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Public officials tour Newburgh's low-income housing



Skartados with Louann Patrillo, living at the Econolodge

NEWBURGH - Members of the group Community Voices Heard took elected officials on a tour of key locations in Newburgh Saturday that exemplify just how hard the economic crisis has hit low-income citizens in the Hudson Valley.

The tour was dubbed "Day in our Shoes" by the leaders of CVH and noteworthy destinations included a residential block where approximately half of the buildings are abandoned, a dilapidated apartment building in which families were still living, the Econolodge where victims of the economic and housing crisis were being put up by the Department of Social Services, and the Newburgh waterfront where some federal Community Development funds reported to be misused.

Along with the members of CVH and countless supporters, 12 elected officials participated in the tour including Congressman Maurice Hinchey and Assemblyman Frank Skartados.

Skartados said he will be addressing the issue after having seen the conditions.

"Today I walked in your shoes and I feel your pain." He then voiced his concern for the current situation of housing, employment, and equality. "I have walked in your shoes but I'll tell you this, from now on you'll be walking with me in my heart and in my mind and I will do whatever I can to change the circumstances."

When the tour arrived at a horribly dilapidated apartment building, in which families were still living, the elected officials were taken inside for an example of the sub-standard living conditions that residents are being forced to accept.

As Assemblyman Skartados left one building, he said the landlord "kept insisting there were no violations when I did identify violations, reporting that although the landlord is not responsible for cleaning the premises there did

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exist malignant structural violations.

After being taken through the same sub-standard building, Hinchey said it was “high time that we made a significant contribution to upgrading the housing in communities.” Hinchey said Newburgh is a city that “has one of the clearest indications that we need an upgrade in housing.”

The tour culminated with an open forum at the Newburgh Ministry on Johnston Street where CVH members concluded by asking the participating elected officials, “What did you learn today on a walk in our shoes?”

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