

Community Board 1
May 21, 2013

Mr. Vinicio Donato, Chairperson of Community Board 1, commenced at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Donato opened the meeting with the first public hearing item from the Department of City Planning (DCP), Mr. Jerry Caliendo, Co-Chair of the Zoning and Variance Committee, read item #C 130244ZSQ, #C090486ZSQ, #C090484ZMQ, and #C1130068ZMQ – The ULURP actions required for the Hallets A Development Company, LLC, in collaboration with the NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation, and the NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA). The developer is seeking a set of discretionary approvals including a rezoning, zoning text amendments and special permits, that will facilitate the transformation of portions of the Hallets Point peninsula on the Astoria waterfront (1st St. from Astoria Blvd. to 26th Ave.) from an area containing low-scale light manufacturing buildings, adjoining a large public housing development, and an underutilized esplanade along the East River into a medium density mixed-use development integrated into the existing NYCHA Astoria Houses campus along with new public access to the riverfront. The proposed development includes 11 buildings ranging from 11 to 31 stories which will provide 2,161 new market rate dwelling units and 483 affordable units through the Inclusionary Housing Program. Five of the 11 proposed buildings are to be constructed on the Astoria Houses campus, including four buildings containing a total of 340 affordable units and one building with 240 market rate units. A total of 68,683 gsf of ground floor retail space is proposed, including a 30,000 sq. ft. FRESH food supermarket, along with 1,176 enclosed accessory parking spaces. Ms. Evie Hantzopoulos asked if they could clarify if they would be providing 483 units for affordable housing. Mr. Fisher stated that the affordable housing will be based on the housing guidelines of 60% of the annual income which is the standard under the City's qualification to meet eligibility for the Inclusionary Housing Program. If an Astoria housing resident becomes one of the tenants they will need to become eligible for a section 8 voucher where they will only pay a portion and the city will the other portion. This would be acceptable as payment of rent. It would for families of 4 and their income roughly \$35,000- \$40,000, but will depend on the specific area median income (AMI) that is assigned when the first building goes up and what the City will allow in terms of rents. It is basically for the working class. Ms. Hantzopoulos asked if the median income of 35,000 to 40,000 would rise over the next few years. Mr. Fisher stated that is done on a city-wide basis and consists of many factors, which is set by the Federal government. The only thing that the City set is based on the area's median income and only 60% of it. He mentioned that they have been in discussions with Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney about doing 202 housing which is Federally financed not City financed that is dedicated to senior citizens. This would depend on what is allocated by the Federal government to the program and 202 Housing would be their first choice. Mr. Daniel Aliberti asked if they would be taking DRIE and SCRIE recipients for the affordable housing. Mr. Fisher stated that as long as they are city programs they would be applicable. Ms. Frances McDonald asked if the SCRIE and DRIE would fall into the 20% affordable. Mr. Fisher replied yes. Ms. McDonald stated she was concerned that many people fall into a gap that is not covered under the current guidelines. Mr. Fisher stated that the housing that they are looking to build is for the Astoria Queens residents not Manhattan or Brooklyn. The property will be waterfront property that is currently being used for warehousing that is not accessible to the public. The project has to have the open space on the waterfront and all the amenities that the City is requiring them to do as part of the development. Debbie Tharrington, Representing Council Member Van Braymer, asked if they had a breakdown of the apartment sizes. Mr. Fisher stated not yet because the formulas have not been given by the City and it also depends on the financing as well. There will be very few studios. There will be 1 and 2 bedrooms and a few 3 bedrooms as well. They will not have an exact count until the formulas are given. Ms. Tharrington asked if there are a specific number of units that will be guaranteed to Astoria residents. Mr. Fisher clarified that the 35,000-40,000 dollars is the maximum annual income. 50% of all the affordable housing will go to local residents, Astoria Houses, then to the community board. Mr. Khuzami asked if they could direct traffic during and after construction on 27th Avenue. He would like to avoid traffic on residential area on 27th Avenue. The ferry which he thinks is a good thing and it will attract people from outside who will be taking the limited parking spaces. Astoria is in need of a performance space or gymnasium and would be a good anchor to bring people to the area. Mr. Fisher stated that they will come up with a plan prior to construction to deal with the traffic and the ferry is not part of their original plan. They feel that in coordination with the school and community that a space like that would be a wonderful multi-purpose space. Mr. Aliberti asked that when they begin building will there be a priority for employment for people within Astoria. Mr. Fisher stated that they are committed to providing opportunities to qualified individuals in the community. Mr. Fisher stated after construction there will be about 300 permanent jobs within the buildings and in the retail sections. Ms. McDonald stated that with the increase in population there will be an increase in children in the area and there will be a need for a school. She asked if the Department of Education (DOE), School Construction Authority (SCA) is aware that there will be a need for schools for the incoming children in the area. Mr. Fisher agreed with Ms. McDonald. Mr. Donato suggested that they reach out to the DOE SCA about the future children population with the construction of this project. Mr. Donato asked the audience to raise their hand if they feel that the project is a decent plan. Mr. Donato stated that at least half the room believes it's a decent plan. Mr. Donato asked if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to speak for or against this application. Mr. McKatice, 30th Avenue resident stated that he and his wife moved into the area in 1991. Steinway Street was a great street to live and was safe at night for walking. In the last 10 years, he does know what department or agency has allowed it to become a zoo, by allow bikini bars and strip clubs to operate there. Over the last 3-4 years they have seen at least 8-9 fight's a week. Last year there was fight that involved 40 kids. Mr. Donato asked if he was speaking on the current item. He replied "No". Mr. Donato said he will be called up again during General Discussion. Mr. Dominic McCaffrey represents local 32BJ stated they support the goals of the project to build several hundred units that are safe and environmentally sound. It will bring amenities to the open space to the neighborhood. They would like to also urge the Board to look at the positive social economic benefit of the project by providing work for those in the community. They would like to ensure that this project is done fairly and addresses the needs of the community as well as be responsible landlords to bring growth to the neighborhood. Ms. Claudia Cogar, President of the NYCHA Astoria Houses Tenant Association, stated that they are in support of the project. She could not say that they are in total agreement with everything, but there are some great things and it is a beautiful project. They have some desires that they think needs to be met, one of them is a state of the art, multi service, multi-ethnic, and multi-resource facility and that could include what has been mentioned earlier as part of the school in that building. The buildings that are going up now are going to be 30 stories. Why not have this type of facility in one of them. This is their desire for this project and they feel that they deserve this for the neglect over the years. Ms. Ruth Haynes Taylor, Astoria Housing Tenant, she has watch all the growth that has been going on in the neighborhood. She agreed with Ms. Cogar and this is a much needed project. They have been waiting for the right developer and she believes they have just found them. Mr. Tyronne Vaughn, resident for 41 yrs, stated he is concerned with the demographic change in the area. He feels that the residents of Astoria Houses will be forced out because he has seen developments like this. It will not stop there, there will be more developments and will turn into condos and co-ops. He asked

