

Minutes
Joint Meeting Land Use Committee/ Economic Development Committee
December 5, 2023

<https://youtu.be/FTPxOtB5iMg>

Location – Board office 5676 Riverdale Ave. Suite 100 Bronx NY 10471

Hybrid Meeting

Chairmen Moerdler and Fazio called meeting to order at 7:05 pm

Attendance Land Use:

Present (11) – Charles Moerdler, Martin Wolpoff, Sylvia Alexander, Bob Bender, Carol Blake, Nick Fazio, Daniel Rowan, Laura Spalter, Lee Chong (EC), David Gellman (EC), Omar Murray (EC)

Absent (1) – Jessica Sosa

Attendance Economic Development:

Present (3) Nick Fazio, Joy Campbell Priveterre, Rhashida Hillard,

Absent (3) – Constance Barnes Watson, Julia Gomez, Community Member Miguel Matos

Community Board Members: Julie Reyes (CB8 Chair), Rosemary Ginty

Staff: Farrah Kule Rubin District Manager

Guests - Camila Thomas (DCP), Benjamin Huff (DCP), Paul Phelps (DCP), James Powers Architect, Johanna Phelps MNLA Landscape Architect, Hanifa Barnes (RCS), Mike Galligan (RCS), Jesse Lerer Rep. for Assemblyman Dinowitz, Sherida Paulsen

Land Use Vote to approve November 6, 2023 minutes – Correct spelling typo on Guest Jesse Lerer name then approved unanimously.

APPROVED (11)– Charles Moerdler, Martin Wolpoff, Sylvia Alexander, Bob Bender, Carol Blake, Lee Chong (EC), Nick Fazio, David Gellman (EC), Omar Murray (EC), Daniel Rowan, Laura Spalter

ABSTAINED 0 OPPOSED 0

Economic Development Vote to approve November 2023 minutes – No Quorum
Will table vote until January meeting.

SNAD Applications:

RIVERDALE COUNTRY SCHOOL Driveway Improvements:

Zoning Authorization on a Special Natural Area District (SNAD) to facilitate construction of an expanded bus drop-off and pick-up area. The development site is 17,265 sq.ft including a driveway of 10,375 sq. ft., a sidewalk of 3,109 sq. ft., planting areas and a modification to the perimeter fencing of the school, it is being sought by the private Applicant Riverdale Country School at 5250 Fieldston Road in Fieldston, CD 8, The Bronx.

WHEREAS, the representative for Riverdale Country School presented the project to make improvements and expansion of the Driveway at 5250 Fieldston Road to address student safety and traffic flow on Fieldston Road, and

WHEREAS, Applicant informed all neighbors within 200 feet of the property, and,

WHEREAS, no opposition was indicated either from the board or from the community.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED for the reason set forth above, the Land Use Committee APPROVES this application.

Approved (11) C. Moerdler, M. Wolpoff, S. Alexander, B. Bender, C. Blake, L. Chong, D. Gellman, N. Fazio, D. Rowan, J. Sosa, L. Spalter

OPPOSED 0

ABSTAINED 0

Hebrew Home of Riverdale:

James Power, Architect representing the client, gave an update on the renewal of the 4-year special permit Hebrew Home Status of Special application pending at Department of City Planning (DCP) for review. Will make a complete presentation at the next Land Use Meeting in January and will send details of the permit modifications for the Committee to review.

- North portion of campus is in R4 district and South portion acquired is in R1 District where they are making special modifications.
- In 2018 DCP granted approvals for new independent living building of 3 separate wings and are a part of CCRC in R1 District.
- North Campus use is as of right in an R4 District.
- Hebrew Home agreed to changes asked of community in restrictive declaration and, although not recommended by the CB8 board, this was approved by DCP, City Council and Bronx Borough President. Construction

was delayed due to Covid. Draft to modify the project to continue to make improvements to this building.

- Discussed 11-foot increase in height of the building for additional mechanical equipment and adding a rooftop terrace and club room which was not in the original 2018 approval.

Report by subcommittee working with Stagg construction on 3745 Riverdale Avenue:

- Sub-Committee met with Stagg representative. They are still working on the elevators and when completed Con Ed will come in to turn on and they will focus on the outside area and beautification. Projected to be completed end of January, not end of year due to issues with the windows coming in later.
- Possibility of putting a Sculpture in the front. Committee asked if a local artist can be retained for the project and gave the name of a local artist they recommend.
- Discussed getting sidewalk back to the way it is supposed to be. Discussed damage that was done to the neighboring 3751 building due to insufficient protection between the two buildings.
- 3801 Waldo Ave. building Stagg owns and contracted as a residence for migrant families not a shelter. Operation of the building will be done by Westhab. Five apts. set aside for office space and recreational use. Building to begin functioning sometime in January.

