

January 8, 2010



Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation

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Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th floor
New York, NY 10007
via fax to 212-669-7955

Hon. Robert LiMandri, Commissioner
New York City Department of Buildings
280 Broadway
New York, NY 10007
via fax to 212-566-5575

**Re: Illegal Billboards at 97 Greenwich Avenue,
Equinox Fitness, Manhattan**

Dear Chair Tierney and Commissioner LiMandri:

Thank you for agencies' responses to GVSHP's and others' complaints regarding the illegal billboards at this location. I appreciate that both agencies quickly inspected the site, and that 13 buildings violations were issued and a warning letter was issued by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

However, I am concerned that in spite of it now being made patently clear that these billboards are illegal, violate zoning regulations, and were erected without required Buildings or Landmarks permits, they remain in place. In its public statements, Equinox has given no indication that it acknowledges the inappropriateness of the billboards, or that it has any intention of removing them.

This is a not uncommon situation with illegal billboards in the city, and stems at least in part from the fact that fines for violating the law are small, slow to accrue, and often pale by comparison to the direct or indirect profit that those responsible reap from the signage. GVSHP has repeatedly raised the need for these fines and the speed with which they can be delivered to be increased, and will continue to do so. At a time when the city's financial resources are so strapped, it would seem particularly wise to try to make the fines for these types of large and flagrant billboard violations more substantial.

That said, I urge both your agencies to continue to pursue violations for and removal of these billboards as vigorously as the current law allows. It would truly be a shame if, in spite of these signs being found to be so clearly in violation of landmarks and zoning rules and the action taken by both of your agencies, they were allowed to remain up for an extended period of time.

Thank you again for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: State Senator Tom Duane
Assemblymember Deborah Glick