

May 16, 2024

A Public Hearing on the City’s funding application for the Hudson Housing Authority Redevelopment Project under Restore New York Communities Initiative Program was held by the Common Council on Thursday, May 16, 2024, at 6:00 PM, in the Common Council Chambers, City Hall with President Thomas DePietro presiding.

Upon roll call there were present: Councilmembers Belton, Daskaloudi, Merante, Morris, Purnhagen, Volo and President DePietro.

Absent: Councilmembers Mizan, Roberts, Rony and Sarowar.

(Councilmember Mizan arrived after roll call.)

President DePietro stated the following Notice of the Hearing was published in the city’s official newspaper on May 8, 2024:

**CITY OF HUDSON
COLUMBIA COUNTY, NEW YORK
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

The City of Hudson will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, May 16, 2024 at 6:00 pm** at City Hall, 520 Warren Street, Hudson for the purpose of hearing public comments on the City of Hudson’s Restore NY funding application for the Hudson Housing Authority Redevelopment Project to be located at 41 North 2nd Street in Hudson, NY. The project involves the restoration and renovation of multiple properties including the demolition of Bliss Towers.

The Restore New York Communities Initiative (“Restore NY”) provides municipalities with financial assistance for the revitalization of commercial and residential properties. The program encourages community development and neighborhood growth through the elimination and redevelopment of blighted structures. For full details on the program, please visit the Empire State Development website at: <https://esd.ny.gov/restore-new-york>

If special accommodations are needed for persons with disabilities, those with hearing impairments, or those in need of translation from English, those individuals should contact Tracy S. Delaney, City Clerk at (518) 828-1030 or cityclerk@cityofhudson.org, at least one week in advance of the hearing date to allow for necessary arrangements. Written comments may also be submitted to Tracy S. Delaney, City Clerk, 520 Warren Street; Hudson NY 12534 until **Friday, May 17, 2024 at 4:30 pm**.

**RESTORE NY
PROPERTY ASSESSMENT LIST**

Municipal Name: City of Hudson

Project Name: Hudson Housing Authority Redevelopment Project

Address 41 North Second Street

TID 190.35-2-19

Sq Ft 4.43 acres

Site:	Residential	
Status	Residential-to demolished	be
Zoning	GC	

Dated: May 3, 2024

Tracy Delaney, City Clerk
 City of Hudson
 City Hall
 520 Warren Street
 Hudson, New York 12534
 Columbia County
 (518) 828-1030

President DePietro stated the following written comment had been received from Tassilo von Parseval:

To the members of the Common Council and the Mayor representing the executive branch of the City of Hudson:

The City of Hudson should under no circumstances provide any support for the HHA Restore NY project.

The project as stated strives to rebuild Bliss Tower and Columbia Apartments into a new housing project of 300 units, an increase of over 120% from its current number of 135 units. Mayor Kamal is in favor of this as he claims that lack of affordable housing is the reason for Hudson's shrinking population as well as the near 240 open positions at Columbia Memorial.

He is correct in as much as housing is unaffordable and a factor that contributes to the decline in population. What he fails to recognize is that Columbia County's unemployment rate is sitting at around 3.6%.

He can create any amount of housing he wants - there won't be enough people moving into it to work at the hospital since everyone who wants a job already has a job. It is ludicrous to expect anyone to relocate to Hudson and live in newly built public housing only to work a near-minimum-wage job at the hospital. It will not happen.

What would however happen is the construction of a grotesquely out-of-scale housing project in a city of 5,800 people that is going to haunt the city for the next 50 years.

We should at this point not forget to talk about the Hudson Housing Authority itself.

The HHA is a federal agency that has been operating with Watergate-levels of secrecy and opacity. What is worse is their incompetence. They have a proven track record of mismanaging an existing stock of 135 housing units to the extent that over 30 of them are no longer inhabitable, by their own admission. It is preposterous to entertain the idea of putting them in charge of 300 units when they are already not able to handle less than half that.

The City should have a germaine interest in making the HHA obsolete.

As a federal agency, it is not subject to the laws and agencies of the city and Hudson should aim to regain agency over affordable housing.

Far better and more successful alternatives exist in Hudson right now, and those need to be looked at instead. Hudson Terrace Apartments provide 168 units of affordable housing, managed profitably by a private company that succeeds in keeping the units inhabitable. On top of that, this style of housing does not feature a nine-story tower of rotting concrete and in all likelihood did not cost in excess of \$733,000 per unit either.

