hatch	heavily	27:6, 29:7,
32:8, 33:5,	124:10	32:11, 138:18,	31:18, 33:18,
33:19, 34:8,	hate	141:14	68:10, 72:6,
34:12, 34:22,	123:12	heavy	72:8, 85:13,
41:2, 42:9,	hazardous	32:11	138:10
42:10, 42:13,	126:4	hello	high-quality
43:13, 43:22,	head		45:20
55:13, 55:14,	3:22, 148:10	2:2, 31:11, 40:10, 91:20	highlight
56:18, 69:18,	headed	help	155:6
69:21, 70:5,	85:3, 85:6		highly
70:6, 70:8,	healed	21:4, 23:6,	
74:7, 74:20,	118:4	71:1 helped	37:10, 45:3 hill
75:13, 79:1,	healthy	89:22	
79:20, 84:13,	42:22		84:7, 164:9
84:15, 84:18,	hear	helpful	hills
103:7, 103:9,	2:2, 2:4, 2:18,	7:10, 7:22	29:2, 32:17,
109:6	3:14, 19:11,	helping	163:18, 164:4,
Н	26:2, 31:2,	20:13	164:8
habits			
42:22			

	Conducted on W		O1
himself	28:4, 41:21,	97:17, 97:20,	22:11, 23:13,
141:17	51:1, 51:5,	100:5, 101:5,	26:21, 27:1,
hire	68:7, 79:20,	103:7, 107:9,	27:7, 27:22,
105:20	86:7, 86:9,	122:14, 122:17,	28:6, 28:21,
historic	86:13, 86:15,	122:14, 122:17, 122:19, 123:16,	32:18, 39:21,
	106:4, 106:7,	124:13, 125:3,	41:2, 44:19,
162:17, 163:14			The state of the s
historical	107:3, 122:10,	125:5, 163:9,	45:5, 45:21,
165:1	122:11, 124:3	163:12, 163:15,	46:3, 47:11,
history	homeowners	163:17, 163:19,	49:10, 52:9,
4:15, 139:10,	34:15	164:2, 164:8,	56:15, 67:3,
141:9	homes	164:10, 164:12,	69:11, 73:15,
hit	122:8, 122:9	164:16	79:1, 83:22,
23:2	hope	household	84:4, 84:8,
hitching	2:19, 5:22,	41:17	109:6, 162:14
22:15, 24:19,	17:2, 17:12,	houses	I
30:9, 30:10,	21:8, 24:17,	32:14, 55:5,	idea
31:20, 31:22,	50:10, 51:10,	69:15, 69:18,	113:20
32:2, 32:3,	57:16, 65:22,	70:3, 70:6,	identified
32:5, 34:13,	68:16, 70:17,	111:13, 163:20,	126:12
35:3, 42:11,	70:22, 89:16,	164:5	identify
42:14, 43:20,	160:18	housing	3:12, 95:3,
44:22, 46:5,	hopeful	165:1	149:4
52:11, 55:12,	67:21	how's	
55:13, 56:14,	hopefully	65:20	illegally
56:16, 56:20,	4:3, 4:5, 7:10	however	111:12
56:22, 69:14,	hoping	55:3, 60:9,	imagine
	28:1, 58:2,	61:18, 86:18,	27:15
69:22, 83:21,	58:5, 68:12,	87:4, 92:21,	immediately
84:10, 84:11,		128:16, 150:1	36:20, 37:4,
84:18, 91:1,	86:5, 86:19,	hpl	57:13, 150:18
99:14, 100:16,	87:8	_	immensely
102:7, 103:12,	horse	60:10, 60:12,	16:14
103:14, 107:9,	32:3	61:6, 64:10,	impact
112:20, 113:13,	hour	64:19, 65:11,	17 <b>:</b> 7
164:2, 164:7	32:12	79:12, 161:7,	implement
hold	hours	165:13	104:11
•	67:12, 113:10,	hundred	implementable
holding	113:14, 127:5,	163:8	12:16
50:8, 152:15	127:7, 127:13,	hurt	implemented
holdings	127:14, 127:20,	14:20	104:21
60:11, 60:13,	128:1, 165:20	husband	importance
61:6, 64:11,	house	19:19, 49:10,	37:15, 72:7,
64:19, 65:11,	42:10, 56:19,	50:3, 51:8,	72:12
79:12, 165:13	60:19, 74:1,	59:16	important
holistic	86:10, 86:20,	hyattsville	41:18, 49:21,
110:11	88:2, 88:21,	11:2, 15:21,	51:3, 54:7,
holistically	91:3, 91:5,	19:15, 19:16,	54:11, 67:22
118:8	92:12, 93:2,	19:20, 20:16,	impossible
home	93:16, 97:6,	20:18, 22:9,	_
20:5, 27:13,			81:7

	Conducted on March 17, 2024				
impressed	indicating	instead	134:2, 147:12,		
117:3	33:18, 124:2,	42:13, 72:15,	150:4, 150:17		
improve	131:15	166:6	issues		
53:17	indication	institute	30:13, 53:15,		
improvements	159:11	147:4, 151:21	61:22, 75:7,		
53:15, 53:16,	indispensable	instruction	75:10, 128:20,		
125:2	38:4	41:9	130:1, 130:9,		
improving	individual	integral	140:21, 150:2,		
70:9	156:9	23:9	151:1		
ims	individual's	intend	it'd		
110:2	25:12	131:19, 160:22	45:22, 93:1		
in-home	individually	intending	it'll		
68:4	61:14	87:12	25:13, 93:1,		
inches	individuals	intent	127:6		
124:7, 124:10	37 <b>:</b> 11	106:5	item		
include	industrial	interest	165:14		
8:22, 88:6,	143:12	23:22, 24:1,	items		
88:12, 92:13,	industry	168:7, 168:12	77:10, 137:15,		
97:18	154 <b>:</b> 17	interested	161:5, 161:10,		
included	infant	50:13	165:10		
17:1	68 <b>:</b> 16	intergenerational	itself		
including	infants	24:2	124:22, 139:11,		
80:3, 89:7,	51:1	interior	152:21		
113:5	infer	91:2, 91:4,	J		
incorporated	84:11, 86:4	164:10	j		
32:18, 84:8	informal	intersection	102:12		
incorrectly	111:13	22:21	jennifer		
35:2	information	introduce	21:21, 25:19		
increase	5:12, 6:5,	3:3	jenny		
34:17, 68:8,	71:9, 168:4	invaluable	46:21, 47:9,		
68:17, 70:19	initial	17:13, 29:20,	59:1, 76:20		
increases	61 <b>:</b> 21	36:8, 41:15	jenny's		
68:14, 68:20	inquiries	invested	76:20		
increasing	89:12	164:16	jessica		
72:8	inside	investment	35:15, 36:1		
incredible	118:15, 155:5	45:16, 53:10,	job		
21:11, 36:22,	inspection	57:9, 60:17	1:20, 37:22,		
37:5, 45:4,	90:17	invests	105:14		
45:6, 53:13	inspections	45:9	joe		
indebted	90:16	invite	53:12, 60:15,		
20:11	install	24:2	79:13, 103:11		
indeed	74:8	involve	join		
22:5	installed	143:7	41:22, 45:13		
independently	32:19, 33:4	involved	joining		
20:9	installing	144:11	44:19		
indicated	90:14	irrelevant	joseph		
64:9, 107:15,	instantly	75:3	59:14		
117:4, 123:18	36:19	issue			
		126:1, 132:18,			

```
90:5, 90:16,
journey
                     68:22, 69:16,
                                                               143:4, 143:10,
23:9
                     70:15, 79:22,
                                          91:2, 92:9,
                                                               143:15, 144:1,
                     83:8, 86:19,
                                          93:1, 93:4,
                                                               144:3, 144:7,
joy
                     106:14, 110:12,
                                          96:20, 97:10,
                                                               144:10, 144:12,
54:4
                     113:3, 115:1,
                                          99:11, 101:10,
                                                               144:14, 144:17,
joys
                     116:1, 117:10,
                                          101:12, 101:13,
                                                               145:12, 145:19,
29:12
                                          106:17, 108:6,
                     118:1, 131:21,
                                                               145:20, 146:6,
ju
                                                               146:8, 146:12,
                                          108:9, 112:3,
                     132:6
74:2
                     kind
                                          116:18, 123:5,
                                                               146:18, 146:20,
judge
                                          123:13, 133:15,
                                                               147:10, 147:15,
                     14:4, 18:5,
141:22
                                          133:17, 135:18,
                                                               147:16, 147:20,
                     21:3, 28:6,
judging
                     30:3, 32:3,
                                          137:4, 138:13,
                                                               149:19, 149:21,
155:19
                     42:6, 67:8,
                                          139:20, 139:21,
                                                               150:4, 150:8,
jurisdictions
                                                               151:15, 152:7,
                     72:7, 84:4,
                                          140:4, 152:10,
148:1
                                          152:18, 153:3,
                                                               152:8, 153:11,
                     97:10, 100:1,
justification
                                          153:4, 153:5,
                                                               153:14, 154:16,
                     100:18, 111:9,
4:19, 4:22,
                                          153:19, 154:15,
                                                               155:22, 156:14,
                     120:19, 125:22
5:1, 6:16, 9:2,
                                                               156:19, 156:22,
                                          154:22, 155:7,
                     kitchen
63:15
                                          156:14, 156:21,
                                                               157:1, 157:5,
                     92:20, 98:7,
         K
                                          158:16, 160:9,
                                                               157:15, 157:20,
                     98:12
kaz
                                          166:4
                                                               158:20, 163:16,
                     knew
139:15
                                          knowledge
                                                               163:17
                     32:2
keep
                                          104:14, 117:21,
                                                               landscape
                     know
14:21, 43:17,
                                          118:21
                                                               5:18, 6:3,
                     6:15, 9:5,
111:2
                     13:8, 13:11,
                                          knowledgeable
                                                               10:3, 11:5,
keeping
                     13:17, 14:4,
                                          154:12
                                                               11:20, 12:1,
68:8
                     15:19, 18:8,
                                                               107:11, 119:8,
                                                   L
keeps
                                                               126:11, 128:17,
                     18:10, 25:13,
                                          label
163:14
                                                               129:16, 129:17,
                     25:14, 26:3,
                                          122:13
kellev
                                                               129:19, 130:1,
                     27:22, 42:5,
                                          labored
5:17, 10:3,
                                                               150:1, 151:7,
                     45:17, 46:19,
                                          125:16
10:22, 14:9,
                     50:12, 52:19,
                                                               153:16
                                          ladies
14:15
                                                               landscaping
                     52:22, 54:9,
                                          117:19
kelly
                                                               119:18, 119:19,
                     55:5, 57:15,
                                          lady
101:13, 104:17,
                     57:19, 58:4,
                                                               120:6
                                          6:19
104:20, 119:7
                                                               lane
                     58:11, 63:21,
                                          laid
kept
                                                               22:15, 24:19,
                     64:16, 67:9,
                                          160:11
41:9, 167:1
                     67:11, 68:19,
                                                               30:9, 30:10,
                                          land
kick
                     69:4, 71:8,
                                                               42:11, 43:20,
                                          6:1, 125:2,
117:11
                     72:4, 74:4,
                                                               44:22, 46:5,
                                          133:16, 135:10,
kid
                                                               52:8, 52:12,
                     75:16, 76:5,
                                          136:16, 136:17,
37:1
                     76:22, 78:19,
                                                               55:11, 55:12,
                                          138:11, 138:12,
                     81:10, 82:1,
                                                               55:13, 56:14,
kiddie
                                          138:14, 138:18,
                                                               56:16, 56:21,
86:21
                     86:14, 86:20,
                                          138:21, 138:22,
kids
                     86:22, 87:11,
                                                               56:22, 69:14,
                                          139:1, 139:11,
                     87:13, 88:17,
                                                               83:21, 84:11,
41:20, 42:16,
                                          140:6, 141:12,
                                                               84:19, 99:15,
                     89:14, 89:17,
42:17, 42:21,
                                          142:4, 142:13,
                                                               102:7, 162:13,
43:17, 52:18,
                     89:18, 89:19,
```

