

Housing & Human Service Committee Minutes
Thursday, September 3rd, 2020

Committee Members Present: Osi Kaminer, Ayisha Oglivie, Edda Santiago, Bruce Robertson, Leo Jimenez, Marielle Ali, and Ariel Miranda

Public Members Present: Marshall Vanderpool

Fellow Board Members Present: Sally Fisher, Maria Luna

Agenda

1. Call to Order

2. Introductions

- Ariel: Began discussing what the meetings goals are, gave thanks to the members of the committee, and had everyone introduce themselves, both board members and members from the public
- Community Board members as well as members of the public introduced themselves
- Ariel: Asked Janet Wolkoff to also introduce herself as we know we will be hearing from her later on in the New Business section
- Janet Wolkoff joined in to introduce herself as a President of the Edgcombe Parc Condo Association at 456 West 157th Street, a building with 49 units and 2 commercial spaces within it that have recently had a great deal of renters staying there. From this, Janet went on to say that she particularly came to the meeting to discuss issues she has been having with a current organization, Community Options, Inc. that is renting 2 units and caused a great deal of stress to several of its residents, claiming that the clients its housed in these units are so violent its staff cannot control it.
- A member of the public put forward a question asking about the rezoning in the chat to which Ariel responded saying that if they'd like to raise a topic that to please do in the New Business section

3. Setting Committee Goals

- Ariel: Established wanting to focus some time on creating yearly goals and etch out individual ideas that are particularly of concern to the Committee members. To this, he started off by mentioning that he would like to connect with organizations that work with individuals who are homeless such as homeless shelter providers and Coalition for the Homeless as well as organizations supporting families still being evicted through current loop holes even in the midst of the pandemic.
- Ayisha: Expressed wanting to: (1) establish a systematic means of keeping track of the work being done, (2) focus on follow up with the community board administration ensuring records are maintained appropriately, and (3) pass resolutions that are in regards to holding DHCR accountable, tenant's rights, and addressing immigration policy changes (ex: application fees, particularly those fleeing harm)
- Sally: Stated that she would like to ensure we are following parliamentary procedures
- Osi: Stated she too was concerned about Ayisha's goals and ensuring we have follow up had with the community board admin

- Ayisha: Stated that she is considering speaking with Gale Brewer's office about this matter as well
- Osi: Stated that she wants a resolution on the 100,000 apartments program, assisting families without a home be given a home, and ensuring the homeless shelter system does not continue to serve as a long-term solution. Following this she also noted that the expenses of such a system is unnecessarily more expensive and wasteful than when giving people homes.
- Sally: Stated that she wants to focus on similar initiatives that reform the means to address homelessness, improve the shelter system, address the mental health crisis, and provide supportive services as well as additional services for hotels
- Ariel: Stated that while there's been a sense of tension arising over the past few weeks about the matter of using hotels for alternative shelter sites it has also led to discussions regarding the fair citing of agency facilities, which he thinks ought to be discussed more in depth given the reality that often times these facilities are disproportionately located in lower-income communities and communities of color
- Edda: Wants to support the expansion of the Right to Counsel bill (Int 2050-2020), host an event focused on informing the public of their tenant's rights, hear from the Northern Manhattan Community Land Trust, and support first time low-income homebuyers
- Ayisha: Stated that she would like to support the Homes Guarantee and address long list of individuals waiting on the affordable housing lottery, NYCHA rent overcharges, NYCHA's policies on the the requirement of tenants to move into other units because of changing family sizes, The New School's study on the digital divide created by Census' format and how it's further disadvantaging communities, addressing how institutions such as NY Presbyterian are able to claim affordable housing status through its employees that they also service as tenants, the impact of NY real estate tax programs (credits) have on our budgets, improving services in relation to those fleeing domestic violence, incarceration re-entry, credit for renters programs, working with local government agencies to ensure landlord accountability, building coalition on immigrant's rights organizations to support immigrant populations, following up on the situation with The Armory, inviting DHS to discuss what is happening with individuals and families that are homeless in the community (Ayisha has previously connected with them about this), regulations and changes in the housing code in relation to the amount of electricity being shared by "Daisy Chaining" with extension chords, understanding the impact the \$15 minimum wage has had on people's eligibility for services, Housing Vouchers (CityFEPS and SOTA Voucher controversy), SNAP, and Land trusts
- Leo: Requested that Ayisha shares her document with the list of priorities
- Maria Luna: Shared that she'd like to discuss 857 West Riverside to which Ariel said this is being given time towards the end
- Sally: State that she would like to get both the Health and Housing Committees together for a meeting this year and at some point discuss how air conditioning units are essential for housing vulnerable populations such as the elderly (particularly when looking at Isabella
- Ariel: Said he agrees and wants to hear from healthcare professionals as well
- Edda: Stated she'd like to discuss how mixed messaging from the CDC is complicating matters for everyone's housing condition, especially because of the eviction moratorium
 - Language from CDC can be found here: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2020-19654.pdf>
- Sally: Stated that CD12 is #4 for communities with most essential workers according to Comptroller Stringer's report and therefore causes further issues for us as a result of the economic impact COVID is having on our neighbors
- Ariel: Asked to please be sent the link

