

MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD #16 – March 24, 2009

Attendance

David Alexander	Yolanda Matthews
Renee Archer (A)	Sadie McNamara
Orlando Aupont (A)	Ted McQueen
Octavius Bamberg (A)	Rev. Joseph Norton (A)
Sissi Benitez (A)	Marie Pierre (E)
Josephine Blakeley (E)	Rev. Devon Ponds
Patricia Boone (A)	Mattie Pusey
Essie Duggan	Melaine Rochford (E)
Samantha Dunn (A)	Linda Sanders
Ivory Ellison (A)	Lashon Segar (A)
Helen Giles (A)	Tyrone Thomas
Shirley Gonsalves	Ernestine Turner
Sarah Hall	Rev. Miran Ukaegbu (E)
Jessie Hilliard	Alice Vines (E)
Kofi Hormeku	Annie Walkes
Michael Howard	Herman Winston
Allene Ingram (A)	Hazel Younger
Daisy Jackson (A)	Viola D. Greene-Walker, DM
Javonn Johnson (A)	E. Jane Coleman-Assistant ADM
Troy Johnson (A)	Jimmi Brevil, Community Assistant
Pamela Junior	Hon. Charles Barron
Eula Key	Latrice M. Walker for Hon. Yvette Clarke
Danny King (A)	Essie Duggan for Hon. Velmanette Montgomery
Bettie Kollock-Wallace	Mel Faulkner for Hon. Inez Barron
Shawn Lewis (A)	Cathleen McCadden for Hon. Darlene Mealy
Deborah Mack	
James Mack (A)	

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 Rev. Dr. Denise L. C. Boyce.

A motion was made by Ms. Mattie Pusey, seconded by Mr. David Alexander, and carried to waive the reading of last month's minutes.

District Manager Viola Greene-Walker highlighted two articles found in her report. The first was an article concerning free tax preparations for individuals earning less than \$40,000 (with dependents) or \$25,000 (with no dependents). The second article was on the Department of Parks and Recreation's lifeguard recruitment efforts for persons 16 years old and older.

A motion was made by Ms. Pamela Junior, seconded by Ms. Deborah Mack, and carried to waive the reading of the District Manager's report.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Anthony Graham.

Mr. Graham stated that he is the Executive Director of H.E.L.P. USA's Amboy Shelter, which has serviced 1,016 families in the last ten years. He thanks the community for their support over the years.

He was recently approached by the Active Communities Project, in conjunction with Teachers' Preparatory High School, about a program entitled "Brooklyn Eats". Two students participating in the program are here tonight to speak about the program.

The students, who introduced themselves as Ashley and Thembi, displayed a PowerPoint presentation. They stated that EATS is a collaboration between the Active Community Project, HELP USA, and Teachers' Preparatory High School (Teachers Prep) working together to promote healthy food in the community by creating a garden and a food store.

EATS was created as a way to promote sustainable healthy eating habits for the young people of

the community. There is a high percentage of child obesity in America. If children and teens are exposed to a healthy choice of food, their risk of health problems is reduced (A chart was displayed indicating a tendency for the rate of obesity among adolescents to increase as they age).

The Eats class at Teachers Prep is divided into four groups of equal importance. The gardeners are transforming a former playground behind the school into a garden space. Along with Help USA, they are working to create a larger garden space at the Amboy Neighborhood Garden.

The Media Team has created a blogging and networking website (www.communityeats.ning.com) that allows people to communicate and work together to develop EATS projects. Using cellular phones, they will update EATS' participants and the community on their project and the history of Brownsville. The project is being documented on video and audio in the aspiration of duplicating the program elsewhere.

The Design Team is designing an EATS logo and flyers to promote the EATS program. They are working with architects and other partners to design and create the farm and to design the store, which will be open in the fall to provide our neighborhood with healthy organic food.

They are organizing and managing community meetings to update the community about the status of the project and to get feedback on their activities. They are requesting your attendance and your support in getting other community members to attend their first meeting on April 22nd. They will inform the community on the details as the information becomes available.

They are also requesting the assistance of the community in other ways. You can help if you are able to connect them with the community groups that you represent or donate your time, skills, tools, or other materials to the project (They distributed a survey requesting the input of the community on the types of produce that they would like to see grown in the community).

Ms. Mattie Pusey stated that as she understands, it is the students' intent to sell organic produce to the community. Where will the produce be acquired?

The students responded that they will be growing the produce locally to sell at the store that they plan to open.

Chairperson Younger recognized Lynne Serpe from the Community Environmental Center.

