

**Community Board No. 8
Berean Missionary Baptist Church
1635 Bergen Street
Brooklyn, NY 11213**

January 13, 2011

Members Present

Kim Albert
Akosua Albritton
Dr. Adele Allen
Julia Boyd
Gail Branch-Muhammad
Diana Foster
Ede Fox
Fred Frazier
Nizjoni Granville
Jamell Henderson
Shalawn Langhorne
Priscilla Maddox
Kwasi Mensah
Adelaide Miller
Clarine Miller
Dr. Fred Monderson
Atim Oton
Angelina Pinto
Marlene Saunders
Meredith Staton
Audrey Taitt-Hall
Gregory Todd
Ethel Tyus
Robert Witherwax

Liaisons Present

James Ellis, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce
Gwen Sumter, Brooklyn Children's Museum

CB Staff Present

Michelle George, District Manager
Julia Neale, Community Associate

Members Excused

Glinda Andrews
Dr. Flize Bryan
Desmond Atkins
Princess Benn-James
Viola Bing
Helen Coley
Xeexxema Jordan
Robert Puca
Mary Reed
Patricia Scantlebury
William Suggs
Launa Thomas-Bullock
Sharon Wedderburn
Vilma Zuniga

Members Absent

Teri Coaxum
Renaye Cuyler
Doris Heriveaux
Marie Louis
Robert Matthews
Alton Pierce
Yves Vilus

Elected Official's Representatives

Purcell Sarana, Assemblyman Camara's Office
Carl Luciano, Councilmember Mealy's Office
Alfred Chiodo, Councilmember James's Office
Ron Thomas, Congresswoman Clark's Office
Lee Church, Assemblyman Jeffries's Office
Renea Murphy, Councilman Vann's Office
Dottie Lebron, Councilman Vann's Office
Jennifer James, Congressman Town's Office

Ms. Granville called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Acceptance of Minutes – The minutes of the last meeting were unanimously accepted as written.

Correspondence – CB 8 newsletter and other information was distributed for review.

Ms. Granville asked for an update on the Weeksville project from Ms. Jennifer Scott.

Weeksville Heritage Center – Ms. Jennifer Scott, Vice Director/Director of Research

Ms. Scott announced that the construction project for the Weeksville Educational Center and office space is presently underway. She urged those that have not visited the site to visit the first free black settlement that was almost erased from history. The Weeksville houses were rediscovered in the late 1960s and the late Joan Maynard led the initiative to save and preserve the houses, and it is still an ongoing 40-year project to rehabilitate and preserve.

The \$30 million building is presently under construction. It will house an arts education and cultural center, educational classrooms, a media lab, recording studio, and performing arts center. The goal of the building is to support an important history from being lost.

As such, Weeksville Heritage Center has entered into a partnership with Empire State College on a Public History discipline, which is a new discipline that documents history and preserves it. She introduced Mr. Daniel Katz from Empire State College to discuss more of the details of the Public History discipline.

Mr. Katz stated that Weeksville is one of the greatest examples of the power of public history. As the first free black colony after slavery in NYC, the houses and the soon to be completed museum will provide a look at history from an alternative perspective. He also stated that the draft riots of NYC is another great example of public history.

Public History is considered as “mining memories of the people” that serves as empowerment of the people and community. It is now a new concentration at Empire State College. However, it is not a full Master’s degree; rather, it is a 15 credit program designed to enrich the history and understanding of the community.

Dr. Monderson piggybacked on the importance of history and culture and implored those present to identify photos and those who are in them by writing the names of persons on the back of the photo. Photos serve as a history of the family and too often, our progeny do not know who is who and who did what in the family. It would also serve as a way of preserving the past.

Ms. Granville thanked Ms. Scott and Mr. Katz and asked for a report from the following committees:

Aging/Health & Human Services – Ms. Marlene Saunders, Chair

The Aging/Health & Human Services Committee did not meet for the month of January. The next meeting will be held on Monday, February 7, 2011 at 5:30, weather permitting. It will be held at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation located at 727 Classon Avenue, Brooklyn, NY.