exactly where the affordable housing will be placed in the development. Mr. Bob Shankel illustrated on the diagram that the affordable housing will be in one location and then throughout the project. Ms. Lynne Serpie, resident, stated she lives, works, and play in the neighborhood. She asked how many people are estimated to be living in this new complex. She stated that over the past few years hospitals have been closing and they may want to address the issue of access to clinics and what other type of commercial space would be allowed in this project. She would like them to strengthen employment opportunities. She is glad that they are looking into multi modal transportation and asked if there will be a launch pad site since they do kayaking at Halletts Cove. Mr. Fisher stated that there would be about 6,700 people and they have heard from the community that there is a need for medical facilities. There is a limit on retail and how big they can be. There may be an opportunity for a clinic but will have to be looked into. The buildings will be by Hells Gate and the waters are not safe for a launch pad. Their regulatory agreement has the preference for the affordable housing. They are currently working with NYCHA on preference for employment. Ms. Louann Rozman, resident, asked if there was anything on the table in helping people as far as the police and the fire department in dealing with the additional 7,000 people in project area as far as response time. Mr. Fisher stated that they have met with both the fire and police department and are working on creating a safe place. Mr. Ronnie K. Meyer, community advocate, stated he is support of the project. However, he is concerned that the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is correct when it comes to air rights and to ensure the material that is brought in does not cause a health hazard down the line. They reached out to the urban development alliance and the tenant association to ensure that all organizations are able to meet with the developer. He added that the law requires that the contract specify the number of public housing it will provide. They like the plan and would like them to incorporate them into their plan. He asked if all the organization that they have spoken to in the past meet with them at a roundtable with them. He also stated that the school be taken out of the program because it will take 10 to 15 years before it will be built. Mr. Monte Monsoor, 9th Street resident, stated that he has lived there for 26 years and recently retired. He likes the neighborhood and does not want to move. He is favor of the project and the change from the manufacturing and warehouse noise would be good. Ms. Pat Hayes, Astoria Housing resident, stated that she has a good job and does not make enough money, but not for affordable housing. She stated that she needs real numbers because she is not eligible for section 8. She feels the program is good and good for the neighborhood. Mr. Fisher clarified that the numbers he gave is the maximum levels for the affordable housing. If you make more than that but not enough to go into the market rate then this may not be the best option for you. The City sets the guidelines for the subsidized housing and the market sets the guidelines for the rest. The project will not solve everyone's problem. Mr. Jonathon Szott representing Council Member Vallone, Jar noted the Council Member has not taken up a position on the development, as of this date. Lawyers have been working with the developer and changes have been made. There are further discussions dealing with many other items that are viable to the project. He looks forward to hearing from the Board and their conditions regarding this development. As always, thanks the Board for their commitment. Ms. Susan LaMear, stated that she has worked in the area for 12 years. She said the numbers that were on the handout which she received, she did not understand. Will there be the same number of affordable housing as there is currently. Mr. Shankel stated that there will be more affordable housing units with the project. They are not eliminating any affordable housing but in fact are adding an additional 400 affordable housing units. Ms. Crystal Harris, resident for 43 years, stated that the beautification is great but she has a few concerns with the 4 main buildings on 27th Avenue. She asked if the developers will they repair the stress fractures that occur or when the building shifts. The 11 story will be blocking her view and she does not want to see someone else in their apartment. Mr. Fisher stated that they are aware that some views will be block but, they are taking great strides to open up the corridors in the development to create a lot of nice views. He added that there as a need for senior housing in the Astoria community at large. They are trying to design the apartments to be attractive to senior, but there are limits of what they can do according to the City. Mr. Rodney Minor, resident since 1967, stated they would like to make sure that everyone is aware that they do need a state of the art facility for the community and for the youth. Ms. Lucille Hartmann, District Manager, noted that the distribution of approximately 1,500 notices for this evening's Public Hearing was possible because of the help of Ms. Claudia Cogar, Mr. Eric Mathews, Mr. Ronnie Minor, and Mr. Rodney Minor. It would have been a very difficult task without their help. She expressed her sincere appreciation. Ms. Evie Hantzopoulos asked them to clarify what kind of facility they are talking about, is it a youth or performance facility. Mr. Minor stated that in this community they need mentorship for the young men and women. They need somewhere they can go to and learn, a place that can encourage them. Ms. Pauline Suds, resident, stated that what is being presented looks and sounds great. She is in favor of the project, but she has some concerns. She asked if they will have senior housing and will it be a separate building. Mr. Shankel stated that they are looking to create a separate building that would house seniors and incorporate various aspects such as meeting rooms, corridor sizing, and customized for seniors. They need Federal funding and they will be working hard to reach that goal. Ms. Claudia Cogar stated that the multi service/ethnic state of the art building. The building should house early childhood, trade training and resources for the youth, senior center, and a clinic. They want it to be state of the art. Mr. Daniel Thorpe, merchant, stated that they stand with the Astoria houses and this has been a long time coming. Mr. Frank Miller, resident, asked if there is anything planned for the north side. Mr. Donato stated that the project that is being proposed for the north side has not come to the Board yet. There was no further discussion. Item closed.

