

## **MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD #16 – SEPTEMBER 22, 2009**

### **Attendance**

David Alexander (E)  
Orlando Aupont (A)  
Octavius Bamberg (A)  
Carolyn A. Benjamin-Smith  
Patricia Boone  
Margaret Brewer  
Lynn Brown (A)  
Essie Duggan  
Helen Giles  
Shirley Gonsalves (E)  
Sarah Hall  
Jessie Hilliard  
Kofi Hormeku  
Michael Howard (E)  
Allene Ingram  
Prince Issachar (E)  
Daisy Jackson  
Orin Johnson-Griffith  
Pamela Junior  
Rev. Eddie Karim  
Eula Key  
Danny King (A)  
Bettie Kollock-Wallace  
Charles Ladson  
Shawn Lewis (A)  
Deborah Mack (E)  
James Mack  
Yolanda Matthews

Sadie McNamara  
Ted McQueen  
Genese Morgan  
Davond Motes (A)  
Rev. Joseph Norton  
Blanche L. Peltonbusch  
Marie Pierre (E)  
Rev. Devon Ponds  
Hellen Purdie-Thomas (A)  
Mattie Pusey (A)  
Melaine Rochford (E)  
Wendy Rutheford  
Linda Sanders  
Tyrone Thomas (A)  
Ernestine Turner  
Rev. Dr. Miran Ukaegbu (E)  
Alice Vines (E)  
Annie Walkes  
Herman Winston (E)  
Hazel Younger  
Viola D. Greene-Walker, DM  
E. Jane Coleman-Assistant ADM  
Jimmi Brevil, Community Assistant  
Hon. Charles Barron  
Hon. Inez Barron  
Maurice Adams for Hon. Eric Adams  
Christopher James for Hon. Darlene Mealy  
Xamayla Rose-Persadi for Hon. Marty Markowitz

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

### **PUBLIC HEARING**

Chairperson Hazel Younger called the public hearing to order at 7:06 p.m..

An invocation was said by Rev. Joseph Norton.

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD):

- 1) pursuant to Article 16 of the General Municipal Law of New York State for:
  - a. the designation of property located at 1612 Park Place (Block 1468, Lot 56); and 404A, 408, 414, and 416 Hopkinson Avenue (a.k.a. Thomas S. Boyland Street) (Block 1468, Lots 58, 60, 63, and 64), as an Urban Development Action Area; and
  - b. an Urban Development Action Area Project for such area; and
- 2) pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for the disposition of such property to a developer selected by HPD;

to facilitate development of a residential building, tentatively known as Hopkinson/Park Place, with approximately 25 units, to be developed under the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's New Foundations Program.

District Manager Viola Greene-Walker requested the developers of the project to step forward and give a brief presentation on their proposal.

Mr. Sal Perry stated that he is a principle of the development firm of Latent Productions. They are hopeful that this project will serve as a new neighborhood beacon that displays a careful balance of stable design and sound investment. Driving their optimism is the concept of

lightness – from the vast window openings, to the selection of materials, to the footprint of the project, to the low-maintenance requirements for years to come.

With him are representatives from the architectural firm of SR+T Architects and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

Schematic drawings and a model of the project were displayed. Ms. Karla Rothstein of SR+T Architects stated that the project is comprised of five vacant lots, located on Park Place between Eastern Parkway and Hopkinson Avenue (Thomas S. Boyland Street), and Thomas S. Boyland Street between East New York Avenue and Park Place. The lots have been vacant for nearly fifty years. They intend to build five four-story buildings with a collective of twenty-five new homes.

The design seeks to create a street edge where none currently exists. Each of the buildings will have entries to the street as well as to a common courtyard. The courtyard, that they hope will serve as an oasis in the middle of the block, will provide an area for gardening, benches, and a covered area for bicycle parking. Off Park Place, there will be a gated entry allowing residents access to the courtyard.

The distribution of apartments is as follows: seven one-bedroom units, fifteen two-bedroom units, and three three-bedroom units.

