

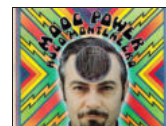


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Wednesday, May 30, 2018

CB4 Mulls Air, Street, Pier Matters

Added by **Scott Stiffler** on October 14, 2015.

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Land use lawyer Jay Segal speaks on behalf of Extell Development's petition for transfer of unused development rights. Photo by Winnie McCroy.

BY WINNIE MCCROY | Nearly 100 community members came together on the evening of Oct. 7 at Fulton Auditorium in Chelsea for the monthly full board meeting of Community Board 4 (CB4). The watchword for the meeting was development — particularly, the petition for transfer of unused development rights for properties on W. 24th St. to Extell Development and chef Anthony Bourdain's rumored opening of an international food hall at Pier 57.

First Vice Chair Delores Rubin led the Public Hearing session, where the community weighed in on the Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA) application for the transfer of unused development rights to 136 W. 24th St.

"Normally air rights would be transferred if they were in the same zoning district. They would have requisite congruity," explained land use lawyer Jay Segal, who spoke at the meeting on

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behalf of Extell Development. The real estate company is attempting to secure the 29,000 floor area ratio (FAR) of unused air rights from the co-op at 136 W. 24th St., and tack it on to their property at 142 W. 24th St., so that they can build up.

FROM OUR SISTER NEWSPAPERS

THE VILLAGER

Extell entity, which is one building away, wants to use these 29,000 feet. The co-op wants to sell it to them. But in order to do it, two things need to happen. The BSA must be able to use the variance, we have to form a "chain" between the buildings, and we have to get the city to approve it. It rained on their parade, but they danced on.

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DOWNTOWN EXPRESS

Now said it's for a commercial building, and that would allow a hotel," said a very hot issue in that neighborhood. This is the third applicant who has come forward. This fellow will invest in unused development rights in the area. Police Blotter: Week of May 24

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All booked up: CB1 worries zoning change will push more hotels into crowded Downtown

announcement of an Oct. 24 show at Ailey Center — some area residents came forward to let the board know that they were not happy with the trouble they'd seen on the streets.

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The Hudson Yards / Hell's Kitchen Alliance BID spoke in support of Agenda Item 18, a letter to the NYC BID Association regarding a Street Vendor Study, which concerned the possible introduction of a local law to relax existing rules pertaining to street vendors.

Some people want the permit cap on vendors to be removed. While the HY / HKA agrees that the street permit system is not working, they believe changes should begin with better enforcement of the rules we have. They have talked to business owners, elected officials and vendors themselves, and believe that lifting the cap and allowing any number of permits is not the answer. The caps should remain until there is time to get the system under control and study it. Later in the evening, CB4 approved Item 18, asking the BID to conduct future studies.

Also appearing at the Public Session to complain about the current climate on the streets was Carly Nordstrom, who lives near the Bowery Residents' Committee's homeless shelter at 131 W. 25th St (btw. Sixth & Seventh Aves.).

“[Executive Director] Muzzy Rosenblatt said that BRC programs created a safe environment for its clients and neighbors, and he claims they don't stand outside or loiter in the streets,” said Nordstrom. “But there is public urination, fighting and drug deals. I have personally witnessed these and reported them to the BRC. The first response is usually, ‘Are you sure they're from the BRC?’ The NYPD has been assigned to patrol the block for eight-hour shifts, but it's not working. BRC is an unresponsive neighbor.”

Nordstrom concluded that the facility was too large, and that the high concentration of homeless people gave rise to an unacceptable street presence, making the area unsafe since they opened in 2011.

GAY CITY NEWS

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Connie Kurtz, Lesbian Activist, Artist, Dies at 82

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HOP: Nabe Complaints Led to New Parade Route

B4 member Betty

EAST VILLAGER NEWS

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Carla Nordstrom, who has “personally witnessed” public urination, fighting, and drug deals on W. 25th St. (btw. Sixth & Seventh Aves.), connects these incidents to the presence of Bowery Residents’ Committee on that block. Photo by Winnie McCroy.

Later in the Public Session, CB4 public member and longtime BRC Community Advisory Board (CAB) member Pamela Wolff spoke candidly, supporting Nordstrom’s assessment.

“This is a terrible situation for people who live there, but BRC offers incredible services to people in this city,” said Wolff. “I have served on their CAB since the beginning, and I personally feel that the only real solution is to find a way to reduce the size of the population of that facility. It was originally two hundred, and is now three-hundred-twenty-eight. It’s too big. I’m sorry to be saying that, but it needs to become a political urgency to reduce that population.”

HOW TO SPEND A MILLION DOLLARS

“People have hundreds of ideas on how to spend a million dollars,” said former CB4 Chair and current City Councilmember Corey Johnson, who stopped by the meeting to share the latest news on Participatory Budgeting. Johnson said his office had already held four Neighborhood Assemblies where citizens weighed in on how they’d like see \$1 million spent in their community. Anyone who lives in the 3rd Council District and is 14 years old can vote. Contact Matt Green in Johnson’s office by sending an email to mgreen@council.nyc.gov.

Johnson also gave a quick update on his work with the City Council, which included unveiling 12 bills last week on the steps of City Hall to reform the Department of Buildings (DOB) and get accountability in the department.