The solution thus is to find competent partners that can build affordable housing with private money, move the tenants from Bliss Tower and Columbia Apartments into it, tear down the old structures and dissolve the HHA once and for all. It is embarrassing for Hudson to have a Housing Authority and perpetuating its existence that most of its elected officials are too lazy to think of viable alternatives.

I remain hopeful that the elected officials of Hudson are not overwhelming lazy and will consider solutions less nefarious and simplistic as what has been proposed,

President DePietro read the following petition that had been submitted:

“To the City Council:

“The undersigned residents of Bliss Towers and Columbia Apartments have been informed by the Hudson Housing Authority that it has prepared a Preliminary Redevelopment Plan which proposes to demolish Bliss Towers and Columbia Apartments to replace the existing affordable housing and also add additional affordable housing on the site and some additional sites, which the HHA is planning on acquiring.

“We have further been informed by HHA that over the next several months, it will be working with the City Administration, the Council, and the Planning Board, as well as New York State funding agencies and other financing partners, the HHA residents themselves and other Hudson residents to possibly revise and finalize the Redevelopment Plan. We urge all those parties to work together to finalize a plan that works for the residents and the community.

“Finally, we have been informed that HHA is asking the City to support its request to submit an application for funding under the Restore New York Communities Initiative, a funding source that would assist in the demolition of an obsolete Bliss Towers and Columbia Apartments, which would occur after all residents are relocated to new HHA or other affordable housing.

“The undersigned residents of Bliss Towers or Columbia Apartments submit this Petition in support of the City of Hudson submitting the HHA’s application for funding under the Restore New York Communities Initiative.

“We ask that this Petition be read into the record on this matter.”

President DePietro stated the petition had been signed “by roughly forty Bliss residents.”

President DePietro: Now, we’re going to open the hearing for public comments, please state your name and address for the record and going to limit the comments to thirty minutes per speaker.

(Several people speaking at the same time)

President DePietro: Well, let’s cut that down to three, three minutes per speaker and please stop when I ask you to at three minutes, that’s all I ask. Who from the, by the way, this is not a Q and A, this is not a time to ask questions, this is the time to tell us your comments, your feelings or whatever about this proposal. Who would like to go first? Yes.

Robert Rasner: You want me to go first?

President DePietro: Yes.

Mr. Rasner: My name is Robert Rasner; I live in the First Ward. The beauty and burden of a democracy is that it grants citizens the freedom to express diverse viewpoints and mobilize around shared values. No idea should prevail without the support of the majority. This is a public hearing required by the Empire State Development’s Restore New York Communities Initiative. Restore New York funding is available for projects involving demolition, rehabilitation of vacant and abandoned properties. In short, this program has nothing to do with construction of new housing, it is for demolition of redundant housing. To be eligible for a grant under this program, there’s just three simple requirements, including: The applicant must demonstrate at least a ten percent match in funds; and they must hold a public hearing to discuss the application and the assessment of the property involved. On April 24th, prior to the required public hearing, Common Council met and voted not to approve the resolution supporting the application for a two million dollar grant to demolish existing structures once replacement housing was in place. Apparently dissatisfied with that outcome, President DePietro once again placed the item before Common Council at a special meeting on April 29th. Again, the required public hearing had not been held nor even scheduled. Much of the discussion that second evening focused upon the need for affordable housing. Affordable housing was not the subject of this resolution. At the meeting on the 29th, Council Person Belton pointed out the application required a public hearing. The requirement of a public hearing is clearly stated in the application requirements. That requirement was not met prior to Common Council taking action on the 24th. When Ms. Belton drew attention to the hearing requirement there was a brief discussion among Council members about the requirement. In fact, one member of the public pointed out that a

vote taken prior to a public hearing was not in compliance with the intent of the application and probably not legal. Fully aware you were not in compliance with the requirement, Council proceeded to vote on the resolution and approved it with two dissenting votes. The State of New York has published a fifteen-page document that advises and guides governing bodies on conducting public meetings and hearings. The title page of that documents sets the tone for its subject – Democracy, like a precious jewel, shines most brilliantly in the light of an open government. Asking us now, after you have voted, for our thoughts on this matter is simply unacceptable. Again, the requirement of a public meeting to discuss or opine on the application for funds to demolish redundant housing is simply overlooked or ignored? Either way this action does not speak well for Hudson’s elected officials. You’ve shown no interest in the public’s opinions, feelings, concerns.....

