

MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD #16 – February 26, 2008

Attendance

David Alexander (E) *	Bettie Kollock-Wallace
Joyce Anderson (E)	Shawn Lewis
Renee Archer (A)	Deborah Mack
Octavius Bamberg (A)	James Mack
Sissi Benitez (A)	Yolanda Matthews
Josephine Blakeley (E)	Sadie McNamara (E)
Patricia Boone (E)	Rev. Joseph Norton
James A. Bowens (E)	Edna Petty (A)
Gregory Coad (A)	Marie Pierre
Bonnie Crump (A)	Elder Devon Ponds (E)
Essie Duggan	Mattie Pusey (E)
Samantha Dunn	Melanie Rochford (A)
Ivory Ellison (A)	Lashon Segar (A)
Helen Giles (A)	Ernestine Turner
Shirley Gonsalves	Rev. Miran Ukaegbu (E)
Daniel Goodine (A)	Alice Vines (E)
Sarah Hall	Herman Winston
Henry Hill	Hazel Younger (E)
Kofi Hormeku	Viola D. Greene-Walker, DM
Michael Howard (E)	E. Jane Coleman-Assistant ADM
Allene Ingram (A)	Jimmi Brevil, Community Assistant
Daisy Jackson (E)	Edna Johnson for Hon Edolphus Towns
Javonn Johnson (A)	Brandon Bloomfield for Hon. John Sampson
Troy Johnson (A)	Essie Duggan for Hon. Velmanette Montgomery
Dr. Cade Jones, III	William Whitaker for Hon. Marty Markowitz
Pamela Junior	R. Hermon for Hon. William F. Boyland, Jr.
Eula Key	Kevin McCall for Hon. Charles Baron
Danny King (E)	Maurice Phillips for Hon. Darlene Mealy

* Inadvertently marked present for January 22, 2008 meeting should have been marked excused.

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

PUBLIC HEARING

First Vice Chairperson Henry Hill called the Public Hearing to order at 7:08 p.m. and an invocation was said by Dr. Cade Jones, III.

IN THE MATTER OF the City's Preliminary Budget Statement and Community District Register for Fiscal Year 2009. The Hearing is to obtain public comments on City agencies' responses to Community Board 16's Capital and Expense Budget Priorities for Fiscal Year 2009.

District Manager Viola Greene-Walker stated that Community Board members were sent a copy of the Register of Budget Requests and that they are itemized on the first ten pages of her report.

First Vice Chairperson Hill asked if there were any comments or concerns about the Preliminary Budget Statement and Community District Register?

Mr. Randy Hudson asked if the Livonia Avenue Bridge is included in the budget requests?

District Manager Greene-Walker stated that the Livonia Avenue Bridge is listed as item 19 of the Capital Budget Requests. She read the request and the agency's response.

Mr. Hudson stated that the IRT #3, BMT "L" Train Transit Committee (of which he is the President) will meet with representatives of the Transit Authority and local elected officials on April 3rd to discuss this issue. While the Transit Authority and the City are of the opinion that the bridge is unnecessary, the Committee believes that it has been necessary for some time now.

The April 3rd meeting is scheduled to be held at the Temple Bethel Church, located at 327 Powell Street between Blake and Dumont Avenues. It will not be a public meeting, but he will inform the community of its results.

Ms. Deborah Mack, Chairperson of the Community Board's Transportation Committee, stated that comments are sorely needed from the community in order that the Board may respond to the responsible agencies' responses to the Board's capital and expense budget requests.

One proposal from the Transportation Committee is a phone campaign to let the bureaus know our feelings on the issues. At their next meeting, they intend to draft a flier for distribution at the March Board meeting. The flier will urge the entire community to call, over a specific ten day period, the elected officials whose districts encompass the areas wherein a negative response was received from the responsible agency. The flier will request that the elected officials be called multiple times. It is often heard that other communities get what they want from elected officials. Those communities speak out to be heard. It is time that we make ourselves heard as well.

Ms. Marie Pierre suggested that the elected officials' email boxes should be flooded.

