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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD SIX
211 EAST 43RD STREET, SUITE 1404
NEW YORK, NY 10017

**Manhattan Community Board Six
Meeting of the Housing, Homeless, & Human Rights Committee
February 7, 2019, 6:30pm
CB6 Office • 211 East 43rd Street, Suite 1404**

Meeting Minutes

Present: Members Carin van der Donk (Chair), Claire Brennan, Andrew Gross, Rich Mintz, Matt Roberts; Public Member Philip Napolitano.

Excused: Rajesh Nayar, Kyle Athayde, Aaron Humphrey, Abigail Krusemark, Joseph Parrish, Claude. L. Winfield.

Absent: None.

Guests: CB6 Board Chair Molly Hollister; CB6 Assistant District Manager Cody Osterman; CB6 residents Gontran Fortuna, Kathy Kenlock, Gilbert Robichaud; Brian Lafferty on behalf of Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer; New York City Council Member Mark Levine.

Call to Order and Adoption of the Agenda/Previous Meeting's Minutes

Ms. van der Donk called the meeting to order at 6:38pm.

A motion to adopt the agenda was made, seconded, and passed. A motion to adopt the minutes from the meeting of January 22, 2019 was made, seconded, and passed.

Committee Business

Item 1: Presentation from Council Member Levine's office on Intro. 1234-2018 and Intro. 1261-2018 regarding hate crime prevention

Mr. Gross addressed the Committee regarding the increase in hate crimes (including but not limited to anti-semitic hate crimes) in New York City, and two items of legislation related to hate crime prevention that had been introduced in the City Council in response, Intro 1234-2018 sponsored by Council Member Levine (who was present),

and Intro 1261-2018 sponsored by Council Member Deutsch. He noted that we experienced a very serious incident here in CB6, the desecration of Sutton Place Synagogue in October 2017.

Council Member Levine, representing the 7th District (encompassing most of the West Side of Manhattan from 96th Street north to Washington Heights), addressed the committee. He noted that his district had been the scene of multiple hate crimes, including the painting of offensive symbols inside the office of a Barnard professor. He observed that hate crimes had risen in 2016, again in 2017, again in 2018, and apparently again in the first month of 2019. He said: “We need to be united in combatting [hate crimes], and the city has to up its game, going past the NYPD to look at every agency in the city that needs to be mobilized. We do this with many other challenges we face in the city, where we create a mayoral office that has the power of the mayor’s name behind it to bring together agencies on a citywide priority.”

CM Levine called for mobilizing the Department of Education to teach a curriculum in schools that would improve mutual understanding between groups, and for involving the Commission on Human Rights, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and other agencies, which would require a mayoral agency to manage and enforce collaboration and cooperation.

He noted that his bill (Intro 1234-2018) creating such a mayoral agency had passed [on 1/24/2019] and was then waiting for action by the mayor. [Receiving no action by the mayor, it was automatically enacted 30 days later per City Charter rule.]

An attendee noted that the sponsorship of the bill seemed to include a broad geographic and cultural coalition. CM Levine replied that one silver lining of the rise in hate crimes was the coming together of different factions within the city to build bridges. He said that for CB6 to approve a resolution in support of the measure would be helpful, both to give it impetus and to indicate what we would want such an office to do, because pressure from community organizations would help ensure that the Mayor adequately funded the new agency.

Ms. Hollister asked whether the NYPD Hate Crimes Unit (HCU) was in support, and CM Levine replied that he believed they were. He noted that at the precinct level, incidents are often not categorized as hate crimes even though common sense suggests that they are, and this means those incidents never reach the HCU at all. He said, “We do need training of first responders to understand how to identify hate crimes and how to respond sensitively. Whether the victim is a transgender New Yorker, a Muslim New Yorker, a Sikh New Yorker, a person being attacked on the basis of their religion or race—we need additional training of front-line enforcers. We need to get the DAs involved as well, because sometimes we lose the trail [on an incident] after an arrest.”

