

Chair Report
March 18, 2021
General Board Meeting

Celebrating the Federal Support We Need and Deserve

I am pleased to report that there is finally light at the end of the long tunnel we have been in for over a year now. On March 11th, President Joe Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan, a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill to rescue our economy from the ravages of the pandemic and fund the ongoing healthcare response needed to finally contain COVID-19.

There is an enormous amount of good contained in this bill beyond the headline cash payments to individuals and families of up to \$1,400 per person, \$4,000 childcare credits, expansion of Affordable Care Act premium subsidies to the families of the self-employed, and aid to state and local governments to avoid layoffs of public servants. I have tried to detail some of the many specific programs in my report below. However, much of this money must be spent within a year or even before the end of the federal fiscal year in September. Community Board 9 will be working hard to make sure that all of our schools, renters, artists and arts organizations, restaurants and small businesses, libraries, parks, and other important community partners receive funding they are eligible for and desperately need.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the Mayor's continued failure to provide a permanent vaccination site in West Harlem. While the site formerly at Wadleigh School in CB10 was moved to A. Philip Randolph High School in CB9 when middle schools reopened, it is likely that the site at A. Philip Randolph will have to close when high schools reopen on March 25th. In particular, our ZIP code of 10031 has suffered enormously, with a positivity rate of around 6% as late as last week, while only 17% of adults had received even one dose of the vaccination. By comparison, ZIP code 10024 on the Upper West Side had a positivity rate of 2% but had a vaccination rate of 37%. Even though their positivity rate was one-third that of Hamilton Heights', they had twice the percentage of adults vaccinated. This is due to the deliberate neglect of Mayor De Blasio, Deputy Mayor Melanie Hartzog, and the City's Vaccine Command Center in opening vaccination sites in our neighborhood and assisting our community members in registering to receive the vaccine. It is a travesty that the Mayor continues to allow people in our community to die from COVID-19 while we have a vaccine that the City has admitted we should be prioritized to receive, but makes no efforts to administer to our community.

I do want to extend my deepest gratitude to the office of Governor Andrew Cuomo. Having been stonewalled by the City, I called the Governor's office, and they quickly arranged a pop-up vaccination site at Convent Avenue Baptist Church with the ability from CB9 and our volunteers to pre-register people in the West Harlem community. We are continuing to work with the Governor's Office and Columbia University to open a vaccination site in West Harlem, and for that I am extremely grateful.

There is a lot of work ahead for CB9, but I have more hope this month than I have for over a year. I look forward to getting to work.

Your Chair,

Barry Weinberg

Governor Cuomo's Office Brings Community-Focused COVID Vaccine Pop-Ups to West Harlem as Mayor De Blasio Continues to Ignore West Harlem's Need for Vaccination Sites, Community Pre-Registration

Governor Cuomo heeded Manhattan Community Board 9's call and those of our elected officials to bring additional vaccination sites to West Harlem by bringing a pop-up vaccination site to Convent Avenue Baptist Church on W 145th Street and Convent Avenue on Friday, February 26th. 600 people were vaccinated. The site also worked to vaccinate hard-to-reach Harlemites who find it difficult to make appointments online by working closely with CB9 to conduct outreach through local non-profits, block associations, tenant associations, and community leaders. CB9 was able to pre-register over 100 people before the online sign-up link was posted, making sure that the vaccine got to those in our community who needed it. The second dose of the vaccine will be given at CABC on Friday, March 19th. Our thanks goes out to Governor Andrew Cuomo, Assemblywoman Inez Dickens, State Senator Brian Benjamin, Borough President Gale Brewer, and Councilman Levine for their assistance. The State continues to work with CB9 to create a permanent vaccination site in the neighborhood, possibly using Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park or another location in CB9.

CB9 is relying on the State to step up and help vaccinate our neighbors as the City has ignored high positivity rates in our area, particularly in ZIP Code 10031, and indefinitely delayed opening a permanent vaccination site in West Harlem. As a result, ZIP Code 10031 has had one-half the vaccination rate of ZIP codes like 10024 on the Upper West Side (last week having 17.9% vaccinated in West Harlem vs. 37% vaccinated on the UWS) even while having a positivity rate three times higher. Please call the Mayor's Office at [\(212\) 788-7418](tel:2127887418) to demand that our neighborhood be given the vaccine access it needs and deserves.

PPE Distributed at COVID Infection Cluster on West 135th Street and Broadway

On Saturday, March 6th, Community Board 9, in partnership with Borough President Gale Brewer, Assemblyman Al Taylor, and Health & Hospitals Corporation's Test and Trace Initiative distributed over 20,000 facemasks and hundreds of bottles of hand sanitizer along with information about COVID testing and vaccination. The supplies were distributed on the corner of W 135th Street and Broadway, near a cluster of COVID infections in the blocks between W 133rd and W 135th Streets between Broadway and Riverside.

