

MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD #16 – January 22, 2008

Attendance

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

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 7:12 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 (HPD):

- 1) pursuant to Article 16 of the General Municipal Law of New York State for:
 - a) The designation of property located at 2156 and 2160 Atlantic Avenue (Block 1433, Lots 23 and 25); 1973, 1973A, 1975, and 1969 Bergen Street (Block 1447, Lots 67-70); 402, 404, 412, and 522 Howard Avenue (Blocks 1451 and 1473, Lots 42, 43, 48, and 35); 1459 and 1461 St. Mark's Avenue (Block 1452, Lots 1 and 87); 1734 St. John's (Block 1473, Lot 34); and 1457 and 1459 Eastern Parkway (Block 1473, Lots 36 and 37), 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 2156 and 2160 Atlantic Avenue (Block 1433, Lots 23 and 25); 1973, 1973A, 1975, and 1969 Bergen Street (Block 1447, Lots 67-70); 402, 404, and 412 Howard Avenue (Block 1451, Lots 42, 43, and 48); 1459 and 1461 St. Mark's Avenue (Block 1452, Lots 1 and 87); 1734 St. John's Place (Block 1473, Lot 34); and 1457 and 1459 Eastern Parkway (Block 1473, Lots 36 and 37), to a developer selected by HPD;

to facilitate development of six residential buildings, ranging from four to six stories, tentatively known as Brownsville North, with approximately 87 residential units, to be developed under the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Cornerstone Program.

District Manager Viola Greene-Walker invited Mr. Ben Upshaw from the development team to come forward for a brief presentation on their proposal.

Mr. Upshaw stated that the development team is composed of two groups, one is the Metropolitan Development Group and the other is his organization, CB Emmanuel Realty. They have a combined experience in development of nearly five thousand properties in the New York City area. They are here tonight to give an overview of properties identified in their core proposal dated November 2005 as Site 19 of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Cornerstone Program. The site consists of six properties that they will describe tonight. He introduced Mr. Herbert Quinones of Danois Architects.

Mr. Quinones stated that the six buildings will consist of rental apartments. He displayed schematic drawings of the buildings. The first building is a six-story building facing Atlantic Avenue on a 100 feet by 100 feet lot. It will have a recreation room and laundry facilities for use by the building's tenants. There will be thirty units comprised of 3-, 2-, and 1-bedroom apartments (no studios). There will be indoor parking and a green area in the rear of the building.

The next building will be constructed on St. John's Place between Howard Avenue and Eastern Parkway. This building will have two sections, one five-stories tall and the other four-stories tall and will be an elevator building. There will be no onsite parking for this building, it is not required by zoning regulations. There will be recreation and laundry facilities.

The next building will be a five-story structure located at the corner of Bergen Street and Thomas S. Boyland Street. It will have on grade parking and a green area in the rear of the elevator building.

The next building is a 59 feet wide four-story building on Howard Avenue. It is only four-stories tall, therefore, an elevator is not required or provided.

The next building is a five-story elevator building on St. Mark's Avenue at Howard Avenue. The laundry room looks out onto a green play area at the rear of the building.

The final building, a four-story structure, is also on St. Mark's Avenue near Howard Avenue and is similar to the previous building.

Someone asked how affordable will the apartments be and what other benefits will the community gain from their construction?

Mr. Upshaw stated that in developing the properties they are seeking to obtain "HOME Dollars" from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In order to qualify for the funding, HUD requires that they maintain certain hiring practices. Amongst those is compliance with Section 3. Section 3 mandates that developers must actively seek to hire local people who are experienced in construction.

They will reach out to various organizations in the community in order to have workers lined up by April in anticipation of a June groundbreaking.

Someone asked if the workers will be union workers? His experience shows that non-union workers tend to be inexperienced, have no benefits, and tend to work in hazardous ways.