Ms. Serpe stated that the Community Environmental Center performs energy efficiency and green building work throughout the city. They are a non-profit organization that was founded in 1994 and have weatherized over one hundred thousand homes and apartments. They have helped over three hundred thousand people save (cumulatively) over \$270,000,000 on their utility bills, and have helped keep about seven hundred and fifty tons of carbon-dioxide from entering our environment.

Last month, Congress passed a huge stimulus bill. Included in the bill is five billion dollars allocated for the weatherization of homes with the idea of weatherizing one million homes a year. This represents a change from one hundred and fifty thousand homes in the prior year. The program is funded by the United States Department of Energy and the Department of Health and Human Services. In New York State, the program is administered by the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). DHCR divides the State into different geographic areas and contracts licensed weatherization providers to do the work. Community Environmental Center is the largest weatherization provider in the State; they perform services throughout Brooklyn and Queens.

The process is simple. When they receive a request, the first thing they ask is where does the requester live? If the caller is not in their service area, they are referred to the appropriate provider. Properties in Community District #16 are in their service area. The second qualifier is income. The income limit is set at sixty percent of state median-income which is approximately \$22,000 for a single individual, \$30,800 for a two-person household, and \$45,300 for a four-person household. Recipients of public assistance and participants in HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) are automatically eligible.

The program encompasses single and two-family homes as well as multi-family dwellings. The weatherization providers work with either the property owners or their managers. Tenants who seek to have weatherization work performed should seek the assistance of their landlords. It can

be beneficial to the property owner to have the work done for their tenants. The average cost for weatherizing a one hundred-unit building is approximately \$300,000.

Upon eligibility and approval of an application, a home energy audit is performed on the property. The auditors will look at areas such as the insulation, windows, the roof, and whether or not there are any environmental safety issues (i.e.: carbon monoxide levels). A Prioritized Work Scope is produced which ranks the priority of work that can be done under the program. For one- and two-family homes, it is likely that one hundred percent of the scope will be covered by the program without any out of pocket expense for the homeowner. Owners of multi-family buildings should expect to pay between twenty-five and thirty-three percent of the total cost of the scope.

Ms. Deborah Mack asked if the eligibility is based solely on income or are the owners' assets factored as well?

Ms. Serpe stated that the value of the applicant's home is not, however, income from tenants is factored.

Ms. Christina Larkin asked if in a situation where the property owner does not meet the income eligibility and a tenant does, can work be done under the program?

Ms. Serpe stated that up to seventy-five percent of the cost may still be covered. Additionally, upon completion of the weatherization work, in collaboration with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), they will replace all of the refrigerators and light bulbs with new energy efficient models.

Ms. Blanche Peltonbusch asked if multi-building complexes are eligible for the program?

Ms. Serpe stated that New York City Housing Authority provides weatherization services for the units that they manage. Properties held by non-profits and other private entities are eligible. It is illegal for property owners to raise rents on units that have undergone weatherization under the program for a period of three years.

Chairperson Younger recognized Daisy James from Achievement First.

Ms. James stated that Achievement First's mission is to close the achievement gap between students who achieve at high levels and those that perform at low levels. This gap is very wide when comparing communities with predominately black and/or Hispanic populations and those with a predominately white population. In 1999, Achievement First founded their first school, the Amistad Academy in Connecticut. That school is now nationally recognized for its success in closing the achievement gap. They used that model to open their first school in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn in 2004. They are now endeavoring to open two more schools in Brooklyn – they currently operate a school serving students grades Kindergarten to fourth in Brownsville. They serve approximately twenty-five hundred students in Brooklyn schools, located in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, Bushwick, and Crown Heights. The scholars attend the schools from Kindergarten through twelfth grade – meaning parents only need to make just one school choice.

Their schools are college preparatory. Starting with kindergarten, the scholars are geared towards the goal of graduating from college. Classrooms are labeled according to the alma mater of the teacher. Throughout the school, pennants of colleges and universities of the nation are displayed. They have a vigorous curriculum and scholars attend classes from 7:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with an abbreviated day on Fridays. Saturday tutoring sessions are available and a mandatory summer academy which begins in July. The additional time the scholars attend classes at their schools accumulate to an extra year of study by the time they are ready to attend college. At their Crown Heights school, one hundred percent of their scholars passed the New York State administered mathematics exam in 2008, compared to sixty-five percent of the rest of the school district. Ninety-eight percent passed the English Arts exam as compared to fifty percent for the school district. Both scholars and staff are evaluated daily.