There being no additional comments, a motion was made by Ms. Deborah Mack, seconded by Ms. Eula Key and carried to adjourn the Public Hearing.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

A motion was made by Ms. Deborah Mack, seconded by Dr. Cade Jones, III and carried to dispense with the reading of the minutes.

A motion was made by Ms. Eula Key, seconded by Ms. Sarah Hall and carried to dispense with the reading of the District Manager's report.

First Vice Chairperson Hill requested that the membership read both the minutes and the District Manager's Report.

He recognized Ms. Leslie Redwine, Esq. of Achievement First.

Ms. Redwine stated that she is the Director of External Relations for Achievement First, which operates several charter schools within the borough of Brooklyn. They are excited to announce that beginning in September 2008 they will be operating a new charter school in Brownsville (Fliers with information about the school were distributed to the audience).

Achievement First Brownsville is opening to address the achievement gap which she considers to be the civil rights issue of our time. The gap is the measure of how well our Black and Latino students are performing in comparison to their peers nationwide and internationally. They know that many of the Black and Latino students are not meeting the standards that they have the potential to achieve.

Achieve First schools are created to address this issue, specifically, in Brooklyn. While there are some good schools, there has been some neglect of our schools. Achievement First aims to have every single scholar (student) attend and graduate college. They do this by having very specific rigorous college preparatory education that starts at kindergarten. They work strenuously to see that these goals are met. They know what the potential outcome can be if the children do not receive the education that they should have.

Their teachers are knowledgeable and caring professionals who are dedicated to their mission. They seek to hire only the very best teachers to go into their classrooms and teach the scholars. The school will grow to accommodate grades K to 12. They will be admitting kindergarteners and first graders this coming fall. In order to be admitted, an application must be completed. The application requests very basic information about the scholar and their family. The way charter schools currently work, each of the completed applications will be entered into a lottery.

Achievement First Brownsville will operate from the I.S. 55 School building at 2021 Bergen Street. She encourages the audience to complete applications for their kindergarten to first grade aged children and to invite other community residents with appropriately aged children to complete applications as well. It represents an opportunity to enroll your child into a free college preparatory education program in your community.

Rev. Joseph Norton asked what will the class sizes be?

Ms. Redwine stated that they will admit 84 scholars for the fall kindergarten grade. The average class size will be about 28 scholars with a minimum of two teachers per class. The literacy classes will have more instructors.

Ms. Christina Larkin of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene related the positive experience of a relative in an Achievement First charter school.

Ms. Redwine stated that she is a lawyer by trade and is pleased to be able to apply that trade towards advocating for our children and their education.

Ms. Bettie Kollock-Wallace requested Ms. Redwine to explain what the role of a parent must be in order that the charter school is a success.

Ms. Redwine stated that on the flier that was distributed earlier is information on a parent session that parents are asked to attend. During the session, the parents will meet the principal of the school who will outline the role and expectation of the parent in their child(ren)'s education. The parent will typically listen to the expectations and it will sound very different from what they are accustomed to because they have a "no excuses" culture. They do not believe that we should be making excuses for why a child can not learn.

Every child who is admitted will sit down with the principal and their parents and they will discuss a plan of action for the child to graduate college. For some parents the task seems daunting at first but they must eventually embrace the plan in order that it may succeed. Once the scholar is enrolled, the parents will be required to read with the child each day and to sign off on their homework every day. The parents are given the telephone numbers of the teachers and the principal and they are encouraged to call when they have questions or concerns about the schoolwork. They offer workshops for the parents to assist them on how they can help the child with their education.

Applications for admission are due by April 1, 2008 and the lottery will be held on April 16th.

First Vice Chairperson Hill recognized Mr. Morgan Smith of the Bank of New York Mortgage Company.

Mr. Smith stated that in the past few months mortgages, particularly sub-prime rate mortgages, have been fairly prominent in the news. Over the past few years, interest rates had been so low that mortgage companies were offering incredibly enticing rates to their clients without any verification of income. As the interest rates have ratcheted upward, many of the borrowers are finding themselves in a position where they are unable to make their monthly payments. This serious issue is affecting this community and many others throughout the nation.

