

Report of the Special Committee on Board Structure & Operations
Bronx Community Board No. 8
December 2006

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Report of the Special Committee on Board Structure & Operations

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The Special Committee

The Special Committee on Board Structure and Operations (the “Special Committee”) was appointed at the June 13, 2006 regular meeting of Community Board No. 8 (the “Board” or “Board 8”). The Special Committee consists of a total of five members. The membership is as follows:

Bradford Trebach (Special Committee Chair)
Damian McShane
Robert M. Moll
Grace Belkin
Anthony P. Cassino *[ex-officio]*

The Special Committee is charged with examining the structure and operations of the Board, and proposing modifications that will increase organizational efficiency and meaningful participation.

As part of this process, the Special Committee canvassed all Board Members for comments and recommendations. In particular, the Special Committee invited suggestions on the following themes:

- 1) Should the Board combine or eliminate any of the various Standing Committees or Officer positions?
- 2) Is there a need to revamp any of the Board’s practices or procedures in order to make the Board function more effectively and efficiently?
- 3) Can the structure and operations of other Community Boards and committee-based assemblies provide useful comparisons for improving the functions of the Board?

The consolidation or elimination of Standing Committees or Officer positions would require revision of the Board’s Bylaws and would need to comport with the statutory requirements of the City Charter.

Call for Comments

The call for Board Members to make comments by written submission was issued on August 1, 2006, with a deadline of September 15, 2006. The Chair of the Special

Committee also made an announcement about the deadline at the September 2006 regular meeting of the Board.

Board Member Submissions

A total of 18 of the Board's 45 Members made submissions in response to the call for comments. For the 41 Board Members who are not part of the Special Committee, the response rate was 43.9 percent. Ten submissions were from members of the Executive Committee. Two were from Board Members who are former Board Chairs.

While it would have preferred more submissions from Board Members, the Special Committee believes that the impact of the consultation was greater than the number of responses suggest. Therefore, the Special Committee is satisfied that its activities were reasonably well known and that the reach of its consultation was sufficient to underwrite the recommendations in this report.

Formal Meetings and Deliberations of the Special Committee

The first formal meeting of the Special Committee was held on September 28, 2006, and a second meeting was held on November 21, 2006. The Special Committee sought advice and guidance by carefully considering all suggestions received from Board Members. Special effort was made to juxtapose the various suggestions so that the range of views could be debated as robustly and comprehensively as possible. Particular attention was paid to the role of each Board Officer and Standing Committee.

In addition, the Special Committee followed up with further questions for some of the Board Member who made submissions.

The members of the Special Committee do not subscribe to every detail in the text but endorse the report as a whole.

Officer Positions

With regard to Officers, the Special Committee noted that the City Charter says little about such posts. Section 2800-d(7) states that each Board shall "Elect its own officers" and Section 2800-f states that "one of the board members shall be elected by the other members to serve as a chairperson."

Among the City's 59 Community Boards, the typical hierarchy of Officers consists of a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. The Chair fulfills the leadership roles of presiding over and representing the full Board. The Vice-Chair is usually the Officer next in rank to the Chair and empowered to serve as Chair in that Officer's absence or disability. Some Boards, including Bronx Community Board 8, have a more elaborate order of succession that includes a Second Vice-Chair, and a few Boards even have a

Third Vice-Chair, such as Brooklyn Community Board 1 and Staten Island Community Board 3.

The Secretary (or Recording Secretary on some Community Boards), is usually responsible for keeping the minutes of both the full Board and the Executive Committee, and is in charge of maintaining correspondence and general records. On Board 8, Article V Section 9 of the Bylaws states that the Secretary “shall cause the minutes of meetings of the Board to be recorded and the records of the Board, including minutes, reports, communications and correspondence to be maintained in an orderly manner.”

A Treasurer (or Financial Secretary on some Community Boards) is usually responsible for looking after the money or finances of the Board. On Board 8, Article V, Section 8 states that the Treasurer “shall cause the financial books and records of the Board to be maintained, shall report thereon to the Board and shall sign all checks, together with the Chairperson, the District Manager or any other officer.”