Funding for Arts, Museums, Libraries and Restaurants included in American Rescue Plan

The American Rescue Plan included \$135 million in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, \$200 million for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and \$28.6 billion for grants to restaurants impacted by the pandemic.

Restaurants, food trucks, food carts, caterers, bars, lounge, and other food establishments will be eligible of grants of up to \$5 million for restaurants and \$10 million for restaurant groups. The program will be administered by the Small Business Administration. To apply for a grant, applicants should follow the instructions from the Independent Restaurant Coalition at <https://www.saverestaurants.com/resources/>

Information for libraries and museums can be found at the New York State Libraries page at <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/stateaid/>.

Information for artists and arts organizations can be found at <https://www.arts.gov/american-rescue-plan-and-arts-and-creative-industries-faqs>

Summer Youth Activity Planning Summit to Be Held, Focusing on Manhattanville

Community Board 9 will be organizing a meeting of youth and providers of after school activities, arts and music education, sports teams, jobs, and other activities this spring in advance of the coming summer in an effort to ensure that all CB9 youth have access to free summer activities. Details to come.

Rental Assistance from American Rescue Plan to be Rolled Out

The American Rescue Plan included \$2.5 billion in rental assistance for New Yorkers, including assistance in paying rent arrears and in placing homeless individuals into housing. Disbursement and applications details are still being worked out for New York. Please check HPD and DHCR's website for updates at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/index.page> and <https://hcr.ny.gov/division-housing-and-community-renewal>.

Earmarks Return to Congress- West Harlem Needs Public Housing Repairs, Transit Improvements, School Construction, and Much More

In much-overlooked news, the House of Representatives voted to reclaim its Constitutional power of the purse and allow individual representatives to direct federal agencies to fund specific projects, a practice commonly known as "earmarking." This practice allows Congressional Representatives to more specifically and directly meet their district's needs, rather than force local governments to apply for the project to the federal agency. West Harlem has a dire need of repairs to our NYCHA public housing, investments in transit improvements and accessibility at our subway stations, repairs to City College and our public schools, and much more. We look forward to working with Congressional Representatives Espaillat and Nadler to bring resources to address these pressing needs.

Press Conference re 1763 Amsterdam Ave/Child's Memorial Site held on Monday, January 25, 2021

Manhattan Community Board 9 held a press conference this coming Monday at 10am at the former site of Child's Memorial Tabernacle Church at 1763 Amsterdam Avenue between 147th and 148th Streets to call on the Department of Homeless Services not to approve an inappropriate contract with a shelter provider to allow a developer to construct a building consisting entirely of studio units to be leased to the provider for 7 years to be used as a shelter for homeless families with children. In addition to the fact that studio units are not adequate or dignified shelter for families with children, CB9 believes that this development site should instead be used to develop permanent affordable and/or supportive housing for homeless individuals or families so that they can escape homelessness and finally have permanent homes. We call on DHS to work with CB9 to acquire the site for such housing. Coverage of the press conference can be found at <https://patch.com/new-york/harlem/west-harlem-leaders-oppose-new-shelter-call-housing-instead> and <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2021/01/26/community-leaders-protest-the-construction-of-homeless-shelter-call-for-the-city-to-build-permanent-affordable-housing/>

New Eviction Moratorium Allows for Hardship Declaration to Delay Proceedings Until May 1, 2021

In December, the State Legislator Passed and the Governor signed the COVID-19 Emergency Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2020. This act stays pending eviction proceedings and residential

mortgage foreclosure actions for 60 days, stays actions and proceedings first filed in December for 30 days, and allows tenants or mortgagors to file hardship declarations that will further stay any proceedings and actions until May 1st. If you are facing eviction or foreclosure, I strongly urge you to consider going to <http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/SSI/images/corona/HardshipDeclaration.pdf>, download the Hardship Declaration form, and send it to your landlord or mortgage holder. More information can be found at <https://www.nycourts.gov/covid-eefpa.shtml>. Please note that this does not constitute legal advice, and I am not an attorney.

Governor, State Legislature Agree that More Tax Revenues are Needed

In February of this year, before the pandemic upended all of our lives, Manhattan Community Board 9 was the first Community Board to pass a resolution calling on our State Legislature and the Governor to address an apparent budget shortfall by increasing taxes on the highest-income and wealthiest New Yorkers. Many of the proposals most likely to be adopted, including a possible tax on high-value second homes (the pied-a-terre tax), increasing the millionaire's tax, and removing the rebate for the stock transfer tax were included as possible solutions in our resolution. I want to commend all of our Board Members for their early advocacy on this issue.

