

MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD #16 – December 19, 2006

Attendance

Rev. Reuben Akinfime (A)
David Alexander
Joyce Anderson
Josephine Blakeley
Patricia Boone (E)
James A. Bowens (E)
Esther Cobb (A)
Adrainer Kim Coleman
Gregory Coad (A)
Bonnie Crump (A)
Essie Duggan
Sam Gardner (A)
Shirley Gonsalves
Daniel Goodine (A)
Sarah Hall
Henry Hill
Kofi Hormeku
Michael Howard
Hattie Hunt
Allene Ingram (E)
Daisy Jackson
Wordell Johnson
Dr. Cade Jones, III
Eula Key
Danny King (A)
Bettie Kollock-Wallace (E)

Shawn Lewis (A)
Deborah Mack
James Mack (A)
Rev. Thelma Martin (E)
Yolanda Matthews
Sadie McNamara
Rev. Joseph Norton
Marie Pierre
Elder Devon Ponds
Mattie Pusey
Isaiah Simmons (E)
Ernestine Turner
Rev. Miran Ukaegbu
Marcus Victory
Alice Vines
Annie Walkes
Dr. Merrill White
Herman Winston
Hazel Younger
Viola D. Greene-Walker, DM
E. Jane Coleman-Assistant DM
Jimmi Brevil, Community Assistant
Hon. Darlene Mealy
Essie Duggan for Hon. Velmanette Montgomery
Theresa Haney for Hon. William F. Boyland, Jr.

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

Chairperson Hazel Younger called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. and an invocation was said by Dr. Cade Jones, III.

Chairperson Younger noted the following correction to the November 28th minutes: In the fifth paragraph from the bottom of page 7, the date in the second sentence should read January 9, 2007 instead of January 28, 2007.

A motion was made by Ms. Hattie Hunt, seconded by Mr. Kofi Hormeku and carried to approve the minutes with the noted correction.

A motion was made by Mr. Kofi Hormeku, seconded by Ms. Alice Vines and carried to dispense with the reading of the District Manager's Report.

Mr. Henry Hill, member of the Senior Citizens Affairs Committee, reported that the Committee met on December 13, 2006 with Mr. Sean Pendergrass, Field Representative for the Social Security Administration.

Mr. Pendergrass stated that a cost of living increase for recipients of Social Security was just passed by Congress. Usually when you receive a cost of living increase, the Medicare premium is also increased.

The Social Security Administration presently has a project to verify if recipients over age 95 are alive. Between Brownsville and Canarsie, he has identified 45 seniors who are over 100 years of age. While doing the project, he identified two fraud cases where family members were receiving benefits of persons who are deceased.

Privatizing of social security benefits is still being discussed. If approved, it will allow you to take a portion of your account and invest it in stocks. President Bush is in support of this, however, the new democratically controlled Congress will probably not be.

Many senior citizen groups are opposed to privatizing social security because they consider it too risky to invest their benefits in the stock market, especially when social security is the only source of income for some seniors.

They are also outreaching to organizations where people of low-income gather who might need SSI but are unable to come into the social security office. If you know of any homebound people or those in nursing homes or rehabilitation centers, you may call Mr. Sean Pendergrass at (718) 272-8225, Ext. 203 for assistance in setting up an appointment.

Persons who are foreign born and have worked may also qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). If you are a citizen, never worked, and at least 65 years old, you may also qualify for SSI.

To qualify for social security benefits, you must put in 40 quarters of work.

If you were married for more than ten years, your spouse is deceased and you never remarried, you may qualify to receive your former spouse's benefits even if your former spouse remarried.

Mr. Hill made an appeal to the audience to join the Committee and stated that the next Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 17, 2007, 3:30 p.m. in the Community Board Office.

A motion was made by Elder Devon Ponds, seconded by Mr. Kofi Hormeku and carried to accept the report of the Senior Citizens Affairs Committee.

Mrs. Hattie Hunt, Chairperson of the Youth Services Planning Committee, reported that the Committee met on Monday, December 19th with Dr. Kathleen Cashin, Superintendent of Region 5, to discuss recent Department of Education policy changes and their impact on the schools in District #23.