President DePietro: Three minutes is up.

Mr. Rasner: I’m going to continue for about half a minute here. That is an insult to the city’s electorate. We, the voters of Hudson, sent you here. We expect you to be fair and informed regarding how government functions, you know, a government for the people, by the people and that old stuff. We have nothing to say that is of value to you. Is all this much ado about nothing? Yesterday, Mountco’s director of development said, yes, we’ll move forward with this process whether or not you approve it, whether or not Empire State Development approves the grant. From the basis of this shoddy procedure alone, Empire State Development should be advised not to approve this application. Thank you for your attention.

President DePietro: Thank you. Next.

Janice Beckles: Good evening. Janice Beckles. I’m a voter and as he says, for the people by the people, I think there’s humanity and equality in that statement, that comes along with what he said. Redundant, that means nobody exists down in that tower.

President DePietro: Thank you. Yes, please.

Carla Sadoff: Carla Sadoff, I live in the Fourth Ward. I just have some questions or statements that I want to put publicly regarding all of this. While I’m all for public housing and whatever’s needed, I’m crystal clear that Bliss Towers as it exists now, is not viable. There are questions, one, the plan funding schedule, there’s so many things regarding Restore and the Restore Grant is for the demolition, but it’s in service, allegedly in service of something else, in service meaning it’s for demolition and it’s for the planned building of these new towers but there’s no, what is the planned funding schedule? What is the construction schedule based on, whenever it’s going to start, there’s a plan for when you start and when you end construction, what’s the construction schedule against the planned start date, what are those conversations, where are they, where’s the information about that to look, what are the constraints and challenges that Mountco and HHA already are aware of that they’re going to have to navigate? Have there been or will there be studies done regarding Hudson’s infrastructure abilities to support this expansion? How do we support in answering the infrastructure to support what is needed for the construction? When will you have these dates? When will there be dates to think about? When will you know when you would have dates to think about? Is there a commitment to, from HHA to bring the City Council and public along on the progress even though you don’t have to

because you don't need to get, if I understand, you don't need the permission, this construction does not need the permission of the City Council, is that correct?

President DePietro: This is not a Q and A.

Ms. Sadoff: Ok, can someone just answer that?

President DePietro: No.

(Unidentified person stated Planning Board)

Ms. Sadoff: Planning Board, thank you.

Alan Weaver: It'll need approval for a PILOT Program.

Ms. Sadoff: Ok.

Mr. Weaver: It will need a PILOT.

President DePietro: Can you not respond....

Ms. Sadoff: What is, are the commitments regarding updating City Council and public on progress status as well as when, where there are things that are not going to go on track. How's there been thoughts as to how best to do this? Governance, what might be the governance structures between the different entities to support each other? Ok. These, I'm just putting as my view of this, I don't expect answers, I'm putting it on record.

President DePietro: Thank you. Next.

Caitie Hilverman: Good evening Councilmembers and fellow residents, my name is Caitie Hilverman, I'm a resident of the Fifth Ward. My family has deep roots in Hudson, we've lived here since the late 1800s when my great-great-grandma immigrated here, so I've witnessed the significant changes in Hudson throughout my lifetime and heard tale of them from my parents, grandparents, and ancestors throughout my life as well. I'm here tonight because I believe it's important for the Council and for all of those interested in affordable housing in Hudson to have some awareness of our history as it relates to housing. So, Hudson, as we probably all know at this point, was once a bustling whaling port and an industrial hub. However, by the mid-20th century, as industries either died out or relocated, our city experienced a significant economic downturn. This led to the urban renewal projects of the 1960s and 70s which dramatically reshaped our waterfront. Neighborhoods deemed blighted were taken down, and as a result of this high-rise buildings like Bliss Towers in the early 1970s were constructed to house displaced residents. My great-grandma, Jennie Martin, also owned a home on lower Warren Street that was taken down during this period. Unlike many others who were displaced in Hudson at that time, my family did not end up in Bliss Towers, a fate common among many black and brown families who were disproportionately affected by these renewal projects at the time. And as we learned at the last Common Council meeting on this topic, some of the original residents of Bliss Towers are still living there today, over fifty years later. Now, we stand at another critical