Economic Development – Ms. Priscilla Maddox and Ms. Atim Oton, Co-Chairs

The Economic Development Committee met Tuesday, December 14, 2010 and Tuesday, January 11, 2011 at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation. Board members present were Gail Branch Muhammad, Daniella Fairbairn, Fred Frazier, Diana Foster, Priscilla Maddox, Atim Oton, Alton Pierce, Robert Puca, Greg Todd, and Ethel Tyus. The committee discussed the following new liquor license applications:

1. The proprietors of BRIG LLC, D/B/A “Nova” located at 884-886 Pacific Street (corner of Underhill Avenue) made a favorable presentation complete with letters of support for his establishment that is seeking a full liquor license. Nova has a maximum capacity of 75 patrons and will seat 24 people at 7 tables with a separate bar space that can seat an additional 6. Nova will operate from 3 PM to 3 AM Monday thru Friday, and 1 PM to 3 AM on Saturday and Sunday. There will be 9 employees for the space measuring 16x43 feet and security guards and cameras will be in use as needed. The space is being shared with a clothing store and the proprietors are subleasing the back of the space. There will be background music for an art gallery that will feature local and international artist exhibits.

There were no police objections to the space and the full Board voted to support the application with a final tally of 17 in favor, 3 opposed, with 3 abstentions.

2. Mr. Ethan Smythe, owner of Stratosphere Café Lounge located at 227 Utica Avenue (between Sterling and St. John’s Places) made a favorable presentation for his establishment that is seeking a beer/wine license. Stratosphere has been in the community for several decades, first operating as a travel agency and now used as a recording studio. There is a maximum capacity of 74 patrons. The space will still be used as a recording studio as well as “stream events” facility, which caters to the spoken word crowd, and the space will also be available for rentals. Mr. Smythe is seeking to serve young adults 21 and over and is attempting to make sure that live music and poetry events are accessible to the community. It will serve as a coffee bar during the day and serve beer/wine in the evenings during events. The hours of operation will be 6:30 AM to midnight with a strict 1 AM closing time. Soundproofing will be completed.

There were no police objections to the space and the full Board voted to support the application with a final tally of 21 in favor, 1 opposed, with 1 abstention.

3. The proprietors of Eve’s (currently “Prospect Pond”) located at 769 Washington Avenue (corner of St. John’s Place) made a favorable presentation for their bar/lounge that is seeking a full liquor license. Eve’s has a maximum capacity of 74 patrons and can seat 42 people at chairs and couches and 10 stools. The lounge will operate from 11 AM to 4 AM Monday thru Saturday and Sunday from Noon to 4 AM. The proprietors will close earlier based on business trends. Presently, there are promoters on a nightly basis and the 3 owners, one of which is a retired NYPD detective, plan to change the promoters to “resident operators.” There will be live performances from artists around the community and the building is already soundproofed. Ms. Albritton asked for clarification on the

term, “resident operator” and was informed that it means that at least one of the owners will be on premises at all times.

There were no police objections to the space and the full Board voted to support the application with a final tally of 21 in favor, 1 opposed, with 2 abstentions.

4. The proprietor of Janelle’s located at 671/673 Washington Avenue (between St. Marks Avenue and Prospect Place) made a favorable presentation for her establishment that is seeking a full liquor license. Janelle’s will seat between 60 and 65 people and will operate from 10 AM to Midnight Tuesday thru Sunday and will be closed Mondays. Caribbean and American food will be served at the restaurant that will also feature karaoke and live jazz on certain nights.

There were no police objections to the space and the full Board voted to support the application with 22 in favor, 1 opposed, with 1 abstention.

In addition, the committee discussed the following renewal applications:

1. Parkside Diner, 355 Flatbush Avenue (Carlton Avenue/Sterling Place)
2. Geido Restaurant Corp., 331 Flatbush Avenue (near Park Place)
3. Restaurant Gen, 659 Washington Avenue (corner of St. Marks Avenue)
4. Milk Bar, 620 Vanderbilt Avenue (corner of Prospect Place)
5. Ortine, 622 Washington Avenue (Pacific and Dean Streets)

There were no police objections to either of the renewals and the full Board voted to support all 5 renewal applications with a final tally of 22 in favor, 2 opposed, with 0 abstentions.

