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Living wage tops CB4 topics

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BY WINNIE McCROY | Members of Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) gathered on December 7 at Roosevelt Hospital for a full board meeting, and public hearings on issues including the NYC Living Wage Campaign and a parking garage project.

Deputy Inspector Elisa Cokkinos, of the NYPD's Chelsea-based 10th Precinct (at 230 West 20th Street, between Seventh and Eight Avenues), opened the meeting with an update on crime in the area. "We've gotten burglaries and robberies under control. There was a seven percent decrease in crime last year," with a slightly lower decrease this year," she reported.

As reflected in Chelsea Now's "Police Blotter" page, many of these crimes are due to people failing to secure their residence before leaving, noted Cokkinos. She invited all to attend 10th Precinct Community Council meetings (held at the precinct, 7pm, on last Wednesday of the month; the next meeting is December 28).

CB4 Board member Pamela Wolff asked Cokkinos about the impact of the Bowery Residents' Committee shelter (at 127 West 25th Street, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues).

"We have seen a little more activity on Seventh and Eighth Avenues, but we are working with Muzzy Rosenblatt to be able to get in there when we need to," said Cokkinos. "We had some problems at first, but now the individuals living there know they can't walk around Chelsea causing trouble."

The public hearing session followed, addressing two issues: the application for a special permit for a parking garage at 340 West 21st Street; and a letter indicating CB4's support for Living Wage NYC (Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act), which mandates that companies receiving city contracts or subsidies and making annual profits in excess of \$5 million must pay workers either \$10 an hour with benefits, or \$11.50 an hour without.

Of the 32 people who signed up to speak, 21 were in favor of the Living Wage campaign. A number shared stories of working long hours in retail or food service and still not being able to support their families. Others told of uninsured family members injured on the job, now relying upon them for support.

"The council is proposing to do what other cities, like L.A., does, which is bring in businesses that pay a living wage rather than ones who won't," said Paul Sonn, legal co-director of the National Employment Law Project. He noted that the legislation would press large corporations to create affordable housing and other carve-outs. He also warned to watch for large retailers trying to hide behind small businesses in opposing the campaign.

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Ava Farkas of Living Wage NYC noted that, "It is not worth taxpayers money to create jobs that keep people in poverty. And now we're building a whole new neighborhood for Related Companies to make money [Hudson Yards Project]. I encourage CB4 to join onto this legislation without conditions." Farkas said they had the support of CB1 and CB12.



THE VILLAGER
"I have many friends living in Manhattan Plaza who are unable to find jobs. I on City Council to pass this legislation," added Nico Boccio of the West Side N
A) It rained on their parade, but they danced on

GAY CITY NEWS
Sheltering Homeless Youth 21-24 Gets \$1MM in New City Budget
Connie Kurtz, Lesbian Activist, Artist, Dies at 82
Albany LGBTQI Advocacy Day Draws 250
Band of Brothers
HOP: Nabe Complaints Led to New Parade Route

Pt We got the ball rolling; How Pr. 40 fight brought us Hudson River al r
Li Park
St From splintered piers to fancy park of today, we've come a long way aft
hc Keeping cool on the West Side, 1940s style

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EAST VILLAGER NEWS
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DOWNTOWN EXPRESS
Another hot topic was the preservation of Arnold Belkin's 1972 mural "Again: Colonialism" at the Matthews-Palmer Playground at 45th Street, between Ni
A) Police Blotter: Week of May 24

Sp Cacophony of colors brings harmony at Governors Island Holi Hai
D celebration
Bl

Pt Wave vs. glacier: Slow pace of resiliency plans will leave Downtown
W at risk for many years to come

Se Once upon a moral panic...
R that they hoped

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

Liquor Authority (SLA), the owners were forthcoming in sharing plans for security, including
two shuttle buses to keep street traffic to a minimum.

