



Robert Rodriguez  
**Chair**

George Sarkissian  
**District Manager**

## COMMUNITY BOARD ELEVEN

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN  
55 EAST 115<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10029-1101  
TEL: (212) 831-8929/30  
FAX: (212) 369-3571  
[www.cb11m.org](http://www.cb11m.org)

**Full Board Meeting  
Community Board 11  
Bonifacio Seniors Home  
7 East 116<sup>th</sup> Street  
April 29th, 2008**

### **Presentation:**

*Mt. Sinai Zoning Variance Application*

*Presenters: J. Rivera, M. Carbone, G. Davis, N. Berg, A. Ruddock, B. Beckstrom*

Representatives from Mt. Sinai came before the board to discuss the zoning variances that they are applying for in order to develop their Center for Science and Medicine.

As the board had seen the details of the variances many times, Mt. Sinai gave a quick overview of what the application included. The variances that Mt. Sinai is applying for deal with setback and coverage issues and the project includes a 500 ft residential development in which Mt. Sinai has sold their air rights to Durst-Fedner in order to make possible.

The discussion then led to one that was focused on the community benefits that the Community Board has been negotiating for. After having Mt. Sinai present their project to various CB11 committees all the feedback was gathered and compiled into one document which was presented to Mt. Sinai as the boards' initial position. Mt. Sinai then responded with a document that showed what they were willing to agree to. Notably, the document did not include any commitment to affordable housing.

After reviewing the documents that illustrated how the negotiation process had evolved, the board members had a few questions for the representatives of Mt. Sinai. B. Vega asked why the Center for Science and Medicine was not focusing on issues that were most prevalent in East Harlem (i.e. obesity, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, asthma). Mt. Sinai stated that they were addressing those issues in a number of other areas of the campus but not necessarily at the new center. L. Henry then asked why no provision for affordable housing was made. Mt. Sinai stated that the developer was not interested and that their focus is on providing quality health care not housing.

Members of the public were then given an opportunity to make statements. Ray Plummey came before the board representing CIVITAS and stated that he had reviewed the five findings that the board of standards and appeals (BSA) requires applicants to meet and found that Mt. Sinai did not meet them. Joanne Seminara, an attorney representing CIVITAS, also came before the board and

reiterated Mr. Plummey's remarks. She also felt that approving this variance application would set a very dangerous precedent in the city. Other public members stated that in previous construction jobs that Mt. Sinai was involved with the environmental mitigation had been poor and they were concerned that a building this big would just lead to a worsened environmental condition in the surrounding area.

Henry Calderon also came before the board to state that he felt that if it was up to Mt. Sinai they would have preferred to keep the entire zoning lot and not sell their air rights but the financial reality was that they needed the money from the air rights to develop the new center. He also felt that the center was necessary for Mt. Sinai to keep pace with other hospitals and continue to be the premier hospital that it is. He told the board to consider what would happen to the community benefits should they vote no on the variance and it still be approved at the BSA.

### **Business Session:**

Roll Call: Cesar Ortiz, Secretary, Quorum Reached

C. Shelton gave an impassioned speech about her history with Mt. Sinai. She stated that Mt. Sinai had saved her life and that she felt board members should vote with their mind and heart and not based on what Mt. Sinai will give.

R. Rodriguez then walked through the negotiation matrix that was provided and detailed how the negotiation had changed. M. Washington then asked Mt. Sinai to state how many jobs would be created as a result of the development and how many would be targeted to East Harlem Residents. Mt. Sinai reiterated that they would try and fill as many jobs as they could using East Harlem residents but would not commit to targets.

C. Asher then stated that he would like to balance out what he was hearing. For context, he shared his experiences with the service at Mt. Sinai and stated that on various occasions he had received very poor service and hoped that people would not vote based on their personal relationships with the hospital but rather on the merits of the proposal.

D. Collier stated that she was very disappointed with Mt. Sinai's attitude and felt that a \$3 million benefits package on a \$475 million project was insulting. Following this statement, D. Avitia asked what initiatives – other than the scholarship fund – Mt. Sinai was proposing to increase their diversity numbers. Mt. Sinai stated that they had an internal office that was already focused on this issue.

G. Figueroa stated that in his mind Mt. Sinai still hadn't adequately addressed the required variance findings and therefore made a motion that the Mt. Sinai zoning variance application be rejected. The motion was seconded by Brunilda Vega and approved (3 opposed: C. Shelton, W.M. Goodman, D. Taitt; 2 Present-not-voting: M. Garcia, M. Ortiz).

## **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by G. Figueroa and seconded by J. Lawson and approved unanimously.

## **Action Item:**

1. G. Figueroa stated that in his mind Mt. Sinai still hadn't adequately addressed the required variance findings and therefore made a motion that the Mt. Sinai zoning variance application be rejected. The motion was seconded by Brunilda Vega and approved (3 opposed: C. Shelton, W.M. Goodman, D. Taitt; 2 Present-not-voting: M. Garcia, M. Ortiz).