The committee also heard a presentation by Ms. Laurel Brown, a representative for Nostrand/Park, a not-for-profit organization that is presently working on improving Nostrand Avenue. Ms. Brown is seeking to obtain support from Community Board No. 8 for their proposal to enter Nostrand Avenue between Sterling and Prospect Places into the “Weekend Walks” program sponsored by the NYC Dept. of Transportation for 4 Saturdays in June 2011 to spark revitalization of the strip. Participating in the Weekend Walks program will seek to increase exposure for businesses on Nostrand Avenue. There will be a “pop-up plaza” on Nostrand to encourage shopping on the Avenue.

The committee discussed many of the issues that may arise with closing off two blocks on the one of the busiest bus routes in the City and suggested that Ms. Brown make a presentation before the Transportation Committee as well to obtain their support. They also discussed how the program would benefit Nostrand Avenue, and the idea of revitalization as those two blocks pose little in the vein of shopping venues. However, they were swayed by the experience Ms. Brown has in the field of merchant’s districts and agreed that Nostrand Avenue needs as much assistance as possible in economic revitalization and concurred that new and current businesses need to be made more aware of the potential of Nostrand Avenue as a major shopping attraction. The full Board voted 17 in favor, 1 opposed, with 6 abstentions to support the application for Nostrand Avenue between Sterling and Prospect Places to be entered into the Weekend Walks program.

The next meeting of the Economic Development Committee will be held on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 at 6:30 PM at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation located at 727 Classon Avenue, Brooklyn, NY. All are invited and encouraged to attend.

Education – Mr. Kwasi Mensah and Ms. Sharon Wedderburn, Co-Chairs

The Education Committee met on December 16, 2010 at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation. Board members present were Kwasi Mensah and Xeerxeema Jordan. Mr. Mensah informed the Board that at the meeting, the plans to close MS 571 was discussed. He stated that he attended a parents meeting at MS 571 with Councilwoman James and representatives from Assemblyman Camara's and Jeffries' offices. A vote will take place on February 3rd on whether or not to phase out or close MS 571. On January 19th at 6 PM at MS 571, there will be a planning meeting regarding the upcoming vote. MS 571 is located on Underhill Avenue between St. Marks Avenue and Bergen Street. Members of the community are encouraged to attend the planning meeting.

On January 26th at 4:30 PM, there will be a citywide rally regarding the pending closure of a number of failing schools across the city at 51 Chambers Street. For more information on school closures and the efforts led to stop them, contact Ms. Zakiyah Ansari at 212-328-9266 or via email at zakiyah@aqueny.org.

The next meeting of the Education Committee will be held on Thursday, January 20, 2011 at 7 PM at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation located at 727 Classon Avenue. All are invited to attend.

Environment/Sanitation – Ms. Helen Coley and Ms. Ede Fox, Co-Chairs

The Environment/Sanitation Committee met on Tuesday, December 21, 2010 at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation. Ms. Fox announced that the committee will be submitting written testimony regarding the city's response to the December 26th blizzard at the City Council public hearing on January 19th. Residents are encouraged to provide written testimony to the District office so that all the complaints can be compiled into one package and submitted from the committee.

The committee will not meet for the month of January. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 15, 2011 at 7 PM at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation located at 727 Classon Avenue, Brooklyn, NY. All are invited to attend.

Fire/Safety – Mr. Robert Witerwax, Chair

The Fire/Safety Committee did not meet in the month of December. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 19, 2011 at 7 PM at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation located at 727 Classon Avenue. All are invited to attend.

Housing/ULURP – Ms. Nizjoni Granville Chair

The Housing/ULURP committee met on Thursday, January 6, 2011 at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation. Board members present were Akosua Albritton, Desmond Atkins, Princess Benn-James, Diana Foster, Fred Frazier, Nizjoni Granville, Meredith Staton, Greg Todd, Ethel Tyus, and Sharon Wedderburn. The committee discussed the following:

1. Ms. Deborah Young, President of Crown Heights North Association (CHNA) requested a letter of support from the Community Board for their acquisition of the landmarked George B. and Susan Elkins House at 1375 Dean St. The Elkins House is the only known freestanding mid-19th century wooden country house remaining in this section of Crown Heights and was landmarked in 2006 to prevent its demolition. CHNA is proposing to convert the building into artists' work spaces and an office for CHNA. The Board's letter of support will assist the Association in securing capital funding through the community's elected representatives to restore the property to a habitable condition.