junction similar to the 1970s, once again, a group of people in power in Hudson are poised to make decisions that will profoundly impact the one hundred families still living in Bliss now. I urge the Council and all stakeholders here to prioritize the needs of these residents, thirty-nine of whom have shown their support for the Hudson Housing Authority's funding application through a petition submitted today. I call on you to prioritize housing equity over beautifying our City or perfecting bureaucratic processes. I've heard a lot about scattered site affordable housing in the last few weeks, it's crucial that any relocation plans for Bliss Towers' residents keep them within the two square miles of Hudson. These families should not be pushed to the periphery of our community; they deserve to stay in the heart of our City that they call home and have called home for generations. Housing is a fundamental right and this topic should be treated as the emergency that it is. The residents of Bliss Towers often feel unsafe and uncertain about their futures. Let's ensure that their voices are not only heard but are also prioritized in this conversation. Yes, we need better communication, yes, we need better more robust practices for making decisions like this but above all, we need an urgent action that recognizes the gravity of the situation. As we contemplate the future of housing in Hudson, let's also remember our past here. The decisions we make today will resonate in the lives of our neighbors for decades to come and let's choose a path of compassion and of justice. Thank you.

President DePietro: Thank you. By the way, any of the comments made, if you would like to submit them for the record, any written comments will be accepted to the end of business day tomorrow. So, if you want to submit them.

Councilmember Volo: This is being recorded, correct?

President DePietro: Yes.

Tracy Delaney, City Clerk: Digital recording equipment, yes.

President DePietro: Anyone else? Yes.

Alan Weaver: I'd like to ask the Council how they vote.....

President DePietro: No, this is not a question and answer.

Mr. Weaver: Listen, shut up. I'd just like to put it to the Council how you can approve a redevelopment that you haven't even seen....

President DePietro: Thank you and now sit down.

Mr. Weaver: and the public has not seen. My three minutes aren't up.

(Several people talking at the same time)

Mr. Weaver: I'm Alan Weaver from the First, Second, Fourth Ward. I was in the Second and now I'm in the Fourth. So, that is what I'm putting to the Council, how you can support something that you don't even know what it is and who gave the HHA the authority to close the street, that's you know, pretty hubristic and there's plenty of housing in Hudson already,

affordable housing and it's trying to replace what Hudson already has now but you're talking about building three hundred and twelve units. Yea, well you have Sparks, you have Dots, you have Crosswinds, you have Crosswinds, you have Providence, you have the waterfront and you have Schuyler Place, there's a lot of affordable housing in Hudson so, you know, I just don't understand how you guys can approve something that you don't even know what it is and the public doesn't know what it is either.

Councilmember Purnhagen: Who's been saying the fact that this resolution is not about new housing, we're discussing demolition of housing, not building new housing with this resolution, it's not about new housing.

Mr. Weaver: Yes, by redundant they'd be housing (inaudible), Bliss Towers is (inaudible).

Crystal Peck, Counsel for the Council: I understand that this is an emotional topic, there are several people here but there are rules, each person gets three minutes, Mr. Weaver is speaking, we would ask that everyone be courtesy to each other and please do not have any interruptions, if there are interruptions, we can stop the public hearing and wait for everyone to adhere to the protocol of being able to speak and allow everyone to speak. It is not a back and forth, everyone may speak for three minutes, please state your comments or concerns on the record and then allow the next person to speak. Thank you.

Mr. Weaver: Do I get more time?

President DePietro: You do have a minute and a half left.

Mr. Weaver: I would ask that Mountco make a presentation to the Common Council and to the public about exactly what it is they want to build other than just orange boxes.

President DePietro: That's it?

Mr. Weaver: I think that's enough, don't you Tom?

President DePietro: Thank you.

Ms. Beckles: Excuse me.

President DePietro: Next.

Ms. Beckles: Put that respect on the Q and A since nobody else is doing it. So, you said with just.....

President DePietro: No, no, we're not going to do a Q and A.

Ms. Beckles: Oh, so now we're not going to do a Q and A.

President DePietro: We didn't answer him. Mary Decker, please.

Mary Decker: I apologize in advance, I understand what you say, no questions and answers, but I'm going to go on with Mr. Weaver just said, you sat on Hudson Housing Authority Board, Alan, come on now...we need more housing, please, come live in Bliss Towers a month and see what we've got to go through as a resident, we have (inaudible), Alan you sat on the Board...

President DePietro: Mary, address it to all of us.

