

Draft

**Harlem Piers & Waterfront, Economic Development &
Consumer Affairs Committee
Manhattan Community Board Nine**

Savona Bailey-McClain, Committee Chair
Vicky Gholson Ph.D., Blaine North, Norma Ramos, Linda Walton, Ernestine Welsh,
Board Committee Members
Maritta Dunn, Public Member

Committee Meeting Minutes of April 10, 2007

The meeting was called to attention at 6:45 p.m. by Chair Savona Bailey-McClain

Present: *Savona Bailey-McClain, Chair, Vicky Gholson, Ph.D., Norma Ramos,
Ernestine Welsh, Maritta Dunn,
Public Member*
Absent: *Blaine North*
Excused: *Linda Walton*
Guests: *Barbara Askins, Executive Director, 125th Street BID, Len Greco,
NYCEDC, Michael Kent, CB9 assigned Urban Fellow*

Adoption of the minutes and agenda was postponed until we had a quorum (which occurred shortly after the meeting opened). Reports were then given.

Reports:

The Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission

The Chair of the Committee gave a short report regarding the commission and the upcoming celebrations planned along the Hudson River. Unfortunately, the Borough historian was not able to attend the committee's meeting and give a report himself.

The twenty-one member HFCQ Commission www.ExploreNY400.com was formed by Governor Pataki and signed into law in 2002. The commission is responsible for the planning and development of three landmark passages in New York State's history: the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's exploration of the Hudson River aboard the Dutch ship, Half Moon; Samuel de Champlain's expedition to Lake Champlain also 400 years ago; and Robert Fulton's maiden steamship journey up the Hudson in 1807, all to be celebrated together in 2009.

Barbara Fratianni was named in 2005 as the 2nd Executive director of the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission. She heads the panel planning the state's major anniversary celebration that will culminate between July and October of 2009 from Battery Park to the State of Vermont.

The Committee Chair shared how West Harlem played a significant role in the last centennial celebrations. Board member Ernestine Welsh interjected how our area was a wealthy part of the City at that time. A hundred years ago, landings were built below Grant's Tomb where thousands of people gathered to watch boats and dramatic fireworks. The Committee Chair is trying to make sure that our community board is included in the various planning. No one from Northern Manhattan (West

Harlem/Washington Heights/Inwood) is currently on the NYC Committee. So far members include National Park Service, the Smithsonian Museum in partnership with the Native American Museum, Macy's, Deputy Mayor's Office of Economic Development and Rebuilding and the Borough Historian representing the Office of the Manhattan Borough President.

Maritta Dunn stated that a letter was sent from the Board to Ms. Fratianni last fall in either September or October in 2006 emphasizing our interest to be included in the celebrations. This will be a major tourist event and our community should be able to reap the benefits. Board member Norma Ramos shared how this smacks of environmental racism where communities of color are not consulted. She also recommended how we could bring a tall ship to our area. Discussion suggested that a possible replica of the Fulton and Clermont steamboats be launched in our area. Ms. Ramos also suggested have a Hudson River author could do a lecture or workshops. She noted how an author stated how aromatic the Hudson River used to be and that is was one of its real distinctions.

It was recommended that the Committee send another letter to the HFCQ re-stating our interest and wish to be involved. It was further recommended, that the committee reach out to the Deputy Mayor's Office of Economic Development and Rebuilding. It is believed that the contact person representing the Deputy Mayor is Ms. Julie Thompson.

Planned activities listed on the ExploreNY400 website include:

The Steamboat Bicentennial

The year 2007 will mark the 200th anniversary of the launching of the world's first practical steamboat, known to history as the Clermont. For the past two years the Steamboat Bicentennial Committee has been developing an appropriate celebration of this landmark event. Plans include a major exhibition at Clermont State Historic Site, an exhibit catalog, a two-day symposium in cooperation with Bard College, school and community outreach programs and a Steamboat Days Festival.

