

**Community Board 12, Manhattan  
General Meeting Minutes – December 16, 2003**

**Members Present:**

Mason Almeida	Walther G. Delgado
Jacqueline Aristy	Sybil R. Dodson
Anita Barberis	Rafael Escano
Rafael Beaumont	Luis Facundo
Wayne Benjamin	Peter Ferrara
Aidee Camacho	Beatrice Hall
Kotie Cannon	Joyce F. Holland
Emila G. Cardona	Mark Levine
Martin Collins	Jose Lopez
Mireya Cruz	Elizabeth Lorris Ritter

Maria Luna
Jay D. Mazur
Renato Mena
Helen Morik
Julio Peguero
Zead Ramadan
Barbara Smith Ramos
Julio Rodriguez
Nelson Rojas
Rose M. Santo

Cleofis C. Sarete
Steve Simon
Dago Suarez
Bienvenido Toribio
Gloria Vanterpool
Milagros Vicente
Homer Young-Kennedy, III

**Members Excused:**

James Berlin
Nelson Castro
Leslie Foster
Glenda Swanson-Massa
Kirk Miller
Dr. Pamela Palanque North
Socrates S. Solano
Sandra Wachspress
Msgr. Gerald Walsh
Elouise Whitehurst

**Opening Remarks:** no resolution on Audubon IV, this will be considered at a special meeting in January.

**Call to order:** at 7:30pm, with attainment of quorum. (Meeting originally called for 7pm.)

**Chair's Report: Zead Ramadan**

- Tragic day in our community due to four-alarm fire in Inwood, and death of fireman Thomas Brick Ladder of 36/ Engine 45 on Vermilyea Ave. Fireman Brick leaves behind a wife and two young children. Fire now under control; businesses being served by NYC Department of Business Services; Red Cross helping displaced residents. 1/9 train services should be restored soon.
- Press conference earlier this evening re: MTA elevator service cutback. In the absence of elevator operators, this could cause chaos. Also honored elevator operator Cleveland Manley, assisted a stabbing victim 12/15: called NYPD and ambulance, saving his life.
- Meeting this morning of Manhattan Borough President's Task Force regarding West 181 Street traffic problem. Six bus lines coming over at a rate of one per minute are clogging our streets. Consultant proposed various signage but inexplicably did not consider a shuttle on the Bronx side at University Avenue, where there are eight lanes for traffic. Such a solution has worked well on the Williamsburg Bridge to relieve traffic on Delancey Street. The Traffic and Transportation Committee has visited this site, but the MTA will not consider. There was a brief discussion of this issue with questions regarding possible impact on local businesses. We also need enforcement and traffic cops. GWB has as much traffic as Lincoln and Holland tunnels combined; they have traffic cops, but GWB does not. In a tragic irony of timing, an elderly pedestrian was struck and killed earlier today by a tractor-trailer at 179<sup>th</sup> & B'way.
- On a more positive, less somber note, thanks to Ethel Sheffer for her efforts and time of her students in studying land use along Amsterdam Ave.
- Holiday party yesterday was a fun event with good food. Nice to see enjoyable and social event at the community board.

**Motion to adopt agenda** by Wayne Benjamin; seconded by Sybil Dodson. Amended to remove resolution regarding Audubon IV; no objection.

**Motion to approve November minutes** by Maria Luna; seconded by Martin Collins; no objection. **Motion to approve November minutes** by Benny Toribio; seconded by Maria Luna; no objection.

**Report on Audubon IV – ULURP** public hearing last Wednesday, December 10, 2003. Many concerns about health, property, economic impact, construction, as well as the extent to which Columbia University is honoring prior commitments and covenants. Columbia University made some attempts to respond, but has not adequately addressed these concerns or those raised by CB12 Land Use Committee at its 12/3/03 meeting. We must respond to the ULURP by 1/12/04, so we will have special general meeting some time in early January pending results of ongoing negotiations. A discussion followed regarding scheduling requirements and limitations.

**District Manager's Report: Gregoria Feliciano**

- Gave details on fire this afternoon – mattress factory at 205<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Red Cross is on site and registered 61 people – 32 adults and 29 children. Expect more; ready to provide basic emergency services (food, clothing, temporary housing, prescriptions). Fire Department has not cleared residential buildings for re-entry.
- Update regarding 187<sup>th</sup> Street step-street. Department of Sanitation will check cleanliness and clean as needed. Department of Transportation has checked lights, which comply with federal standards.
- Met with Dean McCann of the Mayor's Office of Film, Theater, and Broadcasting and formed list of hot spots. He will begin attending the District Cabinet meetings, but noted that Community Board 12 has the least film activity in the borough.
- Discussed crime in Park Terrace West & Isham Park area. 34<sup>th</sup> Precinct deployed foot patrol. Asked DOT to assess lighting and asked Department of Parks & Recreation to prune trees blocking lights.
- Increase in auto theft, especially older Dodge and Plymouth mini-vans. Precincts have vehicle identification number registration programs.
- Mayor's free graffiti removal program is dormant for winter; will resume in Spring. Forms in CB12 office. Landlord or superintendent can authorize.
- Taxi Limousine Commission enforcement of summonses on street hails: many liveries called on the phone but get expensive summonses anyway.
- Crime statistics are good, but quality-of-life complaints are still a problem; chief complaints are noise, rats, and idling buses.
- Thank you for your well wishes during my illness. Happy Holidays

Sybil Dodson thanked Ms. Feliciano and the Parks Borough Commissioner, Bill Castro, for rapid response to the concerns of Park Terrace East/West.