Ms. Decker: Now you never, I'm going to end up-----and I do apologize.

President DePietro: Thank you, Mary.

Ms. Peck: Just to be clear, in order to make sure this is orderly and everyone can be heard, all comments should be addressed to the Council, this is an opportunity for you to comment on the application as being submitted. Please try to respect that.

President DePietro: Yes.

Debra McPherson: I'm Debra McPherson, I've heard what she said, we do have problems down at Bliss Towers and so, they're trying their best to help us out, ok, we down there want to just go some else and live, live a good life, that God wanted us to have and God's waiting for you all to decide on this, do what you just done or not, I'm praying every day and every night so we get this place done, you know, we need to do something about this Bliss Tower and it needs to get knocked down because you got bed bugs in there, you got roaches in there, we need to get it done. Soon as God wants us to get this done, so that's why I'm here today to pray for you all, let you know that God wants it done.

President DePietro: Thank you.

Ms. Beckles: I have one more thing to say, there was a project done in Albany where they asked the residents to move with family if they could or put them up in hotels and then when they finished with renovating their apartments, they were able to go back into the apartments.

President DePietro: Thank you, anyone else like to comment? Go ahead.

Linda Mussmann: I have something to say.

President DePietro: Ok.

Supervisor Mussmann: Support for the Restore grant to demolish Bliss Towers means that the council and the citizens support the entire Housing Authority project, as I understand. To support this grant at this time, in my view, is not possible because the entire plans of the Hudson Housing Authority that they are proposing have not fully been revealed. We have only been given a preliminary sketch of the entire three hundred plus apartment project and a ballpark estimate that each apartment will cost approximately seven hundred thousand dollars. The size and scope of this project is an immense change to a small city to be sure. To support this, Restore grant without understanding the Hudson Housing Authority's entire project at this time is like putting the cart before the horse. Simply put I personally cannot support something I

don't know enough about. The Hudson Housing Authority project for example wants to block off a portion of State Street so Hudson Housing Authority can building a phase one, phase one is building a new Bliss Tower complex, and once completed to be followed by the demolition of old Bliss Towers however the closing of the block of State Street idea has not yet been okayed and without permission to close State Street between North 2nd and North 1st means HHA cannot build phase one and that means that HHA would have to re-think the entire project. Changing the streetscape is not a small task and it seems it would require a serious study – moving traffic resulting from the three hundred plus apartments is no small task. North 2nd going toward Mill Street is a very small and narrow road with a steep grade. Moving more traffic on Columbia, the truck route, is another concern to be fully understood. This rearranging of the streetscape and traffic studies takes time to study and requires public input. In general, the density of your project appears to be out of scale with the rest of Hudson. A picture that you gave us to view your project is hard to understand without a scale model that shows how everything fits together. You have not followed the comprehensive plan or the task force housing plans that call for housing that is scattered and not multiple towers as your plans are at a glance as shown. Instead, it appears to be a place isolated, walled off from the rest of the City. I for one think this grant should be postponed until the plans reveal a more complete picture of the entire proposal. And the guaranteed permits to close off State Street between North 2nd and North 1st have been acquired. Then it seems an application for the Restore Grant potentially is in keeping with the project plans, it is only fair to have the public a partner in this project so we can make a better place for the residents of Bliss. Thank you. Linda Mussmann, 4th Ward Columbia County Board of Supervisors'.

President DePietro: Thank you. Anyone else? Yes.

Carole Osterink: Carole Osterink, the First Ward. I'm going to be brief, I just wanted to express my disappointment with the Council for supporting this grant at this time. It's my opinion that it's premature. The money can be used only for demolition and demolition is a few years off. I agree with Councilmember Morris when she predicted that the reason for seeking support at this point is so that the Housing Authority and Mountco can go out and say look, we have the support of the entire City and you know, based on this vote of support and we've already seen something like that happening. I was at Housing Authority meetings, couple of times when the people from Mountco assured the Board of Commissioners that the City was behind this when what they meant by the City could only have been the Mayor, the Housing Justice Director and possibly the Common Council President because nobody else had any information about this project. And also, after you made the vote, the Executive Director of the Housing Authority told the Register Star that the vote was a strong and clear decision to support us. So, this is why this is happening at this time, you're being asked to support something that you don't understand in order for them to go out and claim support so they can get funding and support from the State and everything else. This project will have an enormous impact on Hudson – probably as great as Urban Renewal did fifty years ago and for anyone to support this without understanding the impact of this project which is like changing the street grid among other things, the impact of the project on traffic, on services, on the economic health and sustainability here in the City of Hudson is, in my opinion, irresponsible and should not be done by anyone who claims to be representing the residents of the City of Hudson. Thank you.

