

MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD #16 – December 18, 2007

Attendance

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

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

PUBLIC HEARING

Chairperson Hazel Younger called the Public Hearing to order at 7:09 p.m. and an invocation was said by Rev. Joseph Norton.

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development pursuant to Section 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for an amendment of the Zoning Map, Section 17D, changing from an M1-1 District to an R6 District property bounded by a line 350 feet northerly of Lott Avenue, Watkins Street, Lott Avenue, Osborn Street, a line 100 feet northerly of Lott Avenue, and a line midway between Watkins Street and Osborn Street, Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 16, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated November 13, 2007.

- 1) pursuant to Article 16 of the General Municipal Law of New York State for:
 - a) the designation of property located at 532, 542, 554-62 Watkins Street (Block 3617, Lots 25, 29, and 33) and 566 Watkins Street, 209-219 Lott Avenue (Block 3617, Lots 36 and 40) as an Urban Development Action Area; and
 - b) an Urban Development Action Area Project for such area; and
- 2) pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for the disposition of such property to a developer selected by HPD;

to facilitate development of thirteen, 4-story buildings, tentatively known as Watkins Street Co-ops, with approximately 104 residential units.

District Manager Viola Greene-Walker invited a delegation for the developers to come forward for a brief presentation on their proposal.

Rev. David Brawley stated that the East Brooklyn Churches (EBC) have a proud history of

having developed 2900 Nehemiah Homes in the East New York and Brownsville Communities, 1525 units in the Spring Creek area, and 48 units on Malta Street in East New York. Tonight they are here to propose 104 affordable co-operative apartments on Watkins Street. The late Irving Domenech saw the site and envisioned it as a location where affordable housing could be placed. They are here tonight to help bring his vision to fruition.

Our community lags behind in the area of homeownership. This project will help bridge that gap, by bringing 104 co-operative apartments to the neighborhood. They partnered with CPC to make it happen.

Mr. Burchell Marcus stated that he welcomes efforts to bring affordable housing to this community, however, he finds that the housing being built is not truly affordable to residents of the community. The residents are not earning enough to purchase the homes that are being offered at what is termed affordable. How will this project be made truly affordable to the residents of Brownsville?

There needs to be equality in the quality of housing along with affordability for residents. He is tired of seeing homes in other neighborhoods built with bedrooms that can accommodate two beds while those built in Brownsville can barely fit one bed.

Rev. Brawley stated that EBC has a long standing record of providing affordable housing in the community. The proposed housing for the Watkins Street site is very similar to those that they have constructed in Park Slope and on Malta Street. There are people in the audience who have seen and live in the units and can testify to their spaciousness and livability. One of their premises is that they will never place anyone in a home that they would not be willing to live in themselves.

Ms. Blanche Peltonbusch stated that she is in agreement with Mr. Marcus with regard to the sizes of the rooms in the units that are being built.

Rev. Brawley stated that they have completed 1500 units in Spring Creek and have not heard any issues in regards to room size. He invites the audience to visit the Spring Creek site or the one on Malta Street.

With respect to pricing, they are not seeking to sell the homes in the \$300,000 range. The asking price for a three-bedroom unit will be approximately \$140,000.

Ms. Deborah Mack asked for clarification on the difference between an M1-1 and an R-6 district.

Mr. Jack Hammer of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development stated that they are zoning designations. In this instance, the subject site is currently zoned M1-1 which is a manufacturing district and does not allow for the proposed buildings. Rezoning to an R-6 will allow the proposed buildings to be erected as-of-right.

Chairperson Hazel Younger thanked the delegation for their presentation and requested District Manager Greene-Walker read the next items.

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) pursuant to Section 505 of Article 15 of the General Municipal (Urban Renewal) Law of New York State and Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for the 8th amendment to the Marcus Garvey Urban Renewal Plan for the Marcus Garvey Urban Renewal Area, Community District 16, Borough of Brooklyn.