Ms. Oton asked if CHNA was working with the Weeksville Heritage Center on the history of the house. She was informed that they were not presently working with Weeksville. Mr. Witherwax asked what CHNA's plans regarding obtaining funding for the purchase the house were. He was informed that CHNA is identifying grants and reaching out to the state for funding. So far, CHNA and state representatives have communicated plans for \$200 thousand in funding to begin the process.

The Board voted to support issuing a letter of support to CHNA with a final tally of 21 in favor, 0 opposed, with 0 abstentions. There were also 3 recusals from the vote.

2. Owner David Newman by his architect Brendan Coburn presented a proposal for 286 Park Place (between Vanderbilt and Underhill Avenues) to: install rooftop skylights and solar panels; alter the front areaway; and modify the rear façade. The presentation showed that the rear façade is visible from a parking lot attached to a former public school near Vanderbilt Ave. The wood frame/metal-clad rear bay window would be modified to consist of glass from the transoms down to the floor to provide more light. The enlarged glass would be protected from excess sunlight by a metal trellis; and there would be stairs from the parlor floor to the backyard. The solar panels would occupy the horizontal plane of the existing skylight opening and be restricted to the permissible square footage allowed by FDNY. The front areaway would be sculpted to provide a graded entry into the basement and eliminate the existing steps that represent a trip hazard.

A representative from the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Corp. (who is an owner of one adjacent property) indicated that a prior presentation had been made to be neighborhood group and there were no objections to the application especially regarding visibility from adjacent properties. The only reservation was a question regarding the trellis and a desire to see a rendering of same. This application is item 3 on the Landmarks Preservation Commission's 1/18/11 public hearing schedule. The full Board voted unanimously with 24 in favor to approve the application.

The next meeting of the Housing/ULURP Committee will be Thursday, February 3, 2011 at 6:30 PM at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation located at 727 Classon Avenue, Brooklyn, NY. All are invited to attend.

Parks – Ms. Glinda Andrews and Ms. Kim Albert, Co-Chairs

The Parks Committee met on Tuesday, January 2, 2011 at the St. John's Recreation Center. Ms. Albert announced that the multi-purpose area is now open to the public. The committee continues to work on its upcoming Community Awareness Day to be held on June 4th. Input is needed, so anyone desiring to participate is encouraged to attend the meeting.

The next meeting of the Parks Committee will be held on Tuesday, February, 1, 2011 at the St. John's Recreation Center located at 1251 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, NY. All are invited to attend.

Police – Ms. Shalawn Langhorne, Chair

The Police committee met on Monday, December 20, 2010 at the 77th Precinct but had no action items. Ms. Langhorne reminded everyone to be conscious of their surroundings at all times as muggings have gone up in the District. The next meeting of the Police Committee will be held on Tuesday, January 18, 2011 rather than Monday the 17th in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Day. The meeting will be held at 7 PM at the 77th Precinct located at 127 Utica Avenue, Brooklyn, NY. All are invited to attend.

Transportation – Dr. Frederick Monderson, Chair

The Transportation Committee did not meet in the month of December. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 25, 2011 at 7 PM the Haitian American Day Care Center located at 1491 Bedford, Brooklyn, NY. There are numerous important items on the agenda, including a presentation by the NYC Dept. of Transportation. All are invited to attend.

Youth/Family Services – Ms. Akosua Albritton, Chair

The Youth/Family Services Committee met on Wednesday, January 5, 2011 at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation. Ms. Albritton announced that there are many changes coming to Medgar Evers College since the appointment of the new president and provost. The committee will discuss some of these changes and other items at the next meeting, which will be held on Wednesday, February 2, 2011 at 6:30 PM at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation located at 727 Classon Avenue, Brooklyn, NY. All are invited to attend.

Ms. Granville thanked the committee chairs for their reports and acknowledged the elected official representatives present and asked for brief updates from each.

