

Arts & Culture Committee of Community Board Nine

Savona Bailey-McClain & Michael Palma, Chairs

Tamara Gayer, Vicky Gholson, Christa Giesecke, Linda Walton & Diane Wilson,
Board Committee Members

Lee-Ann Pinder, Valerie Winborne, Margaret Troupe & Quincy Troupe,
Public Members

Committee Meeting Minutes of December 11, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 6:45 p.m. by co-chairs Savona Bailey-McClain and Michael Palma

Present: Savona Bailey-McClain, Co-chair, Michael Palma, Co-chair;
Committee members: Tamara Gayer, Vicky Gholson, Ph.D., Christa Giesecke, Linda Walton, Dianne Wilson; Public member: Lee-Ann Pinder, Valerie Winborne

Absent: Margaret Troupe, Quincy Troupe, Public members

The meeting had a quorum.

Adoption of the agenda was approved.

Adoption of the minutes was approved.

No Reports

Short Presentation

The draft letter to elected officials was presented to committee members. There was some discussion and requests were made to make some minor adjustments. Committee members were encouraged to send electronically their changes and then Co-chair Michael Palma stated that a final copy would be presented in January, 2007 on letterhead.

Introduction of Guests

Ms. Linda Salavaria from Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) discussed the organization's new membership and neighborhood discounts with local restaurants and businesses. DTH has also developed a vehicle to support young dancers. Individuals can make contributions to support the purchase of ballet shoes or dance clothings. DTH is also planning a gala in the coming year and will resume dance classes for adults. Their recent Open House was very successful.

Ms. Caralyn Spector from Columbia University Arts Initiative introduced herself and shared that the university has a website (www.cuarts.com) where they post neighborhood events for students and faculty.

Mr. John-Martin Green from Blackberry Productions shared how his organization develops new works that focuses on African American history and aesthetics, that they are based at Bread & Roses High School located at 135th Street and Edgecombe Avenue. Mr. Green shared that he is the new arts representative for the West Harlem Local Development Corporation.

Ms. Jeanne B. Ollivierre, a retired teacher from City College and crew member of Drum TV, stated that right now, she represents an African dancer that she would like to bring to the United States and to Harlem specifically.

Open Discussion

Co-chair, Savona Bailey-McClain stated that the committee needed to know the pertinent needs besides money of artists and arts organizations within CB9. She started the discussion by asking guests what their pertinent needs may be.

Ms. Salavaria from DTH stated that the organization needed support for their events. John-Martin Green from Blackberry stated that his organization needed infrastructure support and a home site. Linda Walton stated that she received information regarding a new survey asking arts organizations about their space needs and that she would send the link to others. There's a new program at 55 Water Street to help arts organizations with space.

Ms. Valerie Winborne from Harlem Stage/Aaron Davis Hall shared that the Water Street initiative is very similar to BAM's Hanson Place program in Brooklyn. As an example she shared how groups would pay a discounted price per square and cited Urban Bush Women who pays \$10 per square foot as opposed to the market rate of \$100 per square foot.

The Co-chair asked that more information be provided and shared for next month's meeting.

Ms. Caralyn Spector reiterated that her department is a resource but expressed frustration with encouraging students to get off the campus more which is very hard. Linda Walton asked whether students would be more inclined to a group outing or stage a day where West Harlem artists and groups would go to Columbia University students where they can see a friendly face. Ms. Spector suggested that the students may need faculty to help drag them by the hands and so members asked what the problem could be. Her reply was that NYC is scary for some them like the subway and it's cheaper and easier to just go across the street. Students do not have to leave the campus as opposed to NYU where the city is the campus. Also, many of the students have never been to the theater which poses another obstacle – getting students to appreciate the arts. Her department has tried discounts like tickets to BAM for \$10 dollars and they could not get students to go.

Ms. Jeanne Ollivierre suggested a bus tour so that students can learn about the cultural institutions in the area. Christa Giesecke talked about the need for additional amenities. Folks like to have places to go before and after a performance for a bite to eat and drink. She even suggested that Harlem Stage have a café. Ms. Winborne thought it was worthy to look at offering some kind of package.

The Co-chair also asked if discounts could be developed Columbia staff members since they employ thousands of people. The committee learn that employees to ask about discounts for performances. Ms. Spector shared how they are trying like the Art Train where mostly students can go to different gallery neighborhoods. Studio Museum was a very successful trip. It's about fostering relationships she said.

There was further discussion regarding the different departments at Columbia University and how they can work with artists and arts groups. The Josephine Baker Centennial Birthday weekend was mentioned and how Le Maison Francais and the Institute of African American Research worked together to have this event at Barnard. Barnard has a Dance Department and Teacher's College has an Arts Administration Program where getting interns for groups could be helpful.

Linda Walton talked about the collaborative study that the following groups participated: Alliance of NYS Arts organization, Teacher's College and Harlem Arts Alliance. The focus was advocacy for the future of the arts. There were three teams of students that talked with artists, arts organizations and elected officials. Two focus groups interviewed artists with 0-3 years of experience, 4 – 10 years and 15 years +. Most stated the need for space and funding. Another request was for collaborative projects as a catalyst for more funding. Concerns were raised about the changes in Harlem, lack of housing, exhibition spaces and internalized racism where the community is not embracing the cultural sensitivities in the works. Elected officials stated that they wanted groups to come to them. NYS Alliance shared their concern for an arts committee in the NYS legislature but there is a Tourism, Arts, Sports and Recreation Committee in the NYS Assembly. The NYS Senate has a Tourism, Sports and Recreation Committee. Electeds are stating that they want artists and arts groups to participate in the political process. They want to see their constituents to come to Albany for Arts Advocacy Day in March and raise the level of awareness for the arts. Also, they want to know what groups are focused on specific issues like Healthcare and the Arts, Housing and the Arts and so forth.

To affect policy with our electeds, it was asked if our committee can develop resolutions and what would we need to do. Ms. Gholson stated that a series of resolutions could be developed on a host of matters that pertains to the arts. Ms. Winborne suggested that we develop events where we invite the public to deal with the issues the committee wishes to advocate through resolutions.

Further discussions evolved regarding a CB9 Arts Day with multiple ideas and possibilities. Brooklyn Museum and Studio Museum have a community day that CB9 could develop and institutionalized so that we can encourage local residents to support the arts and build a local audience. Build bridges with entities like Casa Italiana or Triple Candie.

Ms. Gholson requested further discussion regarding goals and objectives in January including whether or not to bring in more artists and arts organizations into the discussion about needs. Lastly, a lengthy discussion took place regarding the WHLDC and the Arts Committee and why there should be more participation in that process.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.