164:2, 164:7	leadership	let's	lighting
laptop	38:6	64:17, 65:16,	127:3
4:4	leading	75:14, 96:14,	lightly
large	22:18	96:15, 96:18,	34:16
17:9, 19:21,	leaning	97:12, 99:8,	likelihood
155:15, 155:20	152:7	99:9, 100:20,	69:15
largely	learn	101:1, 101:15,	limited
53:6	50:1, 110:18	101:22, 103:1,	21:7, 68:13,
larger	learned	106:20, 128:4,	127:10, 127:12
21:6, 36:16,	155:5	128:5	limiting
41:3, 45:7,	learners	letter	114:4
46:1, 163:13	23:21	64:2, 94:19,	limits
last	learning	143:18	92:22, 97:22
6:2, 50:7,	22:18, 23:6,	letting	line
55:7, 56:4,	23:7, 37:16,	26:22, 66:8,	50:12, 67:16,
59:14, 61:20,	41:19, 90:7,	96:22	88:5, 88:9,
69:22, 79:20,	105:13, 154:1	level	99:19, 100:17,
81:15, 86:15,	lease	67 <b>:</b> 14	102:22, 122:22,
94:18, 103:16,	57:11, 86:5,	leverage	123:20, 123:21,
104:20, 107:14,	86:12, 87:4	22:20	123:22, 124:1,
133:20, 133:21,	least	library	124:6, 124:10,
146:2, 148:11,	13:17, 64:13,	42:21, 85:4,	150:7
148:22, 160:9	81:17, 106:2,	85 <b>:</b> 8	lines
lastly	106:22, 123:3	license	88:14, 143:8
5:22, 24:5	leave	11:10, 11:11,	link
later	12:20, 15:5,	80:4, 80:8,	25:9, 72:5
98:17, 157:16	18:4, 44:2,	80:16, 83:10,	list
latham	69:4, 77:3,	89:16, 110:20,	5:13, 45:18,
140:13	97:12, 105:1,	136:21, 137:3,	50:15, 64:15,
laura	107:9, 111:21,	137:9, 138:2,	89:10, 89:14,
49:6, 49:8	113:5, 113:8	139:4, 140:15,	108:11, 126:15,
law	leeway	140:22, 141:3,	137:4, 137:8,
4:10, 133:3,	75:2 <b>,</b> 128:15	146:20	165:22
139:22, 140:5,	left	licensed	listed
152:18, 152:21,	83:7, 85:3,	11:6, 11:8,	12:7, 12:10,
153:2, 157:7,	97:21, 101:4,	53:2, 109:13,	59:13, 61:14,
157:8, 157:9,	103:8, 105:2,	111:14, 136:16,	86:1, 115:17,
157:11	119:9, 119:14,	136:19, 139:17,	153:18, 168:10
lawyer	119:17, 133:3,	141:7, 147:6	listen
149:11	153:11, 159:11,	licenses	81:8
lay	159:13, 165:11	111:3, 147:14	literally
151:13	legal	licensing	86:9, 87:10
layout	91:18	110:22, 153:8	little
69:12, 91:1,	lend	life	31:8, 34:21,
91:3	139:11, 141:16	37:17	37:20, 42:17,
lea	less	light	43:17, 75:1,
18:7	30:11, 35:4,	93:11, 93:13,	86:19, 86:21,
lead	68:9	97:1	87:2, 87:17,
79:7			

	Conducted on W	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
98:17, 117:3,	130:5, 130:12	140:15, 141:19,	12:19, 17:22,
128:4, 140:2	location	145:13, 149:1,	19:5, 59:7,
live	13:10, 32:1,	149:7, 150:6,	63:9, 64:1,
17:8, 17:9,	46:10, 53:22,	151:3, 163:13,	76:22, 80:12,
29:1, 32:14,	87:22, 106:17,	164:11	81:11, 85:22,
36:2, 41:1,	122:3, 125:1	lots	91:6, 91:9,
41:6, 43:2,	log	93:13, 97:1,	91:20, 93:19,
47:9, 49:9,	31:5	122:4, 148:22,	94:20, 95:12,
49:14, 50:19,	long	149:5, 149:6	96:3, 98:16,
52:14, 56:15,		loud	100:2, 100:9,
59:21, 75:21,	27:11, 27:13,	16:1	104:22, 108:18,
78:22, 84:6,	33:17, 57:19,		109:16, 113:22,
	116:19, 143:16,	love	
106:4	148:11, 151:11,	20:2, 24:15,	119:6, 126:1,
lived	155:4		128:6, 130:19,
57 <b>:</b> 5	longer	39:22, 50:21,	130:21, 132:22,
living	41:10	74:12	133:12, 133:13,
62:1	look	loves	135:16, 137:1,
llc	59:5, 61:22,	39:15	137:15, 141:10,
1:10, 4:11,	74:13, 132:8,	loving	142:10, 143:20,
11:1, 22:10,	137:6, 153:9,	49:18	144:9, 144:16,
22:13, 23:8,	158:6	lu	149:17, 150:21,
23:15, 24:5,	looked	19:22	152:17, 157:2,
24:9, 24:19,	60:9, 73:17,	lucio	160:3, 161:13,
52:13, 57:3,	131:6	41:7, 41:16	165:9
60:11, 60:13,	looking	lucky	made
60:18, 60:19,	6:18, 21:18,	19:22, 42:18	21:9, 42:19,
61:6, 61:11,	26:11, 27:9,	luebke	53:10, 53:12,
61:14, 61:17,	36:15, 43:18,	53:12, 59:15,	77:1, 77:2,
64:11, 64:20,	48:5, 59:11,	59:16, 59:17,	91:8, 128:11,
64:21, 65:11,	87:3, 89:13,	60:5, 79:13	154:1, 159:1,
79:4, 79:10,	92:9, 95:4,	luke	162:22
79:12, 79:15,	96:20, 101:9,	50:9	mail
79:17, 83:11,	103:7, 110:8,	lunch	5:3, 6:8, 46:19
83:16, 161:7,	129:20, 131:7,		mailings
165:13, 168:20	133:14, 137:10,	134:10, 159:16,	4:20, 5:11
llcs	144:21, 145:5,	<u>159:17</u> , 160:21	main
63:8	145:18	M	84:10, 84:16,
local	looks	ma	92:13, 92:15,
20:20, 20:21,	10:14, 101:7,	14:1, 34:5	92:17, 92:19,
21:3, 23:14,	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	ma'am	97:7, 100:5,
27:6, 38:3,	122:13, 131:9,	9:17, 10:2,	143:13
	133:3	46:22, 48:6,	maintained
73:10, 163:2	lorman	48:16, 77:17,	73:20
locally	140:8, 140:10	83:4, 159:10	maintains
53:6	lose	madam	
located	164:22	3:13, 3:20,	29:9, 89:14
32:15, 52:11,	lot	4:9, 4:22, 6:4,	maintenance
84:3, 84:5,	69:9, 75:15,	7:20, 8:8,	53:14
122:4, 123:3,	125:18, 140:14,		major
			73:17, 125:2,

	Conducted on M		
150:17	20:15, 38:1,	83:9, 83:17,	means
majority	45:17, 46:8,	83:22, 85:2,	43:11, 48:2,
139:1	50:13, 75:13,	90:17, 109:14,	69:20, 70:2
make	79:22, 81:6,	111:6, 116:5,	meant
3:10, 13:18,	81:21, 81:22,	116:11, 136:14,	166:8
16:6, 32:20,	83:8, 105:21,	136:19, 137:2,	measure
•	110:13, 111:15,	141:3, 142:13,	
33:17, 43:1,	113:8, 115:4,	142:19, 149:1	68:18
66:6, 68:22,		maternity	measured
70:22, 71:1,	116:13, 117:13, 121:20, 123:13,	_	124:5, 124:7
74:19, 87:12,		113:7	measurement
88:1, 89:15,	138:10, 147:18,	math	124:5
91:2, 94:10,	157:17	75:20, 121:22	measures
96:5, 97:2,	map	matt	131:14
102:1, 127:19,	131:4, 132:4,	161:18	meet
127:21, 134:14,	165:17	matter	36:18, 53:3,
135:10, 139:4,	mape	1:9, 107:20,	88:5, 89:17,
145:15, 156:13,	102:19	139:3, 143:15,	104:17, 120:9,
157:14, 158:15,	maple	146:16, 151:13	126:14, 131:15
160:9, 166:15	101:18, 101:21,	matters	meeting
makes	102:16, 102:20	7:19, 148:6	16:21, 36:20,
24:12, 164:12	march	matthew	58:18, 141:22,
making	1:15, 2:16,	162:12	151:5, 151:6,
22:18, 22:22,	168:17	maurene	167:2
68:11, 70:11,	maria	2:15	meets
116:19, 125:16,	118:11	maybe	37:18, 123:12,
128:3	mark	18:8, 42:20,	123:13, 154:8
male	63:20	63:11, 84:4,	member
2:2, 2:4, 6:14,	marked	89:18, 92:8,	36:7, 151:19
64:6, 96:5,	16:8, 63:15,	95:12, 106:2,	members
96:11, 96:13,	119:16, 128:12	155:18, 155:20,	24:3, 27:19,
96:15, 159:10,	markup	165:16	60:12, 61:8,
159:16	6:4, 6:13,	md	64:10, 65:11,
man	6:18, 6:19, 7:9,	25:12	79:12, 80:6,
143:5	9:3	meals	161:6
manage	maryland	45:15	mentioned
69:4	11:2, 11:7,	mean	31:17, 50:3,
management	11:9, 19:16,	13:8, 14:10,	50:19, 76:6,
140:18, 140:19,	22:9, 22:11,	38:17, 39:19,	83:8, 85:21,
162:18	26:21, 28:21,	75:1, 81:21,	86:6, 89:5,
manages	36:2, 41:2,	82:1, 116:21,	93:5, 97:5,
90:3	44:19, 47:10,	117:3, 125:7,	141:2, 141:6,
manassian	49:10, 52:9,	129:20, 131:7,	152:19, 161:6
111:20, 111:21	56:15, 67:3,	133:17, 142:7,	mess
manner	68:5, 68:14,	142:9, 148:10,	
116:22	72:7, 73:20,	149:18, 156:2,	51:20
manual	73:21, 76:8,	156:11, 156:12,	message
	77:18, 79:1,	157:12, 166:10	15:4
11:20, 12:1	80:5, 80:17,	meaning	met
many		68:9	12:15, 36:14,
8:4, 17:5,		00.9	

	Conducted on M		
68:22, 152:12,	miranda	61:11, 61:16,	46:9, 70:7,
154:10	26:10, 26:11,	64:20, 67:6,	86:12, 87:10,
metro	26:13	79:4, 79:9,	117:19
42:4	mispronouncing	79:17, 83:11,	moved
mi	60:6	110:2, 110:3,	124:16
38:17, 58:21	miss	110:5, 114:15,	movement
mic	81:10	118:11, 168:20	20:7
131:18		month	moving
	missed	60 <b>:</b> 21	28:4, 30:8,
michael	45:22	months	
15:20, 49:10,	mix	50:9, 72:1,	69:16, 69:20,
51:8	152:2		70:2, 70:4,
microphone	mixed	112:21, 113:3,	70:17, 89:20
31:14	155:15	113:7, 118:5,	much
mid	mixture	146:2	18:14, 19:5,
41:8	126:18	monument	20:7, 20:18,
middle	mm-hmm	107:22	26:5, 40:1,
61:19	25:20	more	43:3, 44:7,
midst	modern	17:6, 17:14,	54:13, 57:22,
20:4	163:13	21:10, 23:1,	68:11, 71:3,
might	modest	28:5, 39:20,	72:21, 81:19,
7:22, 8:1, 8:2,	164:12	42:16, 46:2,	85:11, 115:12,
9:7, 18:4,	mom	53:14, 55:3,	117:21, 118:22,
50:10, 57:11,	118:8, 118:14	66:5, 68:11,	119:15, 132:8,
57:12, 84:11,	mom's	69:20, 70:2,	160:15, 166:6
99:5, 122:13,	113:2	70:15, 72:15,	much-needed
134:9, 155:18	moment	76:13, 81:21,	57:13
mike	25:14, 31:5,	86:20, 104:1,	multiple
18:17, 31:3,	97:2, 131:18	106:3, 123:6,	27 <b>:</b> 22
38:17	moms	125:15, 127:3,	music
milestones	47:20, 47:21,	140:2, 141:8,	20:20
16:21	113:8, 117:14,	160:18, 162:18,	mute
mind	117:22, 118:1	166:19, 166:21	130:21, 134:2,
15:6, 18:12,	mont	morning	137:22
18:13, 56:3,	37:6	3:13, 3:16,	muted
82:16, 119:15	monte	3:18, 4:8, 5:15,	56:5, 84:22,
minded	21:1	26:21, 29:14,	91:9, 132:22,
20:10	montes	40:11, 46:22,	135:14, 137:5,
minimal	21:2	47:1, 105:9	159:19
53:19, 108:6	montessori	most	mutual
minors	1:10, 16:11,	92:12, 106:13,	24:12
48:4	20:1, 20:12,	106:16, 113:6,	myers
minute	21:2, 22:13,	138:20	7:15, 8:5, 8:6,
82:5, 82:9,	23:8, 23:15,	mostly	8:22, 9:22,
84:21, 102:17,	24:5, 24:8,	98:8	10:14, 91:18,
114:22, 134:20	24:11, 24:19,	mouth	91:20, 92:1,
minutes	27:3, 36:4,	108:10	92:4, 94:10,
15:5, 47:21,	37:6, 44:21,	move	94:11, 94:13,
114:21, 134:17	52:12, 57:3,	3:22, 46:5,	95:12, 95:19,
,,			

