

# Clampdown at National Arts Club Board Meeting After Scandal

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**Arts Club board president Aldon James muzzled board members.**



An apartment in the National Arts Club allegedly being used by board president Aldon James in December 2010. (DNAinfo/Amy Zimmer)

**By Amy Zimmer**

**DNAinfo News Editor**

MANHATTAN — National Arts Club governors were muzzled at the first board meeting since a scandal broke over the president's alleged misuse of the club's Gramercy Park South apartments.

Instead of allowing a showdown at Friday's meeting, board president O. Aldon James brought in security guards to keep members quiet, attendees told DNAinfo.

He completely avoided discussing his alleged misuse of the apartments to hoard junk and renting at below-market rates to other board members and friends, according to meeting-goers who requested anonymity.



National Arts Club president O. Aldon James mingling at a meeting for the Gramercy Neighborhood Associates, Jan. 26 (DNAinfo/Amy Zimmer)

He was so determined to keep the issue off the table that one member who tried to speak about it was harangued so much she left in tears.

"His behavior was erratic," a board member said. "He spoke the entire time with barely a breath. Nobody else could say anything."

James apparently was on the defensive.

Security guards manned the club's entrance — not a common sight for a board meeting, club insiders said.

A lawyer and two cameramen joined James at the meeting as did his twin brother, John, who is not on the board. John, as DNAinfo has reported, pays \$356 a month to rent one of the club's nearly 40 coveted apartments. He also served five years' probation and three months in a psychiatric hospital for past tax misdeeds at the club.



The West Parlor of the National Arts Club ([www.nationalartsclub.org](http://www.nationalartsclub.org))

"It was intimidating to see the recording equipment and two cameras," another board member said. "The evening was spent listening to [Aldon James] raving." He spoke from roughly 6 p.m. until 9 p.m., this board member claimed.

James did not respond to requests for comment.

He had previously dismissed the accusations when confronted by DNAinfo, saying the rental prices had been "deliberated." He said the other allegations were made by disgruntled ex-employees who he claimed were "asking for money."

Some board members had been hoping issues would be addressed at their first meeting since November.

"At the end of the day John and Aldon [James] are really good people at heart. There's just something not clicking right," the first board member said. "Aldon is famous in his own right. If things were normal, he'd be a great figurehead for the club. But it's not normal."

This board member wondered about the club's future.

"Unless there is a majority of people on the board who take a stand, it's never going to change," the member said.