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**The City of New York  
Community Board 8 Manhattan  
Housing Committee  
Joint with the Zoning & Development Committee, and Health, Seniors  
and Social Services Committee  
Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center  
415 East 93<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Dining Room A & B  
Wednesday, January 30, 2019, 6:35 p.m.**

*Please note: The resolutions contained in the committee minutes are recommendations submitted by the committee chair to the Community Board. At the monthly full board meeting, the resolutions are discussed and voted upon by all members of Community Board 8 Manhattan.*

**Minutes**

**CB8 members present:** Elizabeth Ashby, Alida Camp, Anthony Cohn, Billy Freeland, Alexandra Harrington\*, Ed Hartzog\*, Lorraine Johnson\*, Rebecca Lamorte\*, Rita Popper\*, Peggy Price\*, Barbara Rudder, Tricia Shimamura, Marco Tamayo, Adam Wald, Sharon Weiner

**Members of the Public:** Stephanie Chan (Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's office), Hally Chu (Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's office), Luisa Lopez (Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's Office), Abby Damsky (City Councilman Ben Kallos' office), George Janes, Pakhi Kane, Sara Kamillatos, Wilfredo Lopez (City Councilman Ben Kallos' office), Greg Morris, Barry Rehfeld

**Elected Officials:** New York State Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, New York City Councilman Ben Kallos

**Absent:** David Liston`

**Unexcused Absence:** Bessie Schachter^, Elaine Walsh\*

**Excused Absence:** Barbara Chocky\*

\*Housing Committee member

^Public Member

`Member Community Board 8 – Health, Seniors & Social Services Committee

The Meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Community Board 8 Chair, Alida Camp, who presided over the hearing of the three committees.

**1. Public Hearing regarding the Fetner Properties' infill construction project at NYCHA Holmes Towers.**

The chair noted that this was the second hearing of these three committees and that the first joint meeting had been held in November at which time the committees agreed to re-convene in January for this hearing. – she then went on to introduce Hal Fetner and his team from Fetner Properties, Matthew

Charney from NYCHA, acknowledged the presence of representatives from the Comptroller, Scott Stringer's office as well as the attorney for Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer. In addition, to her attorney, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez and New York City Councilman Ben Kallos also attended the meeting.

Councilman Kallos began by noting that the safety ratings for Holmes Towers had gone down during the past three years and that the councilman had given \$500,000 in grants to Holmes for a security system that had not yet been spent. Councilman Kallos also noted that by moving the new building to the north of the existing structures there wouldn't be an issue with shadows – as opposed to the current proposed location. In addition, the councilman suggested that the existing tenants should be permitted to move into the new building and have the new tenants move into the existing buildings, after they are fixed up.

The Councilman also noted that they Mayor will be requesting three zoning overrides for this project and that NYCHA is the worst landlord in the City. With respect to Asphalt Green, the Councilman noted that they wanted to be a partner in this project – as such, he suggested they should give current residents of Stanley Isaacs and Holmes Towers membership cards now.

Matthew Charney, the representative from NYCHA, spoke next and noted that the entire portfolio of buildings under NYCHA's care is comparable to the entire public housing stock of cities such as Pittsburgh, Tampa and Cleveland and that the federal government has not kept up with support for the capital needs of the agency for quite some time and the total amount needed is \$32 billion. Mr. Charney went on to note that all the proceeds from Fetner Properties - \$25 million – will stay at Holmes for capital improvements. Specifically, new windows and façade work. These repairs are supposed to happen at the same time the new building is going up.

Hal Fetner went next and made a point of noting that he and his team had “been here 22 times” to engage the community and to address any misconceptions about him and the project. He did concede that there would be three Mayoral zoning overrides needed for the project. The first would be to override the minimum distance related to the ramp for the proposed recreational space, the second would be to override the “sky exposure plane” requirements for the new building and the third override would be for a 2.3% open space deficiency.

With respect to Asphalt Green and their involvement with programs and recreational activities at the complex – it was noted that they already provide free access for approximately 50,000 people a year.

With respect to the new building, the developer stated that they had an agent for the affordable portion and that studios were going for \$367 a month and that the income band for affordable apartments would be from 30-60% of AMI.

Rose Bergin, the tenant representative from Holmes Towers expressed concerns about the repairs to the existing buildings. In particular, the lack of discussion regarding infrastructure – i.e., pipes. Moreover, there were also concerns about priorities – that is, instead of new windows and façade work, perhaps the developer could use the money to address elevator and water issues that regularly plague the complex. Ms. Bergin also noted that Fetner was not “giving” the residents anything.