Councilwoman Darlene Mealy's Office – Mr. Carl Luciano

Mr. Luciano announced that he is the new public liaison for Councilwoman Mealy. There is a public hearing regarding the Dept. of Sanitation's response to the December 26, 2010 blizzard on

January 19th at Brooklyn Borough Hall. Those interested in providing testimony are encouraged to attend and express their concern and outrage.

The Black/Latino Caucus will take place on February 19th in Albany, NY. Councilwoman Mealy is sponsoring a bus to the event for \$10. The Caucus is an opportunity to interact with your local state officials. Those with concerns are encouraged to attend. For more information or to reserve a space on the bus, contact the Councilwoman's District office at 718-953-3097.

Assemblyman Karim Camara's Office – Mr. Purcell Sarana

Mr. Sarana announced that the number to Assemblyman Camara's office has changed to 718-771-3105. There will be a Tenant's Forum in late February at which NYCHA, DHCR, HPD, and the Dept. of Finance will be present to assist tenants with rent issues in both public and private housing. The date for the forum has not been set as of yet.

The Dept. of Homeless Services is conducting its homeless outreach estimation. Volunteers are still needed to help count the homeless so that services and funding can be provided to eliminate the problem. Visit www.nyc.gov/dhs or call 311 for information on how to volunteer.

Mr. Sarana also distributed grant applications for the Citizens Committee for New York. For more information on the grants available, especially the NYers for Better Neighborhoods grant, or to apply, visit citizens.nyc.org/grants.

Councilman Al Vann's Office – Ms. Dottie Lebron

Ms. Lebron distributed the Councilman's monthly newsletter detailing his works in the Council. She announced that Councilman Vann is partnering with other councilmembers to create sidewalk ATM legislation to regulate the ATMs that are popping up on sidewalks throughout the city. The councilman has also introduced legislation related to the Human Rights Commission (HRC) regarding transparency. The legislation requires reports on what is going on within HRC.

Concerned with student safety in our schools, the councilman is working on the Student Safety Act which would partner with the Dept. of Education and the NYPD to obtain reports detailing school safety matters.

Congresswoman Yvette Clarke's Office – Mr. Ron Thomas

Mr. Thomas announced that the Congresswoman's swearing in ceremony would be held on Monday, January 17th. Visit www.Clarke.house.gov for updates on what the Congresswoman is doing and what is going on in the community. The Congresswoman, despite the turnover in Congress, is still in charge of the Homeland Security Committee and Small Business Committee.

Assemblyman Jeffries Office – Mr. Lee Church

Mr. Church announced that the Assemblyman's State of the District address will be held on January 26th at Pratt Institute. Call 718-596-0100 to RSVP for the event as space is limited.

Ms. Granville thanked each representative and opened the floor for public comments.

An appeal to save Paul Robeson High School was made by a student of the school and Ms. Stefanie Siegel. Ms. Siegel announced that there is a public hearing speaking out against school closures on January 21st at 6 PM at Paul Robeson. Community residents should attend to express their outrage that Education officials are attempting to make students “fight for an education”. Prior to the hearing, there will be a rally from 4 PM to 4:45 PM at the school.

Paul Robeson has made strides despite being given poor leadership in years past in the face of crisis that actually stymied progress that was and is being made. There will be PEP meeting

Ms. Amy Clark, editor of Prospect Heights Patch stated that she is looking for stories for the online neighborhood newspaper that covers Prospect Heights and the area up to Franklin Avenue. Please email her at amy.clark@patch.com if you have any story ideas.

Ms. Granville thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 10, 2011 at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation, located at 727 Classon Avenue, Brooklyn, NY at 7 PM. All are encouraged to attend.

Guests

Agatha Baptist
Curtis Harris
Jennifer Scott
H. Castle
Corrine Bethune
M. Johnson
A. Andrews
Lee Ann Banks
Shirley Mondesir
Jacqueline K.
Cree Storm
Deborah O.
Sharon Bowen
O. Koyama

Deborah Young
Andrea Hornett Robinson
Sheyla Bonnet
Lula Staton
Franchesca Feliciano
Amy Sara Clark
Rohon Williams
Ethan Smythe
Samantha Ridge
Jacqueline Welch
Richard Miller
Valerie Nero
Consuela Lawless
Stefanie Siegal