The proposed amendment will facilitate residential development on a portion of Site 4, which is currently designated for public and semi-public land use. The amendment to the plan will subdivide Site 4 into Sites 4A and 4B and will designate Site 4A for residential use.

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development pursuant to Section 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for an amendment of the Zoning Map, Section 17b:

- 1) eliminating from within an existing R6 District a C2-3 District bounded by a line 300 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, Bristol Street, a line 150 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, and Thomas S. Boyland Street;
- 2) changing from R6 District to an R7A District property bounded by a line 300 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, Bristol Street, a line 150 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, and Thomas S. Boyland Street; and
- 3) changing from a C4-3 District to an R7A District property bounded by a line 150 northerly of Pitkin Avenue, Bristol Street, a line 100 northerly of Pitkin Avenue, and Thomas S. Boyland Street;

Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 16, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated December 3, 2007.

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD):

- 1) pursuant to Article 16 of the General Municipal Law of New York State for:
 - a) the designation of property located at Bristol Street and Thomas S. Boyland Street (Block 3497, part of Lot 2), part of Site 4 of the Marcus Garvey Urban Renewal Area, as an Urban Development Action Area; and
 - b) an Urban Development Action Area Project for such area; and
- 2) pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for the disposition of such property to a developer selected by HPD;

to facilitate development of two, seven-story residential buildings, tentatively known as Bristol Street, with approximately 168 residential units, to be developed under the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Cornerstone Program.

District Manager Greene-Walker invited a delegation for the developers to come forth for a brief presentation on their proposal.

Mr. Martin Dunn of Dunn Development stated that they acquired the site through a request for proposals issued by HPD. This project was previously presented to the Board last year. They are here tonight with their updates.

The current plans were displayed and included one building fronting on Thomas S. Boyland Street and one on Bristol Street. The initial plans called for one large building. They have reworked the plans with an interest in invigorating Bristol Street which is currently underutilized. The plans include an outdoor recreation area and 25 parking spaces (11 more than the original presentation).

When they presented their plans to the Board last year, security was one of the concerns that was mentioned. They stated then that in order to keep the units affordable they could not hire security personnel. They will install security cameras that will record activity at the entries to the buildings. Residents will also be able to monitor the cameras on a Cable TV feed to each unit.

When they presented their plans for a proposed building on Rockaway Avenue at Riverdale Avenue they were able to draw upon architectural cues of surrounding structures for its design. The site for the proposal they are presenting tonight did not offer any historical structures to use as inspiration so they have decided to give the buildings a contemporary design. To further add to the affordability aspect, they have designed the building to be energy efficient. This includes the use of Energy Star appliances, energy efficient windows and insulation.

Ms. Ismene Speliotis of New York ACORN Housing gave a breakdown of the unit sizes and guidelines for rental pricing. There will be a fifty percent preference to current residents of Brownsville.

Someone asked if persons with fixed incomes will be eligible for an apartment?

Ms. Speliotis stated that the building is not currently certified for Section 8. She encourages those who may not qualify because of minimum income requirements to apply anyway. This is because from time to time HPD may have Section 8 vouchers to offer. Should that happen, they will be able to contact the people who are on their list but did not initially qualify.

Ms. Peltonbusch asked if persons already in possession of Section 236 and/or Section 8 Vouchers will be able to use them for this proposal?

Ms. Speliotis stated that Section 236 vouchers cannot be used as they are tied to the development for which they were issued. Section 8 vouchers will be accepted and she encourages persons with the vouchers to apply.

Mr. Kofi Hormeku asked how long will the rent rates be good for?

Ms. Speliotis stated that the units will be rent stabilized. Under rent stabilization guidelines the leases are for one or two years. When the rents are up for renewal they are subject to increase guidelines set by the Rent Control Board each September.

Ms. Linda Sanders asked what happens if there are special conditions where a family requires rooms other than what is stated in the guidelines?

Ms. Speliotis stated that the guidelines are a general rule. If special circumstances exist, they will be noted and taken into consideration.

Mr. Dunn stated that the buildings will be handicap accessible.

