

**Housing & Human Services Committee Minutes**  
**Thursday, April 4th, 2019 at 7PM**

**Members Present:**

Chair: Ayisha Oglivie, Asst. Chair: Barbara Frazier Ariel Miranda, Jay Mazur, Fern Hertzberg, Waldys Cruz, Bianca Guerrero, and Naysa Diaz

**Absent:**

**Public Member:** Marshall Vanderpool

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Agenda Items (as presented):

- Rent Reform
- Fort Washington Armory Governance
- Inwood Library Affordable Housing
- New Business

Opening:

- Chair Ayisha asked that the Community Board members present themselves and give a small description of their career backgrounds to the public and so members went around doing so
- Chair Ayisha started followed up updating the community that as of last month's general meeting, there had been an agreement made to ensure parliamentary rules were to be being followed and then explained the outline of the agenda for the night's meeting
- When Chair Ayisha asked if there were any other materials that anyone thought should be being added to it, Barbara asked that the Housing & Human Services committee had the New York City Housing Authority added to it and that the Inwood Library be kept on it as well before then having it agreed to by Chair Ayisha and then proceeding onward with the current agenda as it had already been laid out for the entire general public to see.

Rent reform:

- In beginning the topic of Rent Reform, Chair Ayisha decided to announce some of the key points noted in a statewide rent reform advocacy group's platform called Housing Justice For All, to which she noted the Committee had already agreed to before but wanted to discuss in further detail throughout the night because of the looming sunset date on our state's rent stabilized units
- Chair Ayisha stated there has been an issue where private entities such as hospitals are allowed to own rent-stabilized units and appear to be raising the rents far above what the Rent Guidelines Board allows for, thus further causing greater displacement. In addition, she expressed the belief that this occurs mainly because the employees of such entities are afraid to come forward and question such changes.
- Chair Ayisha stated there has been a bait and switch method whereby when the tenant should be getting renewals, the entities are giving them new leases instead with preferential rents.
- Chair Ayisha noted this was heard from Julio Bautista of New York-Presbyterian
- Barbara raised the point that it seems unfair that particular entities can ignore the protections of rent stabilization and then get to deregulate it, leaving most others vulnerable and without the originally intended benefits of stabilization.
- Chair Ayisha passed around to the committee a copy of 9-CRR-NY2204.9 which stated the supposed rules allowing for such practices to proceed from the state.

-Chair Ayisha raised they would like to have as a Charter Amendment (noting the 2019 Charter Revision Commission) having an attorney given to each Community Board in order to address these very unclear rules with respect to our rent stabilization stock so that we may further review these matters and better understand why such entities are being given such freedoms under the rules

-A public resident at this time stated that they feel there is a bigger issue that is arising from such private entities benefitting from purchases while maintaining non-profit identification, not paying taxes on the profits being made, and that as a result has led to a decreased number of registered voters and continues to further marginalize communities like ours as it is pushing those who are registered out.

-In hearing this, Chair Ayisha decided to take this opportunity to introduce a [Curbed.com](https://www.curbed.com) article, saying that the article shows how although more development is happening what often happens is that the community loses more housing than is being received as a result.

-Fern noted that this issue is inherent across several non-profits in the city whereby they are often taking advantage of such opportunities to make profits when they are not supposed to

-A public resident noted that they want protections given to tenants under a non-profit so that they may be allowed to be kept when sold back to private entities

-Board Chair Richard Lewis, Senator Robert Jackson's Deputy Chief of Staff Chris Nichols, and representative from Congressman Adriano Espaillat's office Laurie Tobias announced themselves at the meeting at 7:55PM

-A public resident raised there has been an issue with how landlords are being allowed to create an Airbnb just so that those visiting the sick in hospitals can be given an opportunity to rent from the hospitals and how disturbing it is hospitals are profiting from them

-Barbara stated there has already been an "Angel" program of sorts that has existed between hospitals and Airbnb like companies because there are not enough Ronald-McDonald houses

-Public resident wanted to reiterate supporting protections for buildings being sold from non-profit to private companies

-Chair Ayisha referred back to Curbed article mentioning that when old buildings are knocked down for new construction there are often less units within the new buildings than there were in the old and shared her belief that such information being given to most tenants about their rights should be shared with new tenants even when their interpretation of the article

-A public resident mentioned that when their building suffered structural damage, tenants had to leave to be given their apartment back a very long time later at preferential rents, which were problematic for long term trends.

-Bianca noted that if there are any suggestions related to preferential rents they'd like to have added on to the resolution as was already discussed, there has already been language written to address it and should be looked over in the previous minutes.

-Nichols got up to state Senator Jackson's office has already spoken to the Department of Housing and Community Renewals and made sure they understood they were being held accountable to address these matters even though the State budget has already passed

-Chair Ayisha offered to go through a number of the whereas and resolutions proposed in the current Housing & Human Services' resolution to be being voted on today (which can be reviewed in the previous month's minutes)

