



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

January 11, 2010

Rev. Ward Burleson Ewing, Dean & President
General Theological Seminary
175 Ninth Avenue
New York, NY 10011

Dear Dean Ewing:

On the recommendation of its Chelsea Preservation and Planning Committee, Community Board 4 is writing to express its concern with the announcement that the General Theological Seminary has received approval to operate the Tutu Conference Center as a commercial hotel. Our immediate concern is not the approval itself, but rather the secrecy of the process by which it was sought and reviewed. Neither the community nor any of its elected officials were apprised of GTS's efforts to legalize the commercial use of the center.

In response to community concerns that rooms at the Tutu Center were being rented to the general public in violation of a restrictive declaration on the property, Chris Ballard and David Lowry appeared before CP&P on May 21 of last year. They characterized the rentals as mistakes made by an overzealous travel web site and said that, while GTS would have to honor existing reservations, no new ones would be accepted.

When asked about GTS's plans for the Tutu Center they were non-committal but assured us that they would let us know what they were going to do. Despite these assurances, advertisements for commercial guests continued unabated and we heard nothing further about GTS's plans for the Tutu Center until the announcement of a temporary certificate of occupancy permitting commercial use. We deplore GTS's lack of candor with us and GTS's failure to deal openly and publicly with something that directly impacts the community.

CB4 works to represent the interests of all of its constituents – residential, commercial and institutional. In order to do so we depend on mutual trust, transparency and honest communication. Unfortunately, we find all three to be lacking in our recent relationship with GTS.

The histories of Chelsea and GTS are entwined and we hope that GTS will continue to be part of the Chelsea community for many years to come. As you prepare to step down as

Dean and President, we wish you all the best and ask that you urge your successor to work to mend GTS's tattered relationship with the community.

Sincerely,



John Weis, Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



J. Lee Compton, Co-Chair
Chelsea Preservation and Planning

[signed 1/11/10]

Corey Johnson, Co-Chair
Chelsea Preservation and Planning

cc: General Theological Seminary – Chris Ballard
NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn
NYC Council Land Use Division – Danielle DeCerbo
NYS Senator Thomas K. Duane
NYS Assemblyman Richard Gottfried
MBP Scott Stringer – Anthony Borelli, Deborah Morris