

COMMENTS on LMDC Funding Guidelines Public Hearing of April 27, 2005

What follows are the comments I would have liked to have delivered at the Public Hearing on April 27, 2005, to which I arrived by 6:15. I filled out a card to speak, waited for fully three hours, and heard my name listed as one of the ten or so still present in the audience. Like the others, I was denied the opportunity to speak, over our objections. Had the meeting progressed as planned, there would have been no reason for us to have been denied the opportunity to speak.

My name is Rachel Lidov, I am another voice of 9/11 Environmental Action. Thank you for making this time available to address you.

I am here to register my dismay with the LMDC's **Draft Allocation Framework for Remaining Funds**. The Framework reveals that these funds are not being considered for projects designed for healthy, diverse communities, but for high impact, large-scale projects. This money, delegated for the broad revitalization of Lower Manhattan, must be used to sustain the livable city for the diverse population already here as well as for lower and middle-income people just starting out, as it was for me when I came back to Manhattan nearly 30 years ago.

Let me begin by stating 9/11 Environmental Action strongly opposes the allocation of \$70 million to Hudson River Park Trust Authority for the building of environmentally damaging projects on the Hudson River. This money, and additional sums are needed for recovery, not window-dressing.

First, the public investments for construction in Lower Manhattan will create many jobs. But when the construction is over, who will have the opportunity to work? And will they have an opportunity to earn a living wage? It is time to ensure that jobs at the low end – the jobs in retail and service – have high standards for wages and workers' benefits. It is time to allocate dollars for job training and retraining, for ESL programs, and other educational resources that will provide local residents with pathways to better jobs as young people and newcomers become ready to take their places.

Second, we need a major investment in low and middle income housing. The mayor suggested \$293 million in his Vision for Lower Manhattan, but so far the LMDC hasn't even come through with the \$50 million announced a year ago! Affordable housing, that is, housing for the low and middle income wage-earners needed in all communities, is nowhere named in the current LMDC guidelines. It *must* be a very high priority for the remaining funding.

Third, we need to know that it is safe to live and work in Lower Manhattan. As you have already heard, funds must be allocated for medical screening and monitoring as well as for the treatment of people whose health has been, or may be, affected by the contamination created by the events of 9/11. Funds are also required for the cleanup of existing spaces, and for preventing the release of further contamination at those sites where buildings must first be demolished, and new buildings erected.

Repeatedly, 9/11 Environmental Action has questioned LMDC's commitment to securing the expertise necessary to design and ensure safe demolition of existing buildings, such as the one at 130 Liberty Street, permeated with WTC dust at dangerous levels. Let me repeat what has been said before: some contaminants have been measured at 10 to 100 thousand

times the health-based benchmarks. LMDC is already straining under the burden of the cost (and unable to provide any timetable for reimbursement by its insurers).

Instead of meeting this issue head on, LMDC has, with the submission of the April 11th Request for Variance to the NYS Department of Labor, sought to degrade health and safety procedures for handling contaminants by requesting waivers of key asbestos regulations. This is no more than bare-faced cost-cutting at the expense of worker and community safety. With each waiver of regulations, the risk of a hazardous release goes up.

The Request for Variance is the latest evidence that the EPA must take charge. Not only should workers and the local population in their homes, schools, and offices be protected by longstanding safety regulations, but given the unprecedented nature of the upcoming demolitions, by such extra precautions as may be deemed essential.

In conclusion, I would remind you tonight that there are currently five vacant seats on the LMDC Board. The Mayor and the Governor should act quickly and in good faith to fill those vacancies with representatives of the Lower East Side and Chinatown, and with leaders that can bring the concerns middle and lower-income residents and the small businesses to the table, so that we can wholeheartedly recommend Lower Manhattan as a wonderful place to live and work in New York City.

Rachel Lidov
9/11 Environmental Action
April 28, 2005