

## MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD #16 – NOVEMBER 25, 2008

### Attendance

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| David Alexander (A)        | James Mack                                    |
| Renee Archer (A)           | Yolanda Matthews                              |
| Orlando Aupont (A)         | Sadie McNamara                                |
| Octavius Bamberg (E)       | Ted McQueen                                   |
| Sissi Benitez (A)          | Rev. Joseph Norton (A)                        |
| Josephine Blakeley (E)     | Marie Pierre                                  |
| Patricia Boone (A)         | Elder Devon Ponds                             |
| Essie Duggan               | Mattie Pusey                                  |
| Samantha Dunn (A)          | Melaine Rochford (A)                          |
| Ivory Ellison (A)          | Linda Sanders (A)                             |
| Helen Giles                | Lashon Segar (A)                              |
| Shirley Gonsalves          | Tyrone Thomas                                 |
| Sarah Hall                 | Ernestine Turner (E)                          |
| Jessie Hilliard (E)        | Rev. Miran Ukaegbu                            |
| Kofi Hormeku (E)           | Alice Vines (E)                               |
| Michael Howard             | Annie Walkes                                  |
| Allene Ingram (A)          | Herman Winston                                |
| Daisy Jackson (E)          | Hazel Younger                                 |
| Javonn Johnson (A)         | Viola D. Greene-Walker, DM                    |
| Troy Johnson (A)           | E. Jane Coleman-Assistant ADM                 |
| Dr. Cade Jones, III        | Jimmi Brevil, Community Assistant             |
| Pamela Junior (A)          | Hon. William F. Boyland, Jr.                  |
| Eula Key                   | Latrice M. Walker for Hon. Yvette Clarke      |
| Danny King (A)             | Gary Sanders for Hon. Eric Adams              |
| Bettie Kollock-Wallace (E) | Essie Duggan for Hon. Velmanette Montgomery   |
| Shawn Lewis (A)            | Carolyn Sanders-James for Hon. Mike Bloomberg |
| Deborah Mack (E)           | Christopher James for Hon. Darlene Mealy      |

### 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..

She announced the passing of First Vice Chairperson Henry Hill on Saturday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Cade Jones, III offered a moment of silence in his honor and said an invocation.

A motion was made by Rev. Miran Ukaegbu, seconded by Ms. Eula Key, and carried to waive the reading of last month's minutes.

A motion was made by Ms. Mattie Pusey, seconded by Rev. Miran Ukaegbu, and carried to waive the reading of the District Manager's report.

Everyone was encouraged to read the minutes and the District Manager's report at home.

Ms. Genese Morgan, member of the Economic Development Committee, reported that the Committee is continuously working on plans to revitalize the Belmont Avenue shopping strip. Thus far, the Committee has gathered results from a Belmont Avenue business survey, canvassed the four block strip of Belmont Avenue to determine the total number of vacant storefronts and their exact locations, and has held meetings with the Belmont Avenue business owners and the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce.

On November 20, 2008, the Committee met with Matthew Rao, Director of Commercial Revitalization for the Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation (BEDC). They have agreed to share resources to help organize a business improvement district or merchants association for the Belmont Avenue business owners.

Furthermore, the Committee is assisting the Belmont Avenue business owners with plans to host a holiday festival for area shoppers. The festival is scheduled to take place on three consecutive Saturdays, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup>, along the Belmont Avenue shopping strip. All residents, neighbors, friends, and family are invited to attend.

Ms. Annie Walkes, member of the Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee, reported that the Committee met with representatives of Services to the Underserved on November 10, 2008. They informed the Committee that their building under construction at 86 Mother Gaston Boulevard at Somers Street is expected to be completed in February 2009. The building will have 49 studio units – 30 units will be supportive housing for persons with mental illness and 19 units for low-income persons from this community who are in need of permanent rental housing.

As information about the applications for the 19 units are made available, the public will be informed.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Gary Sanders from the Office of Senator Eric Adams.

Mr. Sanders stated that Senator Adams will sponsor two forums in the near future, one will be a town hall forum to discuss the concerns of ex-offenders and their re-entry into the community. The forum will be held on Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m. at Medgar Evers College.

The second event will be a senior community forum to discuss the proposed budget cuts to senior centers by Mayor Bloomberg. He is frequently asked why the Senator is concerned about a City budget issue. The answer is that if it affects seniors in the City, it affects seniors statewide. The forum is to discuss options that may be available at the City level that could dissuade the closing of centers and, if closures are unavoidable, what efficiencies can be made to do more with less? What can be done on the State level to ease the burden? Many elected officials, including United States Representative Yvette Clarke, will be present to share their perspectives. The forum is scheduled for Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at St. Gabriel's Senior Center (331 Hawthorne Street, between Nostrand and New York Avenues in Brooklyn).