Along with academics, scholars are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities. The middle school boys' basketball team at their Endeavor Academy placed number one amongst Brooklyn charter middle schools and twelfth overall in the city. Each of their scholars learns to play a musical instrument.

Applications for admission are being accepted through April 1st, as required by the Department of Education. Enrollment is done through a blind lottery. There is no preferential given except that given to children who reside in the school district where the school is located. Siblings of current enrollees are guaranteed acceptance. She can be contacted through the "Enroll Your Child" link on their website: www.achievementfirst.org or by calling (718) 774-0906 extension *5.

Their belief is that parents are partners in the education of their children. Their scholars are very focused on parent engagement. Once a child is enrolled in one of their schools, they fully expect the parents to be part of the process.

They support Mayoral control of city schools and its support of charter schools. They truly believe that scholars perform better under this system. They also believe that the schools perform better with the support of the community.

Someone asked where do their teachers come from?

Ms. James stated that many of their teachers come to them from the Teach America program which is a program that places new teachers into urban schools for two years. They also have a Teacher's Youth Preparatory Academy to ensure that all of their teachers are certified. Most classes at their elementary schools have two teachers with one being the lead teacher. In their middle schools the teachers tend to have a Masters Degree or higher.

Someone asked if they have programs for special needs students?

Ms. James stated that they have an emerging program called the Special Achievement Educational Program, wherein the scholars are placed in classes with higher performing peers and are provided remedial instruction.

They also accept advanced placement students and actively seek students from non-English speaking households.

Ms. Mattie Pusey asked what is there requirement for parental participation?

Ms. James stated that upon enrollment each child and their parent(s) will meet with the Principal of the school and discuss the role of each party in regard to the child's education. One of her functions is to outreach to the parents and work with them in ways that they can participate in their child's education.

Someone asked if they can apply to more than one school?

Ms. James stated that they can, as parents become more and more savvy they look to take advantage of all opportunities afforded them. She does recommend that parents apply for schools in the school district in which they reside in order to take advantage of their preference in that district's lottery.

Ms. Bettie Kollock-Wallace asked what methodologies are employed to allow the students to remain with the teachers throughout their academic life at the school, given that teachers in the Teach America program are only tenured for two years?

Ms. James stated that their retention rates are better than average. The teachers are allowed to teach and their principals are allowed to lead without the concern of unnecessary bureaucracy.

Someone asked what are the addresses of the Crown Heights and the Brownsville locations?

Ms. James stated that in Crown Heights their school is located at 790 East New York Avenue (between Schenectady and Troy Avenues) and in Brownsville they are located at 2021 Bergen Street (between Thomas S. Boyland Street and Rockaway Avenue).

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Harvey Lawrence, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Brownsville Multi Service Family Health Center (BMS).

Mr. Lawrence stated that BMS is a community institution that was started in the neighborhood by people from the neighborhood. They are an independent, Joint Commission Certified, and a not-for-profit health care organization. He was happy to hear the earlier presentation on the

Brooklyn EATS program because BMS is one of the few health centers in the City that sponsors a farmers' market from July through November. This was done to address the obesity problem in our community and the need for people in our neighborhood to have access to more fresh fruits and vegetables. Canned vegetables tend to contain too much salt and not enough fiber to maintain a healthy colon. They are doing many things to help improve the lives of our community residents and he has along with him this evening Adam Aponte, M.D., to speak about some of them.

Dr. Aponte stated that he has been with BMS for a little less than four weeks. He feels totally embraced by the BMS family. Having come from East Harlem, another community that has many of the same health concerns as this community, he is happy to be a part of BMS.

Some of the things that they are seeing in Brownsville are that, when adjusted for age, Brownsville has a lower average age than most of the City, the mortality from heart diseases is 405 in Brownsville versus 288 for the rest of the City, cancer is 228 compared to 178, the HIV / AIDS rate is three times that of the City, diabetes twice the rate, assaults four times the rate, and strokes are twice the rate.

As was mentioned previously, they are expanding their services and seek to treat beyond just the physical well being of the community. Their adoption of electronic health records will mean that their doctors will always have their patient's records at the ready. This allows the doctors to better analyze what is happening in terms of a patient's health care. He reviewed the services that they and their affiliated programs provide. They are anticipating seventy-four thousand visits to facilities this year. It is their desire to be a community resource and they ask that the community reach out to them with health related issues.

Ms. Peltonbusch asked if BMS is equipped to provide whirlpool therapy for stroke victims?

Dr. Aponte stated that BMS provides basic physical therapy onsite. They collaborate with Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center to provide extensive physical therapy. However, he does not know whether they offer whirlpool therapy.