Mr. Perry stated that beyond the HPD mandate that a third of the homes be offered at 80% or less of the “Area Median Income” (AMI), they are providing the homes on a tiered basis at a more affordable 60 to 100% of AMI. To sustain the long-term affordability of these homes further, they are collaborating with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to ensure that each homeowner’s utility bills are at least 20% less than comparable homes built today. This is done using NYSERDA’s Multi-Family Performance program which offers incentives to developers and benefits individual homeowners by lowering utility expenses.

The homes will be priced from \$140,000 for a one-bedroom unit, \$175,000 for a two-bedroom unit, and \$290,000 for a three-bedroom unit. There are also additional programs that exist within HPD that offer down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers.

Ms. Blanche Peltonbusch asked why so few three-bedroom units and if the units are wheelchair accessible?

Mr. Perry stated that one-third of the units are wheelchair accessible and due to the amount of floor space allotted to a three-bedroom it was not practical to have more than 3 three-bedroom units.

Ms. Rothstein stated that most first-time buyers are seeking one- and two-bedroom homes. HPD presumes two persons per bedroom. The assumption is carried that the vast majority of seekers will be families of two to four persons. Fifty percent of the units are reserved for current residents of Community District #16. Ideally, all the units will go to persons who currently reside in Community District #16. There are additional set asides for municipal employees.

Ms. Linda Sanders asked if a person in a wheelchair can qualify for a three-bedroom unit, even if there are only two persons in the household?

Mr. Perry stated that they could if they are financially qualified.

Chairperson Younger reminded the audience that this item was previously brought before us and was supported by the Community Board and the Borough Board in 2008. It is being revisited because the matter was not entertained by the City Council and the developers are seeking to have it reconsidered.

She recognized Mr. Christopher James from Councilmember Darlene Mealy’s office.

Mr. James stated that Councilmember Mealy is seeking to meet with the developers to discuss this project and she requests that the Community Board table the matter until such time that she is able to discuss the project and render an opinion.

Chairperson Younger reminded Mr. James that the Board is duty-bound to render a vote and that

the Councilmember will have her opportunity to act, as she has in the past.

### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING**

A motion was made by Ms. Pamela Junior, seconded by Rev. Eddie Karim and carried to dispense with the reading of the minutes.

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

District Manager Viola Greene-Walker highlighted the first two articles found in her report - reminding the community of an upcoming meeting of the Neighborhood Advisory Board #16 and of a public hearing on charter schools being hosted by the Department of Education.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Heather Clarke of the Brooklyn Perinatal Network (BPN).

Ms. Clarke stated that the BPN is a community-based organization that has been advocating for the improvement of maternal healthcare in the community for twenty-one years.

Most recently, they have worked with the Brooklyn Infant Mortality Reduction Initiative to secure a five million dollar grant over five years from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for reducing the infant mortality rate in Brownsville.

There is a serious infant mortality problem in Brownsville. A Brownsville baby is more likely to die in its first year of life than babies in the City as a whole. There are districts in the Bronx that share this dubious statistic.

This is not just a problem for the parents of the infants; it is an issue that affects the entire community. The underlying issue for the premature deaths is low-birth weight. Low-birth weight babies who survive beyond their first year are subject to an increased risk for developmental and learning disabilities. These challenges in-turn lead to a greater risk for social problems, school violence, etcetera.

In the Brownsville area, about forty babies are born with a birth-weight of less than three and a half pounds each year. The overall goal of the Brownsville Action Committee for Health Equality (BACHE) project is to reduce the rate of low birth-weight babies from the current 2.6% to 2% in five years. If successful, they will save about seventy babies in that timeframe.

The first two years of the BACHE project focused on planning. As they enter into year three, in October, they will begin to focus on implementation. CDC's directives clearly state that they are not to simply focus on building facilities to attack the problem (although there clearly is a need). Rather, they are looking at some of the broader social issues. These include such things as fragmentation of services, lack of access to care, lack of stable housing, social isolation, poverty, unemployment, poor education, domestic violence, and neighborhood crime. Obviously, this one project cannot solve all of these issues. They have decided to focus on three of these determinates – fragmentation of services, unstable housing, and poor access to care.

