

**Community Board 8  
Webex Virtual Meeting**

**Thursday, September 10, 2020  
Report and Minutes**

**Members Present**

Kiermoni Allison  
Glinda Andrews  
Lisa Atkinson  
Wayne Bailey  
Princess Benn-James  
Gail Branch-Muhammad  
Robert Callahan  
Hanjy Charles  
Nora Daniel  
James Ellis  
Kevin Farley  
Andrea Ferris  
Drew Gabriel  
Tamika Gibbs  
Nizjoni Granville  
Marva Henry  
Sarah Lazur  
Mireille Lemaine  
Kalvis Mikelsteins  
Yahya Raji  
Adam Sachs  
Mark Thurton  
Greg Todd  
Ethel Tyus  
Gib Veconi  
Kimberly Watson  
Irsa Weatherspoon  
Sharon Wedderburn  
Robert Witherwax  
Deborah Young

**Members Absent/Excused**

Desmond Atkins  
Julia Boyd  
John Buckholz  
Helen Coley  
Fred Frazier  
Igenie Harris-Blenman  
Xeexxeema Jordan  
Regina Kinsey  
Elaine Mahoney  
Robert Puca  
Brian Saunders  
Janola Soko  
Meredith Staton  
Karmeisha Superville  
Audrey Taitt-Hall  
Yves Vilus  
Kimberly Watson  
Vilma Zuniga

**Elected Officials Representatives**

Darryl White, NYS Attorney General's office  
Kim Robinson, Councilwoman Ampry-Samuel's office  
Arna Lipkind, Majority Leader Cumbo's office

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The regular meeting of Community Board 8 was called to order at 6:25 PM by Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chairperson. The meeting began with roll call.

Mr. Witherwax made a motion to accept the June 2020 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Saunders.

Mr. Matthew Pitt from the NYC Campaign Finance Board gave an update on voting in 2020.

### **NYC Campaign Finance Board** – Mr. Matthew Pitt

Mr. Pitt announced that he is part of the Voter Engagement Arm for NYC Votes, which is a branch of the Campaign Finance Board. The goal of the unit is to engage and inform New Yorkers about elections and voting in New York City, including registering to vote and updating election laws. Voter pre-registration is now available for 16 and 17 year olds. To register to vote, you must have a mailing address for notifications and posted notifications, and this address can be a shelter, a friend's home, a mail box, etc.—so long as it is a physical representation of an address that physical mail can be sent to.

You must register to vote by Oct 9<sup>th</sup> to participate in the November general election. Mr. Pitt clarified that the homeless can vote if they have an address they can use to receive notifications, including a shelter, a family member, etc.

Certain State agencies are now allowed and required by law to register people to vote, including the DMV. Voters can request an absentee ballot based on risk of illness due to the covid-19 pandemic. Absentee ballots can be requested immediately instead of the standard 30-day wait. Absentee ballots received within seven (7) days after the election, or by Nov 10<sup>th</sup>, will be counted with or without a postmark. Check the box for 'Temporary illness' as the reason for your absentee ballot. You can track your ballot request on the Board of Elections website. The deadline to request an application by mail is Oct 27<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Pitt urged everyone to follow the instructions carefully for the absentee ballot. If you do not, your ballot will be destroyed. He urged everyone to use blue or black ink only and sign the back of the security envelope. Only use the envelope they send to you to return your ballot.

Ms. Young asked if someone else can return a ballot ([at the polling place?]) on an individual's behalf. Mr. Pitt stated that there is some controversy over that, but that there is a provision for certain individuals (for instance, those in nursing homes or hospitals) that someone else can return on their behalf. However, the ballot must still be signed despite a proxy returning the ballot.

Dr. Lazur inquired whether or not the BOE had resolved the issues surrounding postmark confusion as happened during the primary election. Mr. Pitt stated he was unsure if the issue had been fully resolved, but that the NYC BOE would accept ballots with or without a postmark so long as they are received within the time frame given.

