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Report - A forum to provide information concerning the proposed demolition of the Dapolito Center by the Landmarks Committee, CB2 Manhattan September 30, 2024

The Landmarks Committee held a public forum concerning the demolition of the Dapolito Center on September 30. This meeting followed the approval of a resolution opposing the demolition by the Board at its September meeting.

The announced program for the meeting was to have a presentation on the history of the Center, a presentation by the Landmarks Commission of rules covering demolition of a contributing building in a Landmark District and demolition by neglect, and a presentation by the Parks Commission concerning the proposed demolition of the center. This was to be followed by testimony from the public with preference given to people from the neighborhood.

The history was reviewed by Dena Tasse-Winter from Village Preservation as scheduled.

The Landmarks Commission did not respond to the invitation. Susan Gammie read a summary of landmarks regulations concerning demolition of a building of historic and architectural worth in a landmarked district and demolition by neglect. This covered the same territory that would have come from a Commission representative.

The Parks Commission elected not to send a representative and Susan read a letter from the Commission saying that the question, especially the structural condition of the building, was still under study and review. They anticipate having a more information by the end of the year.

The public did not disappoint in fulfilling its part of the meeting. There was testimony from 20 members of the public, most of whom live in the neighborhood and 2 former residents. They ranged from a 4th generation woman from an Italian family through later arrivals with only two or three generations in residence to those who had arrived lately to begin professional work in New York..

There was an instance of a man who had used the pool in his therapy for Parkinson's Disease and a young man who had grown up on Morton Street and who spoke movingly about how the Center had formed his life, ultimately inspiring him in adulthood to become teacher and life coach for young people. He concluded with a plea - "Save my childhood home."

We have a clear picture of the views of the public concerning the Dapolito Center through testimony that went well beyond the range of comments for a usual Landmarks Committee hearing . Landmarks regulations do not include the use of he building or interiors except those individually designated. With the purpose of the meeting to provide information to the public and hear their views, the public fulfilled its part.

It requires no divination to know that the members of the community want the Dapolitio Center campus to be restored and the programs that they love so much returned. No one complained that the pool was unsuited to Olympic Competition or that the NBA may find the court wanting. There was scant mention of the recreation facilities proposed for the affordable housing building on the adjacent water tunnel site. Those who spoke about this said that they did not want it to take the place of the center that they know and love.

The testimony was without exception passionately in favor of restoring the building and preserving the facilities and the full program's remaining in it are a vital and necessary part of the community. This includes the building, the Keith Haring Mural, and the outdoor swimming pool as a campus. There is no separation of building and use in the minds of those who spoke. It is one thing - a community recreation center - the building and the programs indivisible - and they want their building and thier programs back - and soon.

Chenault Spence
Chair, CB2 Landmarks Committee

NB: See [INFORMATION ON THE TONY DAPOLITO RECREATION CENTER](#) on the CB2 Manhattan website for documents relating to this report. The site is updated from time to time as new information is available.