

HUDDLE ON HOUSING

BY ABBY LUBY
DAILY NEWS WRITER

FEDERAL AND Westchester County officials met yesterday to hammer out a firmer plan for the county to build affordable housing.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development last week rejected the county's original plan.

The agency cited the lack of specific time frames and strategies for how affordable housing would be developed and how Westchester would handle resistance to affordable housing by reluctant towns.

The county was ordered last year to build 750 affordable units

Feds, W'chester try to nail affordable plan

after it lost a landmark antidiscrimination lawsuit to the Anti-Discrimination Center of Metro New York (ADC).

The civil rights and fair housing group accused Westchester of failing to use \$50 million of federal funds to develop housing for minorities in mostly white communities. To date, the implementation plan does not specifically detail where the housing will be built, just the process for how decisions will be made.

Among the 31 communities targeted for minority housing are Chappaqua, home of the Clin-

tons; Bedford, Martha Stewart's neighborhood; Pleasantville and Ardsley.

Westchester has to spend the \$50 million over the next seven years to build the new housing units to be marketed to black and Hispanic families that qualify.

In a meeting yesterday between federal housing monitor James Johnson and County Executive Robert Astorino, Johnson laid out a "series of meetings and discussions" to revise the implementation plan, with the county reporting back on March 12.

"There is more work to be done on the implementation plan, and

today's meeting was held to discuss those concerns and go through the next steps," Johnson said yesterday.

Homeowners have decried the mandate, fearing property values would drop if their neighborhoods were slated for the planned housing developments.

County legislators whose districts are among those in the plan see other looming problems in getting the housing built.

"Developers need more money, because land is expensive and community developments eat up a lot of money," said Legislator Mike Kaplowitz, a Democrat from Somers. "The color of green will drive a transaction, not the color of someone's skin."

WELL, IT'S GREAT ON GAS... AND A CINCH TO PARK



Bundled up cyclist ferries cargo through heavy snowfall on 55th St. and Madison Ave. in Manhattan yesterday. Forecasters are calling for mostly sunny skies today, with possible flurries by night and a high of 26 degrees. Photo by Thomas Monaster/Daily News

Pork-fund scandals overshadow Quinn's sweeping change

BY FRANK LOMBARDI
DAILY NEWS CITY HALL BUREAU

IT WAS EASIER to tell who the crooks were back in the days of Boss William Marcy Tweed, when the City Council was called the Board of Aldermen.

Things aren't quite that bad these days, despite the ongoing pork-fund scandal that has been buffeting the Council for nearly two years. The latest product of that ongoing mess was the federal indictment last week of Bronx Councilman Larry Seabrook charging him with a series of scams involving \$1.2 million in discretionary Council funding, known as "pork."

Seabrook's indictment follows closely on the heels of the five-year federal prison sentence handed out Dec. 15 to ex-Manhattan Councilman Miguel Martinez for stealing \$106,000 while in office. And two aides to ex-

Brooklyn Councilman Kendall Stewart — who lost reelection last year — were convicted in 2008 of scamming pork funds.

However, the indictments and the ongoing city and federal probes have drowned out unprecedented efforts by the Council, under Speaker Christine Quinn (D-Manhattan), to clean its own house.

One year after she became speaker in January 2006, she became the first Council leader to name the sponsors of member items worth nearly \$50 million a year. Before then, that had always been a guarded in-house secret.

And the Council's inappropriate parking of budget funds in fictional nonprofit groups was exposed in April 2008.

Quinn insisted last week that the alleged misdeeds of Seabrook and those of Martinez preceded reforms the Council has imposed in the past two years in how pork is dispensed. She said similar abuses could not happen today.

Now, the application for Council discretionary funding runs eight pages long, and requires applicants to disclose any possible conflicts of interest with city elected officials. In addition, all applicants for funds are vetted by the Mayor's Office of Contracts or the Council to make sure they are registered nonprofits, and up to date with their mandated annual reports and tax returns.

Council members also must certify in writing that they do not have a conflict of interest with their member items or those dispensed by other members. As the Seabrook indictment spells out, it's now the obligation of city agencies to monitor how the pork is spent once it's awarded to vetted groups.

Some critics say Quinn shut the barn door after some of the cows escaped. That may be, but at least it's a start.

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AT A GLANCE

WHITE PLAINS — A Yonkers man pleaded guilty yesterday to attempting to cut off a businessman's hand with a meat cleaver while demanding money from him.

The Westchester District Attorney's office said Christopher Calise faces up to 15 years when sentenced March 19 on 11 counts of felony assault.

The incident occurred outside a Westchester County social club on June 7, 2009.

Calise's accomplice, Maurice Mann of Fort Lee, N.J., was accused of holding the victim. He pleaded guilty to one count of felony assault last week.

WESTCHESTER SQUARE

— Catch an intriguing piece of Bronx history this evening when retired NYPD captain and author Tom Walker gives a talk on the old Fort Apache, "Bronx is burning" days.

Walker commanded the 41st Precinct on Simpson St. that became the focus of his book, "Fort Apache, Bronx N.Y." The precinct also was the focus of a movie, "Fort Apache, The Bronx."

Walker's talk will be at 7:30 p.m. at the Huntington Free Library at 9 Westchester Square. Seating is free but limited.

BRONX — To raise awareness about heart health issues during February, American Heart Month, the Soundview Healthcare Network is offering free services, including blood pressure and diabetes screenings, nutritional counseling and educational information, at its four medical facilities.

Here is the schedule of free services from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.: today, at Diallo Medical Center, 1764 Westchester Ave.; Friday, at Burnside Medical Center, 165 E. Burnside Ave., and Monday at Delany Sisters Health Center, 821-7 E. 233rd St., and Soundview Health Center, 731 White Plains Road.

All patients are asked to wear red shirts to focus attention on American Heart Month. For information, call (718) 589-2232.

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