

Bronx Community Board 8 Land Use Committee Minutes
July 27, 2017
Riverdale YM/YWHA, 5625 Arlington Avenue, Bronx, New York

Community Board No. 8:

PRESENT: S. Alexander, R. Bender, Eric Dinowitz, Margaret Donato, Paul Ellis, Diomarys Escano, Robert Fanuzzi, Steven Froot, David Gellman, Rosemary Ginty, Julia Gomez, Marvin Goodman, Daris Jackson, Myra Joyce, Charles Moerdler, Omar Murray, Joseph O'Brien, Daniel Padernacht, Karen Pesce, Amy Robateau, Georgia Santiago, Steven Sarao, Laura Spalter, Jyll Townes, Sergio Villaverde, Martin Wolpoff, Mary Yamagata, Rosalind Zavras

ABSENT: Eric Bell, Lisa Daub, Daniella Fuchs, Irving Ladimer, Rita Lowe, Demetrius McCord, Tao Moran; Julie Reyes, Diego Santiago, I. William Stone;

GUESTS:

Members of the Public: On file in Community Board Office

NYPD – Deputy Inspector O'Toole

Elected Officials:

Assemblyman Dinowitz
Council Member Cohen
Brendan Fitzpatrick, Office of Assemblyman Dinowitz
Frederick Klein, Office of Assemblyman Dinowitz
David Kornbluh, Office of State Senator Klein
Cristina Lang, Office of State Senator Klein
Aneiry Batista, Office of Congressman Espaillat
Joshua Stephenson, Office of Councilmember Cohen
Adam Bermudez, Office of Council Member King
Hennesy Reyez, Office of State Senator Rivera
Paola Munoz, Office of State Senator Rivera

Agency Representatives:

Lincoln Kestler, Office of the Mayor
Matthew Borden, Assistant Commissioner, DHS
Doreen Howe, DHS
Jackie Bray, First Deputy Commissioner, DHS
Nicole Jordan, Community Affairs, DHS
Lori Boozer, DHS
Svein Jorgensen, CEO, Praxis Housing Initiatives

Meeting called to order at 7:35PM.

Mr. Moerdler announced the agenda and introduced himself, and only those registered would speak with a time limitation. Said matter was first learned of on 14th of July. LU acting on behalf of board during the summer, committee of the whole. Format of Broadway issue – first board members, agency representatives then questions. Stagg no show despite saying he would be here. Kathleen Bradshaw Stagg counsel here.

TT Committee Agenda Items:

Unanimously Approved:

- Application for unenclosed sidewalk café # 8513-2017 - ASWC – Blackstone Bar & Grill, 3713 Riverdale Avenue.
- St. Jemuel Back to School Rally – Block Party – with full street closure on September 2, 2017, to be held on Webb Avenue between West 197 Street and Reservoir Avenue/2836 Webb Avenue.

Public Safety Agenda items:

Unanimously approved:

NEW Applications Liquor License or Beer/Wine License:

- Skyclub Café, LLC, 5701 Arlington Avenue
- **Tin Brothers, LLC., 5790 Mosholu Avenue (formerly Kelly Ryan's)

RENEWAL Applications Liquor License or Beer/Wine License:

- Metate, 3515 Johnson Avenue
- Beccofino, 5704 Mosholu Avenue
- Bronx Burger House, 5816 Mosholu Avenue
- Sunrise International, LLC d/b/a Kai Fan, 3717 Riverdale Avenue

Two other items are being moved to end of agenda:

1. Department of City Planning Application No. N170329ZAX, N170330ZAX, N170331ZAX, 4490 Fieldston Road (Lot 1) – For the grant of authorizations for modification of topographic features on Tier I sites, for a development on a portion of a zoning lot having a steep slope or steep slope buffer, and for modification of botanic environment and tree preservation and planting requirements to allow the construction of a single-family detached residence located at 4490 Fieldston Road (Block 5808, Lot 1) within the Special Natural Area District (NA-2), within Community District 8, Borough of The Bronx.
2. Department of City Planning Application No. N170332ZAX, N170333ZAX, N170334ZAX, N170335ZAX, 4490 Fieldston Road (Lot 2) – For the grant of authorizations for the development on a Tier II site or portion of a zoning lot having a steep slope or steep slope buffer, medication of botanic environment and tree preservation and planting requirements, modification of grading controls, and modification of requirements for private roads and driveways to allow the construction

of a single-family detached residence located at 4490 Fieldston Road (Block 5808, Lot 2) within the Special Natural Area District (NA-2), within Community District 8, Borough of The Bronx.

Community board leadership was introduced by Mr. Charles Moerdler, LU committee chair.

He introduced elected officials announced and representatives

AGENDA ITEM: Department of Homeless Services - Families with Children Shelter at 5731 Broadway

CB 12 has same issues with DHS and shelter system. According to DHS, Broadway facility will open mid-August 2017 and house 83 families.