	Conducted on		
95:21, 96:2,	114:16	81:11, 98:9,	39:21, 53:11,
98:14, 99:8,	nature-based	128:11, 152:7	68:12, 87:22,
103:16, 103:19,	20:6	needs	89:19, 90:21,
137:14	navigate	8:17, 36:19,	106:6, 106:20,
myself	23:6, 160:6	37:18, 39:20,	113:13, 155:10
5:8, 36:11,	navigating	68:3, 68:22	news
90:6, 110:11,	79:7	negative	32:13
117:17, 129:8,	nd	30:1	next
135:14, 154:22,	36:2	neighbor	15:5, 21:20,
158:4, 158:5			40:16, 48:16,
	near	29:1, 162:16, 162:20	56:17, 59:21,
N	29:15, 32:9,		
na	103:8	neighborhood	78:12, 81:18,
49:8	nearby	17:8, 17:9,	89:1, 90:8,
naaden	45:11, 164:9	21:6, 23:14,	95:13, 97:3,
1:22, 168:2,	necessarily	29:13, 30:12,	97:16, 98:4,
168:18	70:12, 99:10	32:19, 33:2,	98:13, 99:1,
name	necessary	41:4, 42:3,	99:21, 100:3,
3:7, 10:20,	63:4, 131:14	43:2, 49:14,	100:8, 100:14,
10:22, 15:17,	need	50:21, 52:22,	101:1, 101:15,
19:6, 19:12,	8:2, 9:6,	53:8, 53:20,	101:16, 102:1,
19:14, 21:21,	14:21, 18:4,	54:4, 57:5,	103:4, 120:18,
25:13, 32:3,	19:3, 28:5,	57:7, 67:18,	130:21, 133:15
35:20, 38:22,	35:11, 39:21,	75:21, 84:5,	nicer
40:21, 41:1,	47:20, 60:7,	84:16, 87:11,	106:19
44:16, 47:7,	61:5, 61:7,	108:5, 114:3,	nicola
47:9, 49:4,	61:15, 61:20,	122:8, 163:3,	41:1
49:6, 49:8,	62:22, 64:10,	163:14, 164:21,	nineties
52:5, 52:7,	64:15, 65:4,	164:22	148:21
56:4, 59:15,	68:19, 69:5,	neighborhoods	none
64:5, 66:20,	70:8, 75:18,	54:6	18:3, 25:3,
78:20, 78:22,	75:20, 89:17,	neighboring	164:5
109:4, 109:5,	90:15, 90:20,	36:8, 163:20	nonresidential
136:1, 136:10,	92:1, 99:3,	neighbors	163:11
136:12, 148:8,	99:5, 99:11,	23:5, 29:22,	normally
162:10, 162:12	105:20, 108:8,	45:12, 56:17,	94:3, 94:4,
name's	111:7, 116:1,	60:15, 79:13,	134:7
36:1	116:11, 117:12,	86:8, 103:11	north
named	120:6, 122:13,	neither	98:6, 103:14,
60:12	123:11, 123:13,	168:5	120:4, 122:6,
naomi	127:21, 127:22,	net	122:11, 123:9,
19:14	129:21, 130:7,	34:17	123:22, 124:3,
nationwide	132:3, 148:16,	never	125:4, 125:5,
68:15, 69:5	150:13, 151:12,	16:17, 34:9,	125:7, 126:17
natural	151:15, 151:18,	50:3, 50:4,	northwest
93:13, 97:1	152:9, 156:4,	82:15, 134:13,	39:5
nature	158:19, 160:22,	141:6, 148:13,	northwestern
24:15, 107:22,	163:1	148:16, 151:20	85:13
	needed	new	note
	50:6, 58:1,	31:22, 35:2,	33:17, 128:3,

	_	17, 2024	
164:14	objected	55:18, 55:21,	150:12, 150:17
noted	134:3	58:17, 62:15,	old
81:19, 121:3	objection	65:2, 65:13,	42:16, 50:9,
notes	16:9, 76:2,	65:20, 66:1,	117:11, 153:4,
127:18, 127:19,	78:3, 112:5	81:13, 102:17,	163:9
165:10	objections	105:8, 122:20,	older
nothing	3:11	135:1, 135:7,	16:16, 49:15,
10:8, 15:15,	objectively	137:12, 138:1,	50:7
19:10, 22:4,	70:4, 70:16	158:11, 159:13,	oldest
26:9, 26:16,	observed	161:22	164:8
28:16, 35:18,	53:12	okles	once
38:19, 40:19,	obstruct	14:1	3:6, 9:14,
44:14, 47:3,	44:1	oklesson	16:17, 43:11,
49:2, 52:2,	obviously	5:18, 10:4,	62:12, 111:10,
56:9, 66:17,	154:22	10:5, 10:6,	117:18
78:15, 108:22,	occasional	10:9, 10:12,	one
136:6, 146:6,	114:7	10:19, 10:22,	13:9, 15:10,
162:8	occasionally	11:4, 11:8,	19:7, 23:15,
notice	116:21	11:11, 11:15,	25:11, 26:11,
4:20, 5:11	occasions	11:21, 12:4,	29:12, 32:6,
noticed	154:11	12:9, 12:14,	39:14, 39:19,
125:18	occupancy	14:2, 14:18,	43:8, 43:13,
nowadays	80:10, 80:14,	15:10, 119:7,	43:14, 45:2,
17:5	80:18, 83:9,	119:12, 119:13,	50:10, 50:20,
number	90:11, 109:19	119:20, 120:2,	59:20, 63:21,
22:16, 46:20,	occupation	120:5, 120:9,	64:18, 68:12,
68:6, 71:10,	136:15	120:16, 120:22,	70:19, 71:8,
75:16, 86:1,	occupied	121:6, 121:12,	72:9, 73:14,
121:4, 139:21,	55:6, 62:9	121:16, 121:21,	75:12, 79:11,
151:14	odd	122:5, 122:15,	84:15, 84:20,
numerous	153:20, 153:21	122:18, 122:21,	84:21, 87:15,
29:21, 36:11	offer	123:11, 123:15,	88:4, 90:2,
nurses	45:4	123:20, 124:4,	91:6, 91:11,
118:18	offered	124:9, 124:19,	92:12, 94:14,
nurturing	126:15	125:5, 125:8, 125:12, 126:3,	94:18, 97:11,
16:18, 24:7,	office	126:6, 126:10,	97:16, 100:2,
27:20, 37:8,	1:12, 4:10,	127:1, 127:6,	100:9, 100:13,
49:18	136:14	127:14, 127:22,	101:2, 101:16,
0	offices	128:10, 128:15,	101:22, 102:1,
o-k-l-e-s-s-o-n	140:5	129:3, 129:6,	102:3, 105:15, 105:19, 106:2,
10:10	officially	129:8, 129:11,	107:3, 114:7,
oath	2:19	129:14, 129:17,	114:13, 116:3,
119:11	often	130:13, 130:14,	116:20, 125:15,
object	70:11	130:20, 131:3,	125:17, 131:2,
75:8, 81:17,	oh	131:5, 131:11,	141:19, 142:10,
128:15, 149:20,	2:8, 9:18,	131:14, 132:17,	143:8, 144:5,
157:3	21:18, 26:9,	•	148:3, 150:16,
	30:22, 31:10,	,,	1110.0, 100.10,
	<u> </u>		

	Conducted on W		
150:20, 151:14,	106:5, 109:9	organization	16:1, 32:7,
151:16, 152:2,	operation	20:22	37:3, 42:2,
153:21, 154:20,	113:10, 127:9,	organizations	42:12, 43:13,
156:13, 157:4,	127:11, 127:15,	20:22	43:18, 67:12,
157:18, 164:1,	128:1, 165:20	organized	69:16, 69:22,
164:3	operations	111:6, 111:14	79:19, 86:7,
one's	29:5, 90:3	•	86:13, 88:19,
101:22		organizing	98:7, 103:8,
one-way	<pre>oppor 50:16</pre>	20:19, 67:18	111:11, 117:11,
43:12		oriented	130:4, 130:11,
	opportuni	155:15	130:13, 133:3,
ones	76:18	originals	136:13, 153:12,
37:20, 95:9,	opportunities	140:11	
95:22, 143:9,	53:9, 70:19,	other	153:18, 153:20,
143:13, 147:12,	87:4	13:18, 16:15,	154:2, 155:6,
148:4, 148:5,	opportunity	17:3, 27:19,	160:11, 165:11
156:2	23:3, 23:18,	30:13, 33:20,	outcome
only	30:5, 30:18,	35:10, 42:20,	48:5, 168:7
30:6, 32:6,	45:22, 50:18,	43:15, 45:14,	outdoor
33:13, 37:10,	52:10, 66:3,	45:19, 50:17,	88:10, 114:9,
43:12, 47:21,	86:11, 87:10,	51:4, 51:7,	121:10, 123:3,
53:17, 62:14,	104:4, 112:10,	60:4, 65:11,	126:3
66:7, 68:16,	134:8	69:13, 69:21,	outings
69:14, 70:3,	opposed	76:4, 76:11,	114:7
87:13, 91:12,	8:12, 66:12	82:19, 100:7,	outlined
93:2, 105:15,	opposition	102:11, 103:10,	121:17
105:16, 116:15,	8:9, 8:17, 18:7	104:2, 108:12,	outside
126:10, 132:20,	option	119:1, 122:17,	98:10, 115:4,
139:21, 152:2,	27:11, 50:16,	128:20, 129:22,	130:1
162:20, 164:3,	68:12	130:9, 131:1,	over
164:7	options	131:20, 132:11,	3:1, 16:16,
onsite	21:7, 116:13	132:18, 132:20,	39:6, 45:2,
115:17	ordeal	133:20, 139:6,	51:6, 63:13,
open	153:12	139:9, 141:16,	99:9, 102:10,
12:20, 86:19,	order	142:18, 143:4,	120:3, 124:16,
105:2, 106:6,	13:22, 14:7,	146:16, 148:4,	127:18, 138:10,
111:10, 111:12,	33:9, 46:2,	148:5, 148:6,	141:20, 160:9
116:13, 161:1,	49:11, 57:11,	150:11, 154:6,	overall
167:2	66:9, 66:10,	154:18, 162:22,	24:13, 24:16,
opened	94:4	163:10, 164:5,	45:17, 68:9
89:10	orderly	164:9, 165:6,	overlay
opens	29:9	167:2	132:4, 132:13,
68:12	ordinance	others	165:17, 166:10
operate	11:19, 12:1,	17:12, 50:12,	overly
22:21, 86:12,	87:14, 120:12,	82:7, 161:22	134:12
109:13	132:12, 133:5,	otherwise	overwhelmed
operated	138:14, 151:8,	168:7	27:10
29:19	152:12, 154:9,	out	overwhelming
operating	156:19, 160:10	7:9, 14:22,	52:15, 67:13
79:17, 79:19,	100.10	<i>'</i>	
, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,			

	Conducted on	Waren 19, 2021	/1
own	86:16	120:7, 126:16,	pavers
4:18, 48:3,	pane	131:20, 146:12,	99:15, 99:19,
79:10, 80:3,	159:11	153:2	100:5, 101:6,
86:20, 87:11,	paperwork	participant's	103:3
89:7, 89:8,	111:9	10:14	paving
107:3, 129:6	paramount	participants	90:13
owned	72:7	159:11	pay
53:7, 73:19,	pardon	participate	155:11
163:4	55:21	24:4	payer
owner	parent	particular	59:18, 60:6
11:1, 60:10	27:1, 28:22,	8:2, 13:10,	pedestrian
owners	36:6, 46:3,	13:14, 75:6,	53 <b>:</b> 20
19:20, 53:11,	46:7, 52:20	108:1, 142:4,	pedestrians
59:13, 60:5,	parents	145:2, 156:7,	102:8
60:7, 79:14,	45:15, 69:5,	157:21	pedone
146:5, 156:11,	89:11, 106:13,	parties	59:18, 60:2,
164:16	113:5	168:6	61:8, 79:14
ownership	park	partner	peeled
56:18, 60:19	23:22, 36:2,	24:12, 56:18	43:17
P	107:4, 107:7,	partnership	penalties
p-a-l-u-s	<u> </u>	22:12, 23:12,	10:6, 15:14,
162:13	114:16, 156:7,	24:13	19:8, 22:2,
pace	156:16	pass	26:7, 26:14,
68:8	parked	69:21, 90:15,	28:14, 35:16,
pad	43:22, 106:22	90:20, 160:13	38:18, 40:17,
97 <b>:</b> 9	parking	passed	44:13, 47:2,
page	42:12, 43:19,	90:19	49:1, 52:1,
115:17, 168:10	99:20, 106:10,	passing	56:8, 66:16,
pages	106:12, 107:13,	43:16	78:14, 108:21,
1:21, 12:11,	128:4, 128:5,	passion	136:4, 162:7
168:8	128:8, 128:9,	67:14	penalty
paid	128:10, 128:19,	passionate	168:3
165:2	130:5, 130:11,	39:12, 39:13,	pending
painting	130:14, 130:16,	48:4	90:10
115:4	154:10	past	pennsylvania
palus	parks	45:2, 75:15,	15:21, 49:9,
51:20, 51:21,	20:20, 23:14	89:8, 152:4	50:20
51:22, 52:4,	parkway	paternity	people
52:7, 54:20,	32:9, 34:9,	113:5	9:13, 14:11,
55:2, 55:10,	84:14	path	15:3, 18:10,
55:16, 55:17,	part	31:19, 33:6,	39:19, 40:13,
161:20, 162:9,	3:10, 20:13,	55:11, 74:21	42:12, 43:18,
162:12, 165:8	23:9, 42:22,	paulus	50:17, 55:6,
pandemic	69:11, 72:16,	162:2, 162:12	68:19, 115:11,
17:1, 20:4,	84:7, 87:6,	pause	116:13, 125:18
23:2, 41:12,	97:18, 99:16,	2 <b>:</b> 7	people's
41:20, 42:1,	101:4, 104:2,	pave	3:16, 18:12
, , ,	108:4, 113:19,	88:12	percent
			73:1, 130:16
		ĺ	

```
48:14, 51:16,
                                          94:15, 97:9,
perfect
                                                               116:4, 116:5,
                     51:18, 54:17,
                                          98:4, 98:13,
                                                               116:12, 126:6,
57:14, 58:17,
                     54:18, 54:22,
                                          99:14, 99:21,
                                                               155:9
76:9
                     55:7, 55:15,
                                                               places
                                          100:3, 100:8,
perhaps
77:10, 137:14
                     66:3, 66:9,
                                          100:14, 101:1,
                                                               42:20, 116:7
                     73:5, 73:8,
                                          101:15, 101:16,
                                                               plan
periods
                     73:9, 74:2,
                                          102:1, 103:4,
                                                               5:19, 6:4,
165:2
                     74:4, 74:6,
                                          103:13, 103:16
perjury
                                                               6:13, 7:9, 9:3,
                     74:14, 74:19,
                                          photograph
                                                               10:17, 11:13,
10:7, 15:14,
                     74:22, 75:12, 76:14, 76:15,
                                          95:2, 96:8
                                                               11:16, 11:17,
19:9, 22:2,
                                          photographs
                                                               12:13, 12:17,
26:7, 26:15,
                                          93:16, 93:20,
                     82:10, 108:14,
                                                               12:21, 13:1,
28:14, 35:17,
                     108:16, 119:2,
                                          96:15, 96:18,
                                                               13:3, 13:14,
38:18, 40:18,
44:13, 47:2,
                     119:4, 133:7,
                                          96:19, 131:8,
                                                               13:17, 13:20,
                     133:9, 133:22,
49:1, 52:1,
                                          132:7
                                                               14:3, 63:16,
                     134:2, 134:11,
                                                               75:4, 91:7,
                                          photography
56:8, 66:16,
                     135:3, 159:5,
                                                                91:8, 91:11,
                                          163:22
78:14, 108:21,
                     159:8, 159:9,
136:5, 162:7,
                                          photos
                                                                92:11, 94:9,
                     160:20
                                                                94:22, 101:12,
                                          7:20, 8:3, 9:3,
168:3
                     person
                                                               104:16, 104:18,
permeable
                                          9:6, 82:3,
                     9:6, 18:3,
                                                               105:3, 107:21,
99:15, 99:19
                                          94:11, 94:14,
                     28:22, 49:11,
                                          95:3, 95:5,
                                                               119:16, 119:19,
permission
                     79:2, 85:15,
                                                               120:16, 121:4,
                                          95:7, 95:8,
33:15, 92:1,
                     85:18, 89:22,
                                                               121:7, 121:15,
92:3
                                          95:17, 98:16,
                                          99:9, 103:21
                     90:6, 105:16,
                                                               122:2, 122:7,
permit
                     109:8, 151:13
                                                               123:7, 123:18,
                                          physical
27:4, 28:7,
                     personal
                                                               124:22, 125:1,
                                          16:22
90:11, 109:18
                     69:11
                                                               125:11, 125:14,
                                          physically
permitting
                     personally
                                                               127:10, 127:12,
                                          23:5
155:3
                                                               127:20, 128:12,
                     11:12, 11:15,
                                          pick
perry
                                                               129:1, 129:13,
                     126:12, 152:15
                                          14:15, 53:20,
8:13, 8:21,
                                                               129:14, 129:16,
                     personnel
                                          64:17, 99:8,
17:20, 21:17,
                                                               130:5, 131:16,
                     106:3
                                          119:8, 154:20
21:19, 25:2,
                                                               132:14, 150:1,
                     persons
28:12, 28:13,
                                          pick-up
                                                               150:10, 150:17,
                     8:9
30:22, 31:1,
                                          69:8, 69:17
                                                               150:21, 151:1,
                     perspective
                                          picker
31:3, 31:9,
                                                               151:5, 153:22,
                     17:11
31:10, 31:11,
                                          69:8
                                                               154:8, 156:10,
31:14, 31:16,
                     pg
                                          picking
                                                               161:3, 161:5,
                     25:12
31:21, 32:2,
                                          99:7
                                                               161:9, 164:15,
33:1, 33:10,
                     ph
                                          picture
                                                               165:12, 165:21,
                     26:2, 40:22,
33:11, 33:14,
                                          85:2, 97:3
                     50:9, 77:10
                                                               166:3, 166:5,
33:16, 33:22,
                                          pictures
                                                               166:12
38:11, 38:13,
                     phd
                                          82:2, 82:19,
                                                               planner
40:5, 40:6,
                     37:14
                                          85:19, 95:13,
                                                               6:1, 133:16,
43:7, 43:8,
                     pho
                                          96:4
                                                               135:10, 136:17,
43:10, 43:22,
                     9:6
                                          place
                                                               138:15, 140:22,
46:15, 46:16,
                     photo
                                          24:3, 43:2,
                                                               141:3, 141:7,
48:10, 48:12,
                     8:3, 9:8,
                                          45:11, 115:15,
```