President DePietro: Thank you. Anyone else from the community? We're not really going to; I mean you're not really a community member. This was for us to hear from the people granted I'm sure you have responses to some of what they've said but that's it.

Ifetayo Cobbins: I mean, excuse me.

President DePietro: Oh sorry, I didn't see your hand. Sorry.

Ms. Cobbins: I hear both sides of what's going on here but I don't know what's wrong with some of you all thought processes and I don't know, I think it's politics obviously, anyway, to get that out the way. We live in Bliss Towers, you all don't and I don't know how much you all don't understand that and the building's about to fall down, I mean what is wrong. What's up with you all's thoughts? Tell me. I mean it doesn't make any sense. I mean we've got fifteen years, eighteen years, many years, people still moving in a tilted freaking building and you all are saying no, I mean demolish, something needs to be done, it just can't be hearing talking, talking, talking, talking, talking until there's, trying to get action and you all are throwing rocks at us like f- you all, wait, wait for another plan, wait for something else and how many times do you have to go through this, it's not fair, it is not, I'm a resident, we got Hudson, we got other sites and whatever, whatever, mind you we don't want to move out of Hudson, we want to stay here and you all just got to come, you all just got to come to something because you all so, because you all are just being greedy right now. (inaudible due to applause) because you all are not in our position, you all are not in our position we live there, we live there with the half broken down elevators, like I said tilted access building, it's just, water draining from the roofs, there's water damages, I mean we still live there because obviously there's really no, really affordable housing, there is now, but there's really, everybody's going to end up living in a complex, we want to live in our own houses, whatever, but the point is, you all need to get, get with it, come up with the times, like damn, this is not right, it's not right at all, you all really, I'm really disappointed, I mean this is unbelievable, you all should be ashamed of you all so to, the ones that are against this. That's all I got to say, this is a damn shame, I'm, this is awful, you all should close this.

Ms. Beckles: I've got one more thing to say, I'm sorry but listen, you, you all just made their friggin' case, as to why that building should come down, that's all I'm saying.

President DePietro: Thank you.

Ms. Beckles: But they're not saying if you can go here, you all can come back here after they put up the building, they want you gone. They want you to go and not come back but if they ask you can you can you move somewhere, they're not going to do, til they fix this building, tear it down, put it back up but you all are saying all the ill-conditions that are there, just gave them a real good reason to tear that God damn bitch down.

Ms. Cobbins: Well, they have to...

(Several people talking at the same time)

President DePietro: No, we're getting off track here guys, we can have these conversations outside of this hearing. Anyone else want to make a public, not.

Ms. Sadoff: It's going to be quick, thirty seconds.

President DePietro: Ok.

Ms. Sadoff: Thank you. I don't think anybody in here or most people in here, are not in agreement that something has to happen with Bliss Towers, that there needs to be a re-building of the Towers. What's been in question for many people is, is it, is it being strategic.

President DePietro: Carla.

Ms. Sadoff: That's all, sorry.

President DePietro: I didn't mean to chime in, you should turn to us.

Ms. Sadoff: Is it being strategic, that's, that is my biggest thing, is it being, are we working the smartest and part of that is being educated, transparency, knowledge, all of that is what many people are speaking about that's in question, not the need for a building that supports and houses the people of Bliss Towers and more people, that has never been many of the peoples' question being questioned.

President DePietro: Thank you. Hold on, Jeff.

Jeffrey Dodson: I'm a member of the (inaudible), 31 Fairview Avenue.

President DePietro: Let me just see if there's anymore, anybody else from, who is not affiliated with HHA, want to speak?

(no response)

President DePietro: And we'll let Jeff have some closing comments, I'm not sure.

Unidentified Person: Three minutes.

Mr. Dodson: I'm not going to take three minutes.

President DePietro: Go ahead, yeah.

Mr. Dodson: Not to offend anyone but there's nobody in the room more qualified than myself to be thoughtful in this process being a public housing resident for twenty-three years, working for public housing for twenty-eight years in the largest city in New Jersey and now I'm here, there's nobody more qualified to make a decision. Period. Nobody.