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Other speakers included Onida Coward Mayers, Director of Voter Assistance for the Campaign Finance Board — who invited all to a December 12 voter assistance forum. Danya Sherman, Deputy Director of Programs & Education at the High Line, said that due to low attendance, the park would close at 7pm for the winter. She also announced that they had teamed up with Hudson Guild, Fulton Youth of the Future, Posman Books and the Chelsea Market for a holiday toy drive.

Reps of electeds, on matters pressing and pending

Representatives of elected officials then shared news, with Borough President Scott Stringer's office announcing new board openings for CB4, and Rep. Jerrold Nadler's assistant tackling NYPD's excessive force and curtailing of civil liberties during the Occupy Wall Street action.

State Senator Tom Duane's representative updated the community on his vocal opposition to hydraulic fracking, and welcomed all to a January forum on bars and nightclubs. Linda Rosenthal's office also spoke in favor of banning fracking. Assembly member Richard Gottfried's representative spoke on the recent passage of the tax bill, as well as his advocacy work for medical marijuana.

City Council Member Gale A. Brewer attended personally to inform the community of her opposition on concealed weapon legislation, and her work with the Board of Elections to allow voters advance access to ballots, printed in an easily-readable font.

Speaker Christine Quinn's aide spoke about the recent suit filed against the Department of Homeless Services new procedures to determine eligibility of individuals before offering housing, as well as two major transportation bills. She also invited all to attend several free small business workshops.

Comptroller John Liu's representative announced the release of a Parks & Recreation audit that noted they could have raised \$8.8 million in revenue if they had not allowed park concession contracts to expire. And a representative from District Attorney Cyrus Vance's office noted a new training program to help front-line senior service providers identify elder abuse; as well as the overwhelming success of a PAL Pro Hoops Basketball Training Camp.

CB4 Council passes all agenda items

The main session followed, with District Manager Robert Benfatto reporting on complaints about the new Jumbotron at Port Authority, the intrusive construction on the West 48th Street

water main project, and the need to do due diligence and measure out the distances in the case of the petition for Boxers Hell's Kitchen. He also noted that four people had brought complaints to the BRC Community Advisory Committee meeting.

Burt Lazarin noted that the Mayor had reduced the budget deficit with a plan to raise \$1 billion in revenue from taxi medallion sales. And John Weis spoke of recommendations to make tweaks to CB4's by-laws.

CB4 Chair Corey Johnson reported that the Community Education Council of the New York City Department of Education had abandoned plans to rezone schools in Chelsea. He also noted that the Chelsea Market ULURP (Uniform Land Use Review Procedure) would be certified in January, and before the full board at the February meeting.

The board then voted on 20 agenda items. After much negotiation on the language, the board passed a motion to send a letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo opposing hydraulic fracking, and one to Council Member Brewer supporting Living Wage NYC. Many had questions regarding what they called the letter's "extremely challenging" list of conditions; others thought the Department of Labor should simply raise the minimum wage. The board voted 25-7 to send the amended letter, without conditions.

Another item of controversy was a letter to the City Planning Commission regarding a special permit for the Post Office Garage Project. Many board members were concerned that the parking garage had no accountability regarding overparking or violation of expired permits, and would now be allowed to function with additional spaces and roof parking.

The board noted that the owners' promise to improve the parking conditions, lighting and sidewalk conditions in the area constituted a "significant improvement." The measure passed 28-6.

The board then voted on several issues relating to letters to the Department of Transportation — regarding traffic signals and signage, as well as a plan to install recessed sidewalk lighting along Times Square's historic Restaurant Row (with the caveat that CB4 join meetings on the issue with the Design Commission).

Johnson then bundled the remaining eight agenda items, with the board voting to send letters to the SLA regarding permits for new clubs, restaurants, and food stores in the area.

The next full board meeting of CB4 will be held on January 4, at 6:30pm, at the Fulton Center Auditorium (119 Ninth Avenue). For more info, visit manhattancb4.org or call 212-736-4536.

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