

MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD #16 – June 26, 2007

Attendance

David Alexander	Deborah Mack
Joyce Anderson	James Mack (A)
Renee Archer	Yolanda Matthews
Octavius Bamberg	Sadie McNamara (E)
Sissi Benitez (A)	Rev. Joseph Norton
Josephine Blakeley (E)	Edna Petty
Patricia Boone (E)	Marie Pierre
James A. Bowens (E)	Elder Devon Ponds (E)
Gregory Coad (A)	Mattie Pusey (A)
Bonnie Crump (A)	Lashon Segar
Essie Duggan	Ernestine Turner
Samantha Dunn (A)	Rev. Miran Ukaegbu
Ivory Ellison	Alice Vines
Helen Giles	Dr. Merrill White
Shirley Gonsalves	Herman Winston
Daniel Goodine	Hazel Younger
Sarah Hall	Viola D. Greene-Walker, DM
Henry Hill	E. Jane Coleman-Assistant ADM
Kofi Hormeku	Jimmi Brevil, Community Assistant
Michael Howard	Hon. Charles Barron
Allene Ingram	Hon. Darlene Mealy
Daisy Jackson	Hon. Lisa Kenner
Javonn Johnson (A)	Dale DeGale for Hon. Yvette Clark
Troy Johnson (E)	Rev. Joseph Jones for Hon. Charles Hynes
Dr. Cade Jones, III	Brandon Bloomfield for Hon. John Sampson
Pamela Junior	Essie Duggan for Hon. Velmanette Montgomery
Eula Key	Theresa Harley for Hon. William F. Boyland, Jr.
Danny King (A)	Kenton Williams for Hon. Dianne Gordon
Bettie Kollock-Wallace	William Whitaker for Hon. Marty Markowitz
Shawn Lewis (A)	

MEETING HELD AT BROWNSVILLE MULTI-SERVICE CENTER, 444 THOMAS S. BOYLAND STREET, BROOKLYN

Chairperson Hazel Younger called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. and an invocation was said by Dr. Cade Jones, III.

A motion was made by Dr. Cade Jones, III, seconded by Mr. David Alexander and carried to dispense with the reading of the District Manager's report.

A motion was made by Dr. Cade Jones, III, seconded by Mr. David Alexander and carried to dispense with the reading of last month's minutes.

Ms. Essie Duggan, Chairperson of the Economic Development Committee, reported that the Committee met on June 21, 2007 with Cathy Hickey, Executive Director of the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District (BID).

Ms. Hickey stated that she is in the process of reaching out to merchants and community groups to prepare a marketing plan.

There are plans to develop the former Loew's Theatre at Pitkin Avenue and Legion Street. A developer is proposing retail space on the ground floor and housing units above.

Ms. Hickey stated that she has met with a group who is interested in purchasing the former Chase Bank building at Pitkin Avenue and Mother Gaston Boulevard. The group is proposing a café, a credit union, and a job training program for the building.

Ms. Hickey also informed the Committee that she has met with the Department of Transportation regarding new light fixtures with increase wattage along Pitkin Avenue.

In addition, Ms. Hickey will be working with the Parks Department to get more trees planted along Pitkin Avenue.

The Committee will be looking at ways to increase a better mix of retail stores along the District's commercial strips.

In addition, the Committee will be looking at ways to revitalize Belmont Avenue's commercial strip. The Committee is seeking individuals, who desire to have a say about what comes into our community, to join the Committee. Interested persons may contact District Manager Viola Greene-Walker at (718) 385-0323.

Ms. Bettie Kollock-Wallace, Chairperson of the Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee, thanked the members of the Committee for their support over the past ten months.

She reported that the Committee met on June 12, 2007 with representatives of Family Services Network of New York, Inc. which is proposing to construct 21 units of affordable rental apartments on vacant land at 379-385 Howard Avenue.

The Committee also met with representatives from Common Ground which is proposing 124 units of supportive housing at 39-43 Hegeman Avenue.

The Committee recommends that the Board supports both proposals.

Mr. Cyril Joseph, representing Family Services Network, stated that while he is a member of Community Board #4 he is here tonight to speak about a proposal for a site that is within Community District #16, located at Howard Avenue and Bergen Street (Block 1446, Lots 1 & 3).

The project, tentatively named Howard Avenue Apartments, consists of 21 units in a four-story building – 11 one-bedrooms, 8 two-bedrooms, and 2 three-bedrooms for low-income individuals and families. The projected cost of the project is approximately \$6,100,000.

Mr. David Kriegel of GranKriegel Associates displayed illustrations of the project and stated that having worked on other projects in the area they are familiar with the neighborhood. Their goal is to develop a building that fits into the community architecturally, both in scale and materials and he believes their design reflects that.

