

**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8
MINUTES OF THE HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**HELD ON MARCH 23, 2015
RIVERDALE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
5676 RIVERDALE AVENUE, 2ND FLOOR, BRONX NY 10471**

Board/Committee Members Present:

Paul Ellis
Steven Balicer
Tony Creaney
David Gellman
David Kornbluh
Lucy Mercado
Sergio Marquez
Georgia Santiago

Affiliation:

CB8 Housing Committee, Chair
CB8 Housing Committee, Vice Chair
CB8 Housing Committee
CB8 Housing Committee
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Guest:

Rene Segura
George Torres

Sustainable South Bronx
NYC Department of Buildings

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 P.M. by Committee Chairperson Paul Ellis.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December and February meetings were duly approved by unanimous vote.

2. Presentation by Rene Segura of Sustainable South Bronx (SSB) on SSB's energy efficiency incentive program for Bronx homeowners.

Mr. Ellis introduced Rene Segura, Outreach Coordinator of Sustainable South Bronx (SSB).

Mr. Segura then proceeded to report on that organization's program. SSB is a non-profit funded by the State of New York for the purpose of assisting Bronx homeowners with energy conservation. It can provide a free energy assessment to learn where a homeowner is using energy inefficiently and wasting money.

The homeowner will then be offered a list of licensed contractors who can retrofit the house for increased energy efficiency. The homeowner can be assisted in applying for a low interest loan and subsidies to pay for the work. Bronx homeowners can receive subsidies of up to 10% of the cost of the retrofit. Income eligible homeowners can receive a 50% subsidy.

To be eligible the home must be a one to four unit residential property. The homeowner must provide a twelve month survey of energy usage. Mr. Segura explained that although his organization refers to the South Bronx, the programs offered by SSB are fully available to all Bronx homeowners.

Mr. Segura explained that his appearance at this meeting and at the recent Board meeting were his first outreach attempts Riverdale. The committee then proceeded to discuss various

approaches that he might consider in order to spread the word about SSB programs. Among the suggestions that were made were to have a presence at Riverdale Riverfest and the various street fairs that occur throughout the year, contacting the relevant personnel in the offices of the elected officials (and we provided him with names and contact information) and several other possible strategies.

3. Budget priorities for the NYC Department of Buildings and the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

Mr. Ellis introduced George Torres, Community Liaison with the New York City Buildings Department (DOB). Mr. Ellis went on to explain that Ted Weinstein of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development had contacted the Board office to say that he was ill and would not be able to attend, but that he looked forward to speaking to the committee at a later point.

Mr. Torres reported that in 2014, the Department received 36,000 new building applications and 87,000 alteration applications. 3,600 new building activities were reported.

He explained that the operations of DOB have been digitalized. A new system called "Accela" has been instituted. It allows for continuous tracking of complaints and actions taken. Among the benefits of this system is that it helps to prevent this sort of abuse that has recently been seen, primarily in the Manhattan and Queens offices of DOB, whereby certain applications were being given priority treatment.

Mr. Torres noted that 67 new staff positions have been created. He explained that although the situation is much improved, there is still a backlog.

There are a total of four enforcement inspectors in the Bronx, which is insufficient. He explained that in his view and that of his superiors, there is a need for two additional inspectors and two vehicles.

When queried as to type of work that was not getting done and that would presumably be better served with increased resources, Mr. Torres noted that of the four types of complaints – A, B, C and D – the A and B complaints, which are the more serious ones concerning immediate hazards to life, dwelling units that do not have sufficient egress, illegal conversions and other matters, generally get addressed timely. But the less serious C and D complaints have a significant backlog and in the past have often been closed out as stale before an inspector was able to make a site visit. His expectation that with additional resources, that would enable his office to give more timely attention to C and D complaints.

The Committee thanked him for his statements and committed to offer whatever assistance it could to obtain increased resources for his office.

4. Old Business

Mr. Ellis reported that the garbage situation at Marble Hill Houses has become worse. He has been speaking with Tony Edwards of the Tenants' Association about the planned cooperative effort among the Tenants' Association, the 50th Police Precinct and CB8 to educate residents who contribute to the garbage problem, and ultimately ticket those who continue to violate the rules. At present, we are waiting on the Tenants Association for their work on the planned education program.

Lucy Mercado noted that she would be happy to assist in this effort and agreed that she would be contacting Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Ellis brought up the topic of the committee agenda through June, and noted that we might hold a meeting for residents of the Promenade in April, although that was still uncertain. The committee also discussed the anticipated Housing Court Forum that was planned for May.

5. New Business

Mr. Ellis requested that the committee join him in a round of applause for Steve Balicer, in recognition of Mr. Balicer's two years of service as Chair and one year as Vice Chair of the Housing Committee, in light of his announced resignation from the Board.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Minutes recorded by,
David Kornbluh
Housing Committee Member, CB8 Bronx

Respectfully submitted,
Paul Ellis
Chairperson Housing Committee, CB8 Bronx