Moerdler said two main issues to be discussed: 1) Did Stagg misrepresent? 2) merits of the application.

CB8 had been fearful of bait and switch as had occurred in CB 7 and 12. Stagg had denied he was creating housing for homeless. In a January letter from Stagg section, a 421 A tax exemption application was made. It was said market rate housing was to be constructed. On Jan 31 2017, at the Land Use Committee, Stagg presented the 421A application, again stating use would be market rate. At February 2017 LU meeting, the committee voted to permit after hours work. Stagg continued to insist market rate housing was planned. Board did not issue objection to 421A application. On July 14, board finally notified by DHS that building would be transitional supportive housing for homeless families. Praxis responded to open-ended RFP and was selected and entered into agreement to lease building from Stagg. Praxis has two permanent housing sites in Bronx. According to DHS, BX CB8 has 360 homeless families that originated in the community. They propose 83 families to be located in this building. 30 units at VC Motel will be closed and not repopulated. Were we lied to by Stagg and Carrion? The only reason we did not object to 421A as it was to be market rate.

Moerdler proposed referring matter to DOI for "material misrepresentation of fact made to a city agency" (us). The request approved by board unanimously.

He turned to the merits and substance of the proposal and said DHS would make a presentation. Introduced Assistant Commissioner Borden, who introduced First Deputy Commissioner Bray She described new shelter plan and plan to close 360 cluster sites and commercial hotels. They are taking borough-based approach so people are sheltered in community they come from and kids go to local schools. We need a city-wide solution; every community has to step up. 91% of homeless families headed by single women, 34% are working. They need a path out of homelessness. Have to open high quality shelters. On site social services via Praxis, housing resources, on-site security to be provided, offered to local Bronx families. Commercial space is included and will work with local community.

A dialog ensued between Mr. Moerdler and agency representatives as to the process by which Praxis obtained a contract for emergency, which is what Praxis proposed. Ms. Bray explained the logic behind temporary shelter and there is no minimum and average is one year. DHS is going through a procurement process that includes a public hearing. There is no plan to switch building to permanent housing. Praxis said they would not propose permanent housing. Funding is via a contract with DHS, including city, state and federal funds.

The board raised a variety of questions and comments, some answered by agency representatives:

- Community is moral and cares about , but city should not violate community wishes.
- Putting kids in shelter has an impact on school.
- How do we know 300+ families come from local community?
- Within Tier 2 population, is there a special population to be located here (answer is no).
- Rollout was botched; developer-driven public policy is not good.
- Chain of events is deceptive and unclear.
- Poor job talking to communities, heard nothing between April and July.
- Why do people become homeless – Bray discussed.
- Why not just offer permanent housing? They still need shelter capacity.
- Does not make sense not to use it as permanent housing.

Ms Bray discussed in greater detail the logic behind the program, reducing cluster units which are returned to affordable housing market.

- What is the cost per unit – not public yet.
- Questions about public hearing process – was defined as open RFP that Praxis applied for. Hearing not yet scheduled, prior to contract being registered.
- Stagg lied repeatedly to the CB.
- Did DHD know what Stagg did – Ms. Bray said no.
- Does knowing what Stagg did change their plans? – No.
- Can use for transitional be sunset? Contract is for five years.
- How much does Praxis get paid? Up to \$20,000/person/year.
- Domestic violence victims placed locally? No people will be sheltered who need confidentiality.
- Are fathers involved and teenagers? Yes, some.
- What kind of social services case management, housing specialist, social workers and mental health (psycho-social assessments, partnering with libraries, tutoring).

Elected officials:

- Councilman Cohen: Angry about lack of consultation, process was poor, community needs to be engaged. Children will overcrowd PS 7.
- Assemblyman Dinowitz: How much is Stagg paid per month? Not available yet, at hearing. How much is Stagg getting paid by city compared to if building was a regular rental? Asked Praxis director about his salary – it's public domain. Why so much security? Why is the city doing business with a proven liar?
- Representative of Councilman King, Adam Bermudez: Same problem in east Bronx with same developer.
- Representative of Senator Klein, David Kornbluh: State legislation is required to regulate developers to provide for permanent housing, providing 40 day notice.
- Representative of Congressman Espaillat, Aneiry Batista: Here for you.

Local residents spoke:

- Criticized Stagg Group and its employees.

- Major commercial corridor wrong location.
- Property is a white elephant.
- Intended use of building can't be guaranteed.
- Why not mix permanent and temporary in the building?
- Homeless families need shelter right now and this site will work for them.
- What is average family size: 3 on average.
- Have separate merits from what led up to developer contract with Praxis.
- One speaker said she was ashamed of community and venom expressed.
- Terrified by the crowd's attitude, racist comments in Riverdale Press.

Discussion of 5731 Broadway concluded.

Mr. Moerdler reverted to the discussion to Land Use Issues #1 and #2. He announced that the City Planning Commission passed both items and further discussion is ended.

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 pm.

Submitted by Michael Heller, District Manager