They are developing the site in a manner which allows them to have a garden area in the back of the building. There will not be any on-site parking (zoning does not require any). The entrance will be on Bergen Street and the ground floor will have a community room. As one moves up the building, they will see a mix of two- and three-bedroom units. The fourth floor configuration changes somewhat from the lower floors. The scale of the building along the Bergen Street side is kept low to match the existing townhouses on the block. Along Howard Avenue the building is taller with setbacks and two colors of brick to breakup the visual mass of the building.

Mr. Kofi Hormeku asked if the building will have elevators?

Mr. Kriegel stated that it will and that the apartments will all be wheelchair accessible.

A delegation from Common Ground came forward next.

Ms. Olga Jobe stated that she is a Project Manager for Common Ground which is a developer and manager of 1600 units of supportive housing in New York City. They currently have about 1000 units under construction and two proposed projects in Community District #16, a 71 unit project on St. Mark's Avenue between Howard and Saratoga Avenues and the project they are here to speak about tonight at 39-43 Hegeman Avenue between Thomas S. Boyland and Amboy Streets. The project will consist of 121-units for families, 40% of the units will be set aside for low-income families, another 40% for very low-income families, and 20% for formerly homeless families and those at risk of homelessness.

In 2005 they formed HomeBase which provides services to families at risk of homelessness. HomeBase services include intensive case management, legal services, and financial grants. It is because of their work in HomeBase that they decided to develop housing in Brownsville.

Their local partner in this project is the East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC). EBC will assist them

in marketing the units and ensuring that at least 80% of the units go to current residents of Brownsville.

Ms. Carmelia Goffe, member of the strategy team for EBC and an original Nehemiah homeowner, stated that they have worked with Common Ground in identifying homelessness and the reasons why it is so prevalent in Brownsville. One of their findings is that families need affordable housing. She has raised three sons who now need to go out on their own, however, \$950 per month rent for a 1-bedroom apartment is not affordable.

Rev. Ernest White of St. Paul Church stated that he is a founding member of East Brooklyn Congregations and they strongly support Common Ground's efforts to continue bringing affordable housing for low-income families in the community.

A packet containing photographs and information about the project was disseminated.

Mr. Richard Cook of Cook and Fox Architects displayed photographs of the community and the site for the project from various vantage points. They are pleased to be working with Common Ground and EBC to bring sustainable and affordable housing to the community.

Solar orientation helps determine the shape of the building and allow for maximum sunlight to the planned playground and the residential units. The project will be a green building, making use of energy efficient products and building technologies. Common Ground has committed to developing a playground at the site that will be accessible to the entire community (not just residents of the building). They are looking at several designs for the playground, from traditional designs featuring sandbox to contemporary ones featuring grass and rocks for the children to climb. The roof of the building will be a living roof with plants that will grow instead of a hot tar top.

Mr. Hormeku stated that he likes the idea of a playground on the site but would like to know who will be responsible for maintenance?

Ms. Jobe stated that Common Ground will operate and maintain the playground with hours similar to those of the New York City Parks and Recreation playgrounds.

Someone asked what the income requirements will be?

Ms. Jobe stated that they will range from \$14,880 for a 1 person household with very low-income to \$42,540 for a 4 person household with low-income.

Ms. Hazel Clark asked what will be the height of the building?

Mr. Cook stated that it will be 4-stories tall along Thomas S. Boyland Street and Hegeman Avenue and 12-stories along Amboy Street.

Someone asked how many of the units will be available to current residents of Brownsville?

Ms. Jobe stated that approximately sixty percent of the units are designated for residents of Brownsville and they will be working closely with EBC to market the units to current residents.

Someone stated that there are no swings in the playground pictures and asked what mechanism is in place to keep the rents affordable for neighborhood residents?

Ms. Jobe stated that the playground photos displayed are samples of other playgrounds. They have not finalized the design for this project. With regard to the rents, Common Ground is committed to affordable housing. All of their tenants have rent stabilized leases wherein the amount that the rent can be increased is capped. There should be no fear that the rents will be so high that anyone in this community cannot afford them.

Mr. David Alexander asked if there will be employment opportunities for Brownsville residents stemming from this project?

Ms. Jobe stated that there will be jobs during construction of the project as well as permanent positions upon completion.

Someone asked if there will be senior housing available and what the application process is?

Ms. Jobe stated that Common Ground is in the process of developing a senior housing site on St. Mark's Avenue between Howard and Saratoga Avenues. That project will consist of 71 studio and one-bedroom apartments with 43 units designated for seniors of the Brownsville community. They will provide service from recreation to visiting nurse services.

