

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

**MINUTES OF THE HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON NOVEMBER 28TH, 2011 AT THE BOARD OFFICE**

PRESENT

Thomas C. Durham, Chair
Steven Balicer
Anthony Creaney
Philip Friedman
Colleen Hanley
Thailary Lim
Julie Reyes
Georgia Santiago
S. Budihas
Darren McCarthy
Brendan McHugh
Andrew Sandler
Josiris Urena

AFFILIATION

CB8
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ARC

Riverdale Review
rep. City Councilmember G. Oliver Koppell
rep. NYS Senator Gustavo Rivera

A. Introductions

1. Introduced new committee member and people in attendance.
2. Meeting started at 7:35 PM.
3. Approved minutes of the last Housing Committee Meeting, October 24, 2011

B. Chair's report:

❖ **The chairman attended several meetings since the October 2011 Committee meeting:**

- A. The first meeting was at NYCHA's Marble Hill Houses and hosted by NYCHA Commissioner Margarita Lopez. Commissioner Lopez gave the state of NYCHA across the city and the new direction that the NYCHA's board of directors would like to take with the agency. The Commissioner said that all entities of NYCHA including management and maintenance staff, unions, vendors and residents must work in partnership to save NYCHA as a whole and to maintain what already exists. She spoke about the federal threat to end funding for affordable housing complexes like NYCHA nation-wide and many other internal issues highlighting security, maintenance and sizing apartments to family needs.

The following is information on two important items:

- a. Security cameras - The Commissioner said they will be incorporating a pilot program using three developments; one in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx (none in CB8) that will integrate cameras and a new key card lock system. If the pilot program proves successful in the trial year of 2012, this system will be installed in all NYCHA buildings.
- b. Heating Fuel - Commissioner Lopez said that all of the NYCHA buildings have been using #2 heating fuels since 2009. This is one of

the two fuels (the other, natural gas) mandated for all multi-dwellings by 2030.

c. The Chair attended the Association of Riverdale Co-Ops (ARC). The ARC President, Steve Budihas attended the Housing Committee meeting and spoke about the heating fuel conversion and its economic effects on Co-Op shareholders. The Chair was also asked to be a guest panelist at the Smoke Free Partnership Forum (SFP) held at the Riverdale YM/YWHA. The agenda discussed the removal of second-hand smoke from neighboring apartments in multi-dwellings and creating smoke free apartment buildings. This forum was through the effort of Councilman Koppell's office. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a cold, dark, rainy night and with two other important meetings scheduled on the same night causing the turn out to be small.

- B. On the same evening of the SFP forum, the chair attended the CB8's Environment & Sanitation meeting. Continuing to work on gathering as much information on the Heating Fuel Conversion Rule, the E & S committee will assist the chair in finding the original source of this ruling and any related information. The Heat Fuel Conversion was originally a clean air initiative that grew into a threat to keep multi dwelling housing affordable. Through the effort of E & S Chairperson Rosemary Ginty, this committee found the report that influenced the Mayor on imposing this rule and more importantly, the official DEP ruling that was not completely explained to the citizens of NYC. More details of this finding are in the agenda paragraph.
- C. On Wednesday night, November 23, there was a fire at 3800 Greystone Avenue. The fire was on the fourth floor on the north side of the Building. The fire was in the living room and there were no deaths or injuries.