Having joined the meeting, the Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer made a few comments about the deal and her concerns. First, was her adamant belief that this project should have gone through the ULURP process and that she could have gotten a better deal had the public had a chance to be involved and heard. She noted that it made no sense for the ULURP process to be circumvented and that at the appropriate time she and her colleagues are going to fight to make sure this project goes through a review process and the public is heard. She did not rule out the possibility of a court challenge.

Thereafter the public had an opportunity to express their questions and concerns to the City and the developer. The overwhelming majority of speakers were against the project for a variety of reasons. One resident, Letitia Taylor, who grew up in Holmes Towers spoke of how the new building was a monstrosity and that it would take the sunlight and breeze that used to blow through the open space in the complex. She noted that the new building would have a negative effect on her child's upbringing.

Saundrea Coleman, noted that tenants had marched on Gracie Mansion, held a press conference at City Hall and sent petitions to their elected representatives to express their discontent with the project. While Matthew Charney acknowledged that they had heard the complaints and dissatisfaction with the project, they were still compelled to go forward as best they could because of the pressing need for funds for capital repairs.

On this subject, many residents also expressed skepticism with the \$25 million being spent on windows and façade work. In particular, it was suggested that the capital needs for Holmes Towers and Stanley Isaacs were closer to \$32 million and possibly more. The \$25 million being set aside for repairs is to come from Fetner's payment for a 99-year ground lease on the site.

Many people expressed concerns that this was far below what the City and NYCHA could have gotten for land. Indeed, Mr. Charney admitted that an appraisal placed the value of the land at closer to \$60 million. The board asked to see the appraisal and the environmental impact statement that was done for the project – which had heretofore not been provided.

Given the strong opposition to the project – as expressed by the large turnout and extensive comments (the meeting lasted over 5 hours) – from the public, the lack of information provided to the board (i.e., the EIS and appraisal), the failure to go through the ULURP process and, the elected officials' adamant stance to fight the project, the Committees began a discussion regarding a possible resolution.

In effect, the members wished to stop any further progress until additional information and input could be heard. As such, the following resolution was proposed.

**WHEREAS** the public and local elected officials continue to express opposition to the proposed infill project at Holmes Towers; and,

**WHEREAS** the Fetner Properties' is currently expected to pay \$25 million for a 99 year ground lease at the proposed infill site at Holmes Towers; and,

**WHEREAS** representatives of NYCHA have admitted that there is an appraisal for as much as \$60 million for the same aforesaid lease; and,

**WHEREAS** Community Board 8 and the public have not had an opportunity review the aforesaid appraisal; and,

**WHEREAS** the current capital needs for Holmes Towers exceeds the proposed \$25 million lease payment by Fetner; and,

**WHEREAS** the underlying purpose of infill projects at NYCHA properties is to raise money for the outstanding capital needs of the vast complex of NYCHA buildings – currently estimated at \$32 billion for the entire portfolio of buildings – and the aforesaid appraisal would seem to indicate the potential for an additional \$35 million for capital repairs; and,

**WHEREAS** the public and Community Board 8 have also not been provided the Environmental Impact Study for the proposed infill site; and,

**WHEREAS** the City and NYCHA have promised to provide Community Board 8 and the public the Environmental Impact Study after the January 30 joint meeting of the Housing Committee, Zoning & Development Committee and, the Health, Seniors and Social Services Committees; and,

**WHEREAS**, the project has not yet broken ground and the public, Community Board 8 and the relevant elected officials have all expressed reservations and concerns about the project,

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** Community Board 8 again calls upon the Mayor to refrain from issuing a zoning override for this project; and,

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** Community Board 8 calls upon the City to refrain from moving forward with this project until it and the public have had an opportunity to review the Environmental Impact Statement and Appraisal for the proposed infill site at Holmes Towers.

After discussion, the Committee passed the Resolution 13-0-0 (Yes –Alida Camp, Anthony Cohn, Billy Freeland, Alexandra Harrington\*, Ed Hartzog\*, Lorraine Johnson\*, Rebecca Lamorte\*, Rita Popper\*, Peggy Price\*, Barbara Rudder, Tricia Shimamura, Marco Tamayo, Adam Wald.

**Old Business.**

There was no old business.

**New Business.**

There was no new business and the meeting was adjourned at 11:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alida Camp, Chair, Community Board 8

Minutes prepared by Ed Hartzog, Co-Chair, Housing Committee