

Community Board...

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FILE

What is Banana Kelly?

A city's branch of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) established by Congress to help provide housing for low-income families, announced on Oct. 21, 2002

According to public records, First Deputy Commissioner of the Housing Preservation Department John Warren testified at the Oct. 29, 2002 hearing that he "does not see the city making a substantial capital investment in the properties as long as Banana Kelly was the owner." With over \$3 million in unpaid real estate, water and sewage taxes and over \$3 million more owed to various companies HPD fears that creditors would try to collect on debts acquired by Banana Kelly if a grant for repairs was issued. Rivera, who was also scheduled to testify invoked her 5th Amendment right over 100 times refusing to answer questions that ranged from the significance of a number of five-figure checks allegedly made out to Rivera from Banana Kelly funds to "What is Banana Kelly?"

Amidst all the controversy surrounding Banana Kelly, the city's branch of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) established by Congress to help provide housing for low-income families, announced on Oct. 21, 2002 that Banana Kelly would receive a \$700,000 grant for a vocational training program. Marrero was appalled saying, "This is what kills me. With all of the scandals they (HUD) still give them the money and our Congressman José E. Serrano does nothing about it!"

The latter half of the meeting was used to discuss and reorganize the board's bud-

get requests for the city's 2004 fiscal year. The tedious review placed the construction of new daycare facilities in the community at the top of the Capital Budget Request list. "Daycares are full to the max," stated Chair Rivera adding that if the community wanted more people to work then more daycare facilities were necessary. The construction of a new elementary school and improving the lighting throughout various Hunt's Point locations were second and third on the list.

Educational projects became the board's top priority for the Expense Budget. Majority vote ruled in favor of placing the improvement of student teacher ratio and allocating funds to increase the number of books for public schools above pest control. Board members seemed to agree that the budget was rightfully prioritized as they commented on a statement released by Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión Jr. and the NY State Department of Education, which stated that seventy percent of eighth graders in the city failed to meet math standards.

At the end of the meeting Yolanda Rivera's name was mentioned a few more times. When asked by board members if Marta Rivera would respond to a written attack by Rivera, Chair Rivera merely replied, "I won't justify her words with a response. My record clearly speaks for itself."

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