President DePietro: Thank you. Ok, since there's no more public comments.

Mr. Weaver: Can I say something Tom, it's not that the housing, that Bliss Towers doesn't have to be replaced, we know that's a fact, it was a fact when I was on the Board, it's, does it need to be replaced with this, whatever this thing is that Mountco has proposed, there are other options.

President DePietro: Ok.

(Several people talking at the same time)

President DePietro: We're not going to have.....there being no further public comments, this public hearing is now closed.

(Public Hearing closed at 6:34 PM)

City Clerk

Following the public hearing, the following written comments were received:

Carla Sadoff (submitted 5/16/2024):

Everyone I speak with agrees that the current housing at Bliss Towers is unacceptable and that residents of Bliss Towers need to be provided with alternative housing as soon as possible.

And there are many unanswered questions, insufficient information along with what appears to be a lack of strategic thinking and planning regarding this proposed project, including applying for the RESTORE grant.

The Restore grant states the municipality needs to apply for the RESTORE grant. There are many unanswered questions regarding the total project that will affect the use of monies from the RESTORE grant. What is the plan, besides the beautiful four-page visual rendition?

The Restore grant states 'all projects require no less than ten percent of the aggregated award amount in matching contributions. That would be \$200,000. There must be a 'firmly committed' match, a signed written agreement to provide these resources and it is contingent upon an applicant receiving a RESTORE NY grant. I do not believe there has been discussions with the municipality as to who will be responsible for this. Is this also what the Common Council said yes to and if so, is it in the city's budget or will it be written in? Again, insufficient information, insufficient education for the public.

The Restore grant states that the applicant needs 'Project Feasibility (market feasibility, business plan, letters of commitment on financing, etc.) Project Readiness (conformance with local planning and zoning, federal and state permits) Transportation and Utility Readiness (transportation analysis, utility evaluations etc.). It would seem that if all this is needed, then

there has been the necessary work done in preparation. When will this information be open to the public? To the Common Council ? Does the Panning Board?

The Restore grant states it must have specific documents included in the application such as project proposal, a letter from local planning/zoning officials stating the project is compatible with local ordinances, a 3rd party Project cost estimate; a letter of matching fund commitments. Who is accountable for obtaining the necessary information to develop these documents? When will they be public record?

The Restore grant states if a municipality is awarded the grant, they are solely responsible for enforcement and verification of compliance with the specific requirements. And Empire State Development reserves the right to full or partial recapture the funds (\$2 million) if they find any misuse/not in accordance with the requirements. Who from the City of Hudson will be overseeing that this grant is being managed according to the requirements?

Again, many questions unanswered, regarding so much of this project. For me, this about being educated, all of us being educated and informed. It is about gaining confidence that the parties leading this huge initiative are demonstrating being strategic in planning and executing, looking at everything, engaging the public so community can be elevated rather than pitted against each other.

I am for affordable housing NOW. How this grant has been presented and passed is questionable. And it did not heed to the Restore Grant requirements. This statement has NOTHING to do with not being for affordable housing nor being against building a new building for the residents of Bliss Towers.

Llew Young (submitted 5/17/2024):

Dear Members of the Common Council:

My husband Terence Law and I have lived on Union Street since 2013. I am writing to express my opposition to the resolution of the Common Council dated April 29, 2024 to support the Hudson Housing Authority's application for Restore NY grants as part of its proposed redevelopment of Bliss Towers. The proposed Bliss project seems clearly inconsistent with both the technical requirements and the general intent of the Restore NY program, and the HHA's premature application for Restore NY grants is very likely to be rejected by the State on that basis.

But the harm of the Council resolution goes beyond merely making a wasted effort to obtain a grant. It has been used to signal falsely to other parties (perhaps including New York State housing officials) that there is broad-based support in Hudson for the project as currently put forth by the HHA and its consultant Mountco when there is not. People who have looked at the parts of the design that have belatedly been made public are shocked that anything so ill-conceived is being proposed.

Yes, Hudson residents are (very) eager to see Bliss Towers demolished and replaced, but they want it replaced with humane, smaller-scale buildings that are consistent with the small-scale houses and apartments on the surrounding blocks. Instead of that kind of redevelopment, the HHA's preliminary proposal is for multiple 7- and 6-story apartment buildings that are almost as tall as Bliss, as part of a project that is three times as large as what is there now and even more dense. The proposal is simply Bliss 2.0: the kind of thing you might see in Newark or the Bronx, and destined to be a Bliss-style crime hub. It is enormously frustrating to see Hudson's political leaders poised to make the same mistakes that their predecessors made at the beginning of the 1970s. And it is infuriating to hear members of City government falsely suggest that residents who oppose this kind of misguided design are really just opposed to all public housing.