Mr. Upshaw stated that currently they are planning to go with non-union workers. As a developer, he will present a construction budget to the City. The City administrators will then decide how much funding they will provide. The federal funding that they receive requires that all workers are paid at least the prevailing wage. Union workers tend to be paid at a higher scale and therefore increase construction cost. Higher cost will mean higher rents.

Someone stated that he hopes that the project will afford opportunities to community residents to learn skilled trades.

Ms. Deborah Mack asked what will the rent guidelines be?

Mr. Upshaw stated that the rental plan has not yet been approved. Tentatively, they are looking at approximately \$1,000 per month for a three-bedroom apartment, \$850 to \$875 per month for a two-bedroom unit, and \$700 to \$723 per month for a one-bedroom unit. In general, the income should be between \$31,000 to \$42,000.

Mr. Kofi Hormeku asked how are the number of parking spaces allocated decided upon?

Mr. Quinones stated that a formula is given to them by HPD. The formula calls for about a 35% ratio of parking spaces to apartments.

Mr. Hormeku asked how many parking spaces are being planned for the first building?

Mr. Quinones stated that it is a 30 unit building, for which they plan 12 parking spaces.

Mr. Hormeku asked what happens to the remaining units?

Mr. Quinones stated that this question arises frequently. To provide parking for each unit would require that they go underground which would greatly increase the cost.

Ms. Florence Simon stated that the number of parking spaces should match the number of units.

Ms. Rene Archer asked why they chose to build a six-story building on Atlantic Avenue and not two-family homes?

Mr. Upshaw stated that the RFP requires that they maximize the number of units on that site. They will also be building a number of two-family units at various locations in the district. From an architectural point of view, the City would like the structures to be contextually consistent and not have smaller buildings haphazardly placed amongst larger buildings.

Ms. Archer stated that there are a number of smaller homes on the block. Why not follow that pattern? No one reached out to the current residents to get their input. They have worked long and hard to improve their block.

Mr. Upshaw stated that they are responding to the guidelines of the RFP.

Chairperson Younger stated that Ms. Archer's points are well taken and should be given further consideration. She recognized Mr. Maurice Phillips, Special Assistant to City Councilmember Darlene Mealy, who had previously requested to comment on the public hearing item.

Mr. Phillips read a letter dated January 22, 2008 from Councilmember Mealy to Hazel A. Younger, Chairperson of Community Board #16 which stated her opposition to the designation and disposition of all properties as listed on tonight's public hearing agenda.

She requested that the items be tabled until such time that she is able to fully review HPD's proposal, and that she and the community are assured that there are or are not any better options available that will better benefit the people of the 41st Council District.

A motion was made by Ms. Deborah Mack, seconded by Ms. Eula Key and carried to close the public hearing.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

A motion was made by Ms. Deborah Mack, seconded by Dr. Cade Jones, III and carried to dispense with the reading of the minutes.

A motion was made by Ms. Eula Key, seconded by Elder Devon Ponds 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 Ms. Doris Iheaggwam of Seaman's Society for Children and

Families.

Ms. Iheagwwam stated that Seaman's Society for Children and Families offers temporary beds to children whose parent may feel overwhelmed and thusly prone to subject their children to neglect or abuse. Respite care is also made available to children whose parents are being hospitalized or entering a drug rehab program.

The care is offered for a maximum of twenty-one days in the home of a Seaman's Society temporary foster parent. A screening process is used before any child is placed. They do not accept children who will be abusive to the foster families or children with special needs because their foster parents are not trained to deal with children in those types of situations.

Their temporary foster parents are trained, licensed by the State, and paid through New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS). Unlike regular foster parents, they are not mandated to take in foster children. They are expected to supply basic needs for the children such as providing meals or if necessary assure that the children get to school. The respite providers afford parents an opportunity to get themselves together so that when their children return home, they are better able to care for them. They also prevent children from entering the foster care system.

The Seaman's Society is currently seeking persons to serve as respite providers in their Brooklyn service area which includes Brownsville, Canarsie, Bensonhurst, Coney Island, and Sheepshead Bay. Their office is located at 1731 Pitkin Avenue and she will remain to speak to interested persons about becoming a foster parent after tonight's meeting.