Mason Almeida: Is graffiti removal program available for commercial property? A: I believe not; will confirm

Maria Luna asked a question regarding bullhorns and loudspeakers in commercial areas; DM will follow-up.

Homer Young Kennedy III: Thanks for efforts regarding Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting. Nothing concrete, but good opening dialogue.

**Public Session**

Maria Sachs, Stephanie Low, Lois A. Jordan – Howard Dean's Presidential Campaign, Dean for America: Came because Community Boards represent shining example of activism. Unhappy with direction of politics in this country; Dean's campaign represents grassroots involvement in politics at the national level, which might appeal to the Board as grassroots activists at the local level. Spoke in favor of his candidacy.

Ricardo Ureña, community resident: Spoke against Columbia University and Presbyterian Hospital's "aggressive expansion" into the neighborhood, characterizing them as "big monsters", listed a number of general complaints relating to housing, employment, construction and services. Urged the Board not to support Audubon IV project.

Hector Geraldo, community resident: echoed Mr. Ureña's comments opposing Audubon IV project.

John Horstmann, community resident: Lives in brownstone on West 165<sup>th</sup> Street, across the street from the proposed Audubon IV project. Block is not wide and constantly in use by FDNY. Is concerned about traffic and height of the building. Should be low-rise density. Urged Board to oppose.

Marie Powell, community resident: Also lives across the street and also is opposed. Thanked CB12 for recent public meeting. Raised similar complaints regarding building height, zoning, etc. Is not clear about what the community is asked to approve. Has been doing extensive outreach to local business, to familiarize them with project.

Chair noted that a lot more detail will be available at the January Special General Meeting, based on ongoing negotiations. Clarified approval process.

Laura Peoples, community resident: Voiced concerns regarding health impact of construction. "Science and research should not be divorced from responsibility." Is concerned about environmental impact not just on residents across the street but the effect on residents from Harlem to Inwood. Who will be the watchdog?

Dale Powell, community resident: Echoed previous speaker, specifically regarding parking and possible effect of vibrations from construction.

There was a lengthy discussion of scheduling of special board meeting, the upshot of which is reflected in the January calendar.

Felix Morales, Ft. Washington Library: Gave schedules and registration details for ESL classes at Fort Washington Branch Library.

Dr. Gregory Smith, Prince Hall Mason Lodge: Currently located at 450 West 155<sup>th</sup> Street. Has been there for 59 years. Offers day care, senior facility, housing, soup kitchen and other services. Prince Hall founded the first black mason society in 1775, which now has 10,000 members nationally. Would like to add name to West 155<sup>th</sup> Street between St. Nicholas & Amsterdam: "Prince Hall Plaza". Gave a brief history of freemasonry, naming various prominent historical and civic figures (including Crispus Attucks) who are (or were) Prince Hall Masons.

Dago Suarez: Do kids attending your camp come from the community? A: They come from Washington Heights, Inwood and Harlem.

Aidee Camacho invited Dr. Smith to attend Jan 5<sup>th</sup> Traffic & Transportation Committee meeting, which he agreed to do. She noted that CB9 had not given a letter of support; Dr. Smith said that they have since received one from CB9.

Sybil Dodson: move the agenda.

#### **Elected Officials' Reports:**

Councilman Robert Jackson gave wrap-up of legislative session over last two years and is very proud of the Council's performance: a lead paint bill, the strongest in the country, passed earlier this week; thanks to Stanley Michels who took the lead on this issue for years. Also, the Council passed a living wage bill; displaced workers bill; Intro 38A – access to benefits bill; "no discrimination" bill, offering protection for sexual orientation; 18.5% (not 25%) property tax increase.

Councilman Miguel Martinez: Echoed Councilman Jackson's sense of accomplishment in this legislative session. Noted that the Department of Education's capital plan totally leaves Washington Heights & Inwood out, except for Bishop DuBois site, which was already funded in 2002; all the Mayor did was fast-track a project already in the pipeline. We are the most overcrowded district, and we got no new space. Regarding Audubon IV ULURP – thanks to Community Board 12 for leadership role on this, we have no more land and the only way to go is up, but we need to make sure that all commitments are met. 181<sup>st</sup> Street traffic congestion – the faster we move on this the faster we get results. Regarding today's fire, he has asked for an investigation as to whether this was an illegal store facility.

Sybil Dodson: Noted that fire marshals were removed from this community, this is a public safety problem.

Question from public: What is happening regarding illegal business conversions and zoning issues? A: Report to the board and to 311; many city agencies are involved in monitoring this.

