

Housing and Human Services Committee Meeting Minutes Thursday, October 1st, 2020 7:00 pm

Committee Members Present: Ariel Miranda (Chair), Marielle Ali, Edda Santiago, Osi Kaminer, Bruce Robertson, Ayisha Ogilvie, and Leo Jimenez

Public Members Present: Marshall Vanderpool, Danni Luo, Janet (last name not provided), and William Beltran

Fellow Board Members Present:

Agenda

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 pm.

2. Introductions

AM (Chair) provided a brief overview of the process explaining that every year Community Boards provide the City of New York with budget items that are of interest to the community. Last year, the committee submitted six capital items.

3. Review FY 2021 District of Needs Statement

AM (Chair) spoke about the Statement of Community District Needs and the Community Board's budget requests as part of the overall city's budget process. Both documents are used to consult with city agencies throughout the budgeting cycle. Key stakeholders, including elected officials, use these documents to make decisions on a broad range of local planning and budget priorities. He then spoke about the community profile and reminded board members that the demographics and statistics were based off the 2010 Census but in some instances, there may be information from the American Community Survey.

Statistics from community profile:

- 45% of households in CB 12M reported they were spending 35% or more of their income on rent. In Manhattan, the figure was 37%. Across New York City, it was 45%.
- In CB 12M, 37% of residents five years or older have limited English proficiency. This is double the rate in Manhattan and higher than New York City's rate of 23%.
- Access to parks in CB 12M is listed as accessible with 100% of residents living within walking distance to a park.
- There are 9.3 major felonies reported per thousand residents or per capita in 2017 in CB 12M.

- In CB 12M, 33% of residents 25 years or older have already earned a bachelor's degree or higher. In comparison to Manhattan, this figure is approximately half of the stated 61% across the borough. In New York City, it is 37%.
- CB 12M had a 6.8% unemployment rate. In Manhattan, This is lower at 4.2% Manhattan 4.9% for New York City.
- The New York City poverty. Poverty measure shows that within CB 12 you have 20% of residents having incomes below. NYC poverty threshold. New York State has a different poverty threshold. And yet, Manhattan was 14% across New York City. This is 20%

AM (Chair) highlighted the three top issues in the Overview Statement of Committee District Needs— affordable housing, land use trends, and schools. He also highlighted aspects of the report.

On affordable housing, CB 12M received complaints from residents and small businesses, indicating that their rents are too high and they let their landlords are harassing them in multiple ways. CB 12 Manhattan recommend the city to increase funding for mandatory right to counsel for anyone who is rent burdened or pays 50% of their income in rent. CB 12M also requested increased funding for legal representation and for more permanent long-term affordable housing construction. **It is also requesting to build a large number of apartments or housing units with immediate priority given to nonprofit organizations and community land trust their partner with nonprofit developers. The emphasis should be given to 100% affordable housing based on the communities.**

Our district is facing a rezoning proposal made by the city of New York and a rezoning application for the inward section of the district. That has been submitted to the department city planning CB 12 of Manhattan request of the Departments of the City Planning should dedicate additional training staff to work with CB 12 M and local residents to formulate a zoning plan for Washington Heights and Inwood and to provide technical assistance, evaluate the Inwood rezoning proposal, including the draft and final environmental impact statement.

OK raised that the CB 12M Land Use Committee usually requests a staff person from the Manhattan Borough President's Office to support the CB12 M staff on zoning issues. **OK** recommended checking with other committees to ensure there is no duplication. **AM (Chair)** confirmed.

AO shared that at the public budget meeting duplicate budget items would be combined.

OK asked for an update on line item 1 of the capital expense (provide funding to update to 2110 Amsterdam and 210 Arden Avenue). **OK** understood that both buildings were updated and designated as affordable housing.

AO responded that work has started on both buildings but funding has not been sufficient. The item has been kept as an expense due to insufficient funding. **AO** recommended talking to **Martin Collins** for an update.

AM (Chair) – On human services, the committee has put forward items related to mental health services, including crisis intervention and acute care for persons with severe mental illness. The budget items were picked up by the CB 12M Health and Environment Committee. It is also important for CB 12 M to increase services to prevent and treat chronic diseases and to provide funding for public schools to have health clinics. Noise levels are a considerable concern in the community. For this reason, we request an increase of staff that conduct regular noise enforcement air quality monitoring and water quality testing in our communities. There is considerable overlap between the Housing and Human Services Committee and the Health and Environment Committee. We have a homeless shelter in our district and need a funding for more services. It is still unresolved. **AM (Chair)** agreed to update the text to include more information about the services offered to homeless individuals.

4. Review FY 2021 Adopted Budget Register

AM (Chair) shared his screen to show the committee’s FY 2021 adopted budget register and explained the budget item ranking process.

AM (Chair) asked about why only one building was listed on line item 1 (provide funding to update to 2110 Amsterdam) rather than both 2110 Amsterdam and 210 Arden Avenue.