Chairperson Younger thanked Ms. Iheagwwam for her presentation and encouraged interested persons to reach out to her.

Ms. Essie Duggan, Chairperson of the Economic Development Committee, reported that the Committee met on January 17, 2008 with Mr. Gerald Coleman, Executive Director of the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District (BID), who informed them about his activities since joining the organization in August 2007:

1. Removed dormant newsstand from the corner of Pitkin Avenue and Thomas S. Boyland Street.
2. Working with merchants to offer a discount program for senior citizens.
3. Working on security issues with building owners. Also, working with Deputy Inspector Maddrey on a security plan.
4. During the holiday, the BID sponsored a bus outing for a community youth group to a New Jersey Nets game.
5. The BID also donated to the 73rd Precinct Community Council toy drive during the Christmas holiday.
6. Working on proposal to increase wattage of lights along the Pitkin Avenue BID.
7. Working to bring better quality of stores along Pitkin Avenue.

Mr. Coleman also informed us that the owners of the former Loews Theater building at Pitkin Avenue and Legion Street are in the process of renovating the building as commercial space.

Also, Common Ground has bought the former Chase Bank building at Pitkin Avenue and Mother Gaston Boulevard and is proposing a fine dining restaurant and social services.

The Committee shared several concerns with Mr. Coleman regarding the quality of merchandise and mistreatment of consumers by merchants and employees along Pitkin Avenue.

There was also discussion about inadequate parking along Pitkin Avenue. Mr. Coleman will investigate the feasibility of installing munimeters.

By letter dated January 16, 2008 from the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the Committee was informed that a City-owned vacant site on Saratoga Avenue at Atlantic Avenue was sold to Erma Realty, LLC, a real estate holding company for AM&G Waterproofing. The company plans to use the site and an adjacent lot that they own to construct a 13,000 square foot vehicle maintenance facility. This project will allow AM&G to create 5 new permanent jobs and will compliment its existing corporate headquarters and retail location across the street.

A motion was made by Ms. Deborah Mack, seconded by Elder Devon Ponds and carried to accept the report of the Economic Development Committee.

Ms. Bettie Kollock-Wallace, Chairperson of the Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee, reported that the Committee met on January 8, 2008 with Mr. Cyril Joseph of Family Services Network of New York who gave the Committee an update on their proposal for Lots 1 and 3 on Block 1446 also known as 385/379 Howard Avenue at Bergen Street.

They received a Letter of Site Control from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and are in the process of applying to the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation for financing to develop 21 units of affordable housing.

The Committee is in receipt of the Environmental Assessment Statement for the Howard Avenue Rezoning proposal which will affect the block bounded by Howard Avenue, Pitkin Avenue, and Eastern Parkway. As additional information becomes available to the Committee, they will inform the Board.

At tonight's public hearing, you heard the ULURP application for Brownsville North-Cornerstone Site 19.

At the October 9, 2007 Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee meeting, the developers made an extensive presentation to the Committee. At the Community Board meeting on October 23, 2007, the Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee recommended that the Board approve this project which will increase the number of affordable rental apartments in the district and it was approved.

The Committee recommends that the Community Board continue to support this project by voting in support of the ULURP application heard at tonight's public hearing.

A motion was made by Elder Devon Ponds, seconded by Ms. Eula Key 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, 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.

The Brownsville Recreational Center is heavily utilized. Although it is in need of work, it was recently named one of the best recreation centers in the City.

He appealed for volunteers to adopt a park in the community. He stated that we each live near a park and much goes into their upkeep. Adopting a park will allow the Committee to be aware of what is needed to maintain it. The parks in our community are amongst the best in the City and he encourages the audience to compare them to others throughout the city.

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 January 9, 2008.