Rev. Joseph Norton asked what is the projected cost of the project?

Ms. Jobe stated that the projected cost is forty-five to sixty million dollars and they hope to break ground in late fall 2008.

Mr. Alexander asked if there will be any Section 8 leases?

Mr. Jobe stated that for those individuals and families who were formerly homeless, Section 8 vouchers will be accepted.

A motion was made by Ms. Ernestine Turner, seconded by Mr. Kofi Hormeku and carried to accept the report of the Land Use, Planning, and Zoning Committee and its recommendations.

Mr. Kofi Hormeku, Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Committee, stated that he and Mr. Tony Rosa, Manager of Parks for District #16, visited the District's parks and playgrounds this month. Their findings are in his report which can be found in each member's folder.

The Committee continues to need volunteers to adopt the parks and playgrounds in our community. Please contact the Board office at (718) 385-0323 to volunteer.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. William Whitaker of Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz's office who stated that he can be reached at (718) 802-3876.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Dale DeGale of Congresswoman Yvette Clark's office.

Ms. DeGale stated that she is the newly appointed Community Development Director for Congresswoman Clark. As Director, she reports to Congresswoman Clark the community's concerns about development. She heard Ms. Duggan's request and would like to be considered for membership on the Board's Economic Development Committee. Prior to joining Congresswoman Clark's staff, she was employed for many years at Chase Manhattan Bank and she believes that experience can be an asset to the Committee. She looks forward to working with the Board.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Essie Duggan, representing State Senator Velmanette Montgomery.

Ms. Duggan announced that there are open positions for lifeguards at pools operated by both the Parks and Recreation Department and private concerns. Interested persons may contact the Senator's office for information on becoming certified.

On Monday, July 9th, Senator Montgomery will co-sponsor a Senate Democratic conference on housing for homeowners and persons who may be interested in becoming a homeowner. Topics of discussion will include predatory lending, mortgage flipping and other topics of interest to homeowners.

Senator Montgomery and her colleagues recently passed a Bill requiring that women in non-traditional jobs be compensated the same as men performing the same duties. Beginning January 2008 they will be compensated equally.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Brandon Bloomfield of Senator John Sampson's Office.

Mr. Bloomfield stated that Senator Sampson is currently working on a community reinvestment program wherein he will meet with community groups, not just to discuss problems, but to come up with plans of action that will allow them to reinvest in the community to make it a better place

for everyone. The Senator's Office can be reached by calling (718) 649-7653.

Chairperson Younger recognized District Leader Lisa Kenner.

Ms. Kenner stated that the men of the community need to step up and guide the younger ones. When men who were formerly incarcerated return to the community they will need jobs and support. With so much development taking place in the community, she believes that some of the sites should be able to accommodate some of the men with jobs.

Chairperson Younger recognized Senator Eric Adams who stated that we need to get serious about the education of our youth. His district covers Bedford-Stuyvesant, Park Slope, and Sunset Park and he sees discernable differences in education within his district, let alone the City. He suggests that we begin calling young people graduating from middle and high schools "scholars", thus implanting the seed of success within them.

The Mayor's congestion pricing proposal is more than what it seems to be. Environmentalists laud the proposal for its potential to clean the air in the midtown Manhattan area. What about Harlem and the Bronx, where asthma rates are the highest in the City. Also, City-owned vehicles should not be exempt from the tolls as is planned. There is no reason why a Deputy Director of an agency cannot use mass transit to attend a non-emergency meeting.

About three weeks ago, a woman found an illegal gun in her home and she was criticized for her handling of the discovery. How many of us know what to do in that situation? Can you turn it in without jeopardizing yourself? If you or your child becomes a victim of rape should you bathe or not? What should you do if your child becomes a gang member? These are some of the questions that will be discussed at his "Cradle to College Parent Empowerment Seminar". Two sessions are scheduled, one on August 18, 2007 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Medgar Evers College, located at 1650 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, and the other on August 25, 2007 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Secondary Law School, located at 237 7th Avenue, Brooklyn. He encourages everyone to attend.

Chairperson Younger called forward newly appointed Board members in attendance: Renee Archer, Octavius Bamberg, Ivory Ellison, Helen Giles, Pamela Junior, Edna Petty, and Lashon Segar. Their Oath of Office was then administered by Councilmember Darlene Mealy. Chairperson Younger presented each new member a packet containing the Board's by-laws, mission statements for the Committees of the Board, and Committee membership request forms.

Councilmember Mealy urged the new members to familiarize themselves with the by-laws in order that they may serve to their fullest capabilities. Within Council District #41 there have been several commercial and social service facilities placed in the communities without true dialogue with the affected communities. She asks that the newly appointed Community Board members vote with their conscience when proposals come before them. She also reminded them of their scheduled orientation session on June 28th at Brooklyn Borough Hall.