The next item from the Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA) #99-13-BZ – Premises 32-27 Steinway Street. An application for a special permit to allow a physical culture establishment with existing cellar, first & second floor of above referenced premises. Mt. Todd Dale came up on behalf of the applicant, stated that this is a special permit for a Physical Culture Establishment (PCE), Blink Fitness Gym to operate in a two-story building. The interior is approximately 9,000 sq. ft. It was last occupied by a discount store and has been vacant since. The proposal will allow for Blink Fitness in a C2-4A district which requires a special permit. Blink fitness will occupy the cellar (8,000 sq. ft. for storage) and 1st and 2nd floor (will have the gym & locker rooms) in the building. Blink Fitness is part of the Equinox family. They estimate to have about 30 employees and 15on site at any period of time. The hours are consistent with other gyms within the area and will be open Monday to Saturday from 5:30am to 11pm and Sunday from 7am to 9pm. Ms. McDonald asked if the PCE is handicapped accessible. Mr. Dale replied "Yes". Mr. Donato asked if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to speak for or against this application. Mr. Joseph Pelacino, resident, stated he is against the application. He stated that there a many gyms in the area including 2 to 3 on Steinway Street. He gave examples of the gyms in the area. There is no parking for the shopping and will be less for the gym. Mr. Donato asked if his father owns a gym. Mr. Palisano replied yes, Astoria Sports Complex. No further discussion. Item closed.

