

LAND USE COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES

February 4, 2015

Committee members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair
Isaiah Bing
Osi Kaminer
Jason Miller
Tamara Rivera
Arlene Schulman
Steve Simon

Committee Members Absent

Anita Barberis, Asst. Chair

Board Members Present

Public Member

Vivian Ducat

Public Member Absent

Staff: Debra Blow

Guests: Rita Gorman

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:20pm.
2. The Land Use Committee (“Land Use” or the “Committee”) reviewed plans for the Department of Design and Construction’s Complex Pedestrian Ramp project (the “Project”). The Project involves the construction of new ADA-compliant curb cuts at various locations in Manhattan including three in Community District 12. The plans were forwarded to the Committee for review because some of the construction is near landmark buildings. The Committee determined that although some of the work is near landmark buildings and that it is more appropriate for the Traffic and Transportation Committee to review and comment on the Project.
3. At the request of the Executive Committee, Land Use reviewed various resolutions passed by Community Board 12-Manhattan (“CB12M”) between 2007 and 2013 related to planning and zonings issues in addition to the 2007 Executive Summary of the planning study (the “Study”) undertaken by CB12M and City College in order to determine which should be provided to Kenneth Knuckles, Vice Chair, City Planning Commission to brief him on CB12M’s position on these matters and its requests to the Department of City Planning (“DCP”) to commence rezoning actions. CB12M Treasurer Pamela Palanque-North advised the Executive Committee at its January 2015 meeting that Mr. Knuckles had expressed to her interest in being more informed about CB12M’s concerns, goals and objectives with respect to planning and zoning for the district because it is his understanding that CB12M had not submitted a re-zoning plan during his tenure on the commission - he inquired as to why not and thought there may be value in CB12M submitting such a plan.

The resolutions reviewed by the Committee document, among other things, CB12M’s support for contextual rezoning, affordable housing that is targeted to the income-levels of local residents, providing 421-a benefits only to developments that provide on-site affordable housing, the long-term preservation of affordable housing units, establishing a cap on the maximum market value above which a residential unit would be ineligible to receive any 421-a real estate tax benefits, and the elimination of zoning districts within Washington Heights and Inwood such as C-8 zoning districts that prohibit the development of housing. The Executive Summary, which was forwarded in 2007 to then City Planning Commission Chair Amanda Burden, also documents CB12M’s support for these planning considerations as well as for historic preservation and creating a development framework that balances growth and the preservation of neighborhood character.

The Committee decided to recommend to CB12M Chair George Fernandez that copies of all of these resolutions and a copy of the Executive Summary be forwarded to Mr. Knuckles with a cover letter that invites him to attend a meeting with CB12M to discuss the planning matters they address, inquire how he might advocate on our behalf to cause DCP to expedite working with CB12M on its rezoning requests, requests an update on the status of the Sherman Creek rezoning study, and inquires about the status of the de Blasio administration’s plans for incentivizing the development of affordable housing in Washington Heights and Inwood.

4. Committee member Steve Simon inquired about the status of Land Use meeting with the Manhattan Bible Church. The church requested a meeting with the Committee in early 2014 to discuss conceptual development plans but cancelled and has not rescheduled. It was agreed that the District Manager, Ebenezer Smith, should be asked to follow-up with the church on this matter. Committee member Arlene Schulman also agreed to outreach to the church to determine the status of Pastor Bill Devlin's affiliation.
5. Committee member Jason Miller announced that the Business Development Committee will host a small business conference on March 3rd at Isabella.
6. After further discussion the meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm

Respectfully submitted by Wayne Benjamin