



class size matters

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**Testimony of Patrick Sullivan, Member, Board of Directors of Class Size Matters
Franchise and Concession Review Committee, February 13, 2007**

My name is Patrick Sullivan, and I am a member of the board of directors of Class Size Matters, a citywide parent organization devoted to achieving smaller classes in the NYC public schools. Though this contract does not directly relate to class size, we decided to speak out against it because so many public school parents were outraged when we first heard about it, and have become even more outraged the more we have learned.

Our objections, and the reasons you should vote against this concession are as follows:

1. The private school funds are unnecessary

The proposed payments by the private schools would amount to less than half of the cost of these fields. Moreover, the City Council has already appropriated \$76 million for this project. With a budget city surplus last year of almost \$5 billion, and another billion dollar surplus expected this year, there is no need for taking such a drastic step that would effectively exclude public schoolchildren from having equitable access to these fields.

2. The Administration has failed to follow the lawful process for granting a concession of this type.

The process that would grant this no-bid contract violates mandated local and governmental review of major concessions, as outlined in regulations adopted by City Planning as well as the City Charter. Given the sheer size of the land being converted to athletic fields, the Uniform Land Use Review Process should have been followed. The East Harlem community board should have reviewed the concession and the City Council should have exercised its rights to approve or deny the concession. Randalls Island is part of East Harlem. By approving this concession without following the required protocols, the Bloomberg Administration is committing an appalling affront to that community.

3. The concession is plagued by compelling conflict of interest concerns

There are disturbing conflicts of interest between the Randall's Island Sports Foundation and the Parks Department, as pointed out by an audit of the State Comptroller's office in 2002 and again in 2004. These reports called into question the propriety of any contract entered into between these parties, given the overlapping governance and finances of these two organizations. There are also potential conflicts between the Foundation and the private schools that will be granted priority access to these fields. Any concession involving the selling of access should have been open to all schools and community

groups, not just the schools chosen by the RISF. Who are the RISF trustees and why were these particular schools selected?

4. The resulting contract creates a separate and unequal permitting process

The creation of a separate and unequal permitting process, whereby certain private schools are invited to buy access through a long term contract places our public school children -- especially middle and high school athletes -- at an unfair disadvantage. More than one million children currently attend city public schools; many of who desperately need greater access to after school sports and the fields that would make this possible. Their opportunities to do so should not be curtailed.

5. The concession is an alienation of parkland

The current situation whereby the Bloomberg Administration seeks to alienate parkland unilaterally through its control of the Franchise and Concessions Review Committee is contrary to the historic and legal rights of the public to have access to public lands.

For these reasons, the concession is widely opposed by the public school community:

- I have included testimony here against the proposal from Eugenia Simmons-Taylor, PTA president of the Young Woman's Leadership School, a school the RISF falsely claims supports the proposal.
- The Community Education Council and District Presidents Council for East Harlem have issued resolutions in opposition to the concession. These bodies are the only elected representatives of public parents. They are the only entities recognized by the Mayor and Department of Education to represent parents of the East Harlem School District (#4), a district with 58 schools and 6 playing fields.
- Three other Community Education Councils have issued similar resolutions and several more are in the works.

Despite this opposition, our Mayor, who claims he wants to be judged for his record on public schools, is prepared to use his control of this committee to betray their interests. Tomorrow you vote. Let Michael Bloomberg's legacy reflect how he delivered this crushing defeat to public school parents and children.

Thank you for your time today.