Ms. Branch-Muhammad inquired whether or not the requirement that the back of the security envelope must be signed has been made explicitly visible in the instructions. Mr. Pitt stated that it is, but again encouraged everyone to carefully read all instructions.

Ms. Tyus thanked Mr. Pitt for the update and encouraged everyone to apply for their absentee ballot and also to ensure that they vote in the general election. She then asked for an update on Census 2020.

### **Census 2020** – Ms. Shelly Worrell

Ms. Worrell announced that as of the meeting date, the nation is just a few weeks away from wrapping up all Census operations. Currently, the national response rate is about 65%, with New York State and

the composite New York City slightly below the national average at 62%. Unfortunately, Brooklyn is coming in at only 55%, much lower than the national and state averages. Ms. Worrell informed that Board that the last day to complete the Census form is Sept 30<sup>th</sup>, about a month prior to the original date as the date for completion was pushed up by the White House. She encouraged everyone to complete their form as the Census is very important, determining the number of representative seats in the House, as well as federal government funds for roadway repair, schools, hospitals, school lunch programs, senior programs, Medicaid and Medicare, SNAP benefits, etc. She reminded everyone that need not be a citizen to complete the form and that all Census employees are bound by strict laws and regulations that they cannot share identifying information. The top two most undercounted populations are children under 5 and black men age 18-29.

Dr. Lazur asked if residents of NYCHA with unauthorized persons living with them would be at risk for reporting unregistered roommate or additional occupant. She was informed that there is no risk, as again, all Census employees are bound by strict laws not to divulge information. Additionally, it behooves these individuals to speak up as they and their kin might need additional support services. Without the information being given in the Census count, they will not get the services they need.

Mr. Thurton stated that there are buildings being misclassified as having more units than they actually do have, vacant units being listed as occupied, etc. He asked what the Census is doing to ameliorate enumerated parcels that are not inhabited. Ms. Worrell stated the Census geographers' jobs are to map every household in the US. Sometimes the addresses are not updated, i.e., enumerated accurately. There are frequent changes to land use and structures, such as demolitions, mergers of units, split units in SROs to one larger unit, etc. Vacant units should be counted as 0 by enumerators, and sometimes, when a unit has not been properly identified, a homeowner will get the same form repeatedly and Census trackers will constantly go to the site. If this is happening to anyone you know, she asked that you encourage the property owner to complete the form with 0.

A resident inquired how many representatives Brooklyn is set to lose if the count is not correct. They were informed that the exact number is not known, but in 2000 and 2010 each, the borough lost two districts each time and the lines were redrawn.

Another resident asked how much money Brooklyn's communities are missing out on. They were informed that it is a basic exercise in simple mathematics, that we are only going to receive 55% of the total amount of allocated funds we are realistically supposed to receive.

Ms. Tyus thanked Ms. Worrell for the very important information, and encouraged everyone to remind their friends and family to complete their census form. She then asked for a report from the following committees:

**By-Laws Committee** – Mr. Robert Witherwax, Chair

Mr. Witherwax reported that the By-Laws committee held regular meetings over the summer to make necessary changes to the document. The changes include:

- additional house-keeping changes, cleaning up some areas of confusion and conflict;
- explicitly giving oversight responsibilities to the District Manager for all personnel matters in the District office without consulting the Board;
- including default language for member leave of absence; excused absences no longer counting as an absence;

- removal of member warning time reduced from 30 days to 21 days to accommodate short meeting turnaround;
- formalizing procedures for appointing a new officer if one is removed, resigns, or otherwise leaves office;
- creating language to cover situations like the Covid-19 Pandemic; elections and ballot casting;
- include language for the role of the Chairperson and Chairperson Emeritus. The Chair will be a non-voting ex officio member of every committee, and any Chairperson that serves for at least 4 years without incident and retires will be given Emeritus status.
- As for Committees, the criteria for choose Vice Chairs is changing; previously, Vice Chairs were chosen by the Board Chair only, but new language will make it a collaboration between the appointed Chair at the time and the current committee Chair.
- Committees will be required to meet only quarterly versus the current 10 times per year during September and June.
- The Executive Committee will be comprised of only elected officers and committee chairs.
- Changes to the By-laws of Friends of CB 8 to correspond to the Board's By-Laws.