They are seeking the input of the Community Board as they begin to implement their stated goals.

Someone asked if there is a correlation between the low birth-weight rates and the age of the mothers?

Ms. Clarke stated that it is a factor. Many of the babies with low birth-weights are born to mothers who are less than eighteen years old.

Someone asked if the program will work with the teens on pregnancy prevention?

Ms. Clarke stated that they will focus on women's overall health and will include an education component. They do not provide direct services but work with existing agencies to help fulfill their goals.

Chairperson Younger stated that Brookdale Hospital provides many services, if the parties would just take part.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Scott Codey from Citizens Committee for NYC, Inc..

Mr. Codey stated that Citizens Committee for New York City stimulates and supports self-help and civic action to improve the quality of life in New York City and its neighborhoods. Residents are uniquely situated to define and act on the issues affecting their communities. When provided with modest support, resident-led volunteer groups can effectively mobilize community resources to improve quality of life. Citizens Committee supports their efforts by offering workshops, grants, training, networking events, helpful publications, a lending library, a meeting space, and one-on-one assistance.

The grants are small (five hundred to three thousand dollars) and are only available for grassroots community groups in economically under-resourced neighborhoods. Grants are not awarded to individuals, agencies with paid staff, religious, fraternal, or partisan organizations.

Two of the currently available grants are the New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods Awards and the Mollie Parnis Dress up Your School Awards. The New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods Awards offer funding for groups to work on creative community improvement projects that bring neighbors together. The next application deadline is September 30, 2009. The Mollie Parnis Dress Up Your School Awards offers grants to support student led projects that beautify schools or neighborhoods immediately surrounding schools.

Ms. Genese Morgan, Vice Chairperson of the Economic Development Committee, reported that on Thursday, September 17, 2009, members of the Committee reviewed the District #16 questionnaire which will be distributed to business owners seeking letters of support from the Board to apply for a license from the New York State Liquor Authority to do business in Community District #16. The questionnaire consists of several sections that requests information about the type of license the applicant is seeking; personal contact information, a description of the business activity, specifics about the building that the business will operate from and several questions about the neighborhood to ensure that the potential business owners have intentions of being an asset to our community. Thus far, the Committee has received one (1) application for review; this application will be subjected to the Community Board's new process for review and issuance of letters of support.

This is an effort to ensure that businesses requesting state liquor licenses are considering the laws and regulations that currently exist such as the 200 and 500 foot rules; the 200 foot rule prohibits the issuance of a liquor license within 200 feet of a building that is used exclusively as a school, church, synagogue, or other places of worship; the 500 foot rule contains restrictions on certain on-premises liquor licenses if the location is within a 500 foot radius of certain other establishments with on-premises liquor licenses. Additional information on state liquor laws and regulations can be found on [www.abc.state.ny.us](http://www.abc.state.ny.us).

Furthermore, the Committee continues to work on Revitalization plans for the shopping area along Belmont Avenue. During the summer, the Committee performed an annual canvass of current storefronts to stay abreast of the occupied and unoccupied storefronts. The Committee is still searching for ways to reconnect the community with the merchants by way of events, concerts, etc.. The Committee would like to consider the ideas of community members when such plans are executed and is asking that any person with ideas on outreach efforts to please contact a Committee member or District Manager Greene-Walker.

Additionally, the Committee is happy to announce that Margaret Brewer has joined the Committee in the role of Secretary.

She thanked the audience for their continued support.

Ms. Patricia Brown asked if there is any stipulation regarding how close a liquor establishment can be to a residence?

Ms. Morgan stated that the regulations only apply to distances from houses of worship and schools.

Chairperson Younger stated that there should be some manner of restricting social clubs from opening in a storefront directly beneath a residential apartment.

