

MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD #16 – January 25, 2011

Attendance

David Alexander	Rev. Joseph Norton (E)
Angela Alexander-Wilson (A)	Deidre Olivera-Douglas
Carolyn A. Benjamin-Smith (A)	Blanche L. Peltonbusch
Margaret Brewer (E)	Marie Pierre
Adrainer Coleman	Rev. Devon Ponds
Essie Duggan (E)	Mattie Pusey (E)
Helen Giles (A)	Linda Rivera
Shirley Gonsalves	Melaine Rochford
Danny Goodine	Wendy Rutherford (A)
Chanel Haliburton	Beatrice Saunders (E)
Sarah Hall	Christina Serano
Kofi Hormeku	Hellen Thomas-Purdie (E)
Michael Howard (A)	Ernestine Turner
Allene Ingram (E)	Rev. Dr. Miran Ukaegbu
Prince Issachar	Alice Vines (E)
Daisy Jackson (E)	Annie Walkes (E)
Minyarn Johnson (E)	Yvette Williams-Lawson
Orin Johnson-Griffith (E)	Herman Winston (E)
Carl Joseph	Hazel Younger
Pamela Junior (E)	Viola D. Greene-Walker, District Manager
Rev. Eddie Karim (A)	E. Jane Coleman, Assistant District Manager
Eula Key	Jimmi Brevil, Community Assistant
Bettie Kollock-Wallace (E)	Latrice M. Walker for Hon. Yvette Clarke
Charles Ladson	Alexis Hockaday for Hon. William F. Boyland, Jr.
Deborah Mack (E)	Karen Cherry for Hon. Edolphus Towns
James Mack	Maurice Philips for Hon. John Sampson
Yolanda Matthews (E)	Melvin Faulkner for Hon. Inez Barron
Linda Mayo (E)	Carl Luciano for Hon. Darlene Mealy
Sadie McNamara (E)	Renee Hasticks-Motes for Hon. Marty Markowitz
Ted McQueen	
Genese Morgan	

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

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

Chairperson Hazel Younger called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m., followed with an invocation by Ms. Hazel Clark.

A motion was made by Rev. Dr. Miran Ukaegbu, seconded by Mr. David Alexander and carried to waive the reading of the minutes.

A motion was made by Ms. Marie Pierre, seconded by Mr. Charles Ladson and carried to waive the reading of the District Manager's report.

The audience was encouraged to read the Minutes and the District Manager's report in their entirety.

Chairperson Younger recognized Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes.

District Attorney Hynes stated that he is here tonight to announce the opening of what they believe is a very exciting program for the Brownsville community. The result of this program will be a Brownsville community court, replicating the program in the Red Hook community.

Anyone familiar with the Red Hook of fifteen years ago, when the area was ridden with crime, would have warned against going into the neighborhood. Today, it is one of the five safest neighborhoods of New York City.

The program entitled "Back on Track" is a collaboration with Community Partners Commission Association, Inc., the Kings County District Attorney's Office, the Department of Probation, the Department of Education, the Center for Court Innovation, the Police Athletic League, and others. Housed at 2318 Atlantic Avenue, it offers a variety of services to assist young people

from reoffending. His office has been working with formerly incarcerated individuals. While the national average of recidivism has been sixty percent, the rate falls to twenty-five percent for those who have participated in their re-entry program. This has been validated by Professor Bruce Weston of Harvard University. The majority of the people who have completed their program are now gainfully employed-tax paying individuals. Many of them would otherwise be going to prison for life on the installment plan.

In December 2009, the Governor's Commission on Juvenile Justice delivered a stinging report on the state of the juvenile justice system in the State of New York. Most of the detention centers are located in the Upstate Regions of New York, away from the urban centers, which does not facilitate contact and support by the child's family. The report indicated that many of the youth were abused emotionally and physically, and some sexually. When they are returned to their communities, they are ticking time bombs. Seventy-eight percent of this population are rearrested within three years of their release.

With Back on Track, it is their commitment to change this trend starting with Brownsville. All of the programs that they will be providing have been tested and proven valid. Their Girls Re-entry Assistance Support Project (GRASP) offers effective mentoring and comprehensive services to at risk and court-involved young women which they believe can be replicated to serve young men as well.

The key targets of Back on Track are the high-risk youth. In order to succeed, the youth will need the support of their families. Having grown up in a dysfunctional family with a wife-beating father, he knows firsthand of the pain of domestic violence. Many of these children are facing the same problem. The program takes a holistic approach to solving the problems within the family unit. For instance, if there is an alcohol problem they have rehab programs available, they have anger management programs, social workers on staff, and other therapeutic services so that there is a broad network of support available for our youth.