- Orlando Ovalles, AM De La Rosa's Chief of Staff, decided to introduce himself at Chair Ayisha's urging.
- Barbara stated that there is still no clarity on the position for Major Capital Improvements by the Community Board but believes it should be billed separately so it is clearly defined so that it gets paid and ends within a definitive time period; doesn't get rolled over into the actual rent. Also believes there should be a very clear definition of what constitutes a Major Capital Improvement
- Jay believes we should propose ideas that are politically viable and eliminate Major Capital Improvement
- Nichols states he wants us to know Sen. Jackson is already in support of the entire platform proposed by Housing Justice For All
- Fern said the Department of Homes & Community Renewal doesn't do their job and needs greater funding before being given greater enforcement powers
- Waldys reiterated Jay's point stating landlord's benefits are already being paid for by rent and shouldn't have the right to get paid again
- Bianca pointed out that DHCR has not been given the resources needed to implement the services of the Tenant Protection Unit and the DHCR website has actually just changed
- Nichols states there are going to be instructions sent around for asking for rent history and that they are asking for language-equity with DHCR services and wants CB12's support.
- Resident stated that rent history can be picked up at federal building on Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard
- Resident states that there is now a new number we can text to get our rent history: 646-783-0627
- Ariel wanted to add eliminating the ability for DHCR to inform landlords when tenants ask for their rent histories
- Chair Ayisha stated she wants us to support Sen. Myrie's bill to eliminate statute of limitations on rent overcharges
- Jay asked if the meeting can move past the rent reform and the board voted 8 for and 0 against to move the resolution forward as asked for by the chair.
- Public Vote: 20 in favor, 2 opposed, 1 abstain

## Part 2: Fort Washington Armory

- Chair Ayisha reiterated points from previous meeting (check previous month's minutes)
- Chair Ayisha stated that since the last meeting she submitted 23 questions to the Department of Homeless Services and we have yet to be given answers. Meanwhile advocates such as Phil Zablocki has been submitting FOIL requests since 2002 and still not been given the information requested.
- Chair Ayisha stated all 23 questions sent to DHS aloud to the public and noted there has been an individual who's been potentially living in community space for what may be 36,000 hours which should have been made available to the community
- Bianca said she does not believe any office could have responded back to all 23 questions within a month and we should be focusing on asking for 3 instead
- Ariel made a motion to pass a resolution demanding DHS to comply with all FOIL requests and respond to all questions as soon as possible to which Fern, Barbara, and Ayisha expressed their agreement with.

- Gary Altheim mentioned that he spoke to the Mayor on the Brian Lehrer show and the Mayor states that he appreciated the mental health services. A few hours later, members from DHS called to inform them they were still being evicted. He has still been in his location but does not know when he will be pushed out.
- Chair Ayisha expressed a belief that kicking individuals out while giving others special preference to stay in public facilities is wrong
- The Housing & Human Services Committee voted on Ariel's proposed resolution; 6 in favor and 0 against
- Public Vote: 12 in favor, 0 against  
5 abstained
- Committee motioned to move to next topic but called to a pause for Chair Ayisha to have a resident speak
- Resident wanted to state their thanks for raising the issue several times, stating it has brought attention to elected officials, and even the news.
- Another resident stated they would like us to include an addition of a resolution asking the City Council Oversight Committee looks into the matter
- Ayisha stated she believed such an amendment should not be used for the time being in that she believed this first resolution should be passed. Ariel stated that he must abstain in reference to a motion to amend the resolution in that there would be a potential conflict with his employment and the rest of the committee decided to agree with Ayisha.
- Thus this portion of the agenda ended.

### Part 3: Inwood Library

- Barbara started discussion stating that at the moment the library has been brought into a much greater local lawsuit whereby the petitioners, Inwood Legal Action, brought a Section 78 lawsuit on Dec. 10th, 2018 with Sen. Jackson and Rep. Espaillat, cited over 10 arguments in the suit.
- Fern gave the floor to a local resident, Karla Fisk, to talk about the legal group formed
- Such matters as were shown by Karla of Inwood Legal Action to have been brought into the suit were relating to a refusal to address racial displacement, adverse impacts on MWBEs, lack of services to be included in the replacement center of Inwood Library, and several others.
- The attorney working for them is named Norman Segul
- Fern asked after the brief synopsis of the Inwood Legal Action group what resolution they had been seeking
- Karla responded stating that they would like the city to be forced to go back to the drawing board and conduct such studies before going forward with any rezoning.
- When opening the discussion to the public, a resident asked if there has been any development of 80/20 housing in the district
- Barbara responded stating that at the moment there are no buildings recently but the proposed developments claiming to produce such are already in the works
- Karla stated the reason this issue persists is because the projects and rezoning mainly presents luxury building alone.
- A resident stated they believe the board needed to pass a resolution addressing the Library and problems with it.

- Ariel stated we have already addressed the matters extensively in the ULURP process and have to remember that the past rezoning was made without the recommendations and against the board's decision.
- Ayisha followed up to say there has been a lottery actually opened in a building in Washington Heights
- Resident raised concerns with how resolution wasn't given as much power because our Chair of the entire Board didn't vocalize our resolution enough
- Committee decided to move forward

#### Part 4: New Business

- Chair Ayisha said we are having a public hearing on April 11th regarding the new DHS shelter coming to the community
- Ayisha showed an article about Trump Administration tax cuts costing 750,000 people their food stamps
- Ayisha showed another article discussing "Gentrification getting a middle man" and how companies are making out at this point in development
- Ayisha stated that Met Council wanted everyone to know about the Moral March for Housing
- Ayisha mentioned a film shown in the Bronx recently called "Decade of Fire" which was streamed by Met Council the past weekend
- A representative from the Corner Project asked for CB12's support in finding space where the organization can service homeless and mentally ill now that they have been pushed out of their former space
- Resident asked for greater spaces be made available for mental health services.
- Gary Altheim got up to note there has been a letter thanking Fort Washington Armory service providers that left out Growth and Development Services. After stating this, he provided a copy to the Chair.
- The meeting officially concluded