“The DOB is one of the most difficult agencies for an average New Yorker to navigate. It’s hard even for CB4 members,” said Johnson. “These bills take a more proactive role to protecting tenants. Bill Borock from the Council of Chelsea Block Associations has looked into these owners who say that their building is unoccupied, even though there are still thirty people living in the building. They don’t use the proper safety mechanisms to make sure people’s lives are not a living hell.”

Johnson has a bill that takes aim at this issue: landlords who falsely claim buildings are unoccupied when they still have tenants. He also helped pass an amendment in the City Council to the Schools Diversity Accountability Act, which helps gather more data on school arrests, use of metal detectors, and handcuffs. This data found that across the city, young people of color, disabled, and LGBT youth are targeted at a much higher rate.

“Instead of using prevention and counseling, the cops come in and arrest them,” said Johnson. “I even heard a report of a six-year-old who was cuffed and brought into the station because a teacher thought they were misbehaving.”

Johnson also spoke to Nordstrom’s problems with residents of the BRC, saying that one of the major things his office has seen over the past 18 months is the proliferation of people buying and using K2/Spice “synthetic marijuana” on that block.

“This is not marijuana. It’s herbs with dangerous chemicals sprayed on it that makes people go crazy,” Johnson explained. “It is very, very cheap. People buy it in bodegas for two dollars, and it has packaging that makes it look fun. It’s marketed to young people. And the City Council has come down hard on businesses selling these products, and have used nuisance abatement laws to get these places closed.”

Finally, Johnson let residents know that he would be offering free flu shots on Oct. 28 in his District Office at 224 W. 30th St. (btw. Seventh & Eighth Aves.). RSVP at 212-564-7757 or district3@council.nyc.gov.

“Flu season is almost upon us,” said Johnson. “The flu kills people, so the best we can do for ourselves, our friends and our neighbors is to get this shot, so you don’t spread the flu to people with underlying health problems.”

ANTHONY BOURDAIN, ALL NIGHT LONG?

Agenda Item 15, a letter to Hudson River Park Trust regarding the Pier 57 project, was another hot issue among CB4 members and the community alike. The project concerned is celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain’s proposed food hall and restaurant at end of the mammoth 560,000-square-foot Pier 57 complex at the corner of W. 15th St. and the Hudson River.

The chef has been candid about his plans to revamp the abandoned complex and create Bourdain Market, a huge gourmet marketplace with 155,000 square feet of bakers, artisans, butchers, a fishmonger and oyster bar, and restaurants. Google has scooped up 250,000 square feet in the building, and restaurateurs April Bloomfeld and Ken Friedman have already signed on. In a Sept. 2015 [interview](#) with The New York Times, he equated the end result to “an Asian market. Eating and drinking at midnight.”

Some CB4 members picked up on Bourdain’s “up all night” sensibilities for this project, and noted that as a public park, Hudson River Trust closed nightly at 1 a.m. Bourdain’s business would likely have to follow those operating hours.

In the meantime, CB4 has completed a traffic study of the area. Transportation Planning Committee Co-Chairs Jay Marcus and Ernest Modarelli had looked at the potential traffic congestion in this area and found it negligible, but member Burt Lizarin questioned whether it took into consideration Bourdain’s 24-hour operating model.

Berthet furthered the possibility of putting a friendly amendment into their letter saying that CB4 did not want this project to be open 24 hours. But Rubin noted that it was inappropriate to create a stipulation on something that was not set in stone, noting that these late hours were “highly unlikely” as it was against park policy, and something that they could discuss during a public hearing of the lease.

Rubin added that she had recently called RXR Reality directly to ask about this project, and they had not mentioned Bourdain at all or commented on the operations that would occur inside the pier.

Regarding traffic congestion outside the pier, Rubin said that in the event that Google implements a shuttle service for Pier 57, the tenants would have to consult everyone concerned before implementing and devising a pedestrian safety plan. But this did not assuage citizen concerns.

A final item of note brought Brookfield Properties Vice-President Henry Caso before the board, to show their good faith efforts to manage their construction project on W. 31st St. between Ninth and Dyer Aves.

Earlier this month, he met with CB4’s Transportation Planning committee, who requested an eight-foot variance between the 12-inch safety bollards and Brookfield’s proposed sidewalk elevators to access their above-ground plaza.

“We went back and took a lot of looks...and after due diligence were able to get two more inches, getting to seven-feet, ten-inches, but we had a lot of difficulty getting the full eight feet,” said Caso. “We are asking CB4 to work with us on this.”

The board approved Item 19, Proposed Revocable Consent for the sidewalk and above space for an elevator and extended above-ground plaza, and said that Brookfield would come back next month with their entire list of improvements.

The next full board meeting will be held on Wed., Nov. 4, 6:30 p.m. at the Hotel Trades Union (305 W. 44th St., 2nd Fl., btw. Eighth & Ninth Aves.). For more info, visit nyc.gov/mcb4.

NOTE: This paragraph, in Chelsea Now’s Oct. 15 print edition, was eliminated from the web version in the evening of Oct. 16, after a correction from Christie Berthet (which follows the paragraph).

“Board Chair Christine Berthet said that the applicant had met with the Hudson River Park Trust and CB4’s Business License and Permits Committee (BLP) about the proposed restaurant and it would next come before of the city’s Business and Licensing Committee.”

BERTHET WRITES: “The statement is inaccurate...I reported the fact that we had discussions

with Google, but there has been no conversations with the applicant yet. Thank you for publishing a correction. The meeting with HRPT relates to a different applicant.”

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