His Office will be the coordinating agency for these resources. Some may ask: "What is the District Attorney's interest in all of this?" His response is that his fundamental obligation is to reduce crime and increase levels of public safety. The easiest thing that he does is to put people in jail which does not take much intellect. The difficult task is to provide corrective and preventative services. They currently offer over thirty such services and programs. Among them are the Bank Street School of Education and Medgar Evers College which will offer similar resources. He and Dr. William Pollard of Medgar Evers College recently announced a partnership wherein Medgar Evers will be offering a broad scope of educational programs for the formerly incarcerated and at-risk youth returning to the community from juvenile detention centers. It is known that the more education that this population receives, the less likely they are to recommit crimes.

Services will also be rendered to individuals who are currently in the criminal justice system or are at risk of entering the system, and children who are chronically truant or at risk of dropping out of school. They will also work with the families of these youth. A fulltime social worker, located in the center but employed by the District Attorney's Office, will assess the needs of the youth and determine a coordinated strategy to help the youth and their families.

There will be an active truancy program – there have been truancy programs in place in Kings County since 1993. Up to fifty thousand children per day have been truant in Brooklyn. The rate of re-offense is now only three percent with six truancy centers across the Borough. Parenting workshops and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes will be available.

He encourages everyone to reach out to his Director of Community Relations, Ms. Sharon Devonish-Leid, and arrange to visit their re-entry program on Joralemon Street. Here, angry young men who have never received a break in life, come to the realization that there is an opportunity to change their lives for the better. Oftentimes, when formerly incarcerated individuals are released, it is without a support system in place and the result is usually failure. The re-entry program offers commercial driver's license classes, adult and continuing education classes, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and access to medical, dental, and mental health services, as well as substance abuse treatment.

He looks forward to working with each member of the audience in order to make these programs as successful in Brownsville as they have been in Red Hook.

Mr. Kofi Hormeku, Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Committee, reported that due to the

inclement weather, visits to the parks were not done this month.

Work continues to be needed in and around the Brownsville Recreation Center, specifically lights need to be installed in the ballfield area and the roof of the center continues to leak even though work has been performed in an attempt to correct the problem. He will meet with the Borough Commissioner to discuss the issues and report back to the Board. Our District Parks Manager is unavailable this evening, however, one of the area's Park Supervisors, Robert Seemingal, is here to inform us about what the Department has been doing during the past weeks.

Mr. Seemingal stated that after the recent snowstorms they were tasked to clear snow from the sidewalks in front of their properties, common areas near schools, fire hydrants near park facilities, and bus stops. They have a limited number of staff and vehicles and have worked to perform these duties. They were also assigned to assist the Department of Sanitation with snow removal at other locales.

Ms. Blanche Peltonbusch stated that the bus stops in front of Marcus Garvey Houses was not cleared.

Mr. Seemingal stated that they are only responsible for the bus stop adjacent to their properties.

A motion was made by Elder Devon Ponds, seconded by Ms. Linda Rivera and carried to accept the Committee's report.

Rev. Dr. Miran Ukaegbu, Chairperson of the Sanitation and Environmental Protection Committee, reported on the New York City Council's scheduled oversight hearing held on Wednesday, January 19th entitled: "The December Blizzard of 2010: Evaluating the City's Response".

The blizzard of December 26-27 was one of the largest and most severe (24-28inches snow) in the City's history, ranking as the City's 6th largest. In addition to the damage and paralysis it imposed on the city, the December blizzard also left a significant number of unanswered questions about the City's snow management practices and its emergency preparedness in general.

In order to understand what went wrong and what needs to be done to prevent such problems from happening again, the New York City Council scheduled oversight hearings inviting city officials and civic leaders to testify.

The January 19th hearing, hosted by the Borough President at Brooklyn Borough Hall, was one of the hearings scheduled to provide New Yorkers an opportunity to weigh in and share their snow related concerns in the wake of the blizzard, regarding the City's substandard response and cleanup efforts.

The hearing began at 6:00 p.m. and ended at 9:30 p.m.. Councilmembers Letitia James and Jumaane Williams served as Chairpersons. Representatives from MTA and the Department of Sanitation (Iggy Terranova) were present. The Mayor's absence was noticeable and viewed as a continued lack of respect for New Yorkers.

As a Brooklynite and Chairperson of the Sanitation and Environmental Protection Committee of Community Board #16, she attended this hearing and testified, emphasizing on the Mayor's gross neglect of our Community, then and after last Tuesday's snowfall. Major areas were not properly cleared and remained impassable. This made life difficult and dangerous for residents in wheelchairs and mothers with strollers. Other members of our Community were present and also testified.