The Committee expressed concern about the role of the Parent Coordinators as it relates to ensuring that the parents are active participants and informed about their rights concerning these changes. The Committee recognizes that in order for parents to be effective participants in the education of their children, they must be informed and actively involved in any changes being proposed by the Department of Education.

The Committee also discussed the need and possibility of establishing a trade school in the District. As additional information is made available to the Committee, the community will be informed.

Ms. Hunt invited interested persons to join the Committee as they begin to plan their annual youth conference.

A motion was made by Dr. Cade Jones, III, seconded by Ms. Joyce Anderson and carried to accept the report of the Youth Service Planning Committee.

Chairperson Younger thanked Ms. Hunt and asked about the attendance of their last meeting.

Ms. Hunt stated that it was well attended.

Chairperson Younger stated that she would like to see a lot of energy put into the Youth Service Planning Committee in 2007.

She next announced the appointment of the following Committee Chairs:

- Economic Development – Essie Duggan
- Environmental and Sanitation – Rev. Miran Ukaegbu
- Health and Human Resources – Sadie McNamara
- Land Use Planning and Zoning. – Bettie Kollock-Wallace
- Legislative – Henry Hill
- Parks and Recreation – Kofi Hormeku
- Personnel Budget and Finance – Hazel Younger
- Public Safety – Sarah Hall
- Transportation and Franchises – Deborah Mack

- Women's – Dr. Merrill White
- Youth Services Planning – Hattie Hunt

While not discussed at the Executive Board meeting held on December 15th, it was suggested that a Subcommittee of the Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee be formed to address issues in public housing. Ms. Younger asked Ms. Joyce Anderson to be the Chairperson of the Subcommittee on NYCHA developments and Ms. Anderson consented.

Chairperson Younger noted that the By-laws of the Board require that each member sit on at least two committees. She believes that belonging to a committee means that you actively participate on that committee. The Board needs to strengthen its posture within the community.

We hear of other Community Boards doing other things and we cry foul when the needs and wants of the community are not accommodated. Beginning in 2007, members are requested to ensure that they are active participants on at least two committees and actively attend Board meetings or jeopardize their tenure on the Board.

Also discussed at the December 15th meeting was the establishment of a regular meeting schedule for each of the Committees of the Board. We have not heard from several committees for an extended period, which should not be the case because issues continue to affect our community. Once the schedules are established, the Board's office will mail them to each member.

Chairperson Younger further reported that the 421-a is a tax abatement program established nearly twenty-five years ago to promote affordable housing within the City and is set to expire next year. There is Legislation pending in City Council and in Albany to renew and reform the 421-a tax abatement plan. Four bills have been introduced to change the program which offers tax abatements to developers of newly erected buildings for up to twenty-five years in some areas. Except for developers, all sides generally agree that the program has to be changed.

One of the competing bills introduced by City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, and promptly endorsed by Mayor Bloomberg, list twenty-nine co-sponsors according to the Council's website. (It takes a minimum of twenty-six votes in the fifty-one member Council to pass a bill). Normally, the debate would end here but in this case, with competing proposals, it carries on. Another bill is supported by twenty-four members, including three members who are also listed as co-sponsoring Speaker Quinn's bill (Members may sponsor more than one bill even if the bills conflict).

Two of the four bills are essentially non-starters. Speaker Quinn's bill (Intro 486) would significantly expand the geographic areas where developers would not be able to receive 421-a tax abatements unless they included on-site affordable housing units as part of their market rate development. Councilmember Annabel Palma's bill (Intro 490) call for a Citywide exclusion zone, in effect causing developers to include affordable housing units in all their developments. Among their other differences, Quinn's bill calls for 20% of the units in developments to be affordable while Palma's call for 30% and has the backing of many affordable housing advocates.

Assemblyman Vito Lopez, in direct correspondence, has requested the Board to support his version (A10912 which is the State Assembly equivalent of City Council Intro 490) of the renewal and reform. She thinks that the Board should support Intro 490 because it seemingly has a greater impact on this community and Assemblyman Lopez was thoughtful enough to keep the Board in the loop.

A motion was made by Ms. Marie Pierre, seconded by Ms. Hattie Hunt and carried to support A10912 and Intro 490.

Councilmember David Yassky has proposed legislation (Intro 382) to address the issuance of tickets to homeowners when trash is found on their sidewalks during normal business hours. The bill proposes to require the Department of Sanitation to issue a warning and not a fine to first-time violators. Councilman Yassky is requesting the Board to support this proposed legislation.