There are also serious economic issues raised by the size and scope of the proposed Bliss replacement. I agree that there is an urgent need for additional affordable housing in Hudson that any redevelopment plan should address, and not just a few token housing units. At a bare minimum, the redevelopment plan should guarantee uninterrupted housing for all of the approximately 100 current Bliss tenants and provide additional moderate-income units. But the current plan almost triples the Bliss population from about 100 usable units to over 300 without any plan for where these new residents will work. Some people suggest that the hospital and school district have job vacancies that they can fill, but those positions are generally for workers with specialized skills who earn more than the income limits of subsidized housing permit. A generalized desire to promote social justice is not a plan, and it would be cruel and unfair to bring people to Hudson who have no realistic chance of finding jobs here that pay living wages. The City will also face substantial costs for additional municipal and school services that the new residents will require. An increase of 200 apartments in the HHA project, plus perhaps another 100 in the Depot District, could mean 600 additional residents, an over-ten-percent larger population in the City in a very short space of time. City and school taxes, already high by Upstate standards, could rise dramatically. As far as I can tell, there has been zero planning by the city to identify the costs involved and account for them.

Jeffrey Dodson (submitted 5/17/2024):

I am writing this letter as a resident of the City of Hudson.

I am submitting this written statement to be entered into the record of the public hearing which was held on May 16th regarding the Housing Authority's request for the City to submit a RESTORE New York application for the demolition of Bliss Towers and Columbia Apartments.

I would point out the following:

1. The Housing Authority believes that the City has followed all requirements regarding the submission of the Restore application. Moreover, the final determination as to whether the Restore application is in compliance with all applicable State requirements is not made by the Housing Authority nor any City bodies, but rather, by the State's Empire State Development Corporation.

2. The Housing Authority has already stated, but I will restate for the record that the City's support of the Restore application does not represent the City's support of the preliminary redevelopment plan, which was presented to the City Council and set forth on the Housing Authority's website.
3. I would encourage any City Council Member or City resident who wants to learn about the redevelopment plan and to have input into what the final plan will be to follow that plan on the housing authority's website and attend public meetings like the one scheduled for May 20th at which the architects will be present to discuss the plan. I understand that the Housing Authority has committed to coming before the City Council on a regular basis throughout the planning process to get input from the Council and citizens, as the plan is revised and finalized.
4. There is still a misunderstanding that the ESD funding "attaches" to the current proposal beyond the demolition of Bliss Towers or Columbia Apartments. (1) Whether we are moving forward with redevelopment; (2) the funding source of such redevelopment; and (3) the plans for such redevelopment are different questions. Regarding #1: Bliss Towers is obsolete and is not a financially viable option for rehabilitation. There must be redevelopment. (2) No funding has currently been committed. (3) The Plans are preliminary redevelopment plans are continuously being discussed – these are not final plans.

I ask that you support the City of Hudson by submitting the Hudson Housing Authority's application for funding to the NY Restore Program.

Thank you for your anticipated support of the NYS Restore application.

Ronald Kopnicki (Submitted 5/17/2024):

In my comments for the Council's Special Meeting of April 29, I called upon the Council to assert its role as an equal partner in government and vote against the HHA resolution as originally drafted. What the Council did, in its amended resolution, was to support the HHA resolution for a Restore New York grant for the demolition of Bliss Towers, and nothing more. It rejected the notion that the resolution constituted support for the entire plan of HHA/Mountco/Alexander Gorkin Architects going forward, whatever it might entail.

There is an consensus that Bliss Towers should be demolished and that housing should of course be provided for its current residents. But the HHA/Mountco?Alexander Gorlin plan, to the extent that there is information available about it, goes far beyond this. What can be known about the location, number, size and design of proposed structures raises concerns. The Council and the public have been promised regular updates on the project, and a voice in the detailed discussions that will lead to the ultimate determinations. These promises must be kept, and the clear and focused judgment of the Council as expressed in its amended resolution, must be honored. It should not be misinterpreted as granting a blanket approval to the project.