Some of the problems identified were:

- 1) The Mayor's Office of Operations and the Office of City Emergency Communications lack of communication, hence no decision to declare a snow emergency.
- 2) Insufficient accountability tools that led to a lack of real time information on street conditions.
- 3) Insufficient and delayed deployment of City assets and volunteers/private snow removal operations.

- 4) Non-existing and/or poor action plan despite the adequate weather forecast time for the storm.

The following conclusions were made:

All of the above problems would not have existed if the Mayor was in New York or took responsibility and declared a Snow Emergency and the usual protocols followed. This failure and hardship is deplorable and unacceptable. The Mayor failed and should be accountable to New Yorkers. This situation MUST not happen again.

A motion was made by Elder Devon Ponds, seconded by Mr. David Alexander and carried to approve the Committee's report.

Chairperson Younger commented on the effort made by Mr. Sam Pierre from the Mayor's Community Assistance Unit to reach out to the community to see where assistance was needed.

Ms. Peltonbusch commented that she attempted to reach out to Mr. Pierre, but unfortunately her attempts were unsuccessful.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Maurice Philips from the Office of Senator John Sampson.

Mr. Philips announced that Senator Sampson is preparing his State of the District Report, tentatively scheduled to be delivered on February 10, 2011. As more information becomes available, they will make announcements through the local media or you may contact the Senator's District Office by calling (718) 649-7653.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Melvin Faulkner from the Office of Assemblywoman Inez Barron.

Mr. Faulkner invited the audience to attend an open house that will be held at Assemblywoman Barron's office, located at 669 Vermont Street in the East New York section of Brooklyn on Friday, January 28th. The forum will discuss the Earned Income Tax Credit which can put up to \$5,000 in your pocket. Invited speakers will explain how to claim this credit.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Karen Cherry from the Office of Congressman Towns.

Ms. Cherry reminded the audience of the President's State of the Union Address tonight and encouraged all to watch the telecast.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Carl Luciano from the Office of Councilmember Darlene Mealy.

Mr. Luciano announced that Councilmember Mealy, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, will distribute free flu shot vouchers. Only one hundred are available and they will be given on a first come-first served basis. The vouchers can be used at Walgreens and Duane Reed Pharmacies.

Councilmember Mealy is providing bus transportation to the Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus in Albany on Saturday, February 19th. Refreshments will be provided on the bus and there is a nominal fee of \$10.

Councilmember Mealy invites everyone, especially Board members, to attend her monthly Advisory meetings. For more information, please contact him or Ms. Lipkin by calling (718) 953-3097.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Latrice Walker from the Office of Congresswoman Yvette Clark.

Ms. Walker encouraged everyone to watch the telecast of the President's State of the Union and looks forward to returning to this forum to inform the audience of Congresswoman Clark's plans for the community.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Renee Hastick-Motes from the Office of Borough President Marty Markowitz.

Ms. Hastick-Motes announced that The Borough President will host an Adult Education Fair on Wednesday, February 2nd from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Brooklyn Borough Hall (209 Joralemon Street). She encourages interested young people, ages 15 – 20 years old, to visit their website (www.brookly_usa.org) to download applications for their summer youth employment program. Borough President Markowitz will also hold his State of the Borough Address at Sunset Park High School on February 3rd, 6:00 p.m.. She can be contacted at (718) 802 4091 for additional information about any of tonight's announcements.

Chairperson Younger requested that each of the elected officials' representatives carry a message to their respective official requesting that they lend their support towards finding funds to keep our health facilities open.

She also requested that all Board members reserve the date of February 10th, 6:00 p.m. for an Executive Board meeting.

She recognized Mr. Daniel Murphy of the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District.

Mr. Murphy stated that he works for the merchants of Pitkin Avenue, but without the shopping public there are no merchants. It is therefore very important that he reach out to the public. He believes that it is important to work with the Board and has already agreed to work with Daisy Jackson, Chairperson of the Board's Youth Services Planning Committee, on their summer youth employment initiative. This will benefit the youths by providing them with meaningful employment. It benefits the Pitkin BID because some of the money earned will hopefully be spent on Pitkin Avenue. His office is located at Shoppers World, 1572 Pitkin Avenue, and the telephone number is (718) 922-9600. He requests that he be informed of any issues that the audience may have concerning Pitkin Avenue and its shops.

Ms. Hazel Clark expressed a concern that many of the shops do not accept returns.

Mr. Murphy stated that this is an issue that was raised in a survey taken prior to his tenure and is being addressed. If he has to sit down with every merchant he will. This should already be policy for the chain stores.

Chairperson Younger acknowledged the presence of Mr. Ainslie Cumberbatch, Acting Superintendent for School District #23.

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Rev. Dr. Miran Ukaegbu, seconded by Mr. Charles Ladson and carried to adjourn the meeting.