Ms. Speliotis stated that there will also be a small set aside for persons with disabilities.

Chairperson Younger thanked Mr. Dunn and Ms. Speliotis for their presentation.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

A motion was made by Ms. Deborah Mack, seconded by Mr. Kofi Hormeku and carried to dispense with the reading of the minutes.

A motion was made by Ms. Eula Key, seconded by Rev. Miran Ukaegbu and carried to dispense with the reading of the District Manager's report.

Chairperson Younger requested that the membership read both the minutes and the District Manager's Report.

Chairperson Younger recognized Dr. Merrill White who introduced Ms. Stacey Thompson of the Correctional Association of New York.

Ms. Thompson stated that the Association dates back to 1844 and is one of the first organizations of its kind allowed into New York State prisons and it reports to the public. She is here tonight to discuss the Women in Prison Project of the Association.

Since 1978, when the Rockefeller Laws were instituted, the number of women who are incarcerated has grown by forty percent. This has affected mostly communities of color. The women are not being rehabilitated in order to reintegrate properly back in their communities when they are released.

The Project advocates for a shift in government priorities away from prison and toward alternative programs where a woman can stay connected to her family, address underlying issues, and become a productive member of society. They serve as advocates for these women and when they find a need they seek to address the need. There are several flyers on tonight's distribution table containing information on the different activities of the Correctional Association.

The Coalition has four sub-committees:

1. Violence Against Women - focuses on issues facing domestic violence survivors in prison for committing crimes as a result of the abuse they suffered;
2. Conditions of Confinement - focuses on improving conditions inside women's correctional facilities;
3. Incarcerated Mothers - focuses on issues facing incarcerated mothers and their children, including visitation and parental rights;
4. and Re-entry - focuses on issues facing women returning from prison to their families and communities.

The committees meet each month. Additional information is available on their website: www.correctionalassociation.org and in the literature on tonight's distribution table.

Chairperson Younger thanked Ms. Thompson for her presentation.

District Manager Greene-Walker, in behalf of Ms. Bettie Kollock-Wallace, Chairperson of the Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee, reported that the Committee met on December 11, 2007 with representatives of the Bristol Street project which consists of the new construction of 168 residential units in two buildings on vacant land bounded by Thomas S. Boyland Street, Pitkin Avenue, Bristol Street and East New York Avenue. They are also proposing 25 parking spaces which the Committee feels is not enough, given the number of proposed units and its location where on-street parking is extremely limited.

In addition, the Committee feels that provisions for air condition units should be placed above the windows to provide a more efficient distribution of air.

The Committee recommends that the Community Board:

- 1) Vote in support of the ULURP application to amend the zoning map, Section No. 17b
 - a) eliminating from within an existing R6 District a C2-3 District bounded by a line 300 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, Bristol Street, a line 150 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, and Thomas S. Boyland Street;
 - b) changing from R6 District to an R7A District property bounded by a line 300 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, Bristol Street, a line 150 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, and Thomas S. Boyland Street; and
 - c) changing from a C4-3 District to an R7A District property bounded by a line 150 northerly of Pitkin Avenue, Bristol Street, a line 100 northerly of Pitkin Avenue, and Thomas S. Boyland Street;
- 2) Vote in support of the 8th Amendment of the Marcus Garvey Urban Renewal Plan to facilitate residential development on a portion of Site4, which is currently designated for public and semi-public land use. The amendment to the plan will subdivide site 4 into Sites 4A and 4B and will designate Site 4A for residential use.
- 3) Vote in support of the Bristol street housing project on condition that there be at least 55 parking spaces, given the number of units in an area where there is limited on street parking and that provisions for the placement of air condition units be made above the windows to provide for a more efficient distribution of air.

The Committee also met with representatives of the Watkins Street Co-op proposal which consists of 104 units in 13 four-story buildings on vacant land bounded by Lott Avenue, Watkins Street, Newport Street and Osborn Street.

