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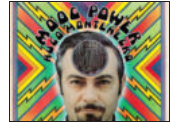


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Show Folk Show Up in Force at CB4

Added by **Scott Stiffler** on March 9, 2016.

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Variety Worldwide made the case to CB4, for transferring their liquor license to a new space: the former Providence nightclub (311 W. 57th St., btw. Ninth & 10th Aves.). Photo by Sean Egan.

BY WINNIE McCROY | Nightclub entertainers, theater producers, dancers and their advocates gathered on the evening of Wed., Mar. 2 at Mt. Sinai Hospital for the monthly full board meeting of Community Board 4 (CB4). The topic of discussion was Variety Worldwide's liquor license transfer for their new venue, located at the former Providence nightclub (311 W. 57th St., btw. Ninth & 10th Aves.). Although CB4 and local residents were largely supportive of the more upscale tenant, some voiced concerns.

"We hope to replace the existing nightclub with our novel form of entertainment," said Alexander Victor, the attorney for Variety Worldwide, a global entertainment and hospitality management company responsible for staging such spectacles as the interactive theater event

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“Queen of the Night” (which ran at the Diamond Horseshoe space in W. 46 St.’s Paramount Hotel) and The Box (a 5,000 square foot, three-level space on the Lower East Side’s Chrystie St.).

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W. 57th St. Photo by Winnie McCroy.

GAY CITY NEWS

As professional dancer/actor David Terry noted, “Shows like ‘Queen of the Night’ are a great scene to the area.”

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s recently sat down

with CB4’s Business Licenses and Permits

a give-and-take

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capacity, including employees, is capped at 599. For events with over 300 people, there is a minimum of one security guard per 75 guests. The applicant agrees no steel barriers will be used, unless the NYPD specifically requests it, and they won’t remain on the street. And the new hours are closing Sun. and Mon. at 1 a.m. and Thursday through Saturday at 4 a.m., with the possibility of 20 ‘4 a.m. exemptions’ per year, with prior notice to the board.”

appropriate and specific direction to the original content.

Alex Picken of Picken Real Estate said they’d also been working with the current landlord, who had received multiple offers to turn the place into a concert venue or adult entertainment establishment, which he rejected.

“Now, the number one candidate is Variety Worldwide, merging theater arts and fine dining,” said Picken. “We hope to have your support, because this will be a great addition to the neighborhood, and after much due diligence, is the tenant that the landlord agreed to have in this venue.”

CB4’s Walter Mankoff asked if they accepted the stipulations as drafted by the BLP committee; the new tenants said they did.

But some were conflicted about the proposal. Anita McDonagh of W. 66th St. said, “Although I don’t approve of the 4 a.m. closing time, the venue is fantastic and I wish them luck. I would prefer a 2 a.m. closing, because of problems.”

Referencing reports of a recent subway mugging, she warned, “You have to be careful. Things happen late at night.”

And Susan, who lives on W. 58th St., said that while she wishes that the BLP had made a longer list of stipulations to avoid future problems, she was “kind of happy that a theater club was coming to the Providence nightclub space, because for many years we had very bad issues.” She foresees problems with people leaving early in the morning in taxis, cars, limousines, and party buses.

Some members, including Quality of Life (QOL) Co-Chair David Pincus, argued owners should be required to meet with QOL early to mandate additional security after closing, and nightly sidewalk cleaning.

Others, like CB4 Chair Delores Rubin, disagreed, saying the new tenants were battling the “ghosts of the establishment before” and were already doing outreach to tenants.

“What issues would you even bring to QOL, because they haven’t started operating yet?” asked Lazarin. “There has to be some sense of trust; you can’t negotiate from a place of no trust. Some operators earn no trust because of their track record, but these operators don’t have that track

record in this space.”

“Any issues we have had are many years in the past, in a different place,” said Victor. “But we endeavor to be as accommodating as possible. We are agreeing to many stipulations, and the consensus seems to be that this will be a better use of the space than past tenants. We’ve presented our plans to the BLP committee, the residents of the building are in support, and we hope to have your support as well.”

CB4 BATTLES THE DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

Another recurring issue that came to light was CB4’s continued pressure on the Department of Buildings (DOB) to fairly advocate for tenants’ rights issues, especially regarding what CB4 member JD Noland referred to as “a plague of false filings” over whether building were truly vacant before being renovated or demolished.

