

## LAND USE COMMITTEE - MEETING MINUTES

April 2, 2014

### Committee Members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair  
Anita Barberis, Asst. Chair  
James Berlin  
Dulce Bueno  
Tamara Rivera  
Steve Simon  
Jason Miller

### Committee Members Absent

Isaiah Bing

### Board Members Present

George Fernandez

### Public Member Present

Vivian Ducat

### Public Member Absent

Staff: Debra Blow

**Guests:** Carol Ward, Evelyn Neal, Jim Hawkins, Adrian Allen, Jamie Venise, James Czajka, Cody Upton, William McNeal

1. The Meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM. Land Use Committee (“Land Use” or the “Committee”) Chair Wayne Benjamin began the meeting by welcoming committee members and guests.
2. James Czajka of JVC architects on behalf of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (the “Academy”) made a presentation to the Committee concerning the Academy’s Terrace Accessibility project (the “Project”). Since the Academy is located in an historic district, i.e.: the Audubon Terrace Historic District, the Project must be approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (“LPC”). Mr. Czajka provided an overview of current site conditions, focusing in particular on the Academy’s North and South Buildings located between West 155<sup>th</sup> Street and West 156<sup>th</sup> Street between Broadway and Riverside Drive. Neither building has an accessible entrance at the terrace/main level. The South Building has an accessible entrance on West 155<sup>th</sup> Street and an elevator that provides an accessible means to reach the main/gallery floor. The North building does not have an accessible entrance and there is no accessible means of traveling between the North and South buildings. The Project involves retaining the existing granite steps at the terrace entrance to the north and South buildings but moving them forward to allow new granite ramps and landings to be inserted in order to make the entrances accessible / ADA-compliant. The Project also involves reinstalling original lamp posts at the terrace entrances to the North and South buildings and new bronze handrails along the new ramps and relocated granite stairs.

After further discussion a motion was made and seconded to enthusiastically support the American Academy of Arts and Letters Terrace Accessibility Project

**The motion passed based on the following votes.**

	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstaining</u>
Committee Members:	7	0	0
Board Members:	0	0	0
Members of the Public:	0	0	0

3. In consideration of the members of the public in attendance to further discuss the proposed renovations at 434 West 162<sup>nd</sup> Street, Mr. Benjamin recommended reversing the order of the agenda to commence the discussions of the proposed renovations before discussion the proposed new local law regarding after-hours construction work.

Mr. Benjamin informed the Committee that at the March 25<sup>th</sup> LPC the Commissioners discussed the proposed project, which consists of changes to the fenestration rear façade’s garden level, a new roof deck and a new bulkhead (the “Renovations”). He stated that he reviewed the on-line video of the LPC meeting; Committee members also acknowledged reviewing the video. Based on the review of the video he noted that members of the public and LPC Commissioners expressed concern with the visibility of the proposed bulkhead and that LPC agreed to keep the record open for 30 days to allow for more public comment. Chair Benjamin reviewed some key points made at the LPC meeting including: the bulkhead is bigger than it needs to be; its design is not appropriate; it is extremely visible; design options could be explored to make the bulkhead smaller and less visible, the bulkhead is visible from the Morris Jumel Mansion, which is a historic house. Members of the public present at the Land Use meeting shared similar concerns with the Committee.

Committee member Jim Berlin stated that at the March meeting the Committee only got one side of the story and he is no longer in favor of the bulkhead. Chair Benjamin reiterated that the resolution passed by Land Used in March and adopted by the Executive Committee on behalf of the Board recommended that LPC the require outreach to neighbors before it approved the Renovations.

After further discussion a motion was made supporting the roof deck and fenestration, but not supporting the bulkhead as it is currently designed and recommending that design options be explored to lower its height so that it is not visible.

**The motion passed based on the following votes.**

	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstaining</u>
Committee Members:	8	0	0
Board Members:	0	0	0
Members of the Public:	5	0	0

4. The Committee discussed a new local law (Int. 17-2014) to amend the City’s Administrative Code as it pertains to the Department of Building’s permit and approval process for after-hours construction work. The Manhattan Borough Board discussed the local law and a draft resolution supporting it at its March meeting. Each Manhattan community board has been asked to consider supporting the resolution. The Committee discussed the local law and proposed resolution, was generally supportive of each but had several questions it needed addressed. Therefore discussion of the matter was table until further information and clarification could be obtained. The Committee anticipated discussing the matter at its April meeting unless it is time sensitive in which case it will be referred to the Executive Committee along with a list of the Committee’s questions.

5. After further discussion the Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Jason Miller and Wayne Benjamin