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## No deal in sight for Armory rehab battle

By Aliza Appelbaum

The Kingsbridge Armory's proposed redeveloper and local community activists are no closer to reaching an agreement about for a living wage requirement and community benefits agreement (CBA) after a City Council hearing that began Tuesday morning.

More than 300 people came to a meeting of the City Council's Committee on Zoning and Franchises to oppose — and in fewer cases, support — the plan to covert the historic former military structure into a mall. The committee gathered to hear testimony from all parties before voting on the proposal next month.

“The project should — and will — deliver significant community benefits,” said Deputy Mayor Robert Lieber in his testimony at the hearing. “A separate CBA, on the other hand, is a private- to-private agreement that the city would have no role in monitoring or enforcing, and therefore is an inadequate tool to memorialize commitments.”

Mr. Lieber said that the city supported the Armory redevelopment plan as it stood.

“The administration agrees that the Armory should create good jobs for the community,” said Mr. Lieber. “We are not in favor of mandating a specific living wage requirement.”

Mr. Lieber and attorneys for Related Companies chose instead to highlight the number of jobs that would be created by their “Shops at the Armory” plan, including about 1,200 permanent jobs and another 1,000 during construction.

But the quantity of jobs will not be enough, said opponents of the plan.

“When billionaire developers are accepting tens of millions of dollars in tax benefits to build in our communities, it is not a radical idea to ask that the jobs they create be good jobs, jobs that offer Bronxites a chance to better themselves and provide for their families,” said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. “It is time to demand that developers do better.”

Other opponents of the current plan pointed out that if Armory workers made minimum wage, most would still be too poor to afford the goods and services at their places of business.

“What I'm hearing is that the only way to get retailers is to keep the people poor,” said City Councilman Eric Gioia, a committee member representing the 26th district in Queens.

Mr. Diaz also noted the importance of creating jobs that would benefit the economic growth of the community, rather than settling for more of the same types of jobs already held by many poor families in the Bronx.

“These jobs must be created in the right way,” Mr. Diaz said. “The old model, that any job is better than no job, is no longer acceptable.”

City Councilman Oliver Koppell, whose district ends across the street from the Armory who recently seemed uncertain about which way his vote would go, told The Riverdale Press he’s made up his mind

“I won’t vote for the plan without a community benefits agreement,” he said.

Those who did not get a chance to be heard at the Tuesday meeting will have another opportunity to give testimony at the next committee meeting on Monday, Nov. 23 at 9:30 a.m. in council chambers.