A Sergeant-at-Arms exists in some Boards, for example Brooklyn Community Board 8, and is responsible for assisting the Chair in maintaining order. Brooklyn Community Board 7 even has an Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms.

Standing Committees

The Special Committee reviewed the structure of many of the city’s other Community Boards, mindful of the fact that district issues should be able to be considered and addressed by an appropriate Standing Committee. A comparative list of Committees for selected Community Boards in other parts of the City appears in the appendix of this report.

The City Charter is succinct in its treatment of Community Board Committees. Section 2800-i simply states that “Each community board may create committees on matters relating to its duties and responsibilities.

In the 2006 *Handbook for Community Board Members*, the Mayor’s Community Assistance Unit states that Board Committees may be structured in any way deemed best to serve the needs of the community. Some possible structures, it notes, are:

- 1) “Functional Committees” that deal with specific needs of the community or carry out specific Charter mandates. Some examples are a Land Use Review Committee, Budget Committee, Education Committee or Public Safety Committee.
- 2) “Agency Committees” that relate to specific municipal agencies or departments. These might include a Police Committee, Sanitation Committee, Consumer Affairs Committee, etc. Sometimes a single Committee will cover several agencies, for example, a Health, Hospitals and Social Services

Committee. Such agency-based Committees are useful during budget and service consultations with the agencies.

- 3) "Area Committees" that handle issues for a specific part of the Community District. This structure tends to spread a variety of work among the Members. An example is the Battery Park City Committee of Manhattan Community Board 1.

The *Handbook for Community Board Members* further explains:

"Many Boards have adopted a mixture of the above styles – for example, using agency committees when close relationships must exist with specific agencies, such as during the budget process, but having a parallel structure of area committees, to ensure that all matters which come before the Board can be fully considered. However, Boards should take care not to create too many committees, which may require too much of the members' time and so be ineffective."

During the deliberations, the Special Committee also considered the structure of other committee-based assemblies, including the city councils of various large U.S. and Canadian municipalities.

Current Structure of Bronx Community Board 8

Under the Bylaws, the following is the Board's current structure:

OFFICERS (5)

- Chairperson
- First Vice-Chairperson
- Second Vice-Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer

STANDING COMMITTEES (13)

- Aging
- Budget
- Education
- Environment and Sanitation
- Ethics
- Health, Hospitals and Social Services
- Housing
- Land Use
- Law and Legislative
- Libraries and Cultural Affairs

Parks and Recreation
Public Safety
Traffic and Transportation

The Board's Youth Committee is not a Standing Committee. It was formed pursuant to an agreement between the Board and the New York City Department of Youth Services. According to Article VI, Section 7 (D) of the Bylaws, "For all technical purposes not specified in these Bylaws, the Youth Committee may be treated as a subcommittee of the Education Committee." The Chair of the Youth Committee is appointed directly by the Board Chair.

The Economic Development Committee is not a Standing Committee. It is a special committee that was created in 1991. In the annual Board elections of 1992, it was treated like a Standing Committee, and it has been treated that way ever since. The rules for establishing special committees are set out in Article III, Section 5 of the Bylaws.

Board Operations

Considerable attention was given to suggestions on how to improve the planning and operating procedures of the Board. It was noted that some of the procedures codified in the Bylaws are not conscientiously adhered to. Particular reference was made to the Board Chair's October 23, 2006 memorandum to Committee Chairs outlining guidelines for conducting certain affairs of the Board.

Recommendations of the Special Committee

A. The Special Committee proposes the following changes to the Board's structure:

- 1) The position of Second Vice-Chair should be eliminated.
- 2) The Aging Committee and the Health, Hospitals and Social Services Committee should be combined into a new Aging, Health and Social Services Committee.
- 3) The Economic Development Committee and the Housing Committee should be combined into a new Economic Development and Housing Committee.
- 4) The Education Committee and the Libraries and Cultural Affairs Committee should be combined into a new Education and Libraries Committee.
- 5) The Ethics Committee and the Law and Legislative Committee should be combined into a new Law, Rules and Ethics Committee.