- Natalie: Stated that we have a previous resolution on the Right to Counsel that was passed in April of 2016 (which should therefore be reviewed before passing another resolution on the newest bill just mentioned) and that the BP's office currently has a housing and environmental policy analyst named Holly Chiu who Natalie is happy to connect us with
- Ayisha: Stated there is concerns over oil burning and its environmental impact on the community in our housing
- Cynthia Auburn (Public): Stated they are concerned with high rise buildings coming up in the neighborhood, the potential for increasing harassment, and the rise of noise complaints

4. FY 2021 Items

- Ariel: Introduced discussion on budgeting process and explained the role that Community boards have yearly with regards to it before providing an example of the work that had been done in a previous year for this.
 - Note: An excel sheet with CB12M's FY2020 Capital and Expense priority items were sent along with links to the City Charter's sections focusing on the budget process to Committee members prior to this meeting
- Ariel: Then explained the process that has been implemented previously so to review prior items and take suggestions for new items, voting as a committee to have these items added on to the new list before then individually ranking each committee's items, having them returned to the committee chair, and shared with the entire board as a whole
- Ayisha: Offered to assist in sharing her screen so as to review the FY2020
- Ariel: Offered to open up the discussion to have new items added on to our list
- Ayisha: Stated (1) a previous item was input by Richard Lewis who had been advocating to get funding appropriated to renovate 2 buildings in the neighborhood, (2) because it took so long to get done it showed a lack of follow up had by the board, (3) previously we had reviewed the Statement of District Needs as well as budget register to see what the responses were for the entire boards' items, and (4) the Chair of the Committee ought to have these items ready for review
- Ariel: Stated that he'd be happy to review the responses to budget items but we are not required to do so at this time and had only meant to ask members if they have new ideas just for the time being to consider
- Sally: Stated that she wanted to know if when agencies get back to us do we ever typically respond to them or not, note that usually there are several items she knows will not get funded and wonders if perhaps the language may have been unclear previously, and asked that folks look online for the responses when they have time
- Ayisha: Stated that previously the office took too long to inform the board and so it missed out on being able to respond back to agencies.
- Ariel: Stated he wanted to pull up the documents to look at quickly and could not find it on our CB12 website so he would check in with the office about where those might be.
- Sally: Stated that we can also pull it on up on the City Planning Commission's website and that Natalie had mentioned it
- Marielle: Stated that she would like to take the time to review the information before contributing any further to the conversation
- Ayisha: Stated that she would like us to look over the FY2020 Preliminary Budget Register
- Bruce: Asked if Naysha had still intended to go before the entire board with her previous presentation made before the board went on break

- Ariel: Stated that he would have to check in with her given that she had wanted to work with the Task Force headed by fellow board member Richard Allman.