The Committee reviewed responses to survey forms distributed at last month's Community Board meeting. Only six forms were received. They are again appealing to fellow Board members and the public to fill out and return the forms tonight. It is difficult for the Committee to address issues if they are not aware of the community's concerns.

The New York City Department of Transportation has begun a traffic study known as the Northern Brownsville Transportation Study which will cover the area bounded by Atlantic Avenue to the north, Pitkin Avenue to the south, Howard Avenue to the west, and Mother Gaston Boulevard to the east. The study will analyze existing and future traffic conditions and recommend solutions to improve traffic operations and safety in the area. As more information becomes available to the Committee, they will share it with the community.

The 2008 Alternate Side Parking Rules Suspension Calendars are on the distribution table. Please take them.

On January 28th, she will attend a workshop being offered by the Department of Transportation to small groups of community leaders within the five boroughs. The next Transportation and Franchise Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 13th, 6:00 p.m. in the Community Board office.

A motion was made by Ms. Essie Duggan, seconded by Mr. Kofi Hormeku and carried to accept the report of the Transportation and Franchises Committee.

A roll call of Board members was done.

There being no quorum present, Chairperson Younger stated that the vote on tonight's public hearing item will be held over until next month's meeting.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. William Whitaker from the Office of Borough President Marty Markowitz.

Mr. Whitaker stated that Borough President Markowitz is very interested in the opinions and concerns of Brooklynites. The audience is encouraged to write to him at askmarty@brooklynbp.nyc.gov.

Within the Borough President's office is a Community Service Center that provides assistance with government services and they can be reached at (718) 802-3777. The Community Relations Unit can be reached at (718) 802-3883. He is this community's liaison to the Borough President and can be reached at (718) 802-3876.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Maurice Phillips from the Office of City Councilmember Darlene Mealy.

Mr. Phillips stated Councilmember Mealy hosts a monthly meeting at 10:00 a.m. each second Saturday at 1753 Union Street (between Utica and Rochester Avenues). At this forum, members of the community may address the Councilmember with their needs and concerns.

She has also implemented a training and placement program. Those who complete the training can end up with union, government or private sector jobs. The program is free of charge and includes course material to aid trainees in obtaining a commercial drivers license (CDL). Upon earning the license, trainees will be able to operate airport shuttle buses, Access-a-Ride buses, and other types of vehicles that require a CDL. Computer training and other skilled trades training will also be offered.

He encouraged the audience to write to the Brooklyn Borough President, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and other City officials to make their views regarding tonight's public hearing item and other issues known.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Essie Duggan, representing Senator Velmanette Montgomery, who announced that Senator Montgomery is sponsoring a workshop on January 31st for entrepreneurs and small and minority-owned businesses. The workshop is designed to help those businesses in their ability to provide goods and services to the State of New York.

Senator Montgomery is also concerned about the financial well being of homeowners. Often they are lured into financial deals that on the surface seem like a good idea, but in the end

jeopardize their homeownership. The Senator has compiled a list of resources that will offer homeowners and prospective buyers valuable information to help them make financially sound decisions.

Chairperson Younger recognized Rev. Joseph Jones from the Office of Kings County District Attorney Charles Hynes.

Rev. Jones stated that approximately 280 prisoners are released to Brooklyn (especially the Brownsville, East New York, and Bedford-Stuyvesant communities) each month from upstate prisons. If they are not provided assistance reintegrating with the community, they will likely reoffend.

The District Attorney's office offers parolees with drug backgrounds, who are returning to Brooklyn, a program that will assist them in reintegrating into the community. The parolees may be directed to the COMALERT program office, located on the 3rd floor of 210 Joralemon Street. The telephone number is (718) 250-5557. If the person is on parole, has any background involving drugs, and reside in Brooklyn they are eligible to receive assistance in job placement, job training, computer literacy, substance abuse treatment, family counseling, and other support services that they may require to prevent them from reoffending.

The program graduated 680 clients in the previous year. The problem with that number is that over 3,000 prisoners were released in the previous year. The program is nine months long and free of charge. At the end of the nine months the clients are provided assistance with interviewing skills and attire for going on interviews.

