Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. I am Roland Lewis, president of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance is a coalition of over 450 organizations working together to transform the New York Harbor and its waterways into a world class resource for work, play, transit and education.

With that mission in mind, I would like to express MWA’s support of Stiles Properties LLC plans to construct new piers to provide public boating access to the NY-NJ Harbor at India Street and Java Street in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn provided that they are designed well.

For a large section of Brooklyn, long cut off from the waterfront, these piers will provide a new and vital lifeline to the water that surrounds them. Historic vessel moorage is in
short supply along our waterfront and will provide an important educational opportunity to community residents. The transient moorage will provide a space for boaters to access the neighborhood for dining and shopping.

We applaud the use of floating transient docks along the side and the floating ferryboat dock at the end of the India Street Pier so that it can be used by a wide variety of historic, educational, ferry and emergency vessels. MWA is pleased to see the India Street floating barge will be used for ferry service and emergency evacuation since there is a great need.

However, there is still room for improvement in the design, construction and management of the proposed piers. Several months ago, MWA reached out to our Alliance Partners and invited several historic boat operators and human powered boaters to meet with Stiles Properties and W Architecture and Landscape Architecture to offer their expertise on good pier and dock design. Set forth below are some of the considerations and guidelines provided by MWA and our expert Alliance Partners that the developer and the City should address as the construction of the piers move forward.

Without electricity, a pump out station or water, it is difficult to envision robust programming but we are happy to see that there are no docking fees. The transient moorage spaces with a freeboard of 18-22 inch freeboard will be limited to small craft vessels while the floating barge with a freeboard of 5 feet will be limited to boats with larger freeboards such as Fireboat John J. Harvey with a 6’ freeboard or the Pegasus. To
make the floating barge accessible to Clearwater and other historic boats with lower freeboards it will be important to design a cut out with steps going down on the western side of the barge.

Knowing that the Java St. Pier has a 5 feet freeboard above Mean High Water and a 8 feet above Low Mean Water. It will be difficult for several educational boats to dock. This includes the Mystic Whaler (freeboard of 2-3 feet), Clearwater (freeboard of 3 feet), Waterfront Museum Barge (freeboard of 3-4 feet), Pioneer (3 feet), Lettie G Howard (4 feet) and W. O. Decker (3 feet) to dock at Java. At the Java Street Pier many of these boats could tie up at high water but would be disadvantaged at low water. It also seems that at some extreme high tides and with the pending sea level rise predictions, this pier could be under water and unusable. For these reasons MWA suggests attaching a floating dock with a 4 ft freeboard and another kayak float with a 4 inch freeboard. A floating dock designed in this manner will provide flexible access to the full variety of historic and education boats which call the NY-NJ harbor their home, as well as human powered boats.

MWA believes it is important for the developer to consider some important factors in the creation of its site management plan to prevent boaters from making it a year round residence or a site for abandoned boats. For example, it will be important to consider an operational plan for the slips on the south side to ensure transient dockage.
In addition to a floating dock, we highly recommend the India and Java Street Piers conform to the North River Historic Ship Society’s design guidelines to ensure they are usable and well-built. It was just announced yesterday at the Mayor’s Waterfront Management Advisory Board meeting that these pier design guidelines will be adopted by New York City.

Transferable development rights and other legal incentives that produce height and density bonuses for developers on the waterfront is one tool for the City’s waterfront and the NY-NJ Harbor to be more accessible to all. However, MWA recommends New York City ensure that pier and public access designs are of high quality and reflect the attention to detail required to ensure docks and piers are useable by a variety of boats and are equitable and beneficial for communities and the city at large. The City should take care to establish standards for quality control with waterfront edges so that the India and Java Street Piers are multipurpose and functional for a variety of users. Advice and oversight from the end users of facilities such as the India Street and Java Street piers is critical for their successful long term viability.

MWA takes no position on the upland residential and commercial portions of this project, but hopes the developer and the City will take into consideration community concerns about the bulk of the project. Similarly, we hope there is continued community involvement from the local neighborhood and the City-wide maritime community, that both piers are multi-use and that there is a human power boat launch. We understand the
upland issues have not been approved but we hope there will be a beach between the two piers and boat storage for human powered boaters so that this site is truly publicly-accessible by all. We commend this feature of the proposed project, and again applaud the developer and the City’s intention of opening up this long forlorn stretch of waterfront for waterfront access and boating activity.