	Conducted on iv		,-
143:4, 144:10,	103:1, 126:15	point	69:14, 70:1,
144:17, 147:10,	plat	7:9, 8:2, 13:7,	83:21, 84:10,
150:8, 153:17,	143:11	14:21, 33:13,	84:11, 84:18,
155:10, 156:14,	platted	35:9, 59:20,	91:1, 99:15,
156:22, 157:1,	163:17	130:4, 130:11,	100:16, 102:7,
157:5, 158:20	play	130:13, 134:2,	103:12, 103:14,
planners		161:12	107:9, 110:1,
147:4, 151:22,	20:7, 88:10,	points	112:20, 113:14,
	97:19, 98:3,	<u> </u>	136:13, 163:19,
155:22, 156:16	98:10, 114:9,	8:1, 70:12,	164:2, 164:7
planning	115:14, 115:17,	162:22	1
13:18, 58:4,	115:18, 116:2,	pond	post-session
79:8, 90:1,	116:20, 121:10,	29:15, 33:7,	23:17
112:11, 125:13,	121:14, 121:17,	45:12, 114:17	posted
138:12, 138:21,	123:3, 123:17,	pony	85:15, 87:19
139:3, 139:11,	124:3, 124:7,	52:8, 55:10,	posting
140:6, 140:21,	124:11, 124:17,	162:13	5:11, 85:19
141:5, 142:5,	126:3, 126:8,	pop	postings
142:13, 142:20,	126:22, 127:4,	57:19, 57:20,	4:20
142:22, 143:1,	127:9, 127:11,	58:9	potentially
143:2, 143:13,	127:20, 131:7,	popping	86:12
143:14, 143:16,	131:12, 131:20,	58:4	power
144:1, 144:3,	131:22, 132:5,	pornography	160:18
144:4, 144:7,	132:6, 132:9,	153:5	powerful
144:14, 145:12,	132:14, 165:20	portion	67:6
145:21, 146:7,	played	150:12	practice
146:8, 146:12,	36:9	position	114:12, 151:10,
146:15, 146:21,	playground	15:19, 49:7,	152:16, 152:19,
147:15, 147:16,	29:15, 32:21,	56:13, 67:1,	152:22, 153:1,
147:20, 147:21,	34:8, 114:3,	151:10, 151:11	155:1
148:17, 149:2,	114:5, 114:19,	positive	practitioner
149:9, 149:14,	114:21, 115:3	<u> </u>	110:7
149:19, 149:21,	playing	17:7, 34:18,	pre-birth
150:5, 150:7,	131:22	48:5	-
151:16, 151:17,	please	possibility	117:10
153:8, 155:2,	2:18, 5:8,	57:15	pre-care
156:8, 156:16,		possible	113:21
156:19, 157:15,	10:19, 44:11,	81:14, 123:6	pre-k
160:8	55:1, 55:9,	post	113:1
plans	73:6, 81:5,	22:15, 24:19,	pre-war
139:3, 139:18,	100:3, 109:3,	30:9, 30:10,	164:8
140:17, 140:18,	136:1, 136:9,	31:22, 32:2,	precisely
140:17, 140:10,	138:19, 146:11	32:3, 32:5,	63:1
plant	pleasure	34:13, 35:3,	prefer
I =	2:20, 29:17	42:11, 42:14,	95:18
126:16	plus	43:20, 44:22,	pregnancy
planters	48:3, 162:5,	46:5, 52:12,	118:14
100:19	163:8	55:12, 55:13,	pregnant
plantings	po	56:14, 56:16,	37:3, 117:22,
88:4, 99:17,	13:7	56:21, 56:22,	118:7
			I .

preliminary	70:17, 71:3,	program	164:13, 164:15,
7:19, 75:4	79:7, 87:6,	23:14, 24:3	164:17
premises	109:14, 141:1,	programming	proposal
114:9, 115:18	142:2, 142:16,	24:2	14:5
prepar	142:20, 148:4,	programs	proposed
39:10	148:14, 155:22,	24:6	13:19, 29:22,
preparation	162:18	progress	46:11, 69:8,
39:11	prior	2:10, 135:6	70:7, 83:20,
prepare	15:22, 81:6	project	91:1, 107:17,
6:4, 11:12,	prioritize	69:12, 148:11,	116:2, 121:5,
117:13, 129:15	37 <b>:</b> 12	149:2, 155:16,	121:13, 121:16,
prepared	private	155:20	123:17, 124:3,
4:19, 5:18,	162:19	pronounce	126:15, 130:12,
11:15, 112:11,	pro	59:14	162:16, 164:21,
129:2, 129:12,	4:16	proper	165:6
129:14, 150:17	probably	66:9, 66:10,	proposing
preparing	28:21, 72:15,	134:6	87:18, 88:1,
11:17	96:1, 123:5,	properties	88:3, 91:2,
preschool	141:12	125:3	128:13
37:2, 50:7,	problem	property	protection
68:16	14:14, 15:7,	13:10, 19:19,	126:9
present	51:6, 112:4,	52:11, 52:15,	provide
58:3, 99:2,	112:9, 128:3,	53:11, 53:18,	3:5, 16:19,
164:15	149:22, 152:10	56:16, 56:17,	17:7, 19:13,
presentation	problems	56:20, 56:21,	27:5, 27:20,
130:20	9:19	57:8, 57:11,	28:18, 28:19,
presented	procedural	59:13, 59:21,	30:9, 47:8,
104:18	4:14	60:7, 60:10,	51:11, 52:6,
pressure	proceed	60:17, 62:1,	68:1, 73:10, 88:9
163:13	44:17	62:4, 79:10,	provided
pretty	process	79:14, 84:2,	15:21, 16:15,
2:19, 96:18,	70:21, 79:7,	85:15, 86:5,	17:2, 41:8
115:12	90:2, 90:7,	87:13, 87:20,	provider
previous	107:20, 146:15,	88:5, 88:9,	53:4
102:3	155:5, 160:6	88:16, 90:12,	providers
previously	profession	98:22, 99:18, 100:15, 100:17,	16:15, 51:4,
128:12	11:3, 11:4, 139:7	102:22, 108:7,	51:7, 52:17,
pri	professional	119:21, 120:3,	68:5
37:12	22:20, 109:20,	122:15, 122:19,	provides
primarily	138:19	122:22, 123:8,	17:14, 50:5,
57:9, 62:2,	professionals	123:21, 124:6,	114:16
114:13, 131:22	37:11	124:12, 124:13,	providing
primary	proffer	126:17, 131:20,	29:20, 57:7,
110:3, 113:1,	150:13	143:8, 143:12,	67:19, 113:17,
116:20	profit	146:5, 146:14,	126:19
prince	110:17	149:4, 162:16,	provisions
1:12, 11:18,	profusely	163:10, 163:15,	152:11
11:19, 11:22,	111:19	•	
	1		

		,	
proximity	132:4, 166:5	21:13, 21:14,	R
114:10	puts	21:18, 24:22,	<u>r-o-a</u>
proxy	96:17, 96:19	25:1, 25:3,	47:13
74:1	putting	28:10, 28:11,	r-o-c-h-e
psychology	90:14	30:20, 30:21,	47:14
110:1	Q	33:15, 33:21,	raise
pt	qualification	34:3, 35:8,	20:13
163:21	149:21	38:9, 38:10,	raised
public	qualifications	38:12, 38:13,	61:22, 158:4
67:16, 67:19,	138:7, 147:15	38:14, 40:3,	raising
67:22, 74:11	qualified	40:4, 40:5,	41:15
published	_	40:6, 43:5,	
164:1	128:16, 149:19, 157:20	43:6, 43:7,	ramp
pull		46:12, 46:14,	88:15, 88:19,
9:14, 91:16,	qualify	46:15, 46:16,	90:14, 92:18,
91:18, 95:19	6:1, 128:21,	48:8, 48:9,	130:15
pulling	129:21, 130:7,	48:13, 48:14,	ranks
42:12, 43:18,	133:16, 145:1,	48:15, 51:14,	68:15
94:14	145:19, 156:21	51:15, 51:17,	rapid
purchased	qualifying	51:18, 54:15,	68 <b>:</b> 7
53:11, 86:8	141:17	54:16, 54:17,	rate
purchasing	quality	62:20, 70:14,	29:21
60:16	17:4, 21:8,	71:4, 71:6,	rather
	27:6, 52:20,	71:7, 73:8,	61:19, 86:21,
purpose	57 <b>:</b> 7	74:17, 75:2,	107:9
62:17	quantitatively	87:16, 104:1,	ratio
purposes	157:17	105:3, 105:7,	29:8, 105:20
46:10, 154:8	question	105:15, 108:13,	rawlings
pursue	9:14, 25:4,	108:14, 108:16,	26:1
89:4	25:19, 31:1,	114:1, 117:1,	rd
pursuing	31:13, 31:16,	119:1, 119:3,	22:8
79:3, 104:1,	43:8, 52:15,	120:19, 127:3,	reaching
117:8, 164:18	55:7, 57:18,	131:1, 132:20,	153:1
pushed	59:8, 61:22,	132:21, 133:7,	read
144:13	62:12, 62:16,	134:13, 142:9,	6:16, 16:1,
pushing	73:6, 73:9,	144:19, 145:1,	16:4
88:17	75:8, 75:9,	154:6	readily
put	75:13, 76:12,	quick	137:22
5:22, 6:19,	89:1, 106:3,	8:9, 31:16,	reading
7:5, 8:21, 10:1,	107:14, 121:1,	57:18, 121:22,	16:6, 16:9,
14:1, 14:8,	143:22, 145:16,	137:16	116:17, 160:10
18:2, 18:3,	150:10, 157:4,	quickly	ready
18:8, 39:15,	161:19	4:14, 96:19,	2:12, 2:13,
71:11, 77:1,	questioning	134:15, 137:15	3:1, 4:6, 4:7,
77:21, 96:16,	34:21	quite	7:7, 9:11,
98:15, 99:1,	questions	43:20, 108:10,	63:13, 73:7,
99:12, 105:2,	10:18, 17:17,	108:11, 116:17	78:5, 117:19,
107:21, 123:6,	17:19, 17:20,	quote	119:12, 119:13,
131:3, 131:8,		31:18	