5. New Business

- Janet: Going back to her original introduction, she stated that she would like the Community Board to reconsider the resolution it passed 6 years ago approving Community Options to have two units in her building. Since then, her building has had 6 years of documented experiences showing why they are not a good organization wants to bring forward a resolution that addresses the concerns of individuals with mental health needs living in her building
- Sally: Stated that she's understood the concern of not having "Wraparound services" for those that need it but also would like to raise that the committee should be focusing on designating a representative for the Inwood Task Force
- Ayisha: Asked if Janet has engaged the office of OPWDD, stated that she had been on the committee when they had passed the resolution as was mentioned previously, and that she understands why this is an issue for the community board whereas it pertains to the oversight of the program, but that this is typically under the direct purview of OPWDD for compliance
- Janet: Stated that she is aware, the association has an attorney who has been in contact with OPWDD, found out that 6 years ago in 2014 people from the public in CB11 organized to get Community Options to agree to only operate 1 unit in their building instead of the originally intended 2, doesn't feel this is the right space for such individuals, the organization is currently on "early warning alert" for probation at the moment, and the organization has not been responsive
- Ayisha: Suggested that we speak with OPWDD to better understand how they have been responding to issues when they arise and explain how they have been working to service clients given what the board's limited purview in the matter is.
- Bruce: Asked if the organization is considered the owners of the condos to which Janet stated they are, then asked if they have enforced the house rules to which Janet stated they have and has since led to \$30,000 in fines, and then advocated for speaking with an attorney about evicting Community Options who are technically owners.
- Ariel: Raised that while this is an issue of concern it seems to be that this has been an internal dispute between homeowners rather than that which is a policy matter. However, he can see that this is related to our oversight responsibility of organizations using public funding and that have contracts because they are potentially not fulfilling the work they were contracted to do.
- Ayisha: Stated that the board does work beyond policy, we can be more than that, and we can advocate on issues. In this matter, it can be advocacy regarding the servicing of people with mental health and disabilities.
- Janet: Stated that a responsibility of Community Boards is to measure "Saturation", there is a historical background for it, and that she would be happy to provide further information about the situation referencing damages, costs, and share names.
- Edda: Stated that she is wondering why this is an issue being brought to us given that it seems to be a matter of litigation that should follow a dispute over damages and breach of contracts, which can be litigated in court
- Janet: Stated that the matter of money isn't of concern and that what they really want is for Community Options to not be operating in their building because it is untenable. The issue is a hot button topic that she knows can upset judges when they hear of mentally distressed individuals and often leaves them the organization paying the fines and then everyone returns to court a month later. Lastly, Janet stated that she would like us to consider "giving them

leverage” because if they do have to go to court they would say they presented this information to the board and having the organization in their building has had a negative impact on the community in several ways

- Bruce: Asked if there are more buildings throughout the district where Community Options has more units to which Janet said no
- Ayisha: Stated that she did research on Community Options finding that they sought to have 2 units bought on 138th before losing the right to buy them and saw the Community Board passed a resolution previously calling upon Services for the Underserved to address issues in an apartment and correct to code before it reminds them that this will be considered whenever any other application is submitted for review by the Community Board. Afterwards, she asked that the association shares what OPWDD and Community Options has given them in response to these issues the past few years.
- Janet: Asked who she should send these items to and Ariel shared his email address with her
- Ariel: Stated he would like to work on a resolution addressing the concerns of the organization, potentially even that of the staff members not fulfilling the roles required of them.
- Janet: Stated she feels there is concern over the staff members’ training and that it could have very well led to them being placed on early alert
- Ariel: Asked a member of the public named Ophelia who had requested time to speak about an application to rezone her building to introduce herself, However, it turned out she was not present and Bruce stated she attended the land use meeting instead
- Ayisha: Raised learning more about the Certificate of No Harassment given the situation that arose at the building at 187th street and expressed concern about this before mentioning we should follow up on it as well

6. Old Business

- Marshall: Stated that Chairman Russell of NYCHA has put forward a proposal to raise NYCHA’s funding stream by creating a Public Benefit Trust, is concerned about this being done without tenant input, wants HUD regulations to be incorporated into the process and to maintain protections for his fellow NYCHA residents, and believes that some apartments are being sold to the private market in exchange for renovation under the Public Benefit Trust. Does not have further information at this time but is attending a town hall being put on to inform NYCHA’s residents further on the matter soon.
- Ariel: Stated that Steve Simon has reached out about this already and as he understands this should serve to be as part of what is called the RAD program, whereby Housing authorities are said to be entering into agreements with the private sector so as to maintain or renovate the buildings
- Bruce: Asked if Marshall knew what has been happening with the ongoing conversations in the private sector
- Marshall: Stated that there is supposed to be some sort of voucher being given to these individuals so as to rehabilitate them but is not sure of anything else at this time
- Bruce: Asked if Marshall has contacted elected officials
- Marshall: Stated he has but will need to speak further with elected after attending the town hall.
- Ariel: Suggested a close to the meeting
- Ayisha: Seconded the closing of the meeting