



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Senator Klein demands removal of ad for Airbnb ‘Animal House’

JEFFREY D. KLEIN December 7, 2015

| ISSUE: **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, HOUSING**

Legislation will be introduced to stop one- and two-family homes from short term rentals

Bronx, NY — State Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester), joined by Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj (D-Bronx), community leaders and angry residents, demanded on Monday that Airbnb and similar sites remove an advertisement for “Fenton Lounge,” placed by a homeowner who is renting out his two-family residence for raucous, lewd, late night parties in a quiet neighborhood.

Senator Klein will also introduce legislation to ban one- and two-family homes from short-term rentals. These residences are exempted from the 30-day minimum rule for renting out multiple dwellings.

During one party thrown by the Pelham Gardens homeowner for the Mayweather/Pacquiao fight, dubbed in a promotional flyer as the “Party in the Ghetto,” photos on Facebook show the backyard bash in action: a stripper swinging on a pole, a woman licking whipped cream off of a topless woman, lapdances on patio furniture, jumbo televisions and projectors playing, with DJs spinning music late into the night.

Inside Fenton Lounge, where guests were charged a \$5 cover, girls served up neon jello shots to the masses. Guests were encouraged to tip bartenders and paid for burgers, wings and

shish-kabobs, according to social media posts.

This party, neighbors say, is not atypical.

“Transforming a home on a residential street into a nightclub-for-rent will not be tolerated. Airbnb and other sites with ads for Fenton Lounge must immediately remove these posts. Clearly, strippers dancing on poles, a woman wearing less than a dash of whipped cream lying on a deck, crowds of revelers and DJs spinning music into the wee hours of the night have no place in a residential backyard. This is an illegal B&B gone wild. This activity must end and I will introduce legislation to prevent one- and two-family homes from being rented out on a short-term basis,” **said State Senator Klein.**

“The lewd and crude activities on Fenton Avenue must be stopped. This type of behavior will not be tolerated in our residential neighborhoods. There is a time and place for those looking for that type of activity, and it is certainly not here. I will do all in my legislative power to prevent this from happening again,” **said Assemblyman Gjonaj.**

Fenton Lounge, owned by Nebi Ayele, commands a price of \$750 for 30 or more guests with a \$1,000 security deposit and \$100 cleaning fee for parties, according to its Airbnb advertisement.

“Hosting outdoor events at Fenton Lounge such as Birthday parties, bachelorette parties, Summer BBQs, New years eve, etc. for up to 75 guests will start at the rates posted below and up. I can include a projector, drop screen, pro lighting and sound system at an additional fee,” the ad reads.

Irate neighbors on Fenton Avenue said that their peaceful street has transformed into a noisy, club-like atmosphere ever since the homeowner began renting it as a B&B and party lounge. DJs often play music until sunrise and fights have broken out on the street.

“The quality of life of our neighborhood is deteriorating because of the actions of one individual who has no regard for the residents of this community. He rents his outdoor space for extremely loud parties that go on until 5 a.m.. The last event resulted in a street fight. This has to stop,” **said Fenton Avenue neighbors Sal and Jean Presta.**

The Prestas, neighbors on Fenton Avenue and on surrounding blocks compiled a petition expressing their concerns about downgraded quality of life, especially because of noise.

Residents alerted Senator Klein and Community Board #11 that Ayele circulated a letter before the spring Mayweather/Pacquiao party, apologizing in advance for the inconvenience of noise, crowds and parking spaces taken by guests. Ayele claimed in the note that he “registered the event with local police” and told neighbors to call “Officer Gil” if they had concerns or complaints with his guests.

Local police told the Office of State Senator Klein that “Officer Gil” did not work for the NYPD. Police have had to respond to Fenton Lounge in the past to address disorderly conduct.

Fenton Lounge faces other problems with the Department of Buildings. The agency issued a partial stop work order at the home back in 2012, after an inspector discovered that workers had demolished a wall in the basement without a permit. A complaint had been lodged that interior and exterior work was taking place without proper permits. The partial stop work order is still open.

Nevertheless, that work was completed. Pictures on Airbnb of the property show a remodeled basement with the Fenton Lounge logo painted on the wall and business is booming. Residents said the latest party took place on November 28.

Rooms on Airbnb are booked through mid-December and the end of January.

"This is long overdue as they were utilizing this location as a commercial establishment in a residential area," **said Community Board #11 Chairman Anthony Vitaliano.**

"Community #11 received its first complaint about this 'B&B' on Monday, November 30. A full week hasn't even gone by, and Senator Klein is already on the case. In Community Board #11, the Senator knows it's not about a place to party. It's about family and respect for one's neighbors," **said Community Board #11 District Manager Jeremy Warneke.**

"As President of Allerton Avenue Avenue Homeowners Association, I am disappointed that we have a beautiful house on a good block in our family-oriented neighborhood and it is being used inappropriately for parties which is a terrible idea," **said Sal Castorina.**

"This house is located in the middle of one- and two-family homes located on Fenton Ave, a once quiet sedate neighborhood where working families raised their children and those children could play in front of their homes. Each neighborhood develops its own character with harmony, safety, co-operation and respect for each other. I am a champion of individual rights but those rights must be weighed against the greater good and old fashioned common sense. America is great because it adheres to these simple principals. There are locations where this activity is accepted, this is not one of them and should not be tolerated," **said 49th Precinct Community Council President Joe Thompson.**