BR and **AM (Chair)** agreed to follow up with Martin Collins. Later in the meeting, **BR** confirmed a response from Martin that both buildings, 2110 Amsterdam Avenue and 210 Arden Avenue, were fully funded. The committee agreed to remove the budget item from the list.

AM (Chair) discussed line item 1 (permanent long-term housing and extending the right to counsel on housing matters) and how it related to City Council Bill Intro 2050. If approved, the committee’s item would provide legal representation in the community more quickly than the bill. It also covers individuals that fall outside the bill’s income threshold.

AM (Chair) discussed Intro 2050, and the cap of who can receive legal services. He stated it should stay at roughly what it was last time, which was 200% of the federal poverty threshold. **AM** acknowledged previous concerns raised by committee members regarding the \$15 minimum wage and how it impacts family’s ability to fall into that 200% cap.

ES shared that the term “covered person” pertains to zip codes. During pandemic, all zip codes are covered. It starts with brief legal advice and then full legal representation based on income eligibility. **ES** noted that the committee was in of increasing the threshold to allow more individuals to receive full legal representation. Hence the request to increase funding to ensure community members have access to full legal representation.

AM (Chair) listed the different line items under capital expenses.

- permanent long-term affordable housing construction building a higher number 100% affordable units with immediate priority already given to nonprofit organizations and community land trust slash land banks
- funding for supportive housing construction for LGBTQ
- provide funding to construct affordable, accessible housing for seniors

- an AEP and PPP program for preservation and rehabilitation of distressed buildings in CD 12
- provide more housing for at risk and transitioning individuals.

After reading the list of items, **AM (Chair)** opened the floor to accept new line items.

AO suggested a line item to provide internet access in publicly available spaces, including HRA service centers.

The Committee accepted the line item.

MA asked a question to clarify if the term “at risk” includes homeless populations or just those on the verge of becoming homeless. **AM (Chair)** confirmed at risk includes both homeless and those that may become homeless.

AO raised a concern about blighted buildings and outdated electrical systems creating apartments at risk for fires. **AO** went on to state that current laws state landlords are not required to upgrade outlets or implement systems that make the fireproof if the buildings are older than a certain date. **AO** suggested adding a line item to provide funding for a program to address and update electrical systems.

AM (Chair) suggested it should be listed as an expense rather than a capital.

BR suggested a line item to provide funding for inspectors to inspect buildings and make sure they are up to code.

AM (Chair) shared that both **BR** and **AO**'s requests could fall into expense item line 5 - Increase funding for more HPD Housing Code. **AM (Chair)** added DOB Building Code Inspectors to line item 5.

MA raised a line item to create a fund to create a program or awareness event on informing tenants of what are housing code violations.

AM (Chair) talked about the NYC's Public Engagement Unit and their work on informing tenants and case managing housing code violations. **AM (Chair)** referenced line item 2 – (increase Tenant Support Specialists specific to CB12 M and fund initiatives to inform and educate tenants of their rights)

MA agreed with the line item.

5. Establish HHS Committee Capital & Expense Items & Plans for submission of rankings

AM (Chair) agreed to keep the deadline for committee responses open to await a response on process timeline from CB12 M Staff.

6. New Business

AM (Chair) talked about the extension of moratorium until new year for most people. **AM (Chair)** suggested having a discussion at a later date regarding the loopholes landlords use.

AM (Chair) talked about an upcoming online town hall event in conjunction with the Youth and Education Committee of CB 12M. The event would potentially include the Department of Youth and Community Development and partner organizations such as Coalition for the Homeless, Help USA, and Legal Aid Society (Homeless Project).

ES made a point of clarification on moratorium. **ES** shared that the NY Governor extended the Tenant Safe Harbor Act. The Act protects tenants who have been financially impacted by COVID-19, but it has to be raised as an affirmative defense. For tenants this means that if they are already in a proceeding, they must raise it. They have to demonstrate that they qualify. It is ultimately up to judicial discretion. If a tenant can demonstrate they've been impacted by COVID-19, then the legal defense is available. The tenant is protected against eviction until the end of the year. The second point about the Act is that while it protects you from being evicted, it does not take away your obligation to pay rent. The landlord can still obtain a money judgment. A money judgement could impact your credit score and your ability to obtain other housing. Tenants are welcome to call 311 and ask for the Housing Hotline.

BR mentioned last year's rent law stating that landlords cannot blacklist a tenant

ES agreed that the law is still in place but also noted that a money judgement can impact an individual's credit score.

7. Old Business

AO asked about the committee's budget request is in relation to the community land trust. **AO** encouraged the committee to advocate on behalf the resolution.

AM (Chair) asked what efforts may be needed to gain local support.

AO responded that members of our community have the HPV program for the community land trust. The community went through a process of creating the land trust. There is buy-in. There needs to be continue advocacy in support of the trust as CB 12 M voted on it. **AO** suggested the CB 12M District Office implement a tracking system to better keep track of the status of passed resolutions and next steps.

AM (Chair) suggested inviting council members to ask for more information on the community land trust.

AM (Chair) called the meeting to close at 8:45 pm. It was seconded by **BR**.