For an illustration of the proposed changes to the Board's structure, see Table 1 on Page 6 of this report.

If the structural changes recommended by the Special Committee are approved by the Board in accordance with the Bylaws, they should be effective on September 1, 2007, and should have prospective effect.

B. The Special Committee has considered Board operations, and recommends that the Board Chair consider and adopt the following guidelines:

- 1) Committee Minutes --- Committee Chairs must provide the Board Office with written minutes of each meeting in time for the full Board meeting so that those minutes can be sent to Board Members and posted on the Board's Web site.
- 2) Vice Chairs --- Each Committee Chair should appoint a Vice-Chair who can preside over and represent the Committee when the Chair is not available.
- 3) Executive Committee --- All Committee resolutions should be brought before the Executive Committee prior to being presented to the full Board, unless time constraints make such advance presentation impossible. The Executive Committee meetings are also an important venue for vetting issues and refining suggestions before presentation to the full Board.
- 4) Committee Reports and Resolutions --- Since the Board should have written minutes from each Committee, reports by Committee Chairs to the full Board should only highlight important issues or involve the presentation of a resolution. Resolutions should contain a brief and clear description of the issue as well as a list of how each Member voted.
- 5) Discussions with the Press --- Communication with the press regarding Board issues or positions should be discussed with the Board Chair and approved prior to such communication.
- 6) Budget Priorities --- In an effort to make the process of setting budget priorities more productive, Standing Committees should maintain an up-to-date record of the status of each capital and expense item throughout the year. Committee Chairs should be proactive in pursuing their funding items with the appropriate City agency. Special effort should be made to remove any superfluous, redundant or out-of-date budget items.
- 7) Materials for New Members --- In addition to the Bylaws and the Board membership list, the package of information sent to new Members should include the Board's Ethical Guidance Manual.

Other Matters

The Special Committee debated the issue of term limits for Officers and Committee Chairs, but was unable to reach a consensus.

Concluding Words

The Special Committee extends its gratitude to those Board Members who offered comments in response to its request.

Respectfully submitted,

Bradford Trebach, *Chair*
Special Committee on Board Structure
& Operations

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APPENDIX

Comparing Community Board Committee Structures

The following is a comparative list of the Committees for various Community Boards in other parts of the City. This information was gathered from Board websites and may not reflect recent changes.

Manhattan Community Board 1 8 Committees
(Tribeca & Lower Manhattan)

World Trade Center Redevelopment
Youth & Education
Battery Park City
Tribeca
Financial District
Seaport/Civic Center
Landmarks
Waterfront

Manhattan Community Board 2 14 Committees
(Greenwich Village, West Village, NoHo, SoHo, Lower East Side, Chinatown & Little Italy)

Business
Environment
Institutions Information
Landmarks & Public Aesthetics
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender
14th Street Gansevoort Market Area
Parks, Recreation & Open Space
Public Safety & Public Health
Sidewalks, Public Facilities & Public Access
Social, Homeless & Senior Services
Traffic & Transportation
Waterfront
Youth
Zoning & Housing

Manhattan Community Board 3 9 Committees
(Tompkins Square, East Village, Lower East Side, Chinatown & Two Bridges)

Housing, Land Disposition, Zoning & NYC Housing Authority
Human Services, Health, Disability & Seniors
Youth & Education
Parks, Recreation, Cultural Affairs & Waterfront

Public Safety & Sanitation
Transportation
SLA *[State Liquor Authority]*
Economic Development
Ethics, Bylaws & Procedures

Manhattan Community Board 4 7 Committees
(Clinton & Chelsea)

Business Licenses & Permits
Chelsea Preservation & Planning
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use
Housing, Health & Human Services
Quality of Life/Education, Libraries & Cultural Affairs
Transportation Planning
Waterfront & Parks

Manhattan Community Board 5 9 Committees
(Midtown)

Business Improvement Districts
City Services & Budget
Consents & Variances
Human Services & Youth
Landmarks
Land Use & Zoning
Parks
Public Safety & Quality of Life
Transportation & Environment

