

**PENDING COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8**

**MINUTES OF THE HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2017 AT 7:30 PM  
AT THE JERICHO PROJECT,  
2701 KINGSBRIDGE TERRACE, BRONX, NY**

**Board/Community Members Present:**

**Affiliation:**

Paul Ellis  
Amy Joy Robateau  
David Gellman

CB8 Housing Committee, Chairman  
CB8 Housing Committee, Vice Chair  
CB8 Housing Committee Member

**Guests:**

AnnMarie Santiago  
Nellie Nieves  
Demetrio Surun  
Cristina Lang  
Gina Klein  
Teri Colon  
Josh Stephenson  
Andrew Laiosa  
Anthony Delorbe  
Peter Fabregas  
Kelly McLane  
Lucy Mercado  
Ruby Lee Palma  
Amanda Williams  
Jacki Fischer  
Vicki Zambrano  
Muslima Adams  
Sylvia Jackson

Housing Preservation and Development  
Housing Preservation and Development  
Housing Preservation and Development  
Office of Senator Klein  
Office of Senator Klein  
Office of Assemblymen Dinowitz  
Office of Councilmember Cohen  
West Bronx Housing  
Community Association of Marble Hill  
Community Association of Marble Hill  
Community Association of Marble Hill  
Community Association of Marble Hill  
Community Association of Marble Hill  
Community Association of Marble Hill  
Community Association of Marble Hill  
Outer Seed Shadow Marble Hill  
Outer Seed Shadow Marble Hill  
Community Resident  
Community Resident

**Absent:**

Anthony Creaney  
David Kornbluh  
Sergio Marquez  
Omar Murray  
Julie Reyes  
Georgia Santiago  
James Santiago  
John Sims

CB8 Housing Committee Member  
CB8 Housing Committee Member  
CB8 Housing Committee Member  
CB8 Housing Committee Member  
CB8 Housing Committee Member  
CB8 Housing Committee Member  
CB8 Housing Committee Member  
Community Committee Member

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 PM.

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

### **1. Approval of minutes.**

The approval of minutes was tabled due to the absence of a quorum.

### **2. Presentation on Outer Seed Shadow Marble Hill, the community garden project at Marble Hill Houses**

Mr. Ellis welcomed Jacki Fischer and Vicki Zambrano to speak about Outer Seed Shadow Marble Hill (OSSMH). They explained that OSSMH represents a vision of using the garden as a platform to address local social issues. It is the third project in New York City for Juanli Carrion, the artist who conceived the project. It addresses issues including health, food justice, social justice and education and is intended to encourage community participation and be a means for addressing community concerns.

Ms. Zambrano explained that one of the goals of the project is to build a healthy community, both in terms of physical health and healthy community interactions. To that end, the team involved with OSSMH has gone door to door within the Marble Hill community, interviewing individuals and families to assess their interest and to identify issues of community concern. They are also hosting panels and lectures on related topics.

She explained that the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has assisted in the outreach and has generally been a very supportive partner in the project. The project intends to involve senior citizens and disabled persons in an effort to engage the entire community around the project. The level of participation has been very positive, with over 50 interviews so far and a high level of community engagement.

With respect to funding, Ms. Fischer explained that Phase 1 has been fully funded, but there is a need for \$2500 for Phase 2 and \$7000 for Phase 3. She explained that while NYCHA has been very supportive, unfortunately it has not been able to assist with funding for the project.

There followed some discussion regarding the details of the project among the presenters and the committee members. Mr. Ellis then thanked the presenters for their time and commended them for what appeared would be a welcome addition to the community and requested that they keep the Committee posted of their progress going forward and of any way that it can assist.

### **3. Presentation on community garden project at Fort Independence Houses**

Mr. Ellis welcomed Anthony Delorbe, Peter Fabregas, Kelly McLane, Lucy Mercado, Ruby Lee Palma and Amanda Williams of the Community Association of Marble Hill to discuss the community garden project at Fort Independence Houses. Mr. Fabregas gave a presentation, explaining that the project would be an urban vegetable and rain garden that would be open to the public.