130:20, 135:17,	recommendations	redirect	146:16, 157:15,
135:20	150:7	34:3	168:5
real	recommended	reduce	relates
137:16, 166:10	104:8, 112:16,	70:7	129:16, 129:17,
really	125:13	reducing	129:19
8:17, 13:8,	recommending	70:10, 71:10	relatively
27:8, 27:10,	158:17	reduction	72:6, 131:9
27:11, 27:12,	reconfirm	76:6	relevant
37:20, 49:17,	83:20	redundant	75:7, 77:22,
49:22, 50:22,	record	99:3, 99:10,	138:21
51:3, 53:14,	3:3, 3:10,	100:2, 101:2,	relieved
68:2, 68:10,	3:12, 3:14,	101:16, 101:22	55 <b>:</b> 5
75:6, 105:15,	4:10, 5:1, 8:17,	referenced	relocate
115:18, 115:22,	10:21, 12:20,	103:10	57:2
152:6, 160:12,	14:12, 15:18,	reflect	relocation
164:7	35:21, 47:7,	160:20	38:7, 69:8
rear	49:5, 49:12,	reflected	rely
122:19, 123:21,	61:4, 63:10,	93:6	152:22
124:13	64:16, 66:21,	regard	remain
reason	72:16, 77:7,	62:22, 87:21,	93:1
41:16, 89:3,	78:20, 78:21,	90:22, 121:13,	remained
108:1, 108:4,	80:13, 81:12,	128:8	27:18
123:10, 144:22	82:7, 89:2,	regarding	remains
reasonable	97:13, 105:1,	143:18, 148:21,	36:13
74:1, 152:22	106:13, 109:4,	168:10	remember
reasons	125:20, 131:8,	regardless	34:9, 140:8,
89:3, 150:20,	136:1, 136:11,	47:19	148:20
165:6	160:20, 161:1,	regards	remind
recall	161:9, 162:11	13:16, 73:10,	3:7
119:7, 140:22,	recorded	106:9	renovations
141:4, 150:9	3:4	registration	53:12, 91:3
received	recording	80:16, 80:20,	rent
36:21, 168:9	2:6, 2:9, 2:11,	109:17	116:6, 116:7
receives	82:22, 135:4,	regular	rep
89:12	135:6, 167:9 recordings	151:13, 152:16	4:11
recently	168:4	regulate	repaired
4:16, 33:4,	records	116:1	112:11
74:8, 144:9, 144:16, 150:16	74:11, 163:16	regulations	repetitive
recognize	rectangular	111:4, 116:10,	58:1
95:1, 151:12,	93:7	160:7	replace
152:13	red	reiki	96:4
recognized	150:7	110:7	replicated
23:18, 147:5,	redevelop	reinforce	51:2
156:7	163:13, 164:15	41:19	report
recognizing	redevelopment	reinstated	12:3, 12:5,
70:21	163:10, 164:13,	61:19	12:8, 12:11,
recommendation	164:17	related	104:5, 112:11,
125:16		121:10, 146:8,	116:18, 127:17,

	Conducted on W		
158:17	reservation	reverse	85:10, 88:19,
reports	16:12	13:22, 14:7	92:16, 95:20,
107:16	reside	review	96:11, 97:8,
represent	52:8, 162:13	81:7, 104:5,	97:19, 97:20,
93:8, 128:7	residence	111:9, 112:10,	99:22, 102:7,
representing	62:13, 162:14,	163:22	102:8, 102:18,
4:11	163:14	reviewed	106:9, 108:12,
request	resident	12:2, 12:4,	110:8, 113:12,
2:22, 8:12,	27:1, 29:12,	128:12	115:22, 117:9,
19:18, 22:14,	46:3, 56:21	reviewing	117:15, 121:7,
46:4, 66:12,	residential	133:5	122:14, 123:15,
105:1, 107:19,	27:4, 32:10,	revised	123:18, 123:21,
120:6	108:5, 122:7,	12:17, 12:21,	124:1, 124:16,
requested	163:19	13:2, 63:15,	124:17, 125:6,
52:12	resources	104:18, 105:2,	129:3, 129:9,
requesting	162:18	150:21, 161:4,	129:12, 129:19,
13:15	respect	161:9, 165:12,	130:15, 131:21,
requests	20:8, 24:15,	166:5	132:19, 135:7,
104:2, 111:15	75:2, 149:18,	revising	145:11, 147:18,
require	154:4	107:21	148:1, 148:7,
106:2, 139:3	respectfully	revision	148:10, 148:17,
required	154 <b>:</b> 2	13:16	149:3, 149:8,
4:20, 53:16,	respond	rewritten	151:2, 153:22,
70:21, 87:13,	26 <b>:</b> 3	4:21	156:1, 158:2,
106:10, 106:12,	responsible	ridgway	158:6, 159:8,
145:1, 151:7,	79 <b>:</b> 3	21:20, 21:21,	159:18, 166:8,
151:16, 156:15	restate	21:22, 22:1,	166:14, 167:4
requirement	109:4	22:5, 22:8,	right-of
88:10, 124:21,	restroom	24:21, 25:16,	55:11
125:10	133:17	25:18, 25:19,	righty
requirements	resume	26:4, 26:5	132:22
11:18, 11:22,	137:2, 137:9,	right	rigorous
53:2, 88:6,	138:1, 138:18,	6:22, 7:16,	53 <b>:</b> 2
90:19, 110:22,	139:20, 141:14,	8:17, 9:14,	risk
114:8, 116:4,	142:9, 144:22,	9:21, 10:16,	68:20, 69:20,
120:7, 120:10,	145:5, 145:19,	15:13, 16:10,	70:2, 70:13
120:13, 120:15,	155:7	18:14, 18:15,	risks
121:10, 121:11,	retain	26:3, 32:8,	70:10
126:14, 132:11,	108:4	33:20, 35:6,	roach
138:16, 142:1,	retained	40:16, 43:16,	47:12
151:5, 151:7,	4:16	50:9, 50:14,	road
154:9	retains	60:2, 61:21,	31:17, 32:6,
requires	164:21	62:7, 62:8,	34:16, 43:15,
115:16, 132:11,	return	62:18, 64:5,	47:10, 70:17,
138:14	32:21, 134:22,	76:21, 77:17,	73:11, 74:7,
requiring	160:21	82:2, 82:3,	74:8, 74:20,
163:7	reuse	82:20, 83:5,	74:21, 84:9,
resending		85:5, 85:7,	84:10, 85:7,
17:17	163:8, 165:5	<b>,</b>	
<u> </u>			

	Conducted on March 19, 2024 /8			
136:14, 146:14	S	saw	10:15, 10:18,	
roads	sac	3:22, 18:3,	12:15, 14:18,	
73:19	102:6	61:2, 61:4,	15:11, 92:7,	
roche	sad	69:22, 104:18,	103:20	
46:22, 47:5,	50:6	145:5, 160:11	screening	
47:9, 47:14,	safe	say	120:7	
47:17, 48:11,	16:18, 23:5,	3:4, 9:19,	sdat	
58:21, 59:1,	31:18, 43:11,	32:4, 35:1,	60:9, 63:19	
59:3	46:8, 49:18,	37:17, 39:8,	se	
rock	63:14, 87:5,	47:16, 47:17,	4:16, 79:21	
20:17	88:11, 116:22,	73:7, 77:20,	se-	
rocks	126:19	84:17, 103:1,	22:16	
86:11	safely	110:13, 118:13,	seasons	
rodriguez	114:11, 126:3,	139:14, 140:4,	114:18	
38:15, 38:21,	126:7	149:8, 151:20,	second	
39:2, 39:4, 40:8	safer	157:16, 159:13,	14:15, 15:10,	
role	35:3, 41:12,	159:14, 160:13,	19:8, 20:5,	
36 <b>:</b> 9	42:11, 43:14,	163:5, 164:14,	73:16, 89:19,	
roles	46:8	165:7, 166:19,	97:11, 118:19,	
54:7	safety	166:22	123:2, 130:16,	
ron	30:10, 34:18,	saying	142:10, 158:20,	
60:16, 79:13	34:19, 46:10,	3:1, 12:22,	165:12	
ronald	68:18, 69:7,	31:3, 33:17,	seconds	
59:17	69:9	43:14, 47:12,	76:2, 142:10	
room	said	96:9, 107:12, 147:9, 150:8,	section	
92:13, 92:15,	5:7, 38:14,	158:15, 158:18	120:12, 124:22	
92:19, 118:15	48:15, 49:13,	says	sector	
rooms	50:12, 64:2,	116:17, 124:1,	162:19	
93:7, 93:11,	65:18, 68:2,	129:2, 153:16,	sediment	
118:19	74:16, 77:4,	153:17	140:17	
rough	103:13, 111:20,	scale	see	
92:11	116:18, 122:9,	155:13, 155:14,	8:13, 18:1,	
route	123:10, 129:4,	155:15, 155:20	18:2, 18:18,	
34:12, 54:2,	143:19, 148:18,	schedule	21:19, 29:13,	
55:6, 55:8	150:12, 152:4,	126:16	29:17, 31:2,	
routine	157:5, 161:16,	school	35:15, 40:13,	
42:2, 43:1	163:6, 166:17	34:7, 41:22,	50:8, 58:6,	
rsf	same	42:3, 52:19,	59:6, 64:13, 65:17, 70:12,	
122:9, 122:15	17:9, 25:11,	53:22, 85:13,	75:14, 77:14,	
rule	25:18, 47:11,	138:10	78:1, 81:18,	
115:16	81:8, 100:12,	schools	83:3, 83:5,	
run	155:12	110:17	91:11, 91:16,	
86:7, 96:16,	save	scientifically	92:7, 93:6,	
111:7, 111:8,	6:2	118:8	96:14, 96:22,	
136:13, 149:15	saving	scratch	97:6, 97:21,	
running	164:16	72:9	98:11, 99:15,	
2:14, 9:20	savvy	screen	100:6, 100:11,	
rush	72:15	6:19, 7:7,	,	
32:12				
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>		

	Conadeted on ivi	,	
100:18, 100:22,	95:8, 96:1,	severe	show
101:3, 103:5,	143:17	45:19	98:21, 99:11,
111:22, 114:18,	separate	shade	102:2, 102:5,
117:16, 121:21,	95:9, 145:20	88:6, 126:9,	111:8, 121:14,
123:15, 123:22,	separately	126:18	121:15, 122:3,
124:15, 124:18,	49:12	shaded	125:1, 125:11,
135:10, 135:18,	separation	88:11, 126:19	130:11, 132:4,
135:19, 141:1,	36:17, 118:2	shall	152:3, 165:17
152:13, 153:6,	september	10:7, 14:18,	showed
153:12, 153:20,	49:16, 71:20	15:15, 19:9,	99:1
157:10, 159:5,	series	22:3, 26:8,	showing
159:9, 159:10,	95:13	26:15, 28:15,	13:19, 14:3,
159:11, 159:14,	serve	35:17, 38:19,	39:16, 94:11,
160:18, 163:7,	54:6	40:18, 44:14,	95:7, 102:21,
165:5, 166:17	service	47:3, 49:1,	102:22, 103:2,
seeing	17:13, 29:20,	52:2, 56:9,	103:14, 119:18,
3:21, 54:4,	57:13, 67:16,	66:17, 78:15,	123:5, 127:3,
141:4	67:17, 67:22	108:22, 123:3,	127:9, 127:11,
seeking	services	125:1, 136:5,	127:19, 128:9
86:2, 87:3,	67:19, 113:18,	162:8	shown
89:9, 89:15	155:12	share	67:15, 125:4,
seem	session	7:7, 14:19,	125:6
29:10, 29:16,	16:1, 167:2	22:12, 27:2,	shows
70:14, 137:13,	sessions	92:2	101:21, 132:14,
152:6	23:16, 23:21	shared	164:2
seemed	set	46:6	shrubs
27:10	32:15, 98:19,	sharing	88:7, 126:18
seemingly	98:20	10:15, 12:14,	shyness
38:5	setbacks	103:20, 119:15	36 <b>:</b> 17
seems	151:6, 154:9,	she'll	sic
153:20	156:10	6:5, 7:7, 65:12	4:2
seen	setting	shepherd	side
57:6, 95:16,	27:15, 51:2	89:22	32:14, 34:10,
97:15, 131:4	settings	short	63:14, 85:9,
seized	22:19	52:18, 134:10	97:4, 97:6,
30:5	settlement	shortage	97:7, 97:8,
send	140:19	27:8, 155:22	97:20, 97:21,
5:2, 7:16, 9:1,	seven	should	98:6, 99:16,
16:5, 17:3,	79:21, 80:2	7:3, 8:11,	100:6, 100:7,
18:15, 27:15,	seventh	14:6, 16:1,	101:5, 103:8,
77:6, 77:7,	68:15	16:4, 21:4,	103:10, 118:6,
93:19, 95:9	several	30:5, 30:6,	119:21, 120:2,
sending	5:15, 24:6,	53:8, 60:18,	120:4, 122:11,
9:22, 16:7	52:22, 61:18,	63:2, 102:21,	123:17, 123:22,
sends	86:7, 86:15,	124:7, 127:10,	126:17, 130:17,
8:22	89:11, 90:18,	147:10, 157:13	146:16, 155:2
sent	92:18, 132:11,	shouldn't	sidewalk
18:14, 83:10,	151:18, 154:11	74:16, 84:17	74:9, 103:9,
	,		

