

**COMMUNITY BOARD SIX
ECONOMIC/WATERFRONT/COMM. DEV. & HOUSING COMMITTEE
MARCH 15, 2010**

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT:

P. BLAKE	S. BURZIO	C. DAVIS
J. FRANCIS	Y. GIRELA	R. LUFTGLASS
S. MILLER	D. PECHEFSKY	D. REISS
Y. ROMAN	B. STOLTZ	

EXCUSED:

B. ATKINS	H. CHERNOFF	E. FELDER
B. LESTER	C. MOLINARI	G. O'CONNELL
L. SONES	P. THOMAS	

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 6:50pm. The minutes were recorded by Judi Francis.

The Co-chair, David Reiss introduced City Council Member Brad Lander who thanked Michael Schnapp, his Policy Director, and Rick Luftglass for their work on the stalled development website. He outlined some of the specific sites that are seriously stalled for a range of reasons mostly because they over-reached or had serious violations in their plans and are now a "huge blight" in our communities.

Lander's team took the Department of Buildings information but updated the data, making it both interactive and more useful to his district (39th). The team found almost two times as many sites than the DOB had reported. (16 DOB reported sites in CB6 grew to 26 in just the 39th District portion). He showed the committee several examples of buildings listed on the site with typical issues of violations including inadequate funds but with some progress on some of the properties.

Goals of the website:

1. To use it as an organizing tool for communities.
2. To report safety issues.
3. To report compliance issues.
4. To contact 311 to complain about issues like hazardous chemicals, for example.

Where there is nothing obviously "wrong", the site calls attention to the problems that the DOB is now aware of.

Councilman Lander said that beyond these goals, he is exploring legislation, as follows:

1. To charge a surcharge to owner above the tax rates that are low as they wait for building to be finished.
2. To get a re-closable lien (with Albany).
3. Amend state law to exclude bad-actors who buy these properties at auction.

While there is no magic bullet, Michael Schnapp stressed that information helps; over time, legislation will also help. But it is a start in what is obviously a long and complicated process for most sites. The question is how do we get the DOB to focus on these sites?

Councilman Lander also outlined how predatory landlords have, incredibly, called in false complaints on his neighbor litigants!

Question: If the city has the authority to increase fines, why aren't fines set at very high levels?

Answer: That is a policy question that Councilman Lander is looking at, along with criminal prosecutions. More is forthcoming.

Another idea that the Councilman suggested is having a statute of limitations on the time that construction sheds are allowed to block sidewalks – something he will also explore.

Use of eminent domain was also a question that someone suggested – but that might be a longer course for solution and may be more costly.

A suggestion was also made to look at which sites got abatements or other special funds from the city over the past 8 years and call those sites out, particularly in the face of the strong real estate lobby that will want those special deals to continue.

A motion was made to thank Brad, Rick and Michael for their heroic efforts to cull this information and get it to the community. All agreed.

Brad suggested that CB6 consider forming a committee specifically dedicated to deal with DOB violations, as CB7 does. Discussion followed and the committee decided to ask Craig Hammerman and Richard Bashner to look at what CB7 does and if we could/should take this function on, considering having someone report back to us from CB7.

Motion was made to pass the minutes of the previous meeting with the amendment that they include the two motions passed unanimously at the full CB6 Board meeting this month regarding cold ironing at the cruise ship terminal.

VOTE: 10.....AYES 0.....NAYS 1.....ABSTENTION
MOTION APPROVED.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm.