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Resignation of Lourdes Zapata

Newburgh - Community Voices Heard leader Loretta Minning issued the following statement regarding the resignation of City of Newburgh Director of Planning and Community Development Lourdes Zapata.

The recent resignation of Lourdes Zapata as the Director of Planning and Community Development makes you wonder, Why is everybody running? I think the pressure is finally coming down on people. Things are starting to come into the light about the way funds have been spent in the City of Newburgh – the way that the Department which is supposed to help the City develop for everyone's benefit has been doing the opposite.

Although the City government is in chaos, this can be a time of great opportunity. Now as the low-income community we have a chance to be heard. We don't want to be left in the dark while decisions are made about how to spend money in our names. We demand that whoever takes Ms. Zapata's position is someone who is committed to informing the community of what is going on and will include us in making decisions.

We hope there is not an interim person – we want someone who is going to be dedicated to improving Newburgh for everyone. We're calling on the City Manager to hold a forum about the role of the Department of Planning and Development before hiring someone into this position.

Ms. Zapata's sudden departure puts the planning for the CDBG Annual Action Plan in jeopardy. A citizen's committee has been formed, and although it is not yet representative of the community as a whole, I am confident that the Council will do the right thing and vote to include seats for low-income residents. But because Ms. Zapata left behind a legacy, that started way before her, of misspending the money meant to help the low-income community, we demand that no decisions about CDBG be made until there is a full report on what money is available. There are still large amounts of funds that are unspent or unaccounted for, and Ms. Zapata has been unable to produce the information on the status of these projects.

We are calling on the City Manager and the Council to work quickly to clean up the mess that has been left and position us so that we can put a plan in place to spend CDBG money in the best way possible – in a way that allows community participation and benefits the whole of Newburgh.



Lourdes Zapata