Mr. Witherwax stated that the draft will be sent to members in October, with comments taken in October and November for the vote in December.

**SLA and Sidewalk Café Review Committee (SLAC)** – Mr. James Ellis, Chair; Mr. Robert Witherwax, Vice Chair

The SLAC Committee met on Wednesday, July 29<sup>th</sup> via Webex. As the committee has executive authority during the summer months, they voted to support the following applications:

- Barghost, 71 6th Avenue—Full
- Bierendelli's, 340 Sterling Place – Beer/Cider
- Chipotle Mexican Grill, 347 Flatbush Avenue – Full
- Tooker Ally, 793 Washington Avenue –Full
- Soda Bar, 629 Vanderbilt Avenue – Full

The committee voted to approve all five applications and, because the meeting was held during the summer hiatus, had executive authority to make determinations on behalf of the full Board. The items are being brought before the full Board this evening for final ratification.

Dr. Lazur made a motion to support the committee's actions. The motion was seconded by Ms. Branch-Muhammad and carried with a final vote of 27 in favor, 0 opposed, with 0 abstentions.

**Youth and Education** – Ms. Sharon Wedderburn, Chair

Ms. Wedderburn announced that the NYC Dept. of Education is moving forward with its plan to reopen schools for in-person instruction on Sept 21<sup>st</sup>. She announced that a number of newer schools are experiencing ventilation issues as the central air and heating have created a vacuum like condition. Older school buildings are having an easier time circumventing ventilation issues as they can open their windows. They still do have, however, issues with space, class sizes, and even proper heating when the time comes.

Ms. Wedderburn announced that the goal of the committee this year will be to focus on policy rather than events. Last year, prior to Covid, the committee had been working on the spelling bee. She also announced that Covid might have inadvertently resolved the snow day issue with schools as the standard for remote learning has been met.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 6, 2020 via Webex, the link for which can be found on the CB 8 website.

**Environment/Sanitation/Transportation** – Mr. Robert Witherwax, Chair; Ms. Irsa Weatherspoon, Vice Chair

Mr. Witherwax announced that Summer 2020 was a very busy for streets with many successful examples of Open Streets and even Open Restaurants. There will be an EST meeting in the coming weeks to work through some of the issues that have arisen to make the current conditions more palatable and smoother for everyone. Any meeting information will be published on the CB 8 website.

**Housing (Advocacy)** – Ms. Nizjoni Granville, Chair

Ms. Granville announced that the Housing (Advocacy) committee will meet on October 14<sup>th</sup> via Webex, the details of which will be published on the CB 8 website. The committee will discuss the Housing Workshop that had been postponed due to the Pause virtually, and try to find a way to have the event via a virtual platform as well to assist tenants and property owners navigate the many changes that have been brought about due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**Land Use** – Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chair

Ms. Tyus announced that that the representatives for the Hebron Project at 920 Park/959 Sterling asked to be laid over until October. The committee continues discussing public realm improvements in the MCROWN and surrounding area, and will move forward with the concept of using a community benefits agreement to tailor private projects in the district.

The next meeting will be October 1<sup>st</sup> via Webex, the details of which can be found on the CB 8 website.

**Parks** – Ms. Glinda Andrews, Chair

Ms. Andrews announced that the Parks Committee will meet virtually on Tuesday, Oct 6<sup>th</sup>, the details of which can be found on the CB 8 website. The committee and a few stakeholders will meet on Sept 19<sup>th</sup> at the Ralph Lincoln Community Garden to engage in a conversation to restore the garden in honor of Robert Matthews.