Fliers for both events are available on tonight's distribution table.

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

Ms. Larkin reminded the audience that it is flu season and that free flu vaccinations will be available at a few locations locally in the coming days. (A flier with dates and locations is available on tonight's distribution table.)

She also reminded the audience about free training for building trade workers to instruct them on how to work safely in areas with lead paint. Beginning in 2010 the course will be required by law for anyone working as a contractor, superintendent, landlord, and/or handyman. She encourages persons in these fields to take advantage of the classes while they are free because future programs maybe at a cost. The next class offered locally will be on Saturday, December 6, 2008, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Brownsville Health Center (259 Bristol Street between Blake and Dumont Avenues).

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. William Boone of the Oasis Beacon Program.

Mr. Boone announced that on Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup> he will be leading a group of children to the ice skating facility at Riverbank State Park in Manhattan. Entry to the facility is free, the skate rental fee is \$5.00, and he suggests packing a lunch as the cost of food in the area is high. He is seeking adults to help chaperone the trip and welcomes all young people to join them.

On Friday, December 19<sup>th</sup> he will accompany another group of children to an event at Madison Square Garden at the invitation of the New York Knicks. He is also seeking chaperones for this trip.

On Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, in cooperation with the 73<sup>rd</sup> Precinct, they will host a holiday celebration for the youth of the community from 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m.. On the same day, through New York Cares, they will be distributing winter coats to those in need. Help is needed to sort the coats on December 19<sup>th</sup>.

Please call him at (718) 498-7033 for more information or to volunteer for an event.

They will also serve Thanksgiving Day meals on Thursday, November 27<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 noon until 3:00 p.m. at 210 Chester Street between Sutter and Dumont Avenues. All are invited to join them in their "all you can eat" celebration.

Chairperson Younger recognized Assemblyman William F. Boyland, Jr..

Assemblyman Boyland stated that he has been working with the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) on a plan to reconstruct the East New York Station of the Long Island Railroad (LIRR). The station is located near a homeless shelter, is poorly lighted, and offers an environment conducive to crime. Work on the station is scheduled to begin in February 2009 and will include additional lighting in the area, as well as moving the taxi stand closer to the LIRR station. It is his understanding that the last major renovation to this station was in 1968. MTA has also agreed to install an elevator to service the pedestrian bridge at Livonia Avenue and Junius Street.

Assemblyman Boyland was asked if the plans for renovating the East New York Station included the addition of an Americans with Disabilities Act access ramp for the westbound platform.

Assemblyman Boyland stated that a ramp is included in the plans (Note: A temporary ramp now provides access to the westbound platform.).

His office has received many complaints concerning the bunching of buses that serve the district. When this occurred in the past, it was reported to the MTA which dispatched linemen to review the problem. The issue had somewhat abated but appears to have become a concern again. He encourages the community to report this and other transit issues to the Board's office so that it may be recorded and reported to MTA.

It has been several years since St. Mary's Hospital has been closed and many of the medical services that were provided there have not returned to the community. He is currently working on plans to bring urgent health care back into the community. BMS (Brownsville Multi-Service Family Health Center) does an excellent job of providing health care services to the community, however, they are not available 24 hours-a-day / 7 days-a-week. We are in need of a local facility that can handle an emergency in the middle of the night.

A budget agreement was not accomplished in Albany this session, mostly due to the legislature's inability to agree upon where the money will come from. Should we cut funds to education or to health care? The issue will be revisited by the Assembly in January and he is seeking comments and suggestions from community residents as to what services are of greatest concern to them.

Chairperson Younger expressed a concern that the request for comments and suggestions are coming at the last minute. A survey should have been done at an earlier date. Reaching out to this audience here tonight does not allow the word to reach the entire community.

Assemblyman Boyland stated that he does send out surveys from time to time and encourages anyone with a concern or an idea to visit his office to discuss them. He can be contacted by calling (718) 498-8681 or emailing [boylan@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:boylan@assembly.state.ny.us).

An Empire Zone exists in the district along its eastern border that stretches out to East New York to include the postal facility. Empire Zones were created to give entrepreneurs an impetus to establish and/or expand businesses in economically depressed areas of the state. By creating and/or expanding businesses, jobs are created that should be filled by local residents. It appears that many residents of this community are unaware of these opportunities. On January 8, 2009, he will sponsor a job fair to bring together neighborhood residents and over 600 employers that are located within the Empire Zone.

As was mentioned earlier, a holiday festival will take place along the Belmont Avenue shopping strip. This is being done in part to celebrate our neighborhood for the positive things that it offers. however, there are some deficiencies along the strip. To address some the deficiencies, he will seek to redraw the Empire Zone to include that area in order to entice new businesses. This effort will begin in January 2009.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Carolyn Sanders-James from Mayor Mike Bloomberg's Community Assistance Unit.