Chairperson Younger, in behalf of Mr. Kofi Hormeku, Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Committee, stated that the Committee's report may be found on tonight's distribution table. She encouraged everyone to take a copy and read it at their leisure.

The Committee continues to need volunteers to adopt the parks and playgrounds in our community. Please contact the Board office at (718) 385-0323 to volunteer.

Chairperson Younger recognized Councilmember Charles Barron.

Councilmember Barron introduced his new Chief-of-Staff, Ms. Joyce Simmons. He stated that there is a new housing development being built near the Gateway Mall in East New York. Apartments there are being offered under the most affordable housing formula in the history of New York City. It is not a plan where there are twenty percent affordable units and eighty percent luxury units. That paradigm is turned around so that there are seventy-five percent affordable units and twenty-five percent luxury units. The project creates seven thousand temporary jobs and one thousand-seven hundred permanent jobs.

He is currently working to ensure that Brownsville receives a fair share of the stimulus monies coming to the City. If some of the richest people and organizations of the nation can receive \$800,000,000,000, certainly some of it should trickle down to Brownsville. Fulton Street and 125th Street need to be bailed-out as well as Wall Street.

He is not against charter schools, he is however against mayoral control of the school system. Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein have failed our children. Too many of our children are not graduating. Our schools have turned into test taking mills and the children are not learning. We as a community must come together and tell the Mayor and Chancellor that they must relinquish control of the Board of Education. When \$22,000,000,000 is spent on one point one million students with only a slight increase in test scores, you have failed. In New York City fifty-two percent of our children graduate; that means forty-eight percent have failed. Upstate seventy-nine percent of students graduate.

We have to stop the violence in our community. We need to stop the criminals in blue-jeans as well as those in blue suits. The police are out of control as well, they recently entered the home of

an elderly resident in the Marcus Garvey Village Apartments and proceeded to ransack the apartment and disrespect its occupant. We need them to know that there is a way to stop crime in our community, which is to create jobs and recreation facilities. It is one thing to stop and frisk individuals for probable cause or reasonable suspicion, but arbitrarily stopping a group of youth because you think one may have a gun is wrong. The police would not do this in Howard Beach, we must not allow them to do it in Brownsville. He will be the first person to say that we cannot allow our youth to run rampant and commit crimes against each other, but we cannot allow the police to turn our community into a police state.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Xamayla Rose from Borough President Marty Markowitz' office.

Ms. Rose announced that Borough President Markowitz will sponsor a walk-a-thon for children's health issues and informational flyers may be found on tonight's distribution table. She also stated that applications are currently being accepted for membership to the Community Board and anyone who is interested can see her at the end of this evening's meeting.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Latrice Walker from Congresswoman Yvette Clarke's office.

Ms. Walker announced that Congresswoman Clarke, in collaboration with District Attorney Charles Hynes, will sponsor a forum to discuss predatory lending and mortgage fraud. The forum will be held at Medgar Evers College, located at 1515 Bedford Avenue on Tuesday, April 14th from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.. Legal Counselors will be present to answer any questions at the end of the forum. For additional information, contact Congresswoman Clarke's office at (718) 287-1142.

Congresswoman Clarke, in conjunction with the Small Business Development Center at New York City College, will also sponsor a free workshop for new small businesses and entrepreneurs of Technology. The workshop will take place on Tuesday, April 7th from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on the first floor of 123 Linden Boulevard (between Rogers and Bedford Avenues).

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Cathleen McCadden from Councilmember Darlene Mealy's office.

Ms. McCadden stated that Councilmember Mealy will host a community outreach event for Class 1 property owners (owners of one- to three-family homes) who may have water or tax liens on their property. Senior citizens are especially invited to attend as they may qualify for an exemption. The Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and the Department of Finance are reaching out to this group of property owners to assist them in the prevention of losing their property through the sale of the lien. She asks the audience to help in spreading the word of the event which will take place from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7th at the Brownsville Recreation Center at 1555 Linden Boulevard.

Councilmember Mealy will also host her monthly advisory meeting on Saturday, April 11th, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to discuss community concerns and everyone is invited to attend. She can be contacted at (718) 953-3097.

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

Ms. Duggan stated that Senator Montgomery is the Chairperson of the Senate's Committee on Children and Families. She continues to request to be informed on issues that concern the community and ask that you contact her office at (718) 643-6140 with your concerns and suggestions.

Chairperson Younger recognized Deputy Inspector Samuel Wright, Commanding Officer of the 73rd Precinct.

