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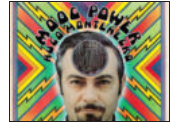


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CB4 Bids Adieu to Longtime Members, Rubber-Stamping Liquor Licenses

Added by **Scott Stiffler** on April 12, 2017.

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City Councilmember Corey Johnson (center) proclaimed April 5 Walter Mankoff Appreciation Day (Mankoff, to the left of Johnson). Sarah Desmond received similar honors. Photo by Winnie McCroy.

BY WINNIE McCROY | Community members gathered at Mount Sinai West (1000 10th Ave.) on Wed., April 5 for the monthly full board meeting of Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4). Despite a busy agenda, many were there to testify against granting a liquor license to a new business not to the liking of residents at London Terrace Towers (a co-op) and London Terrace Gardens (rental buildings). The Board also examined the progress of the new Chelsea Health Center, and bade a fond farewell to exiting members.

"This is a bittersweet meeting because it marks the end of several people's time serving on the Board," said CB4 Chair Delores Rubin. "Tonight we are honoring Walker Mankoff. We appreciate his decades of work as a former chair. Also, Sarah Desmond is leaving, and Ambur Nicosia, who remains a voice in education. Big thanks to all."

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City Councilmember Corey Johnson arrived, framed Proclamations in hand, to declare April 5 a Manhattan "Appreciation Day" for Walter Mankoff and Sarah Desmond.

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Mankoff was grateful, sharing reasons he believed CB4 was great, including that they favor

THE VILLAGER

While ideas and programs, follow proper procedure, do research to support their arguments with facts, and come up with real creative solutions. They compromise to negotiate, be sure localized solutions don't hurt the whole board, involve the neighborhood, and be sure to be fair. It rained on their parade, but they danced on

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D. Park

CB4 called for coming home really remarkable years in which we accomplis

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CB4 SAYS NO MORE RUBBER-STAMPING LIQUOR LICENSES | Nearly a dozen

residents from London Terrace Towers and London Terrace Gardens testified during the public

session, requesting that CB4 not recommend the granting of a liquor license to a restaurant at

nearby 461-469 W. 23rd St. Calling applicant Emil Stefkov a "bad actor," residents cited his poor record of relations with neighbors, his loss of liquor license, and problems of noise, trash, and cigarette smoke.

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In an April 5 letter to the New York State Liquor Authority (SLA), CB4's Business Licenses & Permits (BLP) Committee recommended denying a liquor license to Stefkov as "contrary to the public interest," citing "the cavalier attitude that this applicant has shown toward the community and its concerns."

Tenants rejected the request to add eight outdoor tables in an area where two were already seen as problematic, with late weekend closing hours and loud music being concerns. The BLP said 30 people testified against this at their March 21 meeting at Yotel, with only Stefkof speaking in support.

"Thank you for rejecting [the liquor license for] 461 West 23rd Street," said Andy Humm. "The applicant has a bad track record, and as head of the London Terrace Tenants Association, I hope the full board will reject this application."

Humm was joined by several neighbors, including London Terrace board member Lloyd Van Praagh, who said he had a fiduciary duty to "think about how much this is going to cost us to control or evict this operator, while a tremendous number of homeowners and renters suffer over a protracted length of time."

Longtime London Terrace Gardens residents Adrienne and Frank Fallino said past operators, including Barchetta and La Traviata, had served up a "clatter of dishes, smoking, fights, laughing and loud talking."

"It was a terrible hardship. And this new applicant has a track record," said Frank Fallino. "We are not unreasonable; it's not like we don't want a restaurant there. We just don't want a disturbance."

Carolyn Dobbs echoed this sentiment, saying, "A restaurant can add a lot to our neighborhood, but when you operate outside the law or are loud, it's a nuisance. Mankoff said to support my argument with numbers, so here are some: Zero is for DOB permits they got for building their bar and bathroom. One is for liquor licenses cancelled. Two is Community Boards with whom he's had terrible relations. Five is for ECB [Environmental Control Board] violations for illegal benches, and 52 are the number of 311 complaints in one year for loud music. We have real concerns he won't operate within the parameters of the law with this place, either."

London Terrace Towers resident Ann Northrop bemoaned having to "go down this road again."

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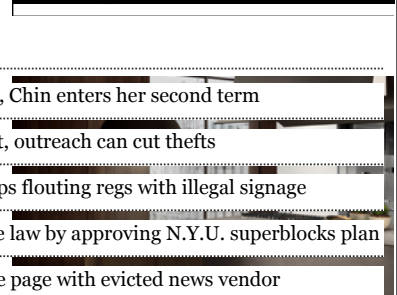
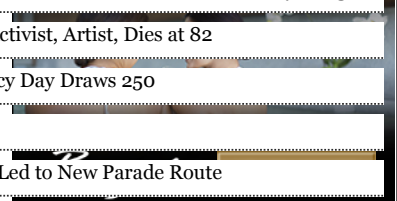
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London Terrace Towers resident Ann Northrop testified against granting a liquor license, and, in doing so, reads from a statement by London Terrace Gardens resident Inge Ivchenko. Photo by Winnie McCroy.

She then read a statement from London Terrace Gardens resident Inge Ivchenko, which said that while neighbors would welcome “a nice vegetarian restaurant with beer and wine and no sidewalk cafe,” the owner’s insistence on late hours, a liquor license, and outdoor seating seemed to indicate the business was “a front for a late-night lounge or club with smoking and loitering, as Emil has done in other places. He’s been a bad actor in the past. If he shows he is a friend to the neighborhood, we can loosen some restrictions, but we have been down this road and been burnt before.”

London Terrace Towers resident Harry Hines spelled out the crux of the situation. Many community members were concerned that the SLA was “rubber-stamping” liquor licenses for business

owners who were clearly not good operators.

“We understand that a liquor license is a valuable thing, but it’s not a right that anyone has to have, it’s a privilege that the city gives,” he said. “If someone with such a bad record can succeed in getting one, what’s the point of even having hearings about it?”

The full membership of CB4 voted to recommend denial of the new liquor license for Maldon, LLC, further stipulating that if the SLA considered granting the license, it would be under the stipulations that the restaurant closed at 11 p.m. daily, played background music only, and had no sidewalk cafe.

UPDATE: As we were going to press with this article, Andy Humm told us via email: “The applicant we were opposing, Emil Stefkov of Maldon LLC, does not ‘plan’ to go forward with his application to the SLA according to his attorney. We are now dealing with a new applicant for the same space, Marco Britti, and have met with him and we are in the process of formulating our stance towards him as he goes before the BLP on Tues., April 18 at the Yotel.”

The next full board meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Wed., May 3 in the Dan Carpenter Room at Hudson Guild (441 W. 26 St., btw. Ninth & 10th Aves.). Visit nyc.gov/mcb4.

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