The 2009 Champlain-Hudson Sojourn

Kayak from the foot of Lake Champlain in Québec to Manhattan. Tentatively scheduled to begin June 28, this event will last 22 days and will feature a core group of Thru-Paddlers, which are people kayaking the entire trip. This event will cover approximately 340 miles with paddlers camping at state and local parks along the way. The Champlain-Hudson Sojourn will be modeled on the Hudson River Valley Greenway's Great Hudson River Paddle.

Dutch New York

Thirteen/WNET in New York City and WMHT in Albany are proposing a two hour television documentary and an education outreach component designed to examine the Dutch history of New York and its impact on American society and culture. The documentary will be hosted by David Hartman and historian Barry Lewis and will chronicle the Dutch legacy in New York State. The broadcast will combine historical re-enactments with expert interviews and will be shot on location in Manhattan, Albany, Long Island, the Hudson Valley, and in Amsterdam, Holland.

The project's educational outreach program will include an extensive web component as well as comprehensive education materials including lesson plans and curriculum training for teachers across the state. *For more information contact:* Peter Repas via email: prepas_apbs@wxxi.org

125th Street BID Expansion

Barbara Askins, Executive Director of the 125th Street Business Improvement District presented a follow-up to her March presentation on how to make West Harlem BID ready.

First, Ms. Askins explained that BID assessments are an additional tax above real estate taxes. A number of city BIDs may determine to assess based on front footage or assessed value alone. The 125th Street BID decided to use a combination for assessment in order to

make amounts fair for smaller property owners. Most of the larger building owners are located on corners with small frontage facing 125th Street and then more height or space in the back of the property. Approximately six large properties contribute the lionshare of her budget. Those property owners help carry smaller owners and she suggest that our board looks at the type of development we need to anchor our portion of the BID area.

Looking at our district from Morningside Avenue to the Hudson River, our community board has a number of large residential blocks on 124th and 126th Street. If those parcels were to be eliminated, then our district has some commercial buildings with low assessed values (the maximum the City of NY will allow is 20%; 125th Street BID assesses 12% which is considered high; most wealthier BIDS assess 2-3%), residential and not-for-profits. Churches and synagogues are tax-exempted. These institutions can choose to contribute but most do not. Our community must look at NYCHA which could potentially contribute with creative mechanisms like Smart Growth Commercial Revitalization that would involve both the State and HUD. Several board members asked what the incentive would be for HUD to participate and Ms. Askins stated, providing services to tenants that may not already be offered in the central core of the BID. Board member Vicky Gholson stated that it was important that we do target NYCHA negatively. The language we used regarding NYCHA should be positive. Board member Norma Ramos asked what would the increase funding to the BID provide. Below is background information and the services that Ms. Askins described to the committee.

The 125th Street Business Improvement District (BID), a not-for-profit corporation, was established in September 1993 to stimulate economic life in the area by developing commercial and service establishments, to spur private investment, and to improve the corridor's physical appearance. Organized in compliance with state and city laws, the BID allows property and business owners in defined areas to adopt a budget for specific services they desire, and to levy a special assessment to cover the cost of those services.

It includes a five-block commercial area in Central, West, and East Harlem between Morningside and Fifth Avenues. Services are provided from funds of 100 properties and numerous businesses that face 125th, and businesses that are located on the avenues in corner buildings.

