

LAND USE COMMITTEE - MEETING MINUTES

May 7, 2014

Committee Members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair
Anita Barberis, Asst. Chair
Tamara Rivera
Steve Simon
Jason Miller

Committee Members Absent

Isaiah Bing

Board Members Present

Arlene Schulman
Osi Kaminer

Public Member Present

Vivian Ducat

Public Member Absent

Staff: Debra Blow

Guests: Brian Baldor, Kaja Kuhl, Mary Anderson, Rita Gorman, Rachel Naylor, Bryan Gerace, Barbara Frazier

1. The Meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM. Land Use Committee (“Land Use” or the “Committee”) Chair Wayne Benjamin began the meeting by welcoming committee members and guests. He stated that two members of the Committee, Jim Berlin and Dulce Bueno, were not reappointed to the community board and that they will be missed. He provided an update on the status of the application before the Landmarks Preservation Commission (“LPC”) concerning 434 West 162nd Street noting that the owners have advised that they no longer intend to move forward with the proposed bulkhead, which was the cause of concern to neighbors and LPC commissioners. He also reviewed the Executive Summary (the “Summary”) from Housing New York: A Five Borough, Ten- Year Plan, noting that the plan created by the de Blasio administration contains a number of goals and objectives that the Committee and Manhattan Community Board 12 (“CB12-M”) have supported in the past and recommended that the Committee review the Summary and consider passing a resolution supporting it at the June Land Use meeting
2. Kaja Kuhl and Brian Balder of Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (“GSAPP”) met with the Committee to discuss GSAPP’ Five-Borough Urban Design Studio and the possibility of CB12-M through Land Use working with it as a community partner. Wayne noted that Kaja formerly work with the Department of City Planning (“DCP”) and previously worked with Land Use on the Sherman Creek Study. Kaja stated that the studio is a three-semester program that has 50 students from all over the world, It o will begin this summer. In order to ground the studio work in the realities of New York City’s communities, community partners are sought who can help the students to understand local issues and community dynamics and in turn can benefit from the work undertaken by the studio. Many potential projects were discussed such as continued work on contextual zoning, infill development, affordable housing proto-types, and decking over the 207th Street train yard to create a site for new mixed-use development. It was agreed that the Committee would give further consideration to the potential projects and provide Kaja with feed-back and that Kaja would review the potential projects with her students and advise the Committee of which they are interested in pursuing.
3. Land Use member Steve Simon advised the Committee that the owner of the gas station site located at Amsterdam Avenue between West 180th and 181st Streets advised the Health and Environment Committee that it has submitted an application to have the site included in the City’s

Brownfield Clean-up Program, is planning to redevelop the site as a mixed-use (commercial and retail) project and anticipates meeting with Land Use once plans are more developed. Wayne stated that the site is one of the C8-3 sites that CB12-M has asked DCP to rezone and that he and Ebenezer met with the owner about a year ago.

4. Committee member Steve Simon also inquired about the status of SoBro's BSA application for its Fort George Hill project. Wayne stated that he routinely asks Ebenezer to follow up with BSA on this matter and that as of early-April was advised that BSA has not taken any action on the application. Community Resident Barbara Frazier brought to the attention of the Committee that she attended a public hearing held by BSA on May 6, 2014 at which SoBro's application was considered. She stated that she found out about the hearing at the last minute and alerted some of her neighbors. She further stated that at the hearing the resolution passed by CB12-M in opposition to the project was not discussed or acknowledged and that the representatives of SoBro down-played the concerns raised by CB12-M, indicating that Land Use did not really understand the project and that technical difficulties with their laptop and PowerPoint projector at CB12-M's December 2013 General Meeting prevented them from adequately presenting the project. Ms. Frazier further stated that she provided testimony at the hearing against the project and presented BSA with a notarized petition signed by 64 local residents objecting the project's floor area, foot print, maximum base height, maximum building height and to local street parking issues that will exacerbated by the project. She advised the Committee that BSA did not vote on the application, left the record open until June 10th for further comments and consider the application again at its June 17th public hearing. Wayne thanked Ms. Frazier for bringing this important information to the Committee's attention and said he would follow up with the District Manager to find out why the Committee was made aware of the BSA May 6th hearing and to clarify the extent of communication with BSA since early-April and with the Chair of CB12-M to re-state to BSA the objections outlined in the resolution passed in December 2013 and to express our objection to not being informed about the May 6th hearing at which the SoBro application was considered. He also stated that Land Use met with SoBro many times over five or more years to discuss its proposed Fort George Hill project and said that he would suggest to the Chair and District Manager that CB12-M that the resolution passed in December 2013 concerning SoBro's BSA application be forwarded to Borough President Gail Brewer's Land Use /Planning Director.
5. After further discussion the Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Wayne Benjamin