The Committee recommends that the Community Board:

- 1) Vote in support of the application for an amendment of the zoning map, section 17D, changing from an M1-1 district to an R6 district property bounded by a line 350 feet northerly of Lott Avenue, Watkins Street, Lott Avenue, Osborn Street, a line 100 feet northerly of Lott Avenue, and a line midway between Watkins Street and Osborn Street.

2) Vote in support of the Watkins Street Co-op on condition that there be at least 50 parking spaces, given the number of proposed units, and that the units have central air condition and heat.

Someone asked what difference is there between an R-6 and R-7 zones?

Mr. Hammer stated that an R-7 zone allows for greater density than an R-6.

A motion was made by Ms. Patricia Boone, seconded by Ms. Marie Pierre 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, displayed photographs of the new rehabbed Betsy Head Playground and reported that copies of this month's survey of the District's parks and playgrounds are available on tonight's distribution table. He urged anyone who has a comment or complaint about the parks and playgrounds to contact the Board's office so that the issue can be addressed.

A motion was made by Ms. Deborah Mack, seconded by Ms. Ernestine Turner and carried to accept the report of the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Ms. Deborah Mack, Chairperson of the Transportation and Franchises Committee, reported that the Committee met on December 12, 2007.

At the request of the Committee, a letter was sent on October 3, 2007 by District Manager Viola Greene-Walker to the Department of Transportation requesting additional lighting along Livonia Avenue between East 98th Street and Junius Street. Due to the elevated train line along Livonia Avenue, the street is poorly lit.

The Department of Transportation responded by letter dated November 23, 2007 that a recent survey of the area did not reveal the need for additional lighting and that the illumination levels measured comply with those set by the Illumination Engineering Society and the Division of Street Lighting.

The Committee disagrees with this finding and will follow-up with the Department of Transportation with additional information to document that there is a need to increase the illumination levels of the light fixtures.

In an effort to identify transportation related matters that need to be addressed, the Committee has prepared a survey form. The Committee is requesting the public's cooperation in filling out the form and returning it to the District Manager.

The next meeting of the Transportation Committee is scheduled for January 9, 2008, 6:00 p.m. in the Community Board Office.

A motion was made by Rev. Joseph Norton, seconded by Mr. Kofi Hormeku and carried to accept the report of the Transportation and Franchises Committee.

Dr. Merrill White, Chairperson of the Women's Committee, reported that the Committee met on December 17, 2007. The Tribute for Ms. Jeannette Gadson will be held on Saturday, March 15, 2008 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.. This event is also being held to honor local women.

The Committee is requesting that members and community residents submit names of women who they feel should be honored. The Committee is looking for some unsung heroines living or working in Community District 16 who have demonstrated leadership (past and present) abilities in (but not limited to) these areas:

- Health
- Child Welfare
- Senior Citizens
- Education
- Political Advocacy

Please submit names to District Manager Viola Greene-Walker at the Community Board Office.

The Committee will begin designing a flyer that will list women related services available in Community District 16. The members discussed a format for the flyer and members agreed to research services available.

The Committee plans to sponsor an Education Forum in April 2008. The Forum will focus on summer programs in the community that parents can access for their children. There will also be information on how parents can navigate the school system.

A prison forum is planned for June 2008. The Committee recognizes the problems that women encounter when returning to society after incarceration and they plan to address these problems at the Prison Forum.

Earlier you heard Ms. Stacey Thompson who was invited by the Committee to speak with us about women's prison issues.

A motion was made by Ms. Allene Ingram, seconded by Ms. Eula Key and carried to accept the report of the Women's Committee.

Chairperson Younger reported that an organization has reached out to the Board with regard to opportunities for youth who are considering college. She was hoping that there would be flyers with information available for tonight's meeting, however, the flyers have not arrived. Be on the alert for the information as there is a short timeline in which to act.