Sub-prime loans are in no way related to reverse mortgages which are government-backed instruments. Reverse mortgages are only available to senior citizens (sixty-two years of age and older) who own their own homes. The program has both benefits and drawbacks. It is important to know both before making a decision to accept or decline a mortgage. It is also important that you make sure that you are dealing with a reputable company before signing any documents.

Seniors who are contemplating taking a line of credit may want to look at a reverse mortgage instead because it offers them the benefit of not having to make any payments as long as they continue to live in the house. Among the drawbacks is the cost of the loan is increased because of the governmental involvement. But the loan is also secured by the government.

District Manager Greene-Walker, in behalf of Ms. Essie Duggan, Chairperson of the Economic Development Committee, reported that the Economic Development Committee met on February 21, 2008 with several merchants on Belmont Avenue between Rockaway Avenue and Mother Gaston Boulevard to discuss the revitalization of this commercial strip where a number of stores are closed.

Several suggestions were made on how to bring life back to Belmont Avenue:

- a) Create a safer environment for shoppers.
- b) Provide more parking.
- c) Provide a product that is not in another location.
- d) Make it financially in a consumer's best interest to shop.
- e) Advertise stores.

Because the Committee did not get the full participation of merchants on Belmont Avenue, it will continue to outreach and meet with them.

The next meeting of the Economic Development Committee will be held on March 20th at 6:00 p.m..

A motion was made by Ms. Deborah Mack, seconded by Rev. Joseph Norton and carried to accept the report of the Economic Development Committee.

Ms. Bettie Kollock-Wallace, Chairperson of the Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee, reported that at last month's meeting, the Community Board heard the ULURP application for the Brownsville North Cornerstone Site 19 which is a proposal to develop six residential buildings, ranging from four- to six-stories on several sites: 2156 and 2160 Atlantic Avenue, 1973, 1973A, 1975, 1969 Bergen Street, 404, 412, and 522 Howard Avenue, 1459 and 1461 St. Mark's Avenue, 1734 St. John's Place, and 1457 and 1459 Eastern Parkway.

The Committee recommends that the Community Board vote in support of this ULURP application to develop the proposed sites which will create 87 affordable residential units.

A motion was made by Rev. Joseph Norton, seconded by Mr. Kofi Hormeku and carried to accept the report of the Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee and its recommendation.

Mr. Kofi Hormeku, Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Committee, reported that copies of this month's survey of the District's parks and playgrounds are available on tonight's distribution table. He urged anyone who has a comment or complaint about the parks and playgrounds to contact the Board's office so that the issue can be addressed.

The Brownsville Recreational Center is heavily utilized. Although it is in need of work, it was recently named one of the best recreation centers in the City.

He appealed for volunteers to adopt a park in the community. Each of us live near a park and much goes into their upkeep. Adopting a park will allow the Committee to be aware of what is needed to maintain it. The parks in our community are amongst the best in the City and he encourages the audience to compare them to others throughout the city.

A motion was made by Ms. Deborah Mack, seconded by Ms. Ernestine Turner and carried to accept the report of the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Ms. Sarah Hall, Chairperson of the Public Safety Committee, reported that the Public Safety Committee met on February 6, 2008 and discussed the formation of a Community Emergency Response Team, also known as CERT.

As of this date, the Committee has reached their target number of 40 volunteers who have signed up for the 11 weeks of training in emergency preparedness which will be led by the Office of Emergency Management and the Fire and Police Departments.

A pre-training session will be held on Thursday, February 28th, 6:30 p.m. at 444 Thomas S. Boyland Street.

A motion was made by Ms. Ernestine Turner, seconded by Ms. Deborah Mack and carried to accept the report of the Public Safety Committee.

Ms. Deborah Mack, Chairperson of the Transportation and Franchises Committee, reported that the Committee met on February 25, 2008 and reviewed the responses from the New York City Department of Transportation to our Capital and Expense Budget Requests for Fiscal Year 2009.

- 1) Upgrade streetlights within the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District (BID).