Mr. Gross agreed that the HCU was a responsive body, not a preventative one, and CM Levine replied, “We’d love to put the Hate Crimes Unit out of business.”

Mr. Gross asked whether the Committee could draft a single resolution that encompassed both CM Levine's and CM Deutsch's bill. CM Levine said he supported CM Deutsch's bill but that he did not know the details of it well enough to speak about it at length. There was a brief discussion about whether to draft a joint resolution with the CB6 Health & Education Committee.

Ms. van der Donk said that CM Levine's bill seemed to lack provision for hate crime prevention. Mr. Levine, bringing up the 2018 incident at the Metropolitan Republican Club, noted that the NYPD was slow to understand the implications of having the self-styled "Proud Boys" involved in a street attack, and that he believed the city was not devoting adequate resources to tracking white supremacist hate groups within the five boroughs. (He referred to the 2018 incident involving Identity Europa at Fort Tryon Park.) He encouraged CB6 to mention hate group tracking in any resolution.

Ms. Van der Donk asked about whether we might request more training for children on how to recognize and defuse a hate-crime situation and to show solidarity with people at risk, referring to the Swedish "Order of the Teaspoon" movement. CM Levine said yes.

After a brief discussion, the group asked Mr. Gross to draft a resolution expressing CB6's support for both CM Levine's and CM Deutsch's bills, and the Committee thanked CM Levine for his remarks.

Item 2: Discussion on resolution supporting the Housing Justice for All Campaign's Universal Rent Control legislative package

There was a discussion of a resolution in development that would support the state legislative bills to close loopholes and make reforms in state rent regulation law, known informally as the Universal Rent Control legislative package, being advocated for by the coalition of groups known as Housing Justice for All.

Ms. Van der Donk noted that most of the bills in the package had been drafted and introduced, except for legislation restricting the offloading of Major Capital Improvement (MCI) costs on tenants (which State Senator Deborah Glick was likely to sponsor), and legislation related to amendments to the Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA) that primarily established a rent regulation scheme for parts of Nassau, Rockland, and Westchester Counties (which senators representing those jurisdictions were likely to sponsor). There was brief discussion of minor changes to wording in the draft resolution not affecting its import.

Mr. Gross asked whether the Committee needed to anticipate and respond to counterarguments from the real estate industry in the resolution. Mr. Osterman cited an article sponsored by the Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY) making the assertion that rent stabilization only benefits high-income earners. Ms. Van der Donk replied that when units are removed from rent stabilization, they are removed permanently, stepping up their base rent for all future tenants. She noted that the current rent regulations were

enacted as a result of market distortions that kept rents high, which distortions have become more extreme in the intervening decades.

Mr. Osterman also noted that landlords would object to tightening the MCI regulations on the grounds that dissuading them from recovering the cost of capital improvements would incentivize them to let apartments go into disrepair. He said that was the reason the MCI legislation was being introduced later: the legislation on this issue is more complex than others, because it has to mandate and enforce that rents are reduced to their prior levels once MCIs have been amortized. There was a brief discussion of the need to press the City Council and the Mayor to set aside proper resources for enforcement of housing laws.

After a brief discussion, the Committee (not having a quorum to act formally) informally resolved to caucus with a quorum during the next Full Board meeting in advance of presenting this resolution to the Full Board for action.

Chair's Report

The Chair waived giving a report.

Old/New Business

There was a brief discussion about the Committee's ongoing effort to watch Displacement Alert Project reports produced by the Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development (ANHD), to identify buildings within Community District 6 where informal efforts by landlords to displace tenants through harassment or inaction might be underway. The Committee discussed the building at 218 East 27th Street, which lost 18 rent-stabilized units within a year, and Ms. Van der Donk agreed to investigate further.

Adjournment

Ms. Brennan made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Mr. Roberts and passed. Ms. Van der Donk declared the meeting adjourned.

Minutes submitted by: Rich Mintz