Tax Lien Sale Delayed Until 2021, Measure Up for Renewal

When property owners do not pay their tax and water bill debts owed to the City, those unpaid debts become liens on the property. Since a law passed during the Giuliani administration went into effect, the City can choose not to take possession of those properties and instead can sell the liens to private Wall Street financial institutions for cash upfront. The financial institutions that purchase the liens can then attempt to collect the debt on an accelerated basis and with higher fees and rates. This process is called a tax lien sale.

The tax lien sales have been delayed until at least 2021 by Executive Orders issued by Governor Andrew Cuomo. Additionally, the City law allowing such sales is due to expire, requiring a renewal from the City Council. Given the dearth of real estate available for affordable housing and other priorities, this is an important opportunity to rethink and potentially end the practice of selling tax liens. Intro 2166-2020, introduced by Councilmember Adrienne Adams of Queens, would delay any future tax lien sales through at least December 31, 2024 and change what properties are subject to the sales. CB9 will be exploring proposed changes to the tax lien sale ourselves to submit to the City Council for further review.

NYCHA Blueprint for Change Proposes Privatization of NYCHA, Erodes Tenant Protections

With the public comment period for NYCHA's Blueprint for Change ending on December 28th, it is of the utmost importance that NYCHA residents and the public in CB9 give their feedback on the plan. The Blueprint proposes to turn NYCHA over to a private Preservation Trust, led by Mayoral appointees, that will have the ability to borrow money against the properties to make repairs. Borrowing against public housing is prohibited by law, which is why the buildings would have to be first transferred to a private trust. As with all debt, there is a danger that if the new Preservation Trust is unable to repay the debt, then New York could lose its public housing that have kept hundreds of thousands housed for generations.

Public housing is an integral part of any housing strategy that can meet the needs of a 21st century New York. The nearly 30 year deliberate disinvestment and austerity campaign, begun by Congressional

Republicans in the 1990s, has starved NYCHA of previously-available federal funds for repair and maintenance. The resulting long, slow decline of our public housing stock was specifically engineered to bring about the privatization of this housing. Community Board 9 will work together with NYCHA residents and others to make sure that NYCHA and our federal officials are held accountable and stop the march to privatization and, potentially, erosion of tenants' rights.

The feedback page is: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycha/about/contact/transformation-plan-public-comments.page>

Free City COVID Testing at 21 Old Broadway

The coronavirus continues to spread in New York, albeit at a greatly reduced rate compared to the spring. New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation offers free coronavirus testing at the clinic at 21 Old Broadway at W 126th Street 7 days a week, Monday-Sunday, from 9am-7pm. No appointment is necessary. Please call 844-NYC-4NYC if you have any questions. Help us keep coronavirus in check and keep your friends, neighbors, and family safe. It pays to get tested!

Get Your Flu Shot!

Flu season has unfortunately arrived. This year it is more important than ever to be vaccinated for the flu so as to avoid getting sick and requiring medical attention, which may further expose you to COVID. Per the DOHMH, "Flu vaccines are widely available at doctor's offices, pharmacies, community health clinics and through employer-sponsored programs. Most health insurance plans cover flu vaccination without a co-pay." Many of the drug stores in our area offer flu shots with no copay and with no appointment necessary. To find the nearest location offering flu shots near you, you can go to <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/flu-seasonal-vaccination.page>

Proposed Development at W 142nd Street and Riverside Drive

Manhattan Community Board 9's Housing, Zoning, and Land Use Committee saw a preliminary presentation by a developer seeking to build a 17 story residential tower on the north corner of W 142nd Street and Riverside Drive. The proposed tower would contain 81 apartments, 21 of which would be affordable. In order to develop the site, the owner would have to destroy two of the historic townhouse on the site. The development would require an upzoning on the site from the current R6A designation (which has a 70 foot height cap) to R9A, which has a 170 foot height cap. The developers have not yet formally had their application at the Department of City Planning finalized, which would begin the formal Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP), at which point the Community Board 9 would hold a hearing and formal vote to recommend for or against approval of the rezoning application.

If you are interested in this development, please email mcb9housing@gmail.com to sign up for the HZLU Committee mail list and plan on attending the upcoming meetings of the Committee, which meets the first Tuesday of every month at 6:30pm.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church Potential Sale and Redevelopment

The Episcopal Diocese of New York is exploring a sale of the property and building of St. Luke's Episcopal Church on Convent Avenue and W 141st Street. CB9 has engaged in preliminary discussions with the Hamilton Terrace Block Association about the future of the site, which is in a Historic District. If you are interested in being part of the research and discussion around the site, please email mcb9housing@gmail.com and mention St. Luke's Church in the subject line.