Elder Devon Ponds stated that when this program was mentioned at a previous Community Board meeting, he sent a few parolees to the office and they were refused entry by security officers at the door.

Rev. Jones stated that there are several agencies housed in 210 Joralemon Street and the security in the lobby is operated by an independent firm. If someone who is seeking to enter their office is stop by the security personnel, they should call the office at (718) 250-5557 and arrangement will be made for their entry. They may also call him directly at (718) 250-3729.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Nathan Bradley from the Office of Assemblywoman Dianne Gordon.

Mr. Bradley stated that Assemblywoman Gordon's District only encompasses a small portion of Community District #16, however, she wants the community to know that they are represented. Their office is located at 669 Vermont Street in East New York. The telephone number is (718) 257-5824.

Chairperson Younger recognized Latrice M. Walker, Esq. from the Office of Congresswoman Yvette Clarke.

Ms. Walker stated that Congresswoman Clarke recently mailed a survey to residents in her district and requests that anyone who has not returned the survey to do so. The surveys are used as a guideline on how to better serve their district.

Congresswoman Clarke has also co-sponsored legislation known as the Second Chance Act to reauthorize a grant program for reentry of offenders into the community. She asks that the audience reach out to their federal legislators and urge them to pass this bill so that the funds may come into the community. This bill is important to our community since a large number of offenders return to the community.

Another aspect of assuring that funds come into the community is to get our community-based organizations (CBOs) up and running. That is to say the CBOs must have sound financial practices in order that they may be eligible for federal funding. CBOs with interest in receiving funding may contact their office for more information.

The National Affordable Housing Trust Fund is being established to assist with the mortgage crisis that is currently affecting us. Persons currently in foreclosure should contact Brooklyn

Legal Services or the Congresswoman's office at (718) 287-1142. They are also working with Brooklyn elected officials to set up a workshop where homeowners can have their mortgages evaluated on an individual basis.

There are approximately 1.4 million New Yorkers who are unable to vote because they are on parole. They are currently working with parolees to change this policy. If you know of any parolees, please ask them to contact their office.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Kelvin Alexander, Deputy Chief of Staff for Senator Eric Adams.

Mr. Alexander announced that beginning Thursday, January 24th, they will be taking reservations from senior citizens who want to go to Albany for the Black and Latino Caucus on February 16th. They will have two buses that will take the seniors up and will also provide meals for the day outing. Interested seniors citizens should call (718) 284-4700, seats will be reserved on a first come – first served basis.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Prince Bartholomew from the office of Assemblyman William F. Boyland, Jr..

Mr. Bartholomew stated that Assemblyman Boyland has been successful in securing funding for the rehabilitation of the subway stations in the 55th Assembly District. Funding has also been provided for police cameras along the Rockaway Avenue corridor. The Assemblyman is seeking high school students who are interested in a career in the legal field to sign up for an outing to area legal firms on February 14 and 15. The students will be able to meet with working attorneys and see firsthand some of the things they do and ask questions.

He has a limited number of copies of Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" to distribute to anyone who seeks them. He is of the opinion that it should be read by every American, especially those with a political mindset.

Chairperson Younger recognized Councilmember Darlene Mealy.

Councilmember Mealy wished the audience a happy Martin Luther King Day and asked that we remember what he stood for. She is working on ensuring that developers of projects in our community provide local workers with union jobs.

She will also be going to the Black and Latino Caucus on February 16th and has access to two buses. Interested persons should contact her office.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. William Boone of the I.S. / P.S. 323 Beacon Program.

Mr. Boone thanked everyone for their notes of condolence sent to him after the recent passing of his mother. He also thanked members of the 73rd Precinct for their assistance in delivering gifts to the children of the community on Christmas past. On Friday, February 15th, the Youth Advisory Board of the Beacon Program will host an appreciation dinner in honor of eight senior citizens who volunteered during the last coat drive.

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.