Discussion on City of Yes for Economic Opportunity:

<https://cbbronx.cityofnewyork.us/cb8/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/10/DCP-COY-Zoning-for-Economic-Opportunity-Presentation.pdf>

Discussion was had on 18 Text amendments in the 664 page zoning text application that Department of City Planning (DCP) wants comments on for each of the 18 text amendments. Points of concern and questions brought up by both committees as follows:

- Primary concern about commercial use in residential properties. More illegal activity can happen. Will DOB be prepared when these changes take effect and have what they need to oversee and enforce? Will the codes and

role of the Department of Buildings (DOB) and Fire Dept. be adjusted to enforce the changes? Answer is yes. Relatively same procedure for DOB with zoning changes and DOB will review as they always do. Difficulty for businesses to take proper path and hoping these rezoning changes makes that process easier so less illegal activity can occur. They will be reviewing the alterations beforehand.

- Concern that many stores are vacant in our district and closing. Spaces are available but not being used. Response from DCP is businesses meet many barriers to opening in a storefront and want to remove them to let more businesses occupy these spaces. Simplifying rules for C1 and C2 districts.
- Comment made- our district has a very low vacancy rate of 6-7%. We have 650-700 storefronts and over 1500 businesses. This proposal would allow more space to become available.
- Must consider Congestion pricing will affect small businesses in Lower Manhattan and people will stay away the next 2-3 years.
- Residential areas in outer boroughs have serious impacts on the economy of area due to expanded homeless and migrant shelters. Need to put these in areas that are affordable. Concerned this is not factored into planning.
- Concerns on Negative Declaration (NEGDEC) process for environmental review and study of impact on character of neighborhoods. Corner establishments in residential areas will bring more garbage, traffic, and signage.
- Proposal on Mayor's Office of Nightlife & Entertainment will be hard to enforce with NYPD cuts. Funding is needed for agencies to oversee new rules and regulations. Response from Chair of Economic Development - after the 200-person limit, business will need to apply for BSA special permit. We have a good history of working with our business to soundproof their establishments and cut down on noise and complaints. Local contractors do the work for the businesses.
- Increasing commercial uses and allowable square footage from 25% to 49% will affect the quality of life of residents in buildings and residential neighborhoods. Response - zoning does not override bylaws for Co-Ops and Landlords that don't allow for commercial use.
- Ask City Council if there were any changes made on the original Carbon Neutrality proposal from original presentation.

- Concerns on Commercial Space in NYCHA Housing Complexes. These are meant to be residential with open Green Space. DCP says it is to help them utilize unused space like a garage and or underground spaces. Response is it allows them to monetize space not currently being used and raise revenue for the complex.
- Does NYCHA development get the revenue raised from this or does it go back to the City? DCP will get back to us on this.
- CB8 Housing Committee held meeting with tenants and tenant reps. from the Marble Hill and Ft. Independence Houses and they were all against this zoning change for NYCHA.
- Questions asked about Manufacturing changes and what it means, ability of Life Sciences industry to expand in NYC allowing for special permit labs to set up near universities and hospital, clean production facilities to go vertical so available to other businesses and more cost effective, and use of mixed zoning in manufacturing zones allows more innovation and more industry for the City.
- Concern raised the objective of DCP was to get rid of R1 and R2 residential districts. – DCP responded that is not in any of the proposals.

Old Business:

- None

New Business:

- Land Use Committee: Next Meeting coming up will have new Zoning applications. A review of the application coming up for the Hebrew Home and Discussion of Concern of 3862 & 2874 Sedgwick Ave. and 69 & 71 Stevenson Place properties being purchased by one developer and what is being proposed there. Chair Moerdler requested the Developer be invited to the next Land Use Committee meeting in January to clarify the plans.
- Economic Development Committee:
MVM Award nominations coming up in January. Must show the following:
 1. For profit Business
 2. Outstanding entrepreneurial skills
 3. Contribute to community in various ways

- Joint meeting again with Land Use and Economic Development Committee on Thursday, January 4, 2024.

Meeting was adjourned 8:53 pm

Submitted by Farrah Kule Rubin – District Manager Bronx CB8