Pitkin Avenue BID is in the process of working with DOT to upgrade lights.

- 2) Reconstruct malls along Mother Gaston Boulevard between Livonia and Blake Avenues.

The agency responded that further study is needed. It is unclear to the Committee why further study is required and this question will be asked of the agency.

It was suggested by the District Manager that this location be considered for a Greenstreets project under the Parks Department.

- 3) Modernize Broadway Junction Station.

The agency responded that work on this project has either been completed or will be finished in Fiscal Year 2008.

The Committee will request more details from the agency.

- 4) Construct Passageway between IRT #3 and IND "L" trains.

The agency responded that the request is not recommended for funding.

The Committee will continue to pursue this project because it deems that it is needed.

- 5) Erect a canopy over pedestrian bridge at Livonia Avenue and Junius Street.

The same response as the previous request.

- 6) Install elevator at the Rockaway Avenue Station on the IRT #3.

The same response as the previous item.

- 7) Increase the wattage of streetlights on Livonia Avenue between East 98th Street and Junius Street.

The agency responded that they will try to accommodate this issue within existing resources.

- 8) Increase pothole and cave-in repair personnel.

The agency responded that in the Preliminary Budget, Citywide personnel/program/equipment funds are increased.

The Committee will seek further explanation from DOT on their responses to all of the budget requests.

Once again, the Committee appeals to everyone to let it know what your concerns are regarding transportation issues by filling out the survey form and returning it to the Community Board Office.

The next Transportation and Franchises Committee meeting will be on Monday, March 17th, 6:00 p.m..

A motion was made by Ms. Essie Duggan, seconded by Mr. Kofi Hormeku and carried to accept the report of the Transportation and Franchises Committee.

District Manager Greene-Walker, in behalf of Ms. Daisy Jackson, Chairperson of the Youth Services Planning Committee, reported that the Youth Services Planning Committee met on February 19, 2008 with Ms. Leslie Redwine, Director of External Relations of Achievement First.

As was heard tonight, Achievement First is proposing to operate a Charter School in the I.S. 55 School building beginning in September. The Committee encourages parents to attend information sessions on Tuesday, March 25th at 6:00 p.m. and Saturday, March 29th at 10:00 a.m. at 1137 Herkimer Street.

The Committee has been informed that the Midwood Development Corporation has openings in its free evening recreational program, Project Connect, for individuals 18 years of age and over with developmental disabilities. The program meets at P.S. 197, located at 1599 East 22nd Street on Thursday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.. Activities include arts and crafts, games, and sports.

To register for the program and for additional information, contact Julian Atkins, Coordinator of Youth and Recreational Programs at (718) 376-1098, Ext. 109 or via email: jakins@middev.org.

The Youth Services Planning Committee will next meet on March 4th, 6:00 p.m. at 444 Thomas S. Boyland Street to begin planning for its Annual Youth Conference.

A motion was made by Ms. Deborah Mack, seconded by Ms. Ernestine Turner and carried to accept the report of the Youth Service Planning Committee.

A roll call of Board members was taken.

There being no quorum present, First Vice Chairperson Hill stated a vote will not be taken on the Brownsville North – Cornerstone Site 19 proposal.

First Vice Chairperson Hill recognized Mr. Maurice Phillips, Special Assistant to City Councilmember Darlene Mealy.

Mr. Phillips stated that at the Borough Board meeting held earlier this month, the record showed that Community Board #16 had approved the proposal for Brownsville North, Cornerstone Site 19 when in-fact no vote has been taken by the Board. This goes to show how things erroneously get approved without the consent of the community. Had he and Councilmember Mealy not been present, this error may well have stood.

Councilmember Mealy has implemented a training and placement program. Those who complete the training can end up with union, government or private sector jobs. The program is free of charge and includes course material to aid trainees in obtaining a commercial drivers license (CDL). Upon earning the license, trainees will be able to operate airport shuttle buses, Access-a-Ride buses, and other types of vehicles that require a CDL. Computer training and other skilled trades training will also be offered.