	Conducted on W	,	
115:10	69:11, 88:1,	six	104:20, 106:18,
sidewalks	139:18, 151:3	72:1, 79:21,	107:22, 114:2,
32:19, 33:4,	sir	80:4, 146:2,	115:6, 120:14,
33:6, 33:8,	6:21, 31:5,	147:22	121:22, 126:21,
34:11, 34:14	31:6, 63:5,	size	128:15, 128:21,
sight	71:5, 77:19,	50:15, 86:22	134:12, 139:19,
53:15	81:4, 108:17,	sketch	140:3, 140:7,
sign	135:13, 146:19,	92:11	143:4, 143:18,
4:20, 5:11,	152:1, 154:5,	skilled	144:18, 150:22,
87:18, 87:19,	157 <b>:</b> 4	37:10	157:19, 161:11,
107:22, 108:2,	sit	skills	163:12
108:9	27:15, 86:20	22:21, 23:4,	somebody
signage	site	24:15	21:18, 43:19,
107:15, 107:17,	5:19, 6:4,	slight	88:16, 161:16,
107:18	11:13, 11:16,	30:9	166:16
signature-p1kal	11:17, 12:13,	slightly	someday
168:15	12:17, 12:21,	89:9	115:2
significant	13:1, 13:3,	slope	somehow
17:7, 70:13	13:14, 13:17,	130:16	70:15
signposting	13:20, 14:3,	sloping	someone
103:6	63:16, 95:7,	98:2, 131:10,	37:14, 42:9,
simas	95:13, 98:16,	132:8	63:1, 65:18,
58:12	98:21, 101:12,	small	84:22, 132:4,
simasek's	104:16, 104:18,	29:7, 29:19,	132:18, 141:11,
95:17	105:2, 107:1,	41:11, 41:13,	145:1, 154:16,
simaseks	107:21, 114:13,	47:20, 86:5,	155:19, 165:17
3:2, 36:9,	116:2, 116:20,	94:10, 100:18,	something
58:12, 67:15,	119:19, 121:4,	102:7, 141:18,	14:22, 51:3,
68:3	121:7, 122:2,	141:19, 151:3,	77:4, 157:13
similar	122:7, 123:7, 124:22, 125:1,	155:14, 155:19,	somewhat
69:13, 154:21	125:11, 125:14,	156:4, 160:5	30:12, 124:17
simple	126:13, 132:5,	smaller	somewhere
107:20	132:9, 132:14,	36:18, 50:15	114:3
simply	139:18, 140:17,	smiling	son
130:13	150:1, 150:16,	54:5	16:16, 41:7,
since	150:21, 151:1,	social	41:9, 41:16,
23:20, 32:17,	151:5, 152:10,	16:22, 37:1,	49:15, 49:22,
53:11, 57:5,	154:8, 156:10,	37:16	50:5, 50:8 son's
58:3, 71:10,	161:3, 161:5,	society	
72:13, 89:10,	161:9, 165:12,	110:3, 110:5	16:21
92:6, 107:20,	165:21, 166:2,	solely	<b>sons</b> 49:15
110:16, 110:20,	166:5, 166:12	62 <b>:</b> 17	49:15 soon
133:5, 139:18	sites	some	161:10
sincerely	116:1	3:5, 8:1, 39:7,	sooner
46:4	situated	69:3, 82:2,	19:3
sindy	163:19	82:3, 84:20,	sor
39:4, 117:7	situation	88:6, 89:17,	21:13
single	105:13, 153:21	100:19, 104:19,	21.IJ
30:1, 47:21,			
	<u> </u>		

	Conducted on M		01
sorkin	93:14, 106:10,	specific	staircase
18:21, 19:1,	107:9, 121:10,	111:6, 111:14,	92:21
19:4, 19:5,	123:17, 124:3,	120:13	stan
19:11, 19:12,	124:11, 126:6,	specifically	3:16, 5:8
19:14, 19:19,	130:14, 164:11	69:17, 73:11	standards
21:16, 21:20,	spaces	specifics	53:4, 131:15
25:15, 25:22,	87:7, 106:12,	13:13	standing
26:4	107:13, 128:5,	specimen	61:6, 61:7,
sorry	128:9, 128:10,	101:8, 101:14,	61:16, 61:21,
2:21, 9:18,	130:5, 130:12	102:21	83:17, 164:6
10:17, 32:2,	spanish	speeding	stanford
49:15, 54:20,	41:17, 41:19,	30:13	33:7, 33:8,
55:22, 59:9,	49:21, 61:13	spend	34:11, 55:14
59:10, 62:15,	spanish-speaking	69:9, 156:13	start
64:3, 64:4,	48:2, 50:1	spent	2:3, 4:7, 16:9,
65:2, 74:5,	spe	22:17	56:3, 94:13,
79:21, 83:2,	5:16	spoiled	95:2, 95:10,
91:10, 96:13,	speak	59:4	118:11, 118:13,
97:1, 100:17,	26:12, 26:22,	spoke	118:14, 119:17
102:2, 102:18,	30:18, 31:4,	76 <b>:</b> 20	started
107:6, 112:7,	45:3, 49:21,	spot	27:9, 110:17,
134:5, 147:2,	52:10, 52:15,	43:21, 130:16,	139:12, 139:13,
161:15, 161:16,	54:20, 69:7,	150:18	160:5
162:1	92:8, 105:18,	spots	state
sort	139:9, 140:5	42:12, 43:19	3:7, 10:19,
18:18, 89:22,	speaking	spreads	11:7, 11:8,
93:6, 99:12,	16:11, 55:22,	108:9	15:17, 19:12,
100:9, 140:5,	137:4, 162:20	square	26:18, 35:20,
153:3, 153:6,	special	92:15, 121:18,	38:22, 40:21,
155:1, 162:20	2:16, 4:12,	121:20, 121:22,	44:16, 47:6,
sound	4:18, 5:16,	164:10, 164:12	49:4, 52:5,
56:4, 65:21	11:13, 22:14,	squares	56:12, 66:20,
south	24:18, 52:10,	93:7	68:5, 73:21,
85:7, 119:21,	54:7, 54:11,	stacey	76:7, 78:21,
122:6, 123:9,	57:3, 75:3,	4:2	80:4, 80:5,
	75:7, 75:10,	staff	80:17, 83:9,
130:17	79:3, 83:13,	12:3, 12:5,	83:17, 90:16,
southeast	86:3, 87:9,	12:8, 12:10,	90:17, 106:2,
158:5, 158:10	89:4, 90:1,	13:5, 27:19,	109:13, 110:20,
southern	104:2, 112:14,	29:8, 29:13,	110:22, 136:1,
122:9	114:8, 120:13,	32:20, 37:10,	136:10, 136:19,
space	124:21, 138:15,	41:16, 45:4,	141:3, 141:6,
21:6, 45:7,	138:16, 138:17,	104:5, 104:9,	142:19, 147:6,
46:1, 86:12,	142:1, 151:5,	105:20, 107:16,	147:11, 147:13,
86:20, 87:4,	155:20 specialized	112:2, 112:10,	149:1, 162:10
87:5, 89:15,	138:11, 145:14	116:18, 127:17,	state's
89:16, 90:21, 92:13, 92:22,	•	128:7, 128:12,	143:17
92:13, 92:22,	<pre>specializing 22:18</pre>	158:17, 160:8	<b>stated</b>
	22:10		78:20, 147:19

		17, 2024	
statement	103:20, 115:11	student	12:17, 165:11
4:19, 4:21,	stopped	29:8	success
5:1, 6:16, 9:1,	2:9, 82:22,	students	54:8
17:12, 63:15	135:4, 167:9	29:8, 29:10,	successfully
states	stormwater	32:20, 34:18	134:3
124:22	140:18	studied	suddenly
status	story	109:22	23:2
63:8	118:7	studies	sufficient
stay	storytelling	73:10, 73:22,	35:8, 156:20,
15:3, 35:9,	20:19, 23:14,	74:7, 74:20	158 <b>:</b> 22
58:17, 82:8,	24:3	study	suggest
103:2	street	71:11, 71:12,	70:14
stayed	15:21, 22:8,	71:14, 72:5,	suggested
64:7	28:4, 30:11,	73:14, 73:16,	13:5
steffens	30:12, 32:10,	75:6, 76:4,	summer
140:12	32:14, 32:16,	77:1, 77:8,	24:6
step	33:7, 33:8,	77:14, 77:21	sun
117:20, 139:16	34:15, 39:5,	su	126:9
steps	41:6, 41:21,	48:1, 54:11	super
53:3, 88:15,	42:5, 42:19,	subdivision	39:18, 48:1
90:8, 90:19,	43:12, 46:9,	75:4, 84:7,	supervised
97:5, 98:7,	49:9, 50:20,	139:2, 139:3,	116:22
98:12	55:10, 69:11,	139:6, 143:7,	supply
steven	70:11, 75:22,	146:13, 146:14,	45:20, 52:18,
5:22 <b>,</b> 136:12	84:12, 84:17,	146:15, 148:21,	68:13, 68:17
stewards	85:9, 86:9,	163:18, 163:19	support
24:7	87:11, 102:6,	subdivisions	2:2, 16:13,
stick	103:3, 107:1,	139:9	18:7, 21:4,
66:8	115:8, 126:5	subject	21:5, 23:11,
still	streets	59:13, 62:1,	27:2, 28:5,
25:13, 58:16,	47:20, 84:16	79:10, 90:12	28:6, 29:3,
59:4, 70:6,	strengthening	submit	30:17, 36:11,
81:16, 94:9,	20:21	4:22, 7:22,	38:5, 41:3,
95:5, 111:21,	stressful	8:3, 9:4, 12:21,	42:15, 43:1,
119:10, 128:9,	105:12	25:4, 62:22,	44:20, 49:13,
159:4, 164:5,	strike	63:4, 63:9,	51:9, 52:16,
166:18	100:2, 100:9,	64:15, 65:5,	53:8, 54:11,
stimulating	100:13, 101:1,	65:10, 77:5,	57:1, 57:16,
37:9	101:15, 101:22	80:13, 80:15,	67:13, 67:21,
stipulated	stroller	81:5, 109:17,	70:18, 71:1,
75 <b>:</b> 22	88:18	112:3, 137:1	71:2, 79:6,
stone's	strong	submitted	140:14, 165:6
86:10	24:14, 44:20,	9:2, 16:2,	supported
stoop	67:7, 67:13	22:15, 75:5,	20:15, 23:22
88:15, 97:10	strongly	75:6, 81:12,	supporting
stop	51:9, 66:13,	81:14, 93:17	20:19, 23:10,
54:1, 54:19,	71:1	submitting	30:15, 163:3,
55:1, 55:9,	struggling	6:17, 8:16,	168:4
	36:16		

