

PENDING COMMITTEE APPROVAL

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

**MINUTES OF THE HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, MAY 23, 2016
AT ST. STEPHENS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
146 W. 228th STREET, BRONX, NY 10463**

Board Members Present:

Paul Ellis
Anthony Creaney
Lenora Croft
Margaret Donato
David Gellman
David Kornbluh
Julie Reyes
Amy Joy Robateau
Georgia Santiago

Affiliation:

CB8 Housing Committee, Chairman
CB8 Housing Committee
CB8 Housing Committee
CB8 Housing Committee
CB8 Housing Committee
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Guests:

Matthew Cruz
Kimberly Bean
Lee Chong
John Sims

Department of Building (DOB), Guest Speaker
Community Resident
Community Resident
Community Resident

Absent:

Noah Friedman, Sergio Marquez, Lucy Mercado, Omar Murray, Ruby Palma and James Rather

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 P.M.

Paul Ellis, Chair of the Committee, welcomed the attendees and introduced himself. Mr. Ellis then went on to review the agenda for the evening.

He also noted that representatives of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) are scheduled to attend the committee's June meeting.

1. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the Committee's April 25, 2016 meeting. After being seconded and followed by discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved.

2. Budget Priorities for FY 2018 for the NYC Department of Buildings (DOB)

Mathew Cruz of DOB addressed the current budgetary needs of DOB in the Bronx. He noted that Mayor de Blasio has allocated \$120 million over 4 years to addressing budgetary shortfalls at DOB, and that we are currently in the second year of that program.

The discussion focused primarily on the needs with respect to DOB's enforcement efforts. Mr. Cruz noted that the Bronx currently has five inspectors and three vehicles. He added that there are plans to add an additional two to three inspectors over the coming year.

In the view of the Bronx office, between the current inspectors and the additional inspectors that are expected, staffing is sufficient. However, he went on to say that with three vehicles being shared among five inspectors, an additional two vehicles would be very useful in increasing the efficiency and productivity of his office.

Mr. Ellis asked Mr. Cruz about the current status of DOB's ability to timely address "C" and "D" complaints, being those items which are regarded as less serious than "A" and "B" complaints and receive lower priority. Mr. Ellis recalled earlier presentations by DOB in which it was noted that due the backlog, C and D complaints often expired before any enforcement action occurred. He noted that this was one of the reasons for past budgetary requests for additional enforcement staff.

Mr. Cruz reported that past problems with "timing out" of C and D complaints had significantly improved. He noted that the backlog, which had been 15% in late 2013 was currently less than 5%. For that reason, his office was confident that with the inspectors currently on hand and the additional inspectors planned, there was sufficient staffing to timely address necessary enforcement issues.

Mr. Ellis asked about current trends as far as illegal conversion complaints in Community Board 8 (CB8). Although he did not have that data at hand, Mr. Cruz responded that he was not aware of a significant number of illegal conversion complaints over the last year.

At that point, two committee members stated that they believed that there were illegal units at 165 W. 197 St. and 2710 Webb Ave. Mr. Ellis requested that Mr. Cruz investigate those reports and respond to the committee, and Mr. Cruz committed to do so.

3. Old Business

Mr. Ellis reported that the Housing Resource Guide Working Group will meet at the conclusion of tonight's committee meeting. The Guide has been significantly revised and edited, and upon finalization, which is scheduled for the end of June, it will be distributed in print and online form.

Mr. Ellis continues to be contacted by Marble Hill residents regarding the troublesome garbage and rodent issues at Marble Hill Houses. CB8 District Manager Patricia Manning and Mr. Ellis are in continued contact with residents and with Mr. Nate Parris of NYCHA in an effort to address the issue.

Mr. Ellis also reported that on May 12, he and Ms. Manning and Mr. Terrence Miller of Senator Gustavo Rivera's office conducted a site visit to Marble Hill Houses to better understand the nature of the garbage issue first hand. During that visit, they took extensive photographs, which were sent to Mr. Parris to get his feedback on what is being done to resolve the problem. They are awaiting a response from Mr. Parris.

Mr. Ellis reported that he received a call from Ms. Kimberly Theodore, the Property Manager at Marble Hill Houses, to inform him that Mr. Parris, who is her immediate supervisor, is due to be reassigned. She was quite concerned, as she believed that Mr. Parris had made significant progress in addressing quality of life issues at Marble Hill. She requested for CB8 to draft a letter proposing that Mr. Parris remain assigned at Marble Hill. Mr. Ellis said that he would be looking into the matter in order to determine what action might be appropriate.

There was then a discussion concerning the lack of screening of incoming residents, including those coming out of homeless shelters. The observation was made that in some homeless shelters, residents are instructed to leave their garbage outside of their doors for pickup, and perhaps the differing rules between shelters and NYCHA housing is a contributing factor to the ongoing garbage issues.

There followed a short discussion concerning NYCHA's lack of participation in the New York City recycling program.

4. New Business

Mr. Ellis reported that David Kornbluh has offered to gather data to assist in quantifying affordable housing needs in CB8. Mr. Kornbluh went on to explain that in his view we tend to neglect planning and are primarily reactive. It is his hope that by assembling more data, we will be able to better assess needs in order to be more proactive. There was discussion on the various sources of data available to Mr. Kornbluh.

Mr. Ellis reported that the Van Cortlandt Motel on Broadway is now being used as a Homeless Shelter and that it is the view of many on the Board and in the community that CB8 and the community should be advised when a homeless shelter is established in the community. Mr. Ellis noted that this matter was on the agenda for the next Land Use Committee meeting. There was further general discussion on this matter.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Minutes recorded by,

Amy Joy Robateau and Julie Reyes
Housing Committee
Bronx Community Board 8

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Ellis
Chairperson
Housing Committee
Bronx Community Board 8