Mr. Joseph Risi, Chair of the Consumer Affairs Committee, read the next item from the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) #1462682 – Premises 37-19 Broadway (Olivers). An application to establish an Unenclosed Sidewalk Café with 18 tables & 36 seats. Mr. James O'Sullivan came up on behalf of the applicant. He stated that it will be a restaurant/bar with European and American food. Mr. Risi asked when they would be open. Mr. O'Sullivan replied "June". Mr. Risi asked what their hours would be and if they would be serving alcohol outside. Mr. O'Sullivan stated that they will be open from 11am to 11pm weekdays and weekends until midnight and they will be serving alcohol outside. Mr. Risi asked if there are apartments above the premise. Mr.

O’Sullivan replied “No”. Mr. Risi stated that the Board is concerned with the number of tables and seats they are requesting. Mr. Steve Wygoda stated that the owner is willing to remove 3 tables. Mr. Risi stated that they should remove the tables on the service aisle. Mr. Robert Piazza asked what is across the street. Mr. O’Sullivan stated that Margarita’s is across the street and they also have an outdoor café. Mr. Donato asked if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to speak for or against the application. There was no one. No further discussion. Item closed.

The next item #1463530 – Premises 30-15 31st Avenue. (Boulis Café). An application to establish an Unenclosed Sidewalk Café with 11 tables & 28 seats. George came up on behalf of the applicant. He stated that there is no liquor served, only traditional Greek pastries, and no beer or wine. They originally request 11 tables and 28 seats but will be reducing the seats to 12 seats. The tables and seats will be in front of the café. There is commercial space on the ground floor adjacent to them. Mr. Risi clarified that there will 5 tables and 12 seats reduced from the original request and the applicant has agreed to sign to the reduction. Mr. Daniel Aliberti asked if they will be cooking on the premises. He stated that there will be some baking on-site and the rest will be brought in. Mr. Donato asked if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to speak for or against the application. There was none. No further discussion. Item closed.

The next item #0959237 – Premises 32-90 36th Street. (Café Bar). An application to renew the license to operate an Unenclosed Sidewalk Café with 11 tables & 26 seats. Ms. Monica Constantinas came up on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Risi asked how long have they had their outdoor café license and if they received any violations since their last renewal. Ms. Constantinas stated that they had an outdoor café license for 16 years and they have no violations. Ms. McDonald clarified that their application is for 11 tables and 26 seats. Ms. Constantinas replied “Yes”. Mr. Donato asked if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to speak for or against the application. There was none. No further discussion. Item closed.

