

COMMUNITY BOARD 9 MANHATTAN
LANDMARKS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: April 9, 2012
Location: Broadway Housing, 583 Riverside Drive
Present: Simon Thoresen
Larry English
Gladys Tinsley
Catherine Abate

1. Chairman Thoresen called the meeting to order at 6.40pm
2. The agenda was adopted.
3. Cathedral of St. John the Divine Housing:

There was a meeting organized by the Morningside Heights Historic District Committee on Tuesday, April 3 to discuss the proposed housing on 113th Street adjacent to the Cathedral. Unfortunately none of the members of the Landmarks Committee were able to attend, but Brad Taylor was there and reported by telephone.

The Cathedral claims it needs the funds that would accrue from a long term lease of the site to a developer to help meet the costs of maintaining the Church and other structures in the Close. Development would also improve what is currently a blighted area. Assemblyman Daniel O'Donnell (a neighbor and long time champion of Landmarks) was concerned with the overall effect on the neighborhood, the Cathedral should be sensitive to the community to which it gives a lot, but also takes. Brad Taylor pointed out that the Episcopal Church has many wealthy members and the Cathedral should look to them for financing, rather than to the Community. Others expressed concern that the construction process itself would be detrimental to the neighbors, particularly St Luke's Hospital and to the fabric of the Cathedral itself.

Stephen Facey, spokesman for the Cathedral, says that plans are still in the early stage of development, but as soon as he has sufficient material he will come before our committee and the General Board. It is the concern of the committee that plans may progress too far, and our in-put may be too late to be effective. Meanwhile, MHHDC is planning another meeting on April 16.

Community Board #9 passed a resolution on November 11, 2002 requesting that the entire Cathedral Close be designated a landmark with the intent that the LPC would have oversight of any future development on the site. This was reemphasized in a letter from Chair of the Board to LPC Chair Robert Tierney on December 17th 2004. This remains the Board's position.

4. P.S. 186:

Chair Reverend Morgan-Thomas has been in discussions with the Boys' and Girls' Club. At the last Executive Committee Meeting she said they will present their latest plans at the April General Board Meeting. Larry English said that they have a new scheme which will preserve the building and accommodate community space and the Boys' and Girls' Club, but will not include housing, as they have not been able to secure funding for that. Therefore, they will be in compliance with the Deed Restriction that calls for at least 85% community use.

At the next Landmarks Committee meeting on May 14th Jean Arrington will give a presentation on Charles Snyder and his schools (including PS 186).

5. Convent Avenue Baptist Church:

The Church has all the approvals it needs from the City and has broken ground on the new addition. The Church has agreed to make efforts to reduce the sound from the annex at the request of the neighbors, who have been before our committee and the General Board with their concerns. They will also replace the cherry tree that was cut down to make way for the construction with two new ones.

6. 41 Convent Avenue:

Gladys Tinsley and Edward Robinson brought up the question of landmarking 41 Convent Avenue, where they are residents. The building is a 79 unit Coop which has been trying to get Landmark status for several years with the support of CB 9, but the LPC will only consider a district that includes the surrounding buildings, which are not interested in being landmarked. Larry English will ask Councilman Robert Jackson to see what he can do.

There followed a discussion about how the committee might be more effective in promoting landmark status.

7. The meeting adjourned at 7.45 pm.

8. Next meeting: May 14, 2012 at Broadway Housing.