Carlos Rodriguez for the Manhattan Borough President: Condolences to Ladder 36 for the loss of Fireman Brick. MBPO is conducting an investigation of the fire and his death. Spoke about the 181<sup>st</sup> Street traffic meeting and commitment; thanks to Helen Morik for facility space on 181<sup>st</sup> Street. Collected 2000 signatures on petition from students and their families and friends; Mayor still has not offered an acceptable site alternative for Luperón High School.

#### **Committee Reports:**

**Committee for the Aging – 01/13/04:** Karen Burnham, Director, Project Nomme & TSS, re: Needs of the marginally middle-class elderly and teenagers serving seniors; Bess Finkel, Representative from AARP, re: update of services; Maria Ortiz-Quezada, re: Medicare/Medicaid services for the elderly.

**Economic Development Committee – 01/08/04:** Review license applications; informational meeting 1/13/04 @ 6p re: next Uptown Arts Stroll; joint public hearing 1/20/04 @ 7pm with Public Safety and Traffic/Transportation Committees re: traffic congestion on West 181<sup>st</sup> Street, at Gregorio Luperón High School (516 W 181<sup>st</sup> Street, btw Audubon/Amsterdam Avenues.)

**Executive Committee – 01/13/04:** agenda items TBA

**Health & Environment Committee – 01/12/04:** Marc Barbiere, NYC Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene, re: community health profile; Jennifer Welles, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corp., re: study on lead paint hazards in Washington Heights apartments.

**Housing & Human Services Committee – 01/05/04:** Wendell Walters, Director of Neighborhood Entrepreneurs Program, HPD; Cecile Noel, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Domestic Violence & Emergency Intervention Services, HRA, re: Types of crisis intervention advocacy and support services,

**Land Use Committee – 01/12/04:** Agenda Item TBA

**Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee – 01/12/04:** agenda items TBA; joint informational meeting w/ Economic Development Committee 1/13/04 @ 6pm re: Next Uptown Arts Stroll.

**Public Safety Committee – 01/07/04:** CERT Training Graduation Ceremony; Joint hearing 1/20 (see Economic Development Committee, above).

**Traffic & Transportation Committee – 01/05/04:** agenda items TBA; Joint hearing 1/20/04 (see Economic Development Committee, above).

**Youth & Education Committee – 01/05/04:** Agenda Items TBA

**Community Planning Task Force – 01/14/04:** Agenda Items TBA

**By-laws Committee – 01/14/04:** Continued discussion on proposed by-law changes

**Meeting Adjourned at 9:45 PM**

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Secretary

## HOUSING & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES – December 1, 2003

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Beatrice Hall, Chair  
Steve Simon  
Mireya Cruz

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Julio Rodriguez  
Renato Mena  
Jacqueline Aristy  
Barbara Smith Ramos (excused)

### BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Wayne Benjamin  
Martin Collins

### Deborah Blow, Community Assistant

### GUESTS

Judith Wray, Errol Christopher, Program Director-Weston United Community Renewal, Walter Kehr, Virginia Aldrich, Michelle Macklin, Director-Manhattan Office

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The meeting was called to order at 7:10pm by the B. Hall, chair. The chair introduced the committee members, board members in attendance and the invited guest.

Michelle Macklin, Director of Manhattan Anti-Abandonment Division and E. Jenkins of HPD gave an overview of the Anti-Abandonment unit. This Division mission is to identify, assess, treat and monitor buildings in the distress. The goal of DAA is to improve buildings and thereby strengthen neighborhoods.

DAA offers one-on-one counseling to property owners, works with owners of buildings with tax arrears to encourage them to pay their taxes in full or enter into installment agreements, give low interest loans and works with owners to develop a voluntary repair agreement. DAA partners with other HPD offices and a number of Neighborhood Preservation Consultants to carry out its mission.

There are two NPC groups in the CB12 area and they are Community associates of progressive Dominican and the Washington heights & Inwood Coalition. DAA (of HPD) has a Small Homes Private Loan Program (1-20 Apartments) and the Home Improvement Program (HIP). The Small Homes Private Loan Program provides loans for Rehabilitation of occupied or vacant buildings with 1-20 apartments. The loans are below market interest rates and loan term can go up to 30 years. The HIP provides low-interest loans for needed home repairs to owner-occupants of one-to four-family homes.

### Vacant Buildings in Washington Heights:

Michelle Macklin stated that investigators have visited all the sites on the prepared list. M. Macklin was able to state the conditions of each building (as poor condition/vacant, vacant unsealed, vacant/ sealed or vacant/ under renovation) and she said that her office would be doing outreach to the build owners. She will be coming back to the committee from time to time as this process goes forward.

### Vacant Lots in Washington Heights:

The committee was referred to Victor Hernandez at 100 Gold Street.

The committee presented a resolution endorsing City Council Bill Streamlining the Rent Regulation System, but the vote taken was invalid due to the lack of a quorum. The resolution will be presented again at our next meeting.

The chair was directed to send Wendell Walters (Director of NEP) a letter requesting his attendance at the January 5, 2004, meeting since he did not appear at the December 1, 2003, meeting as promised.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.  
Respectful submitted by: Beatrice Hall