

Arts and Culture Committee  
Manhattan Community Board 9  
January 11, 2010  
Broadway Housing  
583 Riverside Drive

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## Minutes

### In attendance:

Committee Members: Co-Chairs: Linda Walton, Diane Wilson  
Debra Ann Byrd, Christa Gieseke, Vicky Gholson, PhD, Donitra Clemons  
Public/Task: Stephanie Berry, LaQuita Henry, John-Martin Green, Magli Damas,  
Michael Palma  
Board Members: Pat Jones, Vernon Ballard, Walter South

### Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm (Note: Late start due to combined meeting of Landmarks and Arts & Culture Committee)

### Action Items:

- A. P.S. 186 Community Space for Artists, Cultural Organizations and Arts & Culture-related business:
- The purpose of convening a combined meeting of the Landmarks and Arts & Culture committee was to address concerns/interests of both committees. These efforts to work across committees is in keeping with the mission of the A&C Committee and makes for a stronger case when multiple constituents are rallying to save the project for the benefit of the community.
  - Resos were drafted by both committees with Landmarks addressing the historic significance of the project and Arts & Culture addressing the artistic significance of the PS 186 project.

#### Review and Discussion of Resolution: Preserving a Cultural Legacy

- As specified in CB9M's 197A Plan and land use and rezoning proposals, CB9M needs and supports affordable housing for residents including artists
- CB9M supports the development of affordable living, working and open community space for artists and artistic groups
- Since the original deed restrictions have not been adhered to, a recommendation should come from the board that the City rescind its contract for the sale of the site and make efforts to stabilize the building, maintain the façade and put forth a new RFP
- Resolution process – flush out in committee, present to executive, then to full board for revisions, adoption or disapproval of the resolution.
- It was suggested that the PS 186 Task Force be restored with the reso being strengthened by this broader platform representing multiple stakeholders. There was some concern as to the effectiveness of the first task force.
- Vote taken and reso passes committee 8-0-0 Community members and CB9 Board members present were polled; there was general acceptance of the reso.

#### B. Artist Studio Eviction ~ *Hint House Artist Collective*

Two resos were put forth for consideration:

##### Columbia University Reso

- Tamara Gayer provided background information on the plight of the Hint House Artist Collective:

- Hint House, a collective of over 40 interdisciplinary artists creating art without public assistance; have occupied space in District 9 for over 12 years. The space has served as both live and work space for the artists. The Collective is located in the Columbia University footprint and have been active in the discourse around Columbia's planned expansion advocating for their continued tenancy;
- There were over 200 artists in the footprint. Currently, the Hint House artists are the only remaining artists but must be out of their space by end of month. An extension is possible. Their space has been reduced from 2500 sq. ft. from 7500 sq. ft., from 3 floors to 1 floor with living spaces relinquished.
- The Collective's lease expired over 2 years ago; they are currently in the space on a month to month basis. Other tenants on the block have been evicted in preparation for the expansion
- Columbia has offered alternate space but for more money and less space on a month to month basis
- The development of this area is slated for Phase 2 of the expansion plan commencing in approximately 15 years and the Collective would like to remain in their space until this phase begins or would like a reasonable offer from Columbia
- Both the West Harlem Local Development Corporation and the Community Benefits Agreement stipulate/recommend sets asides for space for artists and artistic purposes. The Hint House artists want consideration
- Suggested change in reso language that allow for the collective to stay in their space for a period no less than 15 years in its present location or until the current expansion plan commences and a comparable and permanent space the size for the original square footage is found
- Vote to approve Columbia University reso passes – 8-0-0

#### West Harlem Local Development Corporation Reso

There is no mechanism in place for the WHLDC to consider or respond to this request although the current structure can take it under advisement. A timeline and process for facilitating proposal requests will be developed taking into consideration those recommendations put forth by the working groups that informed the Community Benefits Agreement.

Concern was expressed that a reso is coming from the board for a single entity and whether the WHLDC is a recognizable, legitimate body. Discussion continued; the spirit of the request is the focal point. The issue/concern is a larger issue in that artists/arts groups are at risk of displacement due to development. This issue is not specific to Hint House but represents concerns that the board will need to address as future development projects come down the pike. A&C Committee should be available to advocate for, support artists/arts entities that come to the board for assistance and advice.

It was expressed that the broad statements about the WHLDC was not legitimate, appropriate, and incorrect. A&C would like to receive regular and current WHLDC updates.

Vote on Reso passes: 4-0-2-2

#### C. Community Board 4 Community/Theater Space FAR Proposal

David Pincus - Chair, Theater Task Force - Manhattan Community Board 4 and Managing Director WorkShop Theater Company, David Gruber – Land Use/Zoning Co-committee chair, Community Board 2 and co-author of the proposal

David Pincus reported that Manhattan Community Boards 1-5 have been working with artists, theater companies, electeds and independent art support organizations for over a year in order to develop strategies and solutions that not only support their creative missions but the survival of over 500 small theaters and other non-profit performing arts institutions in New York City. The initial group is

interested in expanding their effort to every Manhattan Community Board. It is hoped that collectively, all boards could advocate for this issue.

The group organized a public forum last February at The Players on Gramercy Park to explore the feasibility of developing a proposal that offers a new strategy in which the use of "unused" Community Facilities space would be donated to or leased at a significant financial discount to non-profit performing arts organizations by incentivizing landlords. The forum was attended by over 300 representatives from small to mid-sized theaters, artists, arts organizations and public officials. Notable attendees included Ben Cameron, Program Director of Arts at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and former Executive Director of Theater Communications Group and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer who delivered the keynote address. The BP challenged the group to come up with a plan that the electeds would be inclined to support. For 9 months they have been meeting informally with theater groups, community arts group. \$11M Theater sub district, how to use this money

A draft of the Community FAR Proposal which was generated by joint Community Board discussion and consensus over the last several months, was written up by David Gruber and Robin Rothstein of CB2,

DP & DG are asking CB9 support for the proposal in the form of a resolution or letter of support and vote on it at the next full board session

Members of the group met with City Council finance office and with staff at Scott Stringers office for guidance and suggestions for making a better proposal. A sit down meeting with Scott Stringer, in which one representative from each Manhattan Community Board is invited to talk about strategies the CBs and the City can take together in support of small to mid-sized theaters and other non-profit performing arts organizations is scheduled for January 21<sup>st</sup>.

#### **Discussion**

Resolution could be crafted with our language, change focus to include not only theaters, Community Facility FAR is for 501c3 organizations, organizations with an artistic mission, could possibly be for-profit working under the umbrella of a non-profit

Two steps process, support the concept by reso or letter of support, full proposal to ultimately be developed into city and state legislation.

A&C in support of the effort put forth

Reso passes committee/including public members unanimously (8-0-0) with changes.

Would like someone from each board be part of the ongoing discussions

Due to time constraints, Henry Miller, Uptown Playwright's Workshop will present at next month's A&C Committee meeting

Brochures from Harlem Stage new season was distributed  
HSA – offering their space for day time use for rent (workshops, classes)

#### **Old Business**

Arts and Politics – Identifying Space for the Series ~ *Stephanie Berry/Group Discussion – to be taken up at next meeting;*

#### **New Business**

Arts and Culture Committee Members are encouraged to attend the January 16<sup>th</sup> Land Use/Zoning meeting; Edwin Marshall will address the group re City Planning's response to our rezoning proposal including community/cultural/artistic space set-asides ~ *Christa Giesecke, Co-Chair, Land Use/Zoning/Housing Committee*

Meeting adjourned at 9:15pm