Conducted on March 19, 2024				
supportive	sustain	talented	19:17, 22:7,	
66:14	21:4, 76:2	91:18	25:4, 26:19,	
supports	sustainable	talk	35:1, 35:21,	
24:1	163:12, 165:3	40:13, 74:15,	40:22, 49:5,	
supposed	sustained	84:4, 125:10,	55:7, 67:1,	
65:5, 65:8,	78:3	128:4, 128:10,	99:11, 102:19,	
81:14, 125:4	swear	129:22	107:13, 148:7,	
sure	3:6, 10:6,	talked	152:18	
2:11, 3:10,	15:13, 19:7,	60:16, 102:20	telling	
6:11, 16:6,	19:8, 22:2,	talking	74:6, 156:8	
21:21, 34:2,	26:7, 26:14,	14:13, 32:4,	tells	
36:1, 57:21,	28:14, 35:16,	33:3, 76:3,	101:17	
66:6, 66:22,	38:17, 40:17,	102:10, 125:18,	tenths	
68:22, 73:13,	44:12, 47:1,	126:1, 126:2,	164:11	
74:18, 74:19,	48:22, 51:22,	128:19, 141:19,	terms	
76:19, 81:10,	52:4, 56:7,	153:15	34:18, 67:7,	
84:6, 92:10,	66:15, 78:14,	talks	139:20	
97:2, 102:15,	108:20, 136:4,	72:5	terry	
105:12, 116:20,	162:6	tape-recording	91:21, 91:22,	
127:19, 127:21,	switch	168:9	92:3, 93:18,	
132:17, 135:10,	99:9	target	95:6, 96:17,	
139:5, 145:15,	swore	164:13	102:2	
157:12, 157:15,	156:9	tarnish	testified	
158:15, 160:9,	system	145:4	49:11, 49:12,	
166:15	36:11	teach	51:8, 128:17,	
surprise	T	39:17, 42:21	142:20, 146:1,	
37:2	table	teacher	147:19, 148:13,	
surrounding	86:21, 86:22	39:10, 110:16	148:18, 149:9,	
45:9	take	teachers	150:2, 166:15	
survey	4:16, 15:9,	118:12	testifies	
149:4, 157:20	32:20, 34:11,	teaching	6:10, 14:17	
surveying	34:12, 45:11,	22:9, 22:17,	testify	
138:11, 138:19,	55:8, 74:13,	22:20	5:16, 15:4,	
139:1, 140:1,	82:5, 82:18,	team	18:6, 18:17,	
141:15, 145:20,	115:15, 117:10,	16:19, 20:15	18:18, 25:6,	
146:8, 146:19,	117:22, 118:17,	tear	35:11, 38:16, 40:8, 41:5,	
147:20, 152:7, 154:15	129:1, 134:20,	164:13, 164:17	40:8, 41:5, 44:10, 48:17,	
1134:13	145:13	L = -1-	144:10, 40:1/,	
		tech		
surveyor	taken	2:2, 72:15	48:21, 65:19,	
<b>surveyor</b> 136:16, 138:22,	<b>taken</b> 39:11, 51:7,	2:2, 72:15 technical	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5,	
surveyor 136:16, 138:22, 139:4, 143:4,	taken 39:11, 51:7, 53:3, 79:6,	2:2, 72:15 technical 12:3, 12:5,	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:14,	
surveyor 136:16, 138:22, 139:4, 143:4, 143:7, 143:15,	taken 39:11, 51:7, 53:3, 79:6, 116:21, 138:10	2:2, 72:15 technical 12:3, 12:5, 89:22, 90:6,	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:14, 96:6, 111:20,	
surveyor 136:16, 138:22, 139:4, 143:4, 143:7, 143:15, 145:19, 153:11,	taken 39:11, 51:7, 53:3, 79:6, 116:21, 138:10 takes	2:2, 72:15 technical 12:3, 12:5, 89:22, 90:6, 104:5, 112:10,	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:14, 96:6, 111:20, 134:1, 134:8,	
surveyor 136:16, 138:22, 139:4, 143:4, 143:7, 143:15, 145:19, 153:11, 153:14, 153:18	taken 39:11, 51:7, 53:3, 79:6, 116:21, 138:10 takes 116:1, 117:6	2:2, 72:15 technical 12:3, 12:5, 89:22, 90:6, 104:5, 112:10, 123:12, 140:19,	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:14, 96:6, 111:20, 134:1, 134:8, 138:15, 148:2,	
surveyor 136:16, 138:22, 139:4, 143:4, 143:7, 143:15, 145:19, 153:11, 153:14, 153:18 surveyor's	taken 39:11, 51:7, 53:3, 79:6, 116:21, 138:10 takes 116:1, 117:6 taking	2:2, 72:15 technical 12:3, 12:5, 89:22, 90:6, 104:5, 112:10, 123:12, 140:19, 158:17	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:14, 96:6, 111:20, 134:1, 134:8, 138:15, 148:2, 154:13, 160:22,	
surveyor  136:16, 138:22,  139:4, 143:4,  143:7, 143:15,  145:19, 153:11,  153:14, 153:18  surveyor's  137:2, 137:9	taken 39:11, 51:7, 53:3, 79:6, 116:21, 138:10 takes 116:1, 117:6 taking 72:14, 82:9,	2:2, 72:15 technical 12:3, 12:5, 89:22, 90:6, 104:5, 112:10, 123:12, 140:19, 158:17 telework	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:14, 96:6, 111:20, 134:1, 134:8, 138:15, 148:2, 154:13, 160:22, 162:4	
surveyor 136:16, 138:22, 139:4, 143:4, 143:7, 143:15, 145:19, 153:11, 153:14, 153:18 surveyor's 137:2, 137:9 surveyors	taken 39:11, 51:7, 53:3, 79:6, 116:21, 138:10 takes 116:1, 117:6 taking	2:2, 72:15 technical 12:3, 12:5, 89:22, 90:6, 104:5, 112:10, 123:12, 140:19, 158:17 telework 41:21	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:14, 96:6, 111:20, 134:1, 134:8, 138:15, 148:2, 154:13, 160:22, 162:4 testifying	
surveyor  136:16, 138:22,  139:4, 143:4,  143:7, 143:15,  145:19, 153:11,  153:14, 153:18  surveyor's  137:2, 137:9	taken 39:11, 51:7, 53:3, 79:6, 116:21, 138:10 takes 116:1, 117:6 taking 72:14, 82:9,	2:2, 72:15 technical 12:3, 12:5, 89:22, 90:6, 104:5, 112:10, 123:12, 140:19, 158:17 telework 41:21 tell	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:14, 96:6, 111:20, 134:1, 134:8, 138:15, 148:2, 154:13, 160:22, 162:4	
surveyor 136:16, 138:22, 139:4, 143:4, 143:7, 143:15, 145:19, 153:11, 153:14, 153:18 surveyor's 137:2, 137:9 surveyors	taken 39:11, 51:7, 53:3, 79:6, 116:21, 138:10 takes 116:1, 117:6 taking 72:14, 82:9,	2:2, 72:15 technical 12:3, 12:5, 89:22, 90:6, 104:5, 112:10, 123:12, 140:19, 158:17 telework 41:21	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:14, 96:6, 111:20, 134:1, 134:8, 138:15, 148:2, 154:13, 160:22, 162:4 testifying	
surveyor 136:16, 138:22, 139:4, 143:4, 143:7, 143:15, 145:19, 153:11, 153:14, 153:18 surveyor's 137:2, 137:9 surveyors	taken 39:11, 51:7, 53:3, 79:6, 116:21, 138:10 takes 116:1, 117:6 taking 72:14, 82:9,	2:2, 72:15 technical 12:3, 12:5, 89:22, 90:6, 104:5, 112:10, 123:12, 140:19, 158:17 telework 41:21 tell	48:21, 65:19, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:14, 96:6, 111:20, 134:1, 134:8, 138:15, 148:2, 154:13, 160:22, 162:4 testifying	

	Conducted on March 17, 2024			
33:12, 74:15,	thing	154:20, 155:3,	164:3	
74:16, 149:22	39:14, 71:19,	155:5, 157:12,	throughway	
testimonies	117:12, 118:17,	159:16, 160:22,	69:19	
160:16	118:20, 125:15,	161:7	throw	
testimony	151:20, 165:12	thinking	86:10	
3:6, 3:8, 8:2,	things	58:8, 63:18,	time	
10:7, 14:16,	7:9, 42:19,	65:16, 69:9,	8:3, 18:17,	
14:22, 15:14,	64:15, 111:7,	115:3	24:17, 33:13,	
15:22, 18:9,	115:4, 115:9,	third	39:7, 42:8,	
19:9, 19:13,	139:1, 140:3,	165:14	43:3, 55:4,	
22:3, 26:8,	143:14, 143:19,	thought	58:1, 58:4,	
26:15, 28:15,	150:6, 151:6,	14:1, 26:9,	69:9, 69:20,	
28:19, 35:17,	152:19, 154:13,	34:22, 46:8,	69:22, 81:8,	
38:19, 39:3,	154:20, 155:9,	66:7, 66:9,	81:18, 82:5,	
40:18, 44:13,	157:15, 165:11,	106:1, 161:22	82:6, 103:1,	
44:17, 46:6,	165:21	thoughtfully	104:16, 105:22,	
47:3, 47:8,	think	45:8	107:18, 108:18,	
49:1, 52:2,	3:11, 5:14,	three	113:6, 117:17,	
52:6, 56:9,	7:18, 7:21,	16:17, 45:2,	117:20, 134:6,	
58:2, 63:16,	14:6, 14:10,	52:14, 65:11,	134:10, 143:16,	
63:18, 66:17,	14:20, 18:6,	122:9, 139:18,	151:11, 160:3,	
73:1, 77:4,	29:6, 31:19,	162:15, 164:3	160:12	
77:13, 78:15,	35:2, 35:7,	thrilled	times	
81:8, 84:12,	35:8, 38:1,	57:15, 71:4	34:11, 46:8,	
108:22, 112:3,	39:20, 42:10,	thrived	75:13, 75:15	
114:2, 116:16,	43:19, 44:5,	53:1	today	
119:9, 134:3,	47:19, 63:13,	thriving	2:16, 3:6,	
134:15, 136:5,	64:5, 69:21,	20:9, 37:19	4:17, 11:14,	
146:7, 150:3, 158:18, 160:1,	70:16, 73:15,	through	12:18, 36:3,	
162:7, 162:22	76:3, 76:13, 77:2, 82:17,	4:14, 4:17,	38:1, 44:19,	
th	83:7, 85:21,	6:5, 14:4,	45:3, 52:10,	
2:16, 19:15,	88:22, 94:3,	14:22, 30:12,	52:15, 67:5,	
26:20, 44:18,	98:18, 98:20,	37:13, 39:3,	67:7, 81:17,	
67:2	99:4, 100:1,	49:16, 63:21,	125:10, 125:19, 128:13, 160:1,	
thanks	102:3, 102:9,	66:6, 74:11,	160:12, 164:4,	
82:20, 94:11,	102:16, 102:20,	79:15, 80:17,	164:19	
101:19	104:22, 110:19,	84:16, 84:17, 90:1, 90:16,	today's	
theater	112:2, 114:14,	90:1, 90:16, 90:19, 90:21,	21:1	
22:9, 22:17,	115:13, 119:14,	90:19, 90:21, 95:3, 96:16,	toddlerhood	
23:13	119:16, 123:7,	96:18, 98:19,	51:1	
themselves	125:13, 129:21,	99:4, 102:8,	together	
3:3, 3:12,	132:3, 132:7,	103:18, 107:19,	23:10, 39:7,	
50:18	133:6, 141:8,	138:7, 139:4,	39:11, 41:21	
therefore	145:5, 147:22,	154:20, 164:17,	told	
21:5, 37:2,	148:20, 150:9,	164:18	13:9, 13:18,	
38:5, 154:2	151:2, 151:4,	throughout	123:11, 156:9	
they'd	154:16, 154:17,	8:1, 92:19,	tom	
26:3		, ,	53:13, 55:19,	
			, -,	

	Conducted on W		
56:3, 56:4,	114:20, 162:13	28:3, 37:19,	106:21, 117:6,
79:13, 103:11,	training	45:5	122:17, 131:2,
134:14	39:11, 110:4,	trust	137:15, 139:18,
took	117:5, 118:12,	101:19	145:21, 146:5,
85:19, 95:13,	138:20, 141:9,	truth	148:22
96:4, 98:16,	141:21, 145:12,	10:8, 15:15,	type
98:21, 153:18	145:14, 151:17,	19:10, 22:3,	101:9, 128:21,
top	154:21	22:4, 26:8,	155:19, 157:14
55:12, 57:7,	transcribed	26:16, 28:15,	types
111:15, 122:12,	1:22	28:16, 35:18,	125:1, 153:9
128:22, 129:1,	transcriber	38:19, 38:20,	typical
		40:19, 44:14,	25:22
132:13, 148:10	168:1, 168:2	47:3, 47:4,	
topography	transcript		typically
131:4, 131:7,	1:8	49:2, 52:2,	9:5
132:5, 132:14,	transcription	52:3, 56:9,	<u> </u>
133:4, 165:18,	168:9	56:10, 66:17,	u-turn
166:5	transformation	66:18, 78:15, 78:16, 108:22,	70:8, 70:11
torn	53:13		unbelievably
163:9	transit	109:1, 136:6, 162:8	27:12
total	155:15		under
121:17	transition	try	10:6, 15:14,
totally	50:6, 112:22	144:15	17:1, 19:8,
14:11	transitioned	trying	22:2, 26:7,
tough	37:1	85:2, 91:10,	26:14, 28:14,
42:17	travel	110:10, 134:9,	34:5, 35:16,
toward	34:6, 34:8,	134:12, 145:3, 159:5	38:18, 40:17,
131:10, 152:7	35:3, 42:9	turn	44:13, 47:2,
towards	traveled	3:1, 38:16,	48:22, 50:5,
103:7, 138:18,	32:11, 34:16	38:17, 67:12,	52:1, 56:8,
141:15	tree	69:22, 131:18,	57:3, 60:19,
tra	100:7, 101:8,	156:3	65:6, 66:16,
32:11	101:10, 101:14,	turning	78:14, 80:7,
traci	101:18, 101:22,	42:13, 70:9	83:12, 83:15,
3:14, 4:10,	102:17, 102:20,	turns	86:3, 89:6,
4:11, 135:11	126:12	84:15	105:21, 108:21,
track	trees	twenty-seven	116:4, 116:10,
18:5	88:6, 126:18,	91:14	119:10, 120:12,
traffic	126:21	twice	122:8, 128:11,
31:18, 32:5,	tricky	155:12	132:11, 136:4,
33:19, 35:4,	111:10	155:12 <b>two</b>	151:7, 156:22,
42:13, 53:19,	tried		157:5, 162:7,
69:19, 70:9,	128:15	27:17, 29:1,	168:3
73:11, 73:14,	tries	36:6, 42:5, 43:17, 45:1,	understand
73:22, 74:20,	89:14	49:14, 59:8,	17:13, 62:15,
75:3, 75:9,	true	63:22, 70:5,	65:7, 82:15,
76:4, 77:21	24:10, 34:13,	77:10, 80:6,	106:4, 118:6,
trail	168:8	86:19, 106:3,	145:15, 149:13,
52:8, 55:10,	truly	100.10, 100.0,	
	20:17, 27:14,		