A vote was taken which resulted in 23 in favor, 0 against, and 1 abstention by Rev. Joseph Norton (who is a principle of Guytech Management Services, Inc.) for approval of the recommendation of the Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee to support the proposal by Guytech Management Services, Inc. to develop commercial space and 54 units of rental housing known as RiverRock Apartments on vacant land (Block 3602, Lots 34-42) bounded by Rockaway Avenue, Riverdale Avenue, Chester Street, and Newport Street.

A vote was taken which resulted in 23 for, 1 against, and 0 abstentions to support the Central Brooklyn Community Services Corporation's proposal to acquire 444 Thomas S. Boyland Street (the building we are in this evening), demolish the building and construct 129 units of low-income housing for single and married senior citizens and senior citizens who are raising their grandchildren and one superintendent apartment. The project will consist of two buildings. On the first floor will be office space to house current tenants of the building at 444 Thomas S. Boyland Street and additional space for new tenants. The second thru sixth floors will house the residential units. There will be twenty studios, forty – one-bedroom, forty – two-bedrooms, and thirty – three-bedrooms. There will also be sixty-nine parking spaces.

Both of these items were presented at last month's Public Hearing, however, a vote was not taken because a quorum was not present.

With regard to tonight's public hearing, a vote was taken which resulted in 18 for, 0 against, and 6 abstentions in support of:

1) the application for an amendment of the zoning map, section 17D, changing from an M1-1 district to an R6 district property bounded by a line 350 feet northerly of Lott Avenue, Watkins Street, Lott Avenue, Osborn Street, a line 100 feet northerly of Lott Avenue, and a line midway between Watkins Street and Osborn Street.

2) the Watkins Street Co-op on condition that there be at least 50 parking spaces, given the number of proposed units, and that the units have central air condition and heat.

A vote was taken which resulted in 16 for, 0 against, and 8 abstentions in support of:

1) the ULURP application to amend the zoning map, Section No. 17b

a) eliminating from within an existing R6 District a C2-3 District bounded by a line 300 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, Bristol Street, a line 150 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, and

Thomas S. Boyland Street;

b) changing from R6 District to an R7A District property bounded by a line 300 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, Bristol Street, a line 150 feet northerly of Pitkin Avenue, and Thomas S. Boyland Street; and

c) changing from a C4-3 District to an R7A District property bounded by a line 150 northerly of Pitkin Avenue, Bristol Street, a line 100 northerly of Pitkin Avenue, and Thomas S. Boyland Street;

2) the 8th Amendment of the Marcus Garvey Urban Renewal Plan to facilitate residential development on a portion of Site 4, which is currently designated for public and semi-public land use. The amendment to the plan will subdivide site 4 into Sites 4A and 4B and will designate Site 4A for residential use.

3) the Bristol street housing project on condition that there be at least 55 parking spaces, given the number of units in an area where there is limited on street parking and that provisions for the placement of air condition units be made above the windows to provide for a more efficient distribution of air.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Christina Larkin of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Ms. Larkin announced that the Department's New Visitation program which was recently started in Brownsville is off to a good start. The Mayor's Office has begun issuing vendors licenses to allow entrepreneur to sell fresh fruits and vegetables from carts, the Health Department feels that the Brownsville area will benefit from this program. They are also reaching out to neighborhood grocers and encouraging them to carry healthy foods.

Chairperson Younger thanked Ms. Larkin for the information.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Essie Duggan, representing Senator Velmanette Montgomery, who announced that a bulletin from Senator Montgomery is available on tonight's distribution table. It contains valuable information and is recommended reading.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Burchell Marcus.

Mr. Marcus made a plea to the community for it to take a stand against the violence being perpetrated by our youth.

Ms. Shange Thande asked what is taking place on the site of the Prospect Plaza HOPE VI project?

District Manager Greene-Walker stated that excavation for the townhouses has begun. The remaining two towers are to be reconfigured for more spacious units. The developers have engaged in discussions with a bank and a supermarket to occupy space on the ground floor of the buildings along Saratoga Avenue. There will be community space on the second floor. She invited Ms Thange to visit the Board's office for additional information.

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Herman Winston, seconded by Ms. Sarah Hall and carried to adjourn the meeting.