She stated that her district includes East Flatbush, Crown Height, Ocean Hill, Brownsville, and Bedford Stuyvesant. She is sponsoring a town hall meeting on Thursday, June 28th at P.S. 398, located at 60 East 94th Street between East New York Avenue and Rutland Road. Topics will include Education (representatives of the Department of Education will be present), sanitation, immigration, and housing. She invited everyone in the community to attend.

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) recently terminated 500 of its employees only to turnaround and hire 300 new ones who will need to be trained. She foresees that this sort of action will lead to the deterioration of the Housing developments. Her perception is that NYCHA's ultimate goal is to sell the buildings to private concerns that will likely turn them into condominiums. Before this happens, we need to formulate strategies on what plans of action we should take when this is presented to the community.

A march was recently held in Bedford-Stuyvesant in response to recent shootings. We should not only be marching when someone has been killed, we need to be proactive. If you see something, say something. As was mentioned earlier by Senator Adams, we need to make ourselves aware of what to do in situations such as turning in firearms. She personally turned in an illegal gun that once belonged to her nephew.

On July 14th, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., she is sponsoring a “Unity in the Community” event at Betsy Head Playground and she invites everyone to attend. There will be many different organizations providing information and entertainment.

Chairperson Younger recognized Councilmember Charles Barron.

Councilmember Barron stated that there are several issues facing our community, one of which is housing. Residents of our community are being priced out of homeownership opportunities. It is the duty of the City Council to keep this from happening. He and Councilmember Mealy are working hard on that front.

He is currently working on a proposal that will bring single-family homes to the Gateway Estates area at a price of \$158,000. He is also working to ensure that income-levels do not become a barrier as well. A family of four in this community earns about \$35,000, therefore, the income levels should be set lower than \$65,000.

The police are out of control in our neighborhoods. It is not only the youth who are being mistreated, they are also disrespecting our elderly by using “no knock” warrants to break open doors of peoples’ homes, terrorizing the occupants, and then saying they are sorry they have the wrong apartment. We need to stop this kind of treatment by the police. He has people organizing to address this issue. There is also an unemployment problem in our community – why not pay men in the community to patrol their neighborhoods and provide them with tools to do so effectively.

He recently allocated two million dollars for the rehabilitation of the Brownsville Recreation Center Playground. He is also seeking to improve the economic health of the community and wants to see entrepreneurial opportunities for people from the community.

Chairperson Younger recognized Dr. Merrill White, Chairperson of the Women’s Committee of Community Board #16.

Dr. White thanked those who participated in the Committee’s Health Forum that was held on May 14th. Although the attendance fell short of what was expected, there were many representatives of health organizations on hand. Attendees received an abundance of valuable health information.

The Committee will host future forums to cover a variety of topics. They seek the community’s support of their effort to bring vital information to the residents.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Marcel Braithwaite, Director of the Brownsville PAL Beacon Program.

Mr. Braithwaite stated that this summer they will only operate a summer day camp which is a little different than what has taken place in the past. Unfortunately, there is not enough funding to allow for the operation of an evening or Saturday program during the summer. In order to be able to operate the program in the fall, they had to make sacrifices now.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. William Boone of Educators for Children, Youth, and Families’ Beacon Program.

Mr. Boone stated that summer camp will begin on July 5th. Due to the repairs that will take place at I.S./P.S. 323, this year they will operate out of P.S. 327, located on Bristol Street between Sutter and Pitkin Avenues.

He thanked those who helped make their Fathers’ Day celebration a success.

Chairperson Younger recognized Rev. Joseph Jones of the Brooklyn District Attorney’s office.

Reverend Jones extended an invitation to the audience to join a community rally to be held at Brower Park (Kingston and St. Mark’s Avenues) on Saturday, June 30th. There will be several agencies present with information on available resources.

Chairperson Younger recognized Marietta Henry of It's a Community Thing.

Ms. Henry stated that this evening she has heard a great deal about buildings that are being erected in the community. She did not hear anything about the young people of the community. She is here tonight to represent young people who are between the age of 17 and 24, especially those who are in need of jobs. We see them on the streets dressed the part of thugs, mostly because they have not been given direction. They lack employment opportunities and recreational venues. She would like to see a version of the Community Board for youth. An avenue for them to voice their concerns and perhaps have their issues brought to this Board.

Chairperson Younger invited Ms. Henry to work with the Board's Youth Services Planning Committee to help address some of her concerns.

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Henry Hill, seconded by Rev. Joseph Norton and carried to adjourn the meeting.