A recent meeting between the DOB, CB4 Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and other elected officials tackled the demolition of buildings in protected Special District areas, including buildings on Seventh Ave., W. 23rd St. and W. 49th St., and the threat of demolition of 500-504 W. 22nd St.



“We have been working diligently for several months to create something worthwhile,” said producer Jennie Willinik of Variety Worldwide’s effort to establish a presence on the outskirts of Hell’s Kitchen. Photo by Winnie McCroy.

“Although we are supposed to have increased protection of these, three buildings in CB4’s Special District were given permits for construction or demolition,” resulting in the loss of 48 apartments this month alone, said Drew Lombardi, from the Borough President’s office. “We have been meeting with DOB to address this issue at large, and are waiting to hear back on that. Gale Brewer founded a construction safety group last fall, which has met four times, featuring experts, elected officials and more, discussing policy recommendations and reforms.”

Lombardi said they must sit down again with DOB and get in front of these issues, noting they had met with Commissioner Rick Chandler several times in the past few months, with attention given to these inconsistencies.

“Is the problem with DOB one of volume or competency — or worse?” asked former CB4 Chair and current board member Christine Berthet. “We don’t know where to turn to get an audit of their activities. And why do we have these people who are supposed to be professionals not doing their jobs? It’s having a major impact on our community and on individuals who are losing their apartments.”

Furthered member Betty Mackintosh, “On a parallel effort, there is increasingly a clear need for tenant education so that people in these buildings are aware ahead of time that they have rights, that landlords can’t harass them by turning off their utilities, or intimidate them into leaving.”

Brewer’s office currently hosts weekly Tenant Rights Clinics, in conjunction with Housing Conservation Coordinators. Call 212-531-1609 for more info.

REPORTS FROM ELECTED OFFICIALS

Although no elected officials attended the meeting, representatives shared their news. Jeffrey LeFrancois, from the Meatpacking District BID, urged people to bring their old electronics, batteries, cell phones, and computers to a free E-Waste Recycling Event, from 11 a.m.–4 p.m. on Fri., Mar. 18, at the corner of W. 14th St. & Eighth Ave.

Congressman Jerrold Nadler has been busy tackling the government’s attempts to undermine encryption software on phones. Said Special Assistant Robert Atterbury, “The congressman is concerned about their attempt to do an end-run around this, forcing back doors on companies.”

Nadler has also worked to counter “the Republicans’ moral arrogance in insisting women are not informed and can’t make their own choices” around family planning issues, in several cases currently making their way through the courts.

State Senator Brad Hoylman’s office helped secure a \$32.5M budget funding Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation. They are also working to increase funding for homeless and runaway youth, for which NYS budget currently earmarks only .003%. In addition, they believe the

Hudson River Park Trust was bilked out of significant budgeting. They are working to increase funding from \$800,000 to \$3.5M. Finally, they are seeking to honor civic-minded women in their Women of Distinction project.

New York State Assemblymember Dick Gottfried's office expressed concerns about the FY17 budget, to be submitted on Fri., Apr. 1. Notably, the proposal that shifts responsibility for Medicaid costs from the state to the city, and could add a \$656M burden to the city over the next few years. A similar proposal could shift responsibility for a third of CUNY's budget to New York City. Gottfried is also seeking an increase in funding of \$1.8B to the MTA, and proposals from the state on how the MTA can generate mechanisms to create new revenue. Gottfried's office also noted that multiple locations are available throughout the city for residents to get free tax return preparation.

State Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal's office urged for \$30M in additional funds for their OASAS drug and alcohol program.

Comptroller Scott Stringer's office noted that city spending on homeless services increased 46% since 2014, reaching \$1.7B. A recent audit showed that more than 1,100 vacant city-owned lots could be used to build affordable housing, although none are in CB4's area of coverage. A report by NYC's land bank estimates that 57,000 units of affordable housing could come out of this.

Matt Green, representing City Councilmember Corey Johnson, reminded residents that anyone over 14 years old who attends the Community Project Expo can help determine what proposals will be on the ballot for this year's Participatory Budgeting process. The event takes place at 6:30 p.m. on Tues., Mar. 22, at PS340 (590 Sixth Ave., at W. 17th St.).

The next CB4 meeting will be held on Wed., Apr. 6, 6:30 p.m., at Fulton Auditorium (119 Ninth Ave., btw. W. 17th & W. 18th Sts.). Visit nyc.gov/mcb4.

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