Ms. Morgan stated that when completed, the Committee's questionnaire will address this issue and allow the Committee to voice opposition to such facilities. They want to know that business owners are taking into consideration a resident's right to peaceful enjoyment of their residence.

Chairperson Younger expressed the need for legislation that would protect residents from being infringed upon by these establishments.

A motion was made by Ms. Annie Walkes, seconded by Ms. Pamela Junior and carried to accept the report of the Economic Development Committee and its recommendation.

Ms. Bettie Kollock-Wallace, Chairperson of the Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee, reported that the Committee met on September 8, 2009 and reviewed the ULURP application for the Hopkinson / Park project which was heard at tonight's public hearing.

It should be noted that this project came to the Committee in June 2008 and to the Community Board on July 15, 2008. The Board voted in favor of the proposal.

The Committee recommends that the Community Board again vote in favor of the Hopkinson / Park proposal which will facilitate the development of 25 residential units on what is now vacant land. As you heard during tonight's hearing, the twenty-five condominium units will range from one- to three-bedrooms and will be affordable to persons earning no more than eighty percent of the Area Median Income (which for a two person household is less than \$49,000).

A motion was made by Mr. James Mack, seconded by Ms. Pamela Junior and carried to accept the report of the Land Use, Planning, and Zoning Committee.

Mr. Kofi Hormeku, Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Committee, made an appeal to the audience to join the Committee. The parks and playgrounds in Community District #16 are amongst the cleanest in the City and we should go out and enjoy them. Anyone who finds an issue with the parks should report the problem to the Board's office.

There are some problems at the Brownsville Recreation Center (BRC). The pool is closed due a mechanical failure and the lights on the basketball court are in need of repair.

Mr. Charles Ladson asked what is the mechanical failure that is preventing the use of the pool at the BRC?

Mr. Hormeku stated that the exhaust fan is not working and mildew conditions exist.

Councilmember Charles Barron stated that this is the first that he has heard of these problems at the BRC. He recently allocated 3.6 million dollars for the renovation of the ballfield at the BRC and he will continue to work with them in order to have the repairs made.

Someone asked how can the community take part in the construction that takes place here, instead of the work being outsourced?

Chairperson Younger stated that they should follow the newspapers, when the work is proposed bids are sought. Qualified persons who are interested should place their bids in with the appropriate agencies.

A motion was made by Mr. Charles Ladson, seconded by Mr. Orin-Oquil Johnson-Griffith and carried to accept the report of the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Ms. Daisy Jackson, Chairperson of the Youth Services Planning Committee, reported that the Committee met on July 21<sup>st</sup>, August 18<sup>th</sup> and September 14<sup>th</sup>, and reviewed and discussed a proposal to establish a Youth Leadership Council for our community. The Ocean Hill-Brownsville Youth Leadership Council will be a group of action-oriented young people who will work together to improve their community and themselves. It will be an organization where young people can talk about and address issues that matter to youth in their neighborhood while developing leadership skills and personal responsibility. It will also be a place to have fun with other youth through field trips, social events, and community service projects.

The Committee is in the process of refining the program's description, purpose, goals, structure, and implementation plan. A final report will be prepared for next month's Board meeting.

Councilmember Charles Barron administered an Oath of Office to newly appointed Board members: Carolyn A. Benjamin-Smith, Margaret Brewer, Orin-Oquil Johnson-Griffith, Rev. Eddie Karim, Genese Morgan, Blanche L. Peltonbusch, and Wendy Rutheford.

Assemblywoman Inez Barron administered an Oath of Office to the Executive Committee: Hazel Younger, Chairperson; Bettie Kollock-Wallace, First Vice Chairperson; Kofi Hormeku, Second Vice Chairperson; Sarah Hall, Treasurer; Sadie McNamara, Secretary; and James Mack, Parliamentarian.

A motion was made by Mr. Orin-Oquil Johnson-Griffith, seconded by Elder Devon Ponds and carried by a vote of 24 in-favor, 1 opposed, and 4 abstentions to approve the Hopkinson/Park Place Project.