Manhattan Community Board 7 9 Committees
(Manhattan Valley, Upper West Side & Lincoln Square)

Strategy & Budget
Public Safety & Environment
Housing
Transportation
Business & Consumer Issues
Parks & Recreation
Health & Human Services
Land Use
Youth, Education & Libraries

Manhattan Community Board 8 15 Committees
(Upper East Side, Lenox Hill, Yorkville & Roosevelt Island)

Budget
Communications *[Monthly newsletter, biweekly TV show, press releases, answers questions from reporters & assembles press clippings for distribution to board]*
Environment & Sanitation
Housing

Institutional Expansion
Landmarks
Parks
Roosevelt Island
Rules & Bylaws
Senior & Social Services
Street Fairs
Street Life
Transportation
Youth & Education
Zoning & Development

Manhattan Community Board 11 11 Committees
(East Harlem & Harlem)

Bylaws
City Properties, Land Use/Zoning & Housing
Cultural Affairs/Landmarking
Economic Development
Health & Human Services
Mental Health
Office Oversight/Personnel
Parks & Recreation
Public Safety/Transportation
Senior Citizens
Youth & Education

Brooklyn Community Board 1 23 Committees
(Flushing Avenue, Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Northside & Southside)

Aging
Attendance
By-laws
Capital Budget
Cultural Affairs
Disability Concerns
Economic Development
Education
Environmental Protection & Solid Waste Management
Finance
Health
Housing
Landmarks
Parks & Recreation
Public Housing
Public Safety
Service Delivery
Shelter
Social Services
Transportation
ULURP

Waterfront
Youth

Brooklyn Community Board 2 7 Committees
(Brooklyn Heights, Fulton Mall, Boerum Hill, Fort Greene, Brooklyn Navy Yard, Fulton Ferry & Clinton Hill)

Land Use
Transportation & Public Safety
Health, Environment & Social Services
Youth, Education & Cultural Affairs
Finance & Personnel
Parks & Recreation
Economic Development & Job Training

Brooklyn Community Board 6 9 Committees
(Red Hook, Carroll Gardens, Park Slope, Gowanus & Cobble Hill)

Budget/Community Development
Economic/Waterfront Development
Finance/Personnel & Law
Housing/Human Services
Landmarks/Land Use
Parks/Recreation
Public Safety/Environmental Protection
Transportation
Youth Services/Education

Bronx Community Board 2 5 Committees
(Hunts Point, Longwood & Morrisania)

Housing & Land Use
Economic Development
Special Events/Public Relations
Health & Environment
Youth Services Planning

Bronx Community Board 7 10 Committees
(Norwood, University Heights, Jerome Park, Bedford Park, Fordham & Kingsbridge Heights)

Budget/Personnel/Ethics
Community Relations/Long Term Planning
Education/Youth/Libraries
Health/Hospital/Aging
Housing
Land Use & Zoning
Law & Legislation
Parks & Recreation
Sanitation/Environmental Protection
Traffic/Transportation/Public Safety

Bronx Community Board 10 6 Committees

(Co-op City, City Island, Spencer Estates, Throgs Neck, Country Club, Zerega, Westchester Square, Pelham Bay, Eastchester Bay, Schuylerville, Edgewater, Locust Point & Silver Beach)

Health & Human Services
Housing & Zoning
Municipal Services
Parks & Recreation
Planning & Budget
Youth Services

Queens Community Board 3 19 Committees

(Jackson Heights, East Elmhurst, North Corona & La Guardia Airport)

Airport
Anti-Terrorism *[emergency preparedness]*
Business Development
Capital & Expense Budgets
Education
Flushing Meadow-Corona Park Conservancy
Health & Social Services
Housing
Landmarks
Land Use Review
Immigrants-Newest New Yorkers
Parks & Recreation
Personnel & Budget
Public Safety
Sanitation/Environment
Technology Advisory *[website operation, broadband policy, cable services, mobile, pay phone, polling, public access cable channels & voting technologies]*
Traffic & Transportation
Website Administration *[website content]*
Youth Services Planning

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