A motion was made by Ms. Marie Pierre, seconded by Mr. Kofi Hormeku and carried to support Intro 382.

Chairperson Younger stated that the Board's support has also been requested for another bill – Intro 199. She has requested that the Legislative Committee review the legislation and provide a recommendation to the full Board.

The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) is conducting a market study of Livonia Avenue as part of the City's effort to revitalize vacant and underutilized City-owned properties along this corridor with uses that will benefit the community. AKRF, the consultants retained by HPD to carry out this study, has asked the Board to distribute a survey to collect information about local residents' shopping habits and preferences. Chairperson Younger requested that the audience complete the survey form and return it to the Community Board staff for collection by AKRF.

A motion was made by Ms. Hattie Hunt, seconded by Ms. Sarah Hall and carried to accept the Chairperson's report.

Chairperson Younger recognized City Councilmember Darlene Mealy.

Councilmember Mealy commended Chairperson Younger's presentation on the 421-a proposals and agrees wholeheartedly with her about participation by the membership. She supports Intro 490, but worries that if developers were allowed to build mostly luxury condominiums, who will be able to afford them ten to fifteen years from now. The bills will be voted on tomorrow but there is still time for some compromise. If you have any ideas or comments concerning the bills, she can be reached at (718) 953-3097.

Her office, in conjunction with the American Red Cross, has recently hosted a series of preparedness seminars at area senior centers. They provided flyers containing information on emergency preparedness as well as emphasized the need to be prepared in case of an emergency.

She is sponsoring the Neighborhood Heating Fund - a program of KeySpan Energy that assist owners of one- and two-family homes who are having difficulty paying their heating bills. The program provides a one-time grant of the greater of the balance of the bill or \$200. Flyers containing additional information are available on the distribution table.

She is also sponsoring Intro 580 which will provide for an agency similar to the Administration for Children Services that will give children a direct advocate. If a child is being abused by a caregiver, they can seek the assistance of this agency. Currently, only two states (Massachusetts and New Jersey) have child advocacy agencies.

She will be meeting with the leadership of the Police Department in mid-January to discuss the issue of shootings and strategies to improve child safety as a whole. She will sponsor a town hall meeting in February to discuss their findings with the community.

Mr. Marcus from the Development Committee of Block Associations stated that he is very concerned about the closing of schools that serve children of our district. He does not understand why funds are taken from our schools, redirected towards other communities, and then our schools are closed.

Chairperson Younger asked Mr. Marcus to specify the schools to which he is referring.

Mr. Marcus stated that he is referring to Samuel J. Tilden and South Shore High Schools.

It was stated that those school are not located within Community District #16 or Council District #41.

Mr. Marcus stated that he understands that, however, children from District 16 attend the schools. He is appealing to the people of the community to stand up and fight the closing on a community level.

Councilmember Mealy stated that the City Council has a Committee looking at the issue and

invited Mr. Marcus to discuss his concerns with her.

Ms. Hattie Hunt stated that parents can make a difference if they are organized.

Ms. Joyce Anderson stated that when Councilmember Mealy convenes her town hall meeting, it should be done locally. She sees no sense of marching down Fifth Avenue for things that are happening here.

Councilmember Mealy stated that she voiced that same sentiment to Rev. Al Sharpton, regarding the recent march against police mistreatment. While the police bear some culpability, it is our youth who are killing each other the most. She knows that our forefathers have a history of marching, sometimes for miles upon miles, for change. However, if we want to get people's attention, we need to hurt them economically. A march that deposit thousands of people in front of Macy's doorstep aids them - not hurt them. Why not bring those dollars to our communities. She does not mind marching for a cause but we need to strategize better.

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

Ms. Duggan stated that Senator Montgomery requested that she distribute flyers containing information about newly developed low rent units in the Boerum Hill area of Brooklyn. The flyers are available on tonight's distribution table. Anyone seeking further information should call the Senator's office at the telephone number listed on the flyer.

Senator Montgomery cordially invites the audience to her inauguration ceremony on January 14, 2007, 1:00 p.m. at the Concord Baptist Church (833 Marcy Avenue at the corner of Madison Street).

Chairperson Younger recognized Chief Mundy of the Fire Department of New York City.