He explained that the project would feature four green spaces and two murals and would make use of space in and around the Fort Independence buildings that is currently underutilized. He presented renderings and photographs to explain the space that will be used and the scope of the project as currently conceived.

He noted that the project would incorporate composting and various sustainability features, including improved handling of rainwater on the site. The project is intended to involve community members generally and will have a meaningful education component.

As for site access, it will be open to the public, although appropriate fencing will be put in place to protect the gardens once they have been planted. In response to a question from Mr. Gellman regarding composting procedures to be used, the presenters explained the credentials and training of the individuals who would be running the composting and discussed the protocols that would be put in place.

With respect to funding, the presenters explained that their current funding requirements were expected to be on the order of \$20,000-\$30,000.

Mr. Ellis noted that such a project would be a great benefit to Fort Independence Houses and would be a meaningful improvement to the current use of that space. He congratulated the presenters for their work to date and requested that they keep the Committee posted as to their progress and let the Committee know of any way that it can be of assistance.

#### **4. Discussion Concerning Problem Landlords and Problem Buildings in Community District 8**

Mr. Ellis introduced the various participants in the next agenda item, including personnel from Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and representatives from the offices of Senator Klein, Assemblyman Dinowitz and Councilmember Cohen and from West Bronx Housing.

Mr. Ellis explained that while the committee has given meaningful attention to issues concerning NYCHA over the years, the committee recognized the need to address problems concerning private landlords as well. He noted that at any meeting involving tenant issues, there were always multiple concerns expressed by tenants about the frequent failure of their landlords to provide adequate maintenance services and about their limited ability to get resolution of the problems, whether through HPD or otherwise. He explained that one purpose of today's discussion was to bring together people involved in addressing tenant

concerns from various perspectives in order to better understand the nature of the problems and what was being done and could be done to better address these issues.

The discussion involved significant back-and-forth among the participants on various issues and concerns, including the following points:

- The HPD representatives explained the process involved in addressing tenant concerns from their perspective. They pointed out that it was very important for tenants to log any complaint through 311. They noted that the more complaints that were logged from a particular building or about a particular issue, the higher level of attention it would be likely to receive. They went on to explain that sometimes tenants would be frustrated that problems had not been resolved when in fact they had not taken the first step in the process in properly registering the complaints through 311.
- Mr. Ellis pointed out that while he understood the need to step through the process, he also pointed out that if tenants were not always sufficiently diligent in registering their complaints through 311, it was at least in part because of their perception, over the years, that such complaints did not necessarily lead to a correction of the problem. He stated that it was important for HPD to recognize this perception when determining how to best address problem landlords.
- The HPD representatives discussed a relatively new program, the Proactive Preservation Initiative, explaining that it presented a way for HPD to address building-wide issues in a more expedited manner.
- There was a wide ranging discussion concerning the fact that tenants are often reluctant to report problems, as they fear retribution from landlords, whether through rent increases or otherwise. Several of the participants noted that given that the landlords may be within their rights to raise the rent and that in that case, the tenants may have limited recourse, these tenant concerns were unfortunately legitimate.
- The participants discussed the topic of preferential rents and rent concessions. Mr. Stephenson distributed and then walked through an example of a rent history in order to assist in a better understanding of the problem.
- The representatives of the elected officials discussed particular buildings that they were concerned about and various issues that they had been trying to address.
- There was some discussion involving the degree to which building improvements could result in rent increases for tenants, whether through MCI increases or otherwise.

Mr. Ellis concluded the discussion, thanking everyone for their participation and noting that there certainly seemed to be a benefit to continuing this conversation in the future, as it had clarified a number of issues. In addition, he noted that from the perspective of the Housing Committee, it was clear that there were ways in which the Committee could be of assistance

in connecting tenants with the tools and the resources to address their issues. These sentiments were agreed to by the other participants.

## **5. Old Business**

There was no old business.

## **6. New Business**

There was no new business.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 P.M.

Minutes recorded by,  
Amy Joy Robateau and Paul Ellis  
Housing Committee Members  
Bronx Community Board 8

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Ellis  
Chairperson  
Housing Committee  
Bronx Community Board 8