Deputy Inspector Wright stated that he heard Councilmember Barron's comments made earlier this evening. He does not wish to debate the comments in this forum. He does however want to encourage the audience to support the Precinct's efforts to police the community. He will briefly address some of the comments made about different levels of policing and respect in other communities. He understands those concerns as he is of the same color as most of this audience. The fact of the matter is that the persons who are committing most of the crimes in this community are the same color as he is. You know who they are; they are the ones you would not trust around your daughters and sons. These are the parties that they seek to target. Yes, there have been

instances where people who do not fit that bill have had negative encounters with the Police Department.

One of the goals that he set for himself upon taking command of the 73rd Precinct was to reduce the rate of violence in the Precinct. He is trying to live up to that commitment and he asks for the community's assistance. Brownsville was number one in homicides Citywide in 2008. Year-to-date, murders are down nearly eighty-six percent. He attributes much of this to information that they have received from the community. The community knows who is doing what, where certain illegal activities are taking place, and we should not be held hostage in our own neighborhood. The police should not be holding you hostage, but neither should the people that you live with day in and day out. As an attestation to how community assistance has been helpful, gun arrests are up eighty percent (fifty-six arrests this year as compared to thirty-one last year). It is true that the level of engagement of the police is greater in this community than in certain parts of Queens. However, the 73rd Precinct is a smaller geographical area, yet has a larger number of officers. A typical precinct in Queens has approximately one hundred-eighty-five officers covering more square miles, as compared to over four hundred officers in the 73rd Precinct policing area. His past commands have made marked improvements in the reduction of crime. He looks forward to similar achievements in the 73rd Precinct.

Chairperson Younger recognized Police Officer Dawn Townsend of the 73rd Precinct's Community Affairs Unit.

Officer Townsend stated that as the summer approaches parents are likely to be seeking positive activities for their young children. One opportunity that they can take advantage of is the Fresh Air Fund and the Precinct is currently accepting applications. The Fresh Air Fund is a free program and interested persons may request applications at the Precinct. The Fund operates two types of programs - the children can be enrolled in either the camp program or the Friendly Town program, wherein the children spend two weeks with specially selected families in rural areas. The Fund is also hiring teenagers who are at least sixteen years old to be camp counselors. For information on the employment opportunities, please call Ms. Lisa Skobera at (212) 897-8919.

The Precinct is actively seeking youth to join their Explorer program. The age requirement has been changed to allow youth from age twelve to twenty.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Sarah Hall who announced that a petition is being circulated to have Watkins Street between Pitkin and Belmont Avenues co-named in the memory of the late Dr. Cade Jones, III. Dr. Jones, along with being a member of Community Board #16, was the Pastor of St. Luke's Community Church, President of the 73rd Precinct Clergy Council, First Vice President of the 73rd Precinct Community Council, and a recruiter for the College of New Rochelle. She asks for the support of the audience in bestowing this well deserved honor.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Dorcas Miller, representing the Brooklyn Food Conference.

Ms. Miller stated that she is a long-time resident of Brownsville, however, she does not do the majority of her food shopping in Brownsville. She shops at the Park Slope Food Co-operative and they are co-sponsoring the Brooklyn Food Conference on May 2nd at John Jay High School. The conference is an extremely important event, particularly after everything that was said this evening concerning the efforts to bring affordable and nutritious food to the community. The conference is about advocacy, education, and promoting avenues to bring that to this community. The conference is for all of Brooklyn, however, they are particularly targeting communities that are underserved in terms of organic food availability. The conference is free and Borough President Markowitz has committed to arrange for transportation for those who may need it.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Katherine Taylor from the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District (BID).

Ms. Taylor stated that the BID is replacing its banners on Pitkin Avenue and wants to hear from the community. They are seeking submissions of a design you would like to see on the banners, which reflects what Pitkin Avenue means to you, whether it is a place to shop or a place of community gathering, etc..

The contest is open to all area merchants and residents. Local teens and children are strongly encouraged to submit designs. The following cash prizes will be distributed:

First Prize: \$100
Second Prize \$ 50
Third Prize: \$25

All finalists will be displayed on their website, www.pitkinbid.org, and in the windows of area stores. The deadline for submissions is Monday, April 20, 2009.

For additional information she can be contacted at (347) 992-3682, or by email at ktaylor@pitkinbid.org.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Margaret Brewer from the Howard Houses Community Center.

Ms. Brewer announced that the Howard Houses Community Center formerly known as the PAL Center is offering General Equivalency Diploma (GED) preparation classes and certified computer training classes. The program began this past Monday, March 23rd. GED Courses are offered on Tuesday and Thursday from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.. The program is open to all community residents.

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