BID PROGRAM AND SERVICES

- **Sanitation and Street Maintenance:** The BID provides comprehensive street cleaning and maintenance services seven days per week between the hours of 6:00am to 7:00pm (Monday-Friday) and 8:00am to 5:00pm (Saturday-Sunday).
- **Promotion, Marketing, and Tourism:** Through advertising of businesses, consumer shopping guides, cooperative merchants advertising, special shopping bags, special events, clean campaigns, business improvement seminars, point of sale promotions, and special shopping days, the BID increases the visibility and awareness of the 125th Street shopping district.
- **Public Safety:** Ambassador/Public Safety Officer Program will launch in January, 2007. This unique unit is comprised of trained, professional, people-oriented individuals, who will regularly walk the BID corridor, providing an environment of comfort and safety. To all who traverse the 125th Street Business Improvement District, the distinctly uniformed Ambassadors will provide services for directions, assistance, information for Cultural institutions, theatres, concerts, events, shopping, government agencies, business, restaurants, transportation and the other multiple facets which encompass the 125th Street Business Improvement Districts' milieu. The Ambassadors will support all law enforcement and City agencies in reporting unsafe, dangerous and hazardous conditions. Their highly visible uniformed presence shall also act as deterrence for unsavory behavior and activities. [NEW PROGRAM]
- **Holiday Lighting:** To boost the holiday shopping season and provide a festive atmosphere, the BID decorates 125th Street each year the week before Thanksgiving.
- **Expand BID Boundaries:** The BID is presently conducting research to examine the feasibility of expanding the BID from river to river between 124th and 126th Streets.
- **Technical Assistance:** The BID provides technical assistance to businesses and property owners in the district in the form of guidance and problem solving, including informing merchants of small business programs such as loans, and receiving and addressing on-going complaints.

- **Funding:** \$603,000.00 Funding source is a tax levy on properties located within the BID based on combinations of assessed valuation and frontage. Acquiring grants and conducting fundraising activities supplement the budget.

Columbia is the second largest private property owner. Though their assessed value is lower than NYCHA, as they expand those numbers will increase. Columbia is playing a waiting game and want to know what NYCHA will give. Columbia has stated that it will do its part but has cancelled along with NYCHA, joint meetings (3 scheduled meetings) to discuss the possible expansion of the BID west.

Ms. Askins stated how important that we talk now because it can take 8-9 months before NYCHA were to move on any action. The Commissioner for NYCHA is receptive to the possibility but it might be necessary for the Board to develop a letter making a request and advocating the State and the Federal government [HUD].

Ms. Askins informed us that she has spoken to both NYCHA and Columbia separately about carrying the West end. Assessed value would total \$300,000 and \$100,000 respectively.

Harlem Piers

Len Greco from NYC Economic Development Corporation started his presentation with a Powerpoint presentation on the construction of Harlem Piers (below are some of the photographs).

Len Greco shared how a lot of excavating was going on at the bulkhead line and that we could see the existing bulkhead. There are views from Riverwalk and the viaduct. Questions were asked about materials and trees and all materials have been selected and there will be a lot of trees for the park. The southern pier will be the area for ferry and excursion boats to dock. Wooden clusters have been put in place to protect the piers from wayward vessels.

Vicky Gholson suggested that we have our June meeting in the construction site. Everyone liked the recommendation and Len will make the arrangements for our June committee meeting.

Michael Kent, our assigned Urban Fellow announced a 2nd Marine Transfer Station tour for May 24th or 25th. Anyone interested should contact him.

In regards to the kayak launch, the Committee Chair received information for EDC about possible alterations to accommodate row boats. The PAL row boats will be 5ft wide and so therefore the launch should be 10ft wide and the davit (lift) should accommodate non-ramp access boats that weigh about 500lbs.

Norma Ramos inquired about a marina and she was informed that the community stated that they did not want a marina similar to the 79th Street boat basin. The community does support boating though with non-motorized vessels. When asked about ferry service, it was shared that the community did not really want ferry service either but to support the maintenance of the park, both ferry and excursion boats would come to our piers. Next month, Alyssa Cobb from NYC EDC will come to talk about maintenance.

The Committee Chair gave an update on the PAL Boatbuilding program. It was stated that the former Director of the Adventure Learning Program was dismissed and that the new Executive Director was given the impression that the program was a small effort with no real community support. Mr. Felix Urrutia, the new Executive Director now understands that the community does want the problem and is willing to work with his

organization to save and preserve the program. Most of the teens are not from West Harlem but come as far as Brooklyn. Efforts will be made to recruit teens from our community and to expand it in order that to lure adults as volunteers and make the program intergenerational.

Committee members agreed to send a letter of thanks to Mr. Charlie Ritchie the former Director and a resolution supporting the program and involving the Police Department who controls the site.

The vote was unanimous for both a letter to be drafted. The meeting ended at 8:15 p.m.