First Vice Chairperson Hill recognized Ms. Ry-Ann Hermon from the Office of Assemblyman William F. Boyland, Jr..

Ms. Hermon stated that she is the newly appointed Chief-of-Staff for Assemblyman Boyland and looks forward the working with the community. She has information on available jobs at Time-Warner and other organizations.

First Vice Chairperson Hill recognized Mr. Brandon Bloomfield from the Office of Senator John Sampson.

Mr. Bloomfield announced that Senator Sampson, along with several other Brooklyn legislators, will host a forum addressing the current sub-prime mortgage issue at Medgar Evers College on Sunday, March 2nd from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.. Many mortgage issuers and representatives from the Department of Housing and Urban Renewal will be present to discuss ways to protect your home from foreclosure.

First Vice Chairperson Hill recognized Ms. Edna Johnson from the Office of Congressman Edolphus Towns.

Ms. Johnson stated that one issue that Congressman Towns is currently involved in is the

upcoming vote on the tax rebate proposed by President Bush. If you have any questions regarding the proposal, the I.R.S., or any federal government issues please contact the Congressman's District Office at (718) 774-5682.

First Vice Chairperson Hill recognized Mr. William Whitaker from the Office of Borough President Marty Markowitz.

Mr. Whitaker stated that Borough President Markowitz will make his recommendation on the Brownsville North, Cornerstone Site 19 and a City Planning Commission public hearing is scheduled on March 11th at 22 Reade Street in Manhattan.

It is re-appointment time for Board members and re-appointment applications were sent to twenty-three members. Only seven of those applications have been returned. He urges members who have not returned their application to do so soon.

He is this community's liaison to the Borough President and can be reached at (718) 802-3876. The Borough President's e-mail address is askmarty@brooklynbp.nyc.gov and his office is located at 209 Joralemon Street in Downtown Brooklyn.

First Vice Chairperson Hill recognized Mr. Kevin McCall from the Office of Councilmember Charles Barron.

Mr. McCall stated that he is the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Councilmember Barron whose District encompasses East New York, Canarsie, and a portion of Brownsville.

The Councilmember is a co-host of the forum that was announced earlier by Mr. Bloomfield and he encourages everyone to come out to the event, even if they are not currently homeowners.

On February 29th at the Louis Pink Houses, Councilmember Barron will host a financial workshop from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.. The first one hundred attendees will be eligible for a free tax return preparation (tax preparation will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.).

Councilmember Barron has also met with Commissioner Thomas Frieden of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to discuss the proposed issuance of vendor licenses for Green Carts. He is in support of the proposal as it will promote healthy eating and be an economic opportunity for the young people of our community.

They are currently accepting and encouraging proposals for funding from non-profit groups in the 42nd Council District. The Councilmember's Office can be reached (718) 649-9495.

First Vice Chairperson Hill recognized Ms. Essie Duggan, representing Senator Velmanette Montgomery.

Ms. Duggan announced that Senator Montgomery is seeking comments and suggestions for the upcoming State budget proposal process. Individuals with suggestions, requests, or comments may reach out to her at the end of tonight's meeting and she will forward the messages to Senator Montgomery or you may call the Senator's Office at (718) 643-6140.

On March 29th from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., there will be a career day for our youth held at Boys' and Girls' High School.

First Vice Chairperson Hill recognized Mr. Erick Fisher who stated that he has started a petition regarding the service, or lack thereof, at the Brownsville Post Office at 167 Bristol Street. Anyone interested in signing the petition should see him after the meeting.

First Vice Chairperson Hill recognized Ms. Christina Larkin of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Ms. Larkin thanked Councilmember Barron for supporting the Green Cart proposal which she envisions will bring greater access to fresh fruit and vegetables to the community.

Beginning this March, free Lamaze classes will be offered to pregnant woman at the Brownsville

Health Clinic, located at 295 Bristol Street. Fliers are available on tonight's distribution table.

A resource packet was recently mailed to about 75 Brownsville organizations listing many health resources that are available to the community. Any organization that would like to have a packet sent to them may reach out to her at the end of the meeting.

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