

**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8**

**MINUTES OF THE HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2016  
AT THE RIVERDALE YM/YWHA  
5625 ARLINGTON AVENUE, BRONX NY 10471**

**Board Members Present:**

Paul Ellis  
Sergio Marquez  
Lenora Croft  
David Kornbluh  
Omar Murray  
Amy Joy Robateau  
Georgia Santiago

**Affiliation**

CB8 Housing Committee, Chair  
CB8 Housing Committee, Vice Chair  
CB8 Housing Committee  
CB8 Housing Committee  
CB8 Housing Committee  
CB8 Housing Committee  
CB8 Housing Committee

**Guests:**

Mathew Cruz

NYC Department of Buildings,  
Intergovernmental and  
Community Affairs  
Community resident  
Community resident

Kira Dibetta  
John Sims

**Absent, CB8 Housing Committee Members:**

Leonel Baez, Anthony Creaney, Margaret Donato, Noah Friedman, David Gellman, James Rather, Julie Reyes, Lucy Mercado, and Ruby Palma

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 p.m.

Paul Ellis, Chair of the Committee, welcomed the attendees and introduced himself. Mr. Ellis then went on to review the agenda for the evening.

**1. Update on Activities of the NYC Department of Buildings, Including Efforts to Prevent Illegal Conversions and to Address the Backlog of Old Complaints**

Mr. Ellis introduced Matthew Cruz, a representative from the Intergovernmental and Community Affairs Office of the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB). Mr. Cruz provided his contact information.

Mr. Cruz began by speaking on the topic of illegal conversions. He noted that many illegal conversions are cellar or basement apartments in apartment buildings or private dwellings. The reason that they are illegal is usually that the owner did not take the legal steps necessary to convert the space, and often there may be code violations in the construction work that was done. An illegal conversion can pose a fire hazard, especially when the apartment is in close proximity to a water heater or a boiler. An illegal conversion can also be an apartment that is subdivided into additional rooms.

Mr. Cruz informed the committee that there are 27 outstanding DOB complaints, of all types, in CB8. DOB complaints are categorized by letter grades, from A to D, with A being the most serious violations and D being the least serious. By way of example, illegal conversions are considered B violations while curb cut defects are C violations.

Mr. Cruz advised that if someone wants to lodge a DOB complaint, they should call 311. Mr. Ellis asked Mr. Cruz about the current response time for C and D complaints, which have been a problem in the past. Mr. Cruz responded that once a complaint has been made, DOB will respond to C and D complaints within 45 to 60 days (A and B response times being faster) and an inspection will occur within 7 days thereafter. If the inspector is unable to inspect the premises, the inspector will leave a note for the owner to arrange access. After all attempts to gain access fail, DOB can seek an access warrant, but only after DOB has sufficient evidence of the illegality.

Mr. Cruz indicated that there are twenty DOB inspectors in the Bronx, but only four of them are enforcement inspectors, being those who inspect complaints and issue violations. Ideally, eight more enforcement inspectors are needed. DOB's response time to complaints has improved somewhat from the prior year. Usually, duplicate complaints are resolved sooner.

Mr. Cruz then discussed the DOB's ACELA software, which can be used to learn when an inspection will be done or whether work at a site has been completed or whether a permit has been issued for a project. DOB complaints are kept confidential as to source.

Mr. Ellis noted that we are entering into budget season and would want to hear from DOB as to budgetary matters with respect to its activities in CB8. He asked Mr. Cruz whether he was in a position to discuss this subject this evening or whether it should be postponed to a later meeting. Mr. Cruz requested that we arrange for him to return to discuss this matter at a future point.

Upon the completion of Mr. Cruz's comments and questions from committee members and other attendees, Mr. Ellis thanked him for his attendance.

## **2. Preparations for Upcoming Meeting on the Financing of Affordable Housing**

The Committee discussed the Affordable Housing forum that was held on December 9, 2015. The forum was quite informative, but there was concern that some of the attendees were hoping to get information about obtaining affordable housing, which was not the focus of the event. The Committee decided to hold a forum that will exclusively deal with that subject.

The next affordable housing forum will occur in March and the topic will be the financing of newly-constructed affordable housing. A Housing Preservation Development ("HPD") representative, a developer and probably a consultant will be some of the speakers that would make up the panel for the March forum. The Committee discussed who would be the target audience for this forum and who should be contacted. The Affordable Housing Working Group set the next meeting date for March 3 at 8:00 a.m. at the McDonalds restaurant on W. 238<sup>th</sup> Street on Broadway.

### **3. Planning session for the Housing Resource Guide**

The Housing Resource Guide project was discussed and a Housing Resource Guide Working Group was created and a meeting was set for February 26 to begin work on the project.

### **4. Old Business**

The Committee discussed arranging a visit to inspect the boiler at the Fort Independence/Bailey Houses, as was proposed during the January meeting.

### **5. Approval of Minutes**

The committee approved the minutes for the months of November 2015 and January 2016.

### **6. New Business**

None.

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Minutes recorded by,

Sergio Marquez, Vice Chairperson  
Housing Committee  
Community Board 8 - Bronx

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Ellis, Chairperson  
Housing Committee  
Community Board 8 - Bronx