

HOUSING and ZONING COMMITTEE
January 7, 2019

Present: L. Popovic, T. Accomando, I. Guanill, H. Acampora, D. Krynicki, A. Chirico, R. Bieder, M.J. Musano, R. Baez, J. Marano, R. Rodriguez, M. Caruso, M. Velazquez

Absent: C. Papstefanou, P. Cantillo

Guests: T. Vecchio, J. Barnes, C. Wells, R. Baxter, M. Norton, C. Arokum, B. Fraser, C. Seely, E. Bluestone, B. Donaldson, J. Angle, E. Sementilli, L. Rocco, M. Santara, J. Cabate, D. Kawalick.

*Some guest names may be misspelled as some signatures were illegible.

The meeting began promptly at 7:30 P.M. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairperson Popovic led off with the first agenda item which was the proposal of an 11-story new building at 2500 Westchester Avenue. This is the address of the St. Peter's Episcopal Church and cemetery.

The Bluestone Group and St. Peter representatives gave historical facts about St. Peter's Episcopal Church and its land. The current building is the third building in its history and was built in the 19th Century. The building is landmarked. The Church serves thousands of people through its food pantry. Board Members questioned as to why the Church had not opened a pre-kindergarten when it said it would. The Church disclosed that money was an issue. Board Members made mention of the illegal dumping on Westchester Avenue between Seabury Avenue and Butler Place. The Church disclosed that it does not have the personnel to address the cleanliness issues.

According to the Church, the new building which is on the southern portion of the lot, does not have any graves and/or bodies and is not landmarked. There are two phases. Both buildings will be nine stories. The buildings will front Herschell Street and Westchester Avenue. The district is R6 which permits the height of this building. The development is as-of-right. Board Members wanted to know how many parking spaces and residential units. It will be 193 units in Phase 1 that will be one, two and three bedrooms. Phase II will encompass 126 spaces. Parking will be a minimum of 57 spaces and 36 spaces for Phase II. The project will be affordable through NYC HPD's ELLA program. In Phase I, 20% of the units will be for senior housing. Several Board Members voiced displeasure at school overcrowding and the lack of parking spaces in the project. Because the project as-of-right the developer is not required to perform any studies with regard to schools. The developer asks for a letter of support but the Committee felt the letter of support was premature because the information given is preliminary.

The committee moved on to the final agenda item which was the Blondell Commons ULURP application. The project is a total of 348 units with 225 parking spaces. The development team has an extensive record developing affordable housing. The buildings will be 8 stories. The development team is Exact Capital. Ownership is under HP MJM Housing Development. The

Committee heard the presentation's specifics with regard to the site needing remediation. Fink Avenue will be "de-mapped" in this application. The property is applying for NYC HPD's Mix and Match program in order to have different levels of income affordability. The development team is seeking a rezoning to R7-1 from M1-1. The development team indicated that a one bedroom apartment will be over 500 square feet. There were objections from members of the community on the size of the apartments. Committee members were concerned with the future of Blondell Avenue and the congestion it will bring to schools, roadways and had serious concerns about developing on a site that needed such extensive remediation. At this point, there is no indication of using union labor during development. Committee Members and the public voiced their concern at the height of the buildings, units set aside for the homeless and if a charter school was possible to include in this project. There was also a concern raised by a member of the public that should the Board support this application that it can be changed and, at worse, can become a shelter as what has occurred in other parts of the Bronx.

Regrettably, the meeting devolved into personal attacks between Board Members and the public. In short, the Westchester Square Business Improvement District favors this rezoning application as they are pleased with the amount of parking spaces and the potential consumer growth of the Westchester Square corridor. The meeting ended shortly after this point where the Committee discussed future meetings such as discussing with NYCHA the structural matters of the Throggs Neck Houses and how the Committee can be helpful.

The meeting closed at roughly 10:30 P.M. by a motion made by R. Bieder and seconded by R. Baez and was voted unanimously thereafter.