Ms. Sanders-James announced that applications for coupons towards the purchase of converter boxes are available on tonight's distribution table. The converter boxes will be necessary for some televisions to receive signals when the conversion to digital TV is completed on February 17, 2009.

The Mayor has begun a crackdown on deceptive oil delivery practices. Heating oil delivery trucks will be randomly inspected to ensure consumers get the oil for which they have paid.

She encouraged participation in the districts' Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). CERTs have been established in the southern portion of Brooklyn for a number of years, but have only recently begun to spring up in the northern sections of the borough. CERT members are not first responders but they have been trained to assist their communities in many ways before, during, and after disasters. (For information on how you can become involved with Community District #16's CERT, please contact the Board's office at (718) 385-0323.)

The Mayor's graffiti removal program is currently on hiatus until the weather warms up. She encourages property owners who have graffiti on their property to sign up for the program to have the graffiti removed from the building.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Latrice Walker from the Office of United States Representative Yvette Clarke.

Ms. Walker stated that Prospect Plaza has been sitting vacant for a number of years since its tenants were vacated with the promise of an opportunity to return upon completion of needed repairs. Construction is finally underway and applications will be accepted soon. Brownsville is a community that has largely resisted gentrification and she would like to see that continue. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) made a commitment to rebuild housing for the community, in particular Prospect Plaza.

When the applications become available, priority will be given to former residents of Prospect Plaza and current residents of Community District #16. Towards that end, a meeting of former Prospect Plaza residents and NYCHA will be held on December 2, 2008, 6:00 p.m. at 444 Thomas S. Boyland Street. She encouraged former residents to attend the meeting and asked the audience to spread the word to former residents who they know.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Christopher James from the Office of Councilmember Darlene Mealy.

Mr. James stated that Councilmember Mealy recently opposed a proposed housing project (Hopkinson / Park Place on Block 1469) and wants the community to know that she will only support affordable housing.

The application period for the 2008-2009 Home Energy Assistance Program has begun and applications are available on tonight's distribution table. (They are also available at the Board's office.)

Kingsborough Community College is offering a free degree program for senior citizens age 60 or older.

He is also circulating a petition to stop the closing of our senior citizen centers and encourages everyone to sign it. You may contact Councilmember Mealy's office at (718) 953-3097 for additional information.

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

Ms. Duggan stated that this is the time of year when Senator Montgomery and her colleagues are working to finalize their budgets and she encourages the community to inform them of issues that are important to the community.

The audience should keep an eye out for discount coupons for items purchased from merchants along Belmont Avenue. She encourages everyone to take part in the Belmont Avenue Holiday Festival.

Chairperson Younger thanked the presenters for the information that they provided to the community and opened the floor to public concerns and announcements.

Ms. Yolanda Matthews expressed concern about Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) charges on her National Grid bill and suggested that the Board invite a representative from National Grid to a future meeting to discuss the issue.

Chairperson Younger concurred, there are a number of charges on the utility bills that appear to be peculiar such as one for delivery of the gas and another for the usage of the gas. She requested that

District Manager Greene-Walker outreach to National Grid invite a representative to a future meeting.

Ms. Carolyn Sanders-James stated that at a Cabinet meeting that she attended earlier today, it was brought to her attention that there is a scam going around involving checks being sent to individuals who are asked to deposit what appears to be a valid check in their account and to remit funds to another entity. The checks then fail to clear and the victims (often seniors) are defrauded of their monies plus the bank fees for the returned checks.

Chairperson Younger asked where are the checks coming from?

A number of people in the audience stated that the checks come from various sources. They are issued by different organizations, and come from various states and countries.

Ms. Mattie Pusey stated that she received such a check and reported it to the Office of the District Attorney and was advised not to deposit the instrument or contact the parties in any fashion.

Dr. Cade Jones, III announced that St. Luke's Community Church will host their annual Thanksgiving Day Dinner at 142 Watkins Street (between Pitkin and Belmont Avenues) from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.. This free dinner is sponsored by St. Luke's and the 73<sup>rd</sup> Precinct and all are welcome to join them.

Ms. Eudene Stanton stated that she has received a questionnaire that purports to be from the United States Census Bureau. She is suspicious of the questionnaire because of the personal nature of the questions.

Chairperson Younger requested that a copy of the questionnaire be provided to District Manager Greene-Walker so that she may make some inquiries as to its validity.

Chairperson Younger thanked the audience for their comments. She urged them to be cognizant of the issues that face our community and to share the information that they have learned.

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Ms. Sarah Hall, seconded by Elder Devon Ponds and carried to adjourn the meeting.