Chief Mundy stated that the Department is seeking to diversify by hiring more minority recruits. The application period for the exam is over but they want those who have applied to know that tutoring sessions for the exam are available. Dates and locations may be found at their website: nyc.gov/fdny.

He offered the following winter fire safety tips:

- If you have a real Christmas tree, keep it watered and away from heat sources, sparks or flames
- Use only UL approved lights and wiring and do not overload connections.
- Never leave lit candles unattended.
- Do not smoke in bed. Make sure all cigarette butts are extinguished before discarding.
- Make sure you always have a properly working smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector on every floor of your home.

Chairperson Younger recognized Librarians Cynthia Woronowicz and Shirley Hall of the Brooklyn Public Library.

Ms. Woronowicz stated that they have a program for the youth that teaches life skills through drama. Students from the Oasis program have participated in the drama program. They will have an open house at the Brownsville Branch on February 13, 2007.

Ms. Hall stated that the Stone Avenue Branch also has a host of upcoming events and invites the audience to come and participate.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Christine Larkin of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene who stated that she looks forward to continuing to work with the community in the coming year.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Joan Nabors of Brownsville Academy.

Ms. Nabors stated that she is the proud founding Principal of Brownsville Academy High School. The school has been open for three years and has an enrollment of two hundred and seventy-five students. They are Brownsville's best kept secret. Generally, students of color have a 90% failure rate on the Regent Exams but their students have a 90% passing rate. They have a culture of high expectations.

Their students are required to participate in a paid internship program that is funded by their Learning to Work Program. If you are looking for student interns, please contact her because they are always seeking to place students with local businesses.

The students are also required to complete a portfolio that they take with them to college. They have affiliations with Medgar Evers, Brooklyn, and John Jay Colleges wherein the students earn three college credits while attending Brownsville Academy.

This past year, they were privileged to be able to take some of their students to Brazil. They plan to visit South Africa in the coming year and China in 2008.

Seating is limited in the school and they do not directly enroll students. Students are transferred from other schools.

Someone asked for the location of the school.

Ms. Nabors stated that they are located at 1150 East New York Avenue and their telephone number is (718) 778-7305.

Ms. Deborah Mack asked if they have an area of concentration?

Ms. Nabors stated that they are a full academic high school, offering a full line of courses such as chemistry, physics, languages, etc.. One-third of their graduates last year received Regents Diplomas. They have a high staffing ratio – the average class size is fifteen students.

Chairperson Younger recognized Community Affairs Officer Dean Elmore.

Police Officer Elmore reported that for the year, there were twenty-two homicides that took place within the 73rd Precinct. Seventy-two individuals were shot or injured during the commission of a crime. Those numbers actually reflect a decrease, which goes to show that we have a way to go. They continue to appeal to the public for assistance in solving and prevention of crimes in the Precinct.

On a positive note, he is happy to report that he accompanied eighteen young men to Florida where they competed in a national football tournament with other young men from all over the nation.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Sarah Hall, President of the 73rd Precinct Community Council, who announced the retirement of Chief Joseph Cunneen, Borough Commander of Patrol for Brooklyn North. The Precinct Councils met with Commissioner Raymond Kelly and requested that his replacement be a person of color and he appointed Assistant Chief Gerald Nelson to be the next Commanding Officer of Brooklyn North Patrol. They expect to see good things from him.

Chairperson Younger recognized Dr. Merrill White who made an appeal on behalf of Brookdale Hospital and Medical Center's Emergency Department Caring Links Program for volunteers to participate in the program. The program is designed to assist patients and their families while in the Emergency Department. The volunteer will serve as a liaison between patients, family and the Emergency Department staff, keeping family members informed about the patient's progress, and assist in escorting family members to areas within the hospital. Additional information about the program can be found in the pamphlets on the distribution table.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. William Boone of the Educators for Children Youth and Families Beacon Program.

Mr. Boone stated that they are located at 210 Chester Street between Sutter and Blake Avenues. They operate weekdays from 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.. He can be reached at (718) 498-7033.

On December 16th, they hosted their Annual Christmas Celebration and it was a great success. He acknowledged the contributions and participation of New York Cares, Key Food Corporation, Entenmann's Bakery, KFC, and the Pitkin Avenue BID.

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