C. Agenda

❖ **To Discuss the Heat Fuel Conversion Ruling with ARC and The Bronx Realtor's Advisory Board (BRAB).**

1. To the disappointment of Housing Committee and Bronx Community Board 8, no one from BRAB attended this meeting.
2. On behalf of the community, the Housing Committee invited the 2 housing organizations that enroll 98% of the multi-dwell apartment buildings to help assist CB8, ARC and BRAB through communication and collaboration.
3. CB8 is asking that their members notify the board when one of their members are converting to natural gas or placing a temporary boiler on the street. Converting to gas means that there will be street and sidewalk closings when digging to the underground gas supply lines. In some cases, depending on the street, access may be cut off, some public transportation delayed or rerouted and always the loss of parking. When it comes to the mobile boilers, there is overnight noise, the smell of fumes, blind spots for both motorist and pedestrians navigating the streets and an additional loss of parking spaces. ARC's, Mr. Budihas said that he would gladly let his members assist the community in keeping everyone informed.
4. Mr. Budihas pointed out how this new heating fuel conversion rule is strongly impacting the co-op community, not only for the short terms, but also over the long term. Over 75% (maybe greater) of the multi-dwellings in CB8 are co-op buildings. A program of this magnitude with no financial backing or incentives

directly impacts the co-op residents by adding additional assessments or require looking into refinancing mortgages that are already stretched to their limits.

5. Mr. Budihas wanted to remind all, that a large number of co-op residents are seniors and retirees on fixed incomes. Co-ops are not money factories as many would believe and many are just beyond the doors of bankruptcy court.
6. With the New York State Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA), the only governmental agency financially helping to offset the upfront cost of starting the heating fuel conversion, running out of funds; and the energy companies rebate programs that pay after the conversions are completed; the only source of immediate income is straight from the shareholders. And it does not stop there, the long term looks worse as buildings try to heat itself and paying more for the cleaner fuel while getting less BTUs than provided by the present #4 & #6 oil which will soon be phased out.
7. Mr. Budihas feels that the co-ops community is an after thought to elected officials and housing agencies and would like the aid of the Community Board to bring these points to full view of elected officials.
8. The Chairman suggested that although there are over 75% co-op buildings in our community, only 25% of the multi dwellings are in the Bronx. The Chairman suggested that co-ops, open market rentals and Mitchell-Lama buildings should speak with a united voice to all the elected officials across the city that more people live in NYC vertically than horizontally.
9. Thanks to the E & S Committee and its Chairperson Rosemary Ginty, they were able to come up with the original proposed DEP ruling that was presented to the Mayor for approval initiating the heating fuel conversion and the report entitled "The Bottom of The Barrel" produced by the Energy Defense Fund (EDF). The DEP ruling is the more important of the two because there's a stipulation that allows buildings to continue burning #4 & #6 oil if the buildings' heating systems are burning with emissions meeting the current standards. They would be subject to annual quality air tests. If the rule was adopted in its entirety, as in the proposed draft, this information should have been released to the public. We will look into the entire completed ruling.

D. Old Business

❖ **Follow up discussion on security camera at Marble Hill Houses.**

After attending the NYCHA Meeting at Marble Hill Houses, the chair was upset to learn that funds allocated by Councilman Cabrera are being put into a general pool to fund a NYCHA pilot security program. If this was truly discretionary funding by the Councilman, it should be targeted for what it was allocated for: security cameras. The committee agreed and will see if this truly is the case. We plan to meet with NYCHA Commissioner Magarita Lopez before the summer break.

E. New Business

❖ **Department of Homeless Services (DHS) will commence operation HOPE (Homeless Population Estimate).**

1. Committee Member Ms. Colleen Hanley wanted to remind all members that on January 30, 2011 volunteers are needed to perform this duty. You can register online at www.dhs@nyc.gov. The city is looking for about 3,000 volunteers to count the homeless population throughout the five city boroughs. Ms. Hanley and a few members of her family will join this effort.

2. A senior couple that resides in a Kingsbridge Mitchell-Lama said they are worried about a new phone intercom system for access to their building that reveals their unlisted phone number. The Committee members all found this quite disturbing, that in this time of identity theft, how any system installed would allow this to happen. The Chairman said that he would visit the building to personally check this intercom system and report back to the Housing Committee.

F. Adjournment

1. Meeting adjourned at 8:50PM
2. Next Housing meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 23, 2012.

Thomas C. Durham
Chair
Housing Committee