	Conducted on iv	,	
151:14	114:5, 114:13,	ventura	102:17, 108:11,
understanding	115:2, 115:5,	41:7	118:19, 123:2,
14:12, 118:14,	116:7, 122:3,	venue	135:8, 159:4,
160:4	133:17, 141:12,	57:21, 65:7	161:16
understood	142:13, 143:4,	verbal	waiting
123:1	144:1, 144:3,	16:22	2:7, 45:18,
unemployed	145:12, 145:20,	verbose	50:15, 62:9,
23:3	146:6, 146:8,	134:12	66:9, 111:20
unfamiliar	146:12, 146:18,	via	waitlist
14:11	147:15, 147:16,	25:5, 46:6	27:12, 28:1
unfortunately	147:20, 149:19,	viable	waldorf
73:16, 142:7,	149:21, 150:4,	68:12	136:13, 136:14
156:20	151:15, 154:7,	vibrant	walk
university	154:17, 155:15,	37:19	33:1, 42:21,
29:2, 32:17,	157:15, 163:11,	video	53:22, 55:4,
84:7, 85:1,	164:20, 164:21,	135:15	55:10, 75:21,
85:3, 85:7,	165:3	view	102:8, 106:15,
163:18, 164:4,	useful	44:1, 101:5	106:18, 114:17
164:8	72:4, 77:8,	village	walked
unless	134:16	20:13	41:20, 69:10,
3:10, 98:18,	uses	virginia	75:13
128:21, 166:5	120:14, 125:3,	116:8	walking
unnecessary	166:1, 166:2	virtual	53:21, 55:8,
150:4	using	41:22	114:21, 114:22
unregulated	73:22, 98:8,	visit	walkway
68:21, 69:3	114:15, 115:6,	95:8, 95:13,	88:20
unshared	163:21	98:16, 98:21,	wall
14:18	usually	150:16	100:18, 100:22
until	41:10, 67:12,	vital	want
2:18, 58:18,	112:22, 115:11,	23:1, 36:10	7:11, 10:18,
112:21	124:16, 156:14	voice	13:6, 27:2,
upcoming	utility	2:9, 82:22	28:6, 30:4,
87:16	53:18, 98:11	voir	31:5, 33:16,
ups	utilizing	81:16	33:17, 37:15,
53:21	93:12	vote	40:22, 47:17,
urban	v	30:17, 34:14	50:17, 52:9,
151:17, 153:17	vacancies	voting	94:12, 94:13,
urge	42:8	34:14	95:10, 95:15,
22:13, 30:16,	vacuum	<u> </u>	95:16, 96:4,
54:12	13:9		98:15, 98:19,
urgent	valuable	w-r-i-g-h-t	107:18, 108:2,
69:6, 163:1	24:12, 27:6	56:6	108:4, 111:5,
use	value	<b>wa</b>	111:9, 115:20,
7:8, 32:20,	38:2, 54:10,	32:17, 76:9	116:3, 127:19,
68:21, 86:5,	163:2, 163:3	wait	128:21, 130:6,
90:11, 93:3,	various	22:1, 31:10,	130:8, 133:6,
95:17, 95:22,	93:11, 152:11	40:12, 66:15,	133:18, 134:1,
96:8, 114:4,		89:10, 89:14,	135:9, 144:15,

	e onducted on i		
147:10, 158:14,	9:9, 12:16,	46:2, 92:5	97:6, 98:1,
160:2, 160:13,	14:12, 18:5,	well-being	98:11
164:14, 166:4	19:22, 34:10,	37:12, 71:2	wish
wanted	41:17, 57:14,	well-established	54:8, 117:21
3:3, 3:5, 7:19,	58:15, 62:9,	46:1	within
9:18, 35:7,	62:11, 66:7,	well-traveled	54:6, 86:15,
42:5, 46:7,	73:2, 76:14,	30:11	86:20, 87:11,
49:14, 69:7,	76:15, 81:18,	wells	88:9, 125:2,
112:3, 117:2,	82:9, 82:18,	32:9, 34:9,	126:22, 128:20
119:17, 125:19,	86:19, 87:12,	34:12, 84:14,	without
133:14, 134:6,	88:3, 89:8,	84:15	16:12, 58:1,
150:11, 165:7	91:12, 92:9,	went	126:4, 157:21
wants	95:2, 95:4,	41:7, 58:8,	witness
26:12, 113:2	96:20, 99:1,	85:1, 99:4,	5:17, 9:10,
war	114:16, 116:19,	110:1, 110:16	9:11, 10:1,
163:19	125:14, 128:9,	weren't	10:3, 13:14,
washington	128:13, 131:15,	42:1	13:17, 75:1,
39:5	133:4, 133:5,	whatever	78:12, 95:15,
watched	135:20, 141:19,	96:15, 131:14,	95:16, 108:15,
69:1	143:9, 144:22,	146:7	114:1, 130:21,
water	145:3, 150:20,	wheelchair	133:2, 133:8,
84:20	156:1, 160:5,	88:17	133:15, 149:11,
watershed	165:10, 166:18	wheelhouse	149:12, 151:12,
24:8	we've	128:21	156:9
way	9:2, 30:13,	whenever	witnesses
14:10, 25:13,	32:18, 39:6,	111:8	5:15, 13:22,
29:14, 32:6,	39:11, 57:5,	whether	133:20, 159:6
32:7, 35:10,	57:6, 97:15,		woman
39:8, 42:2,	126:14	96:8, 107:15,	163:3
43:13, 43:15,	wealthy	134:15, 141:22,	woman-owned
55:12, 85:3,	67:16	143:10, 143:11, 151:4	29:19
94:18, 97:8,	weather	whi	women
102:8, 111:11,	106:17		53:8
115:20, 134:6,	wednesday	17:16 whichever	women-led
139:14, 139:16,	81:15		21:3
157:13, 158:4	week	94:18, 95:17,	wondered
ways	75:14, 89:12,	153:17	161:20
70:5	115:6, 160:14	whole	wonderful
we'll	weekend	114:15, 118:15,	53:14, 57:6,
3:9, 3:19, 5:9,	104:20	151:20, 153:12	57:12, 67:22
12:17, 14:15,	weekly	wife	wondering
15:10, 58:6,	23:20	105:15, 106:22	114:4
63:20, 90:18,	weight	wild	wood
103:1, 165:18,	76 <b>:</b> 6	72:14	40:8, 40:10,
165:19	weighted	window	40:8, 40:10, 40:14, 40:15,
we're	138:18, 141:14	96:22	40:14, 40:15, 40:17, 40:20,
2:13, 2:16,	welcome	windows	41:1, 43:10,
4:6, 5:14, 9:5,	15:2, 17:6,	92:18, 93:5,	43:16, 44:5,
1.0, 3.11, 3.3,		93:9, 96:22,	13.10, 44.J,

	Conducted on M		00
44:8	58:14, 58:17,	100:6, 101:6,	yield
wooden	59:8, 59:11,	108:1, 119:22,	66:4
88:8, 88:15,	59:16, 59:19,	120:3	young
88:19	60:1, 60:11,	yards	6:19, 27:21,
word	60:14, 61:1,	23:5	29:18, 36:13,
108:10	61:3, 62:3,	ye	37:9, 37:18,
work	62:4, 62:6,	81:13	38:4, 54:5
16:19, 18:10,	62:8, 62:15,	yeah	younger
27:5, 39:12,	62:20, 62:21,	4:1, 5:6,	50:8
42:4, 45:8,	63:4, 65:1,	18:21, 19:2,	yourself
45:10, 56:4,	65:3, 65:13,	19:5, 25:17,	59:14, 60:5
58:10, 58:18,	65:15, 79:13,	35:14, 58:14,	youth
68:19, 90:13,	101:17, 101:19,	60:22, 62:5,	23:6, 24:14
111:3, 113:4,	166:16, 166:19,	65:9, 65:20,	<b>Z</b>
117:19, 118:5,	166:20, 167:1	71:11, 71:16,	
118:18, 138:20,	writ	72:2, 72:20,	z-h-e
139:9, 139:10,	17:8	73:13, 73:14,	25:22
140:15, 141:9,	write	76:20, 77:6,	zag
157:14	76:3	78:1, 81:3,	125:16
worked	writing	93:8, 96:9,	zhe@co
39:7, 45:14,	16:10, 36:3,	100:12, 106:1,	25:12
74:8, 139:13,	112:4	109:22, 115:16,	zip
139:15, 139:21,	written	122:21, 124:16,	109:7
139:22, 140:1,	3:5, 3:8,	125:9, 131:2,	zone
140:7, 140:10,	15:22, 63:16,	134:11, 136:12,	27:4, 122:9,
140:12, 154:16,	77:4, 77:13,	142:7, 158:8,	122:15
160:8, 162:17	122:7, 147:16	161:20, 162:12	zoning
workforce	wrong	year	1:12, 3:17,
69 <b>:</b> 4	67:11, 85:9,	50:7, 61:20,	11:14, 11:16,
working	146:18	139:18, 148:19,	11:19, 11:22,
21:4, 24:8,	wrote	160:9, 163:9,	15:2, 16:13,
34:1, 52:17,	151:19	164:4	18:12, 22:14,
53:7, 68:1,	wtop	years	24:18, 28:7,
70:18, 110:17,	71:12, 71:15,	16:17, 20:14,	29:4, 38:6,
141:11, 155:3	77:1, 77:14	22:18, 27:17,	43:1, 51:10,
works	x	36:14, 36:21,	52:10, 54:11, 67:12, 71:2
65:8, 153:20	x-ray	37:16, 39:6,	67:12, 71:2, 84:2, 87:14,
world	120:12	42:17, 45:2,	120:11, 132:11,
21:1	<u>Y</u>	59:4, 61:18,	133:5, 138:14,
would've		67:16, 75:15,	138:16, 139:5,
81:17	y'all 152:18	79:21, 86:7,	141:22, 145:3,
wouldn't		86:15, 110:13,	148:14, 151:8,
86:10, 94:20,	yard	117:6, 117:10,	152:12, 154:9,
125:11	22:10, 23:9,	126:12, 130:22,	154:21, 155:2,
wright	45:11, 88:5, 93:16, 97:18,	138:10, 138:11,	155:4, 156:19,
53:13, 56:6,	99:16, 97:18,	141:13, 141:21,	160:10, 163:8
56:7, 56:11,	JJ.10, JJ:1/,	154:17, 162:15,	zoom
56:14, 58:7,		162:19	119:20, 121:6
			,

Conducted on March 19, 2024 89				
\$	16	162:19	77:12	
\$10	2:22, 4:13,	200	23	
156:14	5:5, 5:9, 63:15,	121:21	77:12, 77:13	
\$9	89:4, 89:16,	2006	24	
69 <b>:</b> 5	106:11, 121:8	148:12, 153:21	80:19, 109:20,	
0	167	2011	168:20	
	1:21, 168:8	57:5	25	
00	17	2012	80:21, 82:7,	
57:19, 58:5,	6:13, 63:16	73:15	91:12, 109:18,	
58:9, 58:18,	1763	2015	123:3, 123:6	
113:15, 113:20,	136:14	110:3	26	
113:21, 127:13,	18	2017	94:1, 94:20,	
127:15, 127:17	16:8, 63:11,	68:4, 71:10,	94:22, 95:14,	
000	63:17, 64:3,	73:15, 110:15	97:12, 97:15,	
156:14	110:16	2019	98:4, 98:13,	
001	1840	33:4, 41:8	99:6, 99:22,	
2:17, 5:17,	164:9	2020	102:12, 102:13	
22:16, 57:4	19	20:1, 49:16	27	
122.14	1:15, 63:11,	2022	91:15, 94:17,	
133:14	63:19, 64:3,	41:8, 53:12,	94:22, 168:17	
1	120:4, 168:20	57 <b>:</b> 8	273604	
1	1917	2023	124:22	
2:2, 2:3, 2:13,	163:16	2:17, 5:17,	275402	
5:6, 13:6, 15:8,	1938	22:16, 49:16,	120:12	
25:17, 25:20,	164:1, 164:5	57:4, 71:20	28	
58:9	1940	2024	124:1, 134:22,	
10	163:21	1:15, 168:17	137:3, 137:6,	
8:6, 15:5,	1947	2026	137:9	
39:6, 99:5,	163:17	68:6	29	
106:10, 162:15	1977	20740	91:12, 137:3,	
100	139:13	36:3	137:7, 137:9	
73:1	1978	20781	3	
11	139:12	26:21	3	
57:19, 58:18,	1983	20782	6:14, 18:20,	
103:21, 115:17	139:14	11:2, 19:16,	18:22, 19:2	
12	1990	52:9, 67:3	3,480	
8:7, 58:5,	139:17	20783	121:18	
133:14, 134:22	2	15:21, 28:21,	3-	
1230	2	41:2, 47:11,	168:20	
135:1, 135:2	2:4, 2:5, 2:7,	49:10, 56:15,	30	
14	2:11, 2:14,	79:1, 83:22,	22:17, 32:16,	
12:11	9:12, 9:16, 9:18	109:7	113:21, 127:17	
15	20	21	3032	
12:11, 99:5,	2:16, 63:19,	63:20, 64:20	41:2	
126:12 <b>150</b>	64:17, 64:19,	217	3304	
	119:22, 134:17,	121:22	79:1, 79:20,	
136:13	134:20, 138:10,	22	109:6	
		73:3, 77:2,		
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>		

		13, 2024	
3308	60	920	
28:20	163:21	164:10	
34	6116	921	
19:15	22:8	39:4	
3409	66.25	95	
15:20, 49:9	123:20, 124:6,	122:9, 122:15	
37	124:10	966	
44:18, 67:2	7	92:15	
39	7	9704	
26:20		36 <b>:</b> 2	
39.16	113:15, 113:21,	"	
123:16, 123:18	127:13, 127:17 <b>7.3</b>		
4		"employed"	
	130:16	105:16	
4	7003		
64:6	11:2		
4-and-a	7101		
20:10	52:8, 162:13		
40	7205		
120:3	100:17, 100:21,		
43	102:21, 102:22		
22:8	7207		
5	22:15, 24:19,		
5	44:22, 46:5,		
113:20, 127:15,	52:11, 56:16,		
127:17	56:20, 59:13,		
50	59:21, 62:4,		
125:2, 141:12,	62:5, 83:21, 107:9, 164:2,		
154:17, 163:21	164:7		
52	<b>7209</b>		
36:2, 75:15	56:14, 56:22,		
531111	59:21, 103:11		
1:20, 168:20	<b>7211</b>		
5512	100:16		
26:20	<b>77</b>		
5703	139:12		
44:18, 67:2	<b>78</b>		
5906	139:13		
19:15	8		
6			
6	80		
113:15, 113:20	121:18, 122:21		
6,000	8536		
68:4	47:10		
6-year-old	9		
36 <b>:</b> 15	9		
	127:13, 127:15		
	1		