The next item #1327665 – Premises 33-21 31st Avenue. (Bareburger). An application to renew the license to operate an Unenclosed Sidewalk Café with 17 tables & 34 seats. Mr. Pelikanos came up on behalf of the application. Mr. Risi asked how long have they had their outdoor café license and if they received any violations since their last renewal. Mr. Pelikanos stated that they had an outdoor license for over 2 years and no violations. Mr. Donato asked if Bareburger is a franchise. Mr. Pelikanos replied “Yes”. Mr. Aliberti asked if there are tables in the back as well. Mr. Pelikanos stated that have a couple of benches. Mr. Donato asked if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to speak for or against this application. Mr. Jose Gonzalez stated that Bareburger has helped their school tremendously during the last few years. They volunteer and help with fundraising. They are great for the community and the school (PS85Q). He is favor of the application.

The next item was an application to operate a Cabaret at 34-38 38 Street, 4th Fl. (Astoria Complex Catering). Mr. Frank Aleveco, representative, and Steven Palisano, owner, stated that there is an eatery on the 4th floor and would like to provide catering service as well. Mr. Palisano stated that they would like to change the previous history and would like to use the space for small parties such as birthday, wedding, etc. Mr. Aleveco stated they will be reducing the public assembly number to 200 persons and have installed double pane windows to keep the sound below 90 decibels. They will inform guest to respect their neighbors, he is aware of the problems in the past. Mr. Risi asked if this would be open to the public. Mr. Aleveco stated yes, only private parties. Mr. Risi asked if they will have security and parking provided for these parties. Mr. Aleveco stated that they have a company that will be providing security, if it is necessary, but do not feel it is needed. They have 33 parking spaces any additional parking will be street parking. Mr. Risi stated that in the past there was an issue with noise. Ms. McDonald asked why they need a cabaret license. Mr. Risi stated it allows dancing. Mr. Piazza asked what they have on the 1st floor. Mr. Aleveco stated that there is a pool and sports field. Mr. Stamatiades asked if they are going to rent out the facility for other than private functions. Mr. Aleveco replied “No”. Mr. Donato asked if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to speak for or against the application. Mr. Mike Hughes, resident, stated that when the facility came in they cleaned up the area. He is in favor of the application. Ms. Maria Velencia, resident, stated that she is in support of the application and the family is a positive influence for the neighborhood. No further discussion. Item closed.

VOTING:

Mr., Caliendo reiterated that public hearing item from DCA #C 130244ZSQ, #C090486ZSQ, #C090484ZMQ & #C1130068ZMQ – The preceding ULURP applications are required by the Hallets A Development Company, LLC, in collaboration with the NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation, and the NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA). The developer is seeking a set of discretionary approvals including a rezoning, zoning text amendments and special permits, that will facilitate the transformation of portions of the Hallets Point peninsula on the Astoria waterfront (1st St. from Astoria Blvd. to 26th Ave.) from an area containing low-scale light manufacturing buildings, adjoining a large public housing development, and an underutilized esplanade along the East River into a medium density mixed-use development integrated into the existing NYCHA Astoria Houses campus along with new public access to the riverfront. The proposed development includes 11 buildings ranging from 11 to 31 stories which will provide 2,161 new market rate dwelling units and 483 affordable units through the Inclusionary Housing Program. Five of the 11 proposed buildings are to be constructed on the Astoria Houses campus, including four buildings containing a total of 340 affordable units and one building with 240 market rate units. A total of 68,683 gsf of ground floor retail space is proposed, including a 30,000 sf FRESH food supermarket, along with 1,176 enclosed accessory parking spaces. Mr. Caliendo stated that the committee unanimously recommends approval of the application with the stipulation that 1) the developer to provide a youth center facility for multi-purpose use similar to the Boys and Girls Club in Astoria with indoor facilities for youth for this community separate and apart from the proposed school; 2) the restricted declarations to be put in place to memorialize that amenities as presented in the design goals in graphic and verbal presentation such as street traffic control, narrowing Astoria Blvd, monitoring of construction traffic, mass transit amenities, waterfront amenities, open spaces, etc...; 3) the developers are also to investigate increase, upgrading and improving inter-structure, such as city sewers and sanitation service; 4) the developer should also provide and assist with Department of Transportation for perpendicular parking on 27th Avenue, seconded by Mr. Peter Pallos. No further discussion. Mr. Donato called for a vote. Motion called and carried unanimously.

