

Housing/Block Association Committee

Meeting

December 4th, 2024

Dawn Pankey
Fatima
Symone Sylvester
Ralph khawly
Jeannette W
Mary Bell-Downs

Ann Hudson
Dr. Carol Reneau
Ay Leonie Logan
Dawn Pankey
Ayanna G

Guest

Yves Vilus – Erasmus Neighborhood Federation

The meeting of the Housing/Block Association was called to order by the Chairperson of the Board, Dr. Carol Reneau. Dr Reneau welcomed attendees and mentioned the committee did not meet in November. She informed the attendees there were no responses to the newsletter circulated during the General Community Board meeting. She said the committee has a guest and he will discuss housing issues, including vacancies and affordability, as well as parking concerns and community involvement. She then introduced the guest speaker, Mr. Eves Vilas, from the Erasmus Neighborhood Federation (ENF)

Mr. Eves Vilas explains that the organization was established in 1979. At that time, the area was heavily Jewish to African American and Caribbean American. The residents came together to organize and worked closely with the Holy Cross church approximately a quarter block from the office. The coming together addressed housing issues and has expanded to other programs such as economic development commercial revitalization, childcare and other social programs.

ENF focused heavily on housing because that's what the community needs. There was also a focus on basic service like heat and hot water and to fix apartments. Presently, developers are buying properties, especially those next to each other and demolish them and build multiple dwelling units. The prices were outrageous.

Mr. Vilas said:

- There is a list of buildings in the community with vacancies.
- Some buildings have special programs for low-income individuals, but most are still empty.
- The area is gentrifying quickly, pushing out current residents and making it difficult to find affordable housing.

Dr. Reneau said the community board will set up assistance for residents who need help filling out online housing applications.

- A newsletter with contact information for available properties will be sent to the community.
- A database is being created for a block association, and residents can provide their information to be included.

She also reported, The City of Yes housing plan was approved by the city council with modifications. The plan aims to increase housing development through zoning reforms and allow for accessory dwelling units. There are concerns about the impact on housing density and affordability in Community Board 17.

There were complaints reported regarding Cones being used to reserve parking spaces on certain blocks is causing tension among neighbors. Parking is a major issue in the neighborhood, with school buses and double parkers taking up spaces.

Ms. Fraser encourage residents to call 311 to report parking violations and other issues in the community and contact the board's office with the complaint number.

Action items

- Community Board 17 to help find a solution to help residents afford the high rents in the area
- Explore partnerships with organizations or philanthropists to subsidize rental costs for low-income individuals
- Mr. Vilus will provide a contact person or phone number for the buildings on the list
- Mr. Vilus will share any letters or information he receives from developers with the community board
- Miss Sylvester suggested directing tenants to HPD's website for lotteries and providing them with information on violations, owners, and managers of buildings
- Mr. Vilus will identify more buildings and share their information with the community board
- Mr. Vilus to set up staff to assist community members with online housing applications
- Dr. Reneau will gather contact information for properties mentioned by Mr. Vilus and include it in a newsletter format with information to be sent to everyone in the community
- Will be distributed Community Board meetings
- Send an email with the link to the modifications of the City of Yes housing plan to all meeting attendees
- Encourage everyone to call 311 and provide complaint numbers to the community board
- Discuss cone parking issues further and find a resolution within the community
- Contact the 67 Precinct for towing issues
- Continue calling 311 for issues with parking, hydrants, and double parkers
- Email Miss Freezer and the housing department to get involved in community tasks
- Attendees were encouraged to contact the Board's office and complete the committee application form so they can be included in all meeting mailing.

Ms. Fraser was asked to email the link for the City of Yes to all members.

Unfinished Business – none

Adjournment – Ms. Dawn Pankey made a motion to adjourn and seconded by Fatima