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April 14, 2014

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**NYC Comptroller Scott M. Stringer and Manhattan Borough
President Gale A. Brewer Reach an Agreement with de Blasio
Administration for West 95th Street Homeless Shelter**

Agree to examine long-term changes to City's homeless policy

NEW YORK, NY—New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer and Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer today announced an agreement with New York City Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Lilliam Barrios-Paoli and Department of Homeless Services (DHS) Commissioner Gilbert Taylor to reduce by half the number of families at Freedom House, a homeless shelter for adult families on West 95th Street in Manhattan.

Freedom House currently serves 400 adults in two residential buildings on West 95th Street. Under the agreement, the shelter population will be reduced to 200 adults by November 1st, 2014 as part of an effort to create a better environment for shelter clients, building tenants and the surrounding community.

In 2012, DHS sited Freedom House as an emergency contract agreement in two residential buildings that were also home to 71 tenants in rent-stabilized units. The shelter is operated by Aguila Inc., a Bronx-based nonprofit that moved their offices to the Upper West Side when the shelter opened.

“In a city where over 50,000 residents are sleeping in homeless shelters each night, it is essential that we think carefully and critically about how to rectify this growing crisis,” said Comptroller Stringer. “The City needs a long-term plan to address the growing homeless population and this deal indicates a willingness on the part of the Administration to re-evaluate its approach.”

“With homelessness in the City at record highs and shelter costs through the roof, I'm gratified that City Hall has agreed to focus on long-term planning instead of the use of emergency procurement to operate shelters,” Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer said. “The shelters at West 95th Street are emblematic of the problem with emergency contracts that are extended without community input or adequate oversight. We all need to work together to find solutions that take into account neighborhood views, the dignity and safety of our homeless, and the City's budgetary needs.”

"The de Blasio Administration is proud to work with our partners in government to reach solutions that better support homeless New Yorkers," said Deputy Mayor Lilliam Barrios-Paoli. "We look forward to continuing that spirit of cooperation as the City develops pathways to affordable housing for those who need it most."

"Earlier this year DHS announced the re-programming of two different shelters in an effort to better serve homeless families with children which in turn provided us with more capacity in our system for Adult Family groupings," said Commissioner Gilbert Taylor. "Working with the Comptroller, the Borough President and our social service provider Aguila, we were able to seize a unique opportunity with more capacity in the system for Adult Families to right size the Freedom House shelter. We will continue similar efforts across the board to improve conditions for our homeless clients and to be better neighbors in our host communities."

"I applaud the administration for responding to our community's concerns and agreeing to a more collaborative solution," said Senator Adriano Espaillat. "The agreement reached will safeguard permanent affordable housing in a neighborhood with a critical shortage of this resource. This has been a difficult issue, and we will continue to work until all details have been finalized."

"The City has grappled for years with the need to house homeless families and has dealt with it by rewarding unscrupulous landlords offering rooms for hire in SROs with unconscionable, sky-high payments," said Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF - Manhattan). Working for years with neighborhood residents, I saw that such placements were ill-suited for everyone involved, except those collecting the rent. These rooms once housed tenants earning modest salaries who paid modest rents. They often were harassed out of their homes, some into homelessness, to make way for the more lucrative homeless housing racket. I congratulate Mayor de Blasio, Comptroller Stringer and Borough President Brewer for leading the way out of this cycle with a humane and common-sense approach. The agreement reached for the shelters on 95th Street should be replicated in shelters in similar buildings across the City."

"I'm thankful that the Administration is taking this first step to halve the number of homeless at the shelter on West 95th Street." Said District 6 Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal, "I will continue to work with the neighborhood to ensure their safety and quality of life while 200 adult couples remain in the shelter. It's critical that we move forward with additional permanent affordable housing-- and close this shelter for good."

As part of the agreement, the Administration also committed to an ongoing dialogue around the way homeless services are delivered in New York City. The City pays over \$3,000 per unit in many locations to provide shelter and social services in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings, appealing to landlords who seek out lucrative city contracts. This money could instead

be used to help subsidize rents, which would save the City money while putting homeless families on the path to self-sufficiency. The agreement to reduce the number of adult families at Freedom House will open up at least 100 units that could be used as affordable housing for low-to moderate-income New Yorkers.

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