The next item was from the BSA #99-13-BZ – Premises 32-27 Steinway Street. An application for a special permit to allow a physical culture establishment with existing cellar, first & second floor of above referenced premises. The committee met and recommends approval of the application, seconded by Mr. Babor. No further discussion. Mr. Donato called for a vote. Motion called and carried unanimously.

Mr. Risi reiterate public hearing item from DCA3. #1462682 – Premises 37-19 Broadway (Olivers). An application to establish an Unenclosed Sidewalk Café with 18 tables & 36 seats. The committee met and recommends approval of the application subject to no service aisle for the first 30' north of Broadway, Seconded by Ed Babor. No further discussion. Mr. Donato called for a vote. Motion called and carried with 2 Against.

The next item #1463530 – Premises 30-15 31st Avenue. (Boulis Café). An application to establish an Unenclosed Sidewalk Café with 11 tables & 28 seats. The committee met and recommends approval of application subject to the reduction to 6 tables and 12 seats, seconded by Mr. Ryan. No further discussion. Mr. Donato called for a vote. Motion called and carried with 2 against.

The next item #0959237 – Premises 32-90 36th Street. (Café Bar). An application to renew the license to operate an Unenclosed Sidewalk Café with 11 tables & 26 seats. The committee met and recommends approval of the application, seconded by Mr. Pallos. No further discussion. Mr. Donato called for a vote. Motion called and carried unanimously.

The next item #1327665 – Premises 33-21 31st Avenue. (Bareburger). An application to renew the license to operate an Unenclosed Sidewalk Café with 17 tables & 34 seats. The committee met and recommends approval of the application, seconded by Ms. Demakos. No further discussion. Mr. Donato called for a vote. Motion called and carried with 1 against.

The next item was an application to operate a Cabaret at 34-38 38th Street, 4th Fl. (Astoria Complex Catering). The committee met and recommends approval of the application subject to examination of stipulation on adult entertainment, seconded by Ms. Demakos. No further discussion. Mr. Donato called for a vote. Motion called and carried unanimously.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Mr. Anthony Pappas, Professor at St. Johns, stated that the Board should urge Senator Gianaris and Senator Simotas to discussion the Judiciary committee with him.

Mary, Social Media Executive Committee for Libraries, stated that the budget should be out shortly and budget cuts are anticipated. She asked for the Board's support. A petition and postcards were made available for the public to sign.

A parent of a student at PS85Q, stated that there is a need for an additional speed bump on 29th Street as well as a sign. Mr. Donato asked him to prepare a statement and submit it to Ms. Hartmann at CB1.

BUSINESS SESSION:

Mr. Stamatiades motioned to accept the minutes of April's Board meeting. Motion seconded by Mr. Prentzas. Motion called and carried unanimously

Ms. Mary O'Hara, Chair of Housing Committee, reported that in January there was a tax abatement change that would affect the abatement for co-ops and condos. The law that was passed will give a tax break for residential co-ops and condos helping to offset a tax burden between their units and single, two, and three family homes. Another change is the elimination of the benefit for units used as a second home, held in trust or held in an LLC. You will no longer qualify for the tax break.

Mr. Robert Piazza, Chair of Transportation Committee, reported that his committee met with DOT regarding Vernon Blvd. and changes to be made on the roadway. Thirty-five parking spaces will be returned in the vicinity of Rainy Park. Mr. Piazza motioned to send a letter to DOT in support of these changes, seconded Mr. Babor. Mr. Donato called for a vote. Motion called and carried.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS:

Ann Bruno reported the street events have started and so far no problems.

There was no further business before the Board; Mr. Pallos motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Babor. Motion called and carried unanimously.