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. Mel Faulkner from Assemblywoman Inez Barron's office.

Mr. Faulkner stated that something was brought to the attention of Assemblywoman Barron's office yesterday which he hopes never happens again in this community. There is a social club operating in the community that is directly below the apartment of a resident.

It was determined that the club obtained a liquor license without having to come before the Community Board. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Precinct maintains that they are allowed to operate from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.. We need to work as a community to prevent this sort of thing from reoccurring in our neighborhood.

Mr. Charles Ladson stated that this type of quality of life issue is rarely enforced in this community.

Chairperson Younger challenged the validity of that statement.

A brief discussion took place wherein various members of the audience commented on their experiences regarding quality of life complaints with many stating that enforcement is lacking.

Chairperson Younger recounted her experiences with a similar situation wherein she and her neighbors were successful in shutting down the establishment by continuously calling 3-1-1 to report wrongdoings.

Chairperson Younger recognized Councilmember Charles Barron.

Councilmember Barron stated that he is disappointed to have to report on an incident where police officers were seen brutalizing a young man whom they accused of a drug offense (there are video recordings of the brutality). When asked to stop, the police proceeded to mount an assault on Ms. Yolanda Matthews, causing her injury.

In response to inquiries, different versions are being told by the police, from the matter is under investigation to nothing happened.

We must hold our police officers accountable for wrongdoings and let them know that we will not tolerate abuse by them. He is aware that there are those amongst us who need to be arrested, however, most of the people who are being stopped and frisked in this community have done nothing wrong. We demand that our community be policed in the same manner that they police White neighborhoods.

Regarding developers, he cautions that when we hear AMI, we should be wary because the actual median income for our community is approximately \$26,000. Homes being offered at 80% of AMI are not truly affordable to most in our community. When a developer approaches him, he asks that at least 50% percent of the units be marketed at no more than 30% of AMI so that they will be affordable to many in our community.

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

Ms. Rose-Persadi made an appeal to the audience to complete and return the 2010 Census form when they receive it in January or February of 2010.

Chairperson Younger recognized Ms. Sallie Mathis, Community Activist.

Ms. Mathis related her history of over fifty years of community advocacy and requested the support of the community as she attempts to regain control of Brownsville Gardens (formerly Sallie Mathis Gardens).

Chairperson Younger recognized Mr. William Boone of the Oasis Beacon Program.

Mr. Boone stated that he is the Outreach Coordinator for the Oasis Beacon at I.S. / P.S. 323, located at 210 Chester Street. He introduced the program's new Director, Ms. Sandra Johnson.

Ms. Johnson stated that the Oasis Beacon is open to serve the community. They are mandated to provide services to at least 1,200 community residents. Currently, they are under-serving the community and appeal to the audience to make use of the many services that they provide. They will assist any child from anywhere that can come into the school. All of their services are free-of-charge. She encourages non-profit organizations that are in need of space for their programs to reach out to her at (347) 600-9441.

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

Deputy Inspector Wright introduced his new Executive Officer, Captain Miguel Iglesias.

Deputy Inspector Wright stated that he agrees with Councilmember Barron's assessments, police officers who abuse their position have no business being on the force. If the allegations are found true, they will be dealt with accordingly. They are here to protect and serve the community.

Since he last reported to the Board in June, there have been a number of large events in the Precinct. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, the Brownsville Old-Timers Day celebration took place with over twelve-thousand people in attendance; on Saturday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, there were over ten-thousand people in attendance and only one incident required police intervention. This is something that the community should be proud of as it is often said that we cannot come together without there being violence.

When he joined the precinct back in January, he stated that he would be focusing on the reduction of violent crimes in the Precinct. This has happened, most notably with murders. He has commented previously about how they are removing more and more guns off the streets with the assistance of the community and again thanks the community for their help. Citywide, murder is down 13.6%; in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Precinct it is down 51%.

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Ms. Pamela Junior, seconded by Ms. Essie Duggan and carried to adjourn the meeting.