**Public Safety** – Mr. Mark Thurton, Chair; Mr. Desmond Atkins, Vice Chair

Mr. Thurton announced that the Public Safety will meet on Monday, Sept 28<sup>th</sup> via Webex, the details of which can be found on the CB 8 website. The committee will meet monthly but will not have a meeting in December due to the holidays.

He stated that the 77<sup>th</sup> Precinct had a rough summer with increased gun violence, shootings and murders. He called the community together to report illegal gun activity. Also, NCO meetings with the

77<sup>th</sup> have resumed outdoors with social distancing strictly adhered to. Finally, he thanked the new community board members that signed up for the Public Safety committee.

**Seniors** – Ms. Gail Branch-Muhammad, Chair

Ms. Muhammad announced that the Seniors committee met on Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> via FreeConferenceCall.com. Ten seniors attended and she is hopeful that more will be on the call at the Oct 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, call details found on the CB 8 website. She stated that it was imperative to have a Sept meeting to check on the seniors to ensure that no one was completely isolated in their home during the pandemic and to do a wellness check.

Ms. Tyus thanked the committee chairs for their updates and encouraged everyone to periodically visit the CB 8 website, as it is updated daily with valuable information. She then opened the floor for public comments and elected official representatives.

**Mr. Darryl White** from NYS Attorney General Letitia James office apologized to Ms. George for the delay in the receipt of the Smart Seniors Booklet. He asked Ms. Branch-Muhammad if he could attend an upcoming Seniors Committee meeting to discuss the booklet and was given the green light. He informed everyone that while still in the pandemic, we must all be diligent in identifying the many forms of fraud going on as well as price gouging for necessary supplies. The AG's office can assist with consumer fraud.

**Ms. Stefanie Zinerman**, Democratic nominee for the 56<sup>th</sup> Assembly District in November's general election, thanked the board and its members in helping to ensure that government runs efficiently. She praised CB 8 for not delaying its virtual meetings and conducting business as well as keeping the community abreast of all changes and updates brought about during the Pause.

**Mr. Jabari Brisport**, Democratic nominee for the 25<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District, introduced himself to the Board. He stated that he is proud to be a strong candidate for the seat soon to be vacated by the long time representative, Velmanette Montgomery, who is retiring. He is currently a public school teacher in Crown Heights, a position he will hold through December. He gave the board his contact information for issues and concerns. [contact@jabariforstatesenate.com](mailto:contact@jabariforstatesenate.com).

**Ms. Kim Robinson** from Councilwoman Alika Ampry-Samuel's office announced that the Councilwoman will be hosting a census registration and food and supply drive on Sept 19<sup>th</sup> at 1635 Park Place. Supplies to be distributed include back to school supplies. Additionally, the next few Fridays from Noon to 2 Pm at the Councilwoman's office, will be the census count and voter drives to help increase Brooklyn's census response rate and also to help residents register to vote to "rock the vote."

**Dr. Lazur** informed the Board that illegal evictions in the borough continue despite the eviction moratorium. Anyone experiencing an illegal eviction or knows someone that is, should contact the Brooklyn Eviction Defense Network at [brooklynevictiondefense@gmail.com](mailto:brooklynevictiondefense@gmail.com). Mr. White followed up and asked anyone experiencing this to please also contact or have victims of illegal evictions to contact the Attorney General's office. Illegal evictions are a key issue that AG's office needs to know about to get on top of, so please call 718.560.2040 to help the AG's office put an end to these practices and hold landlords accountable.

Ms. Tyus thanked everyone for their comments and updates and asked any new members that were not present at the June meeting to introduce themselves. Ms. Mierielle Lemaine thanked everyone for the

opportunity to serve as a member, and stated that she attended a number of meetings over the last few years and is eager to assist in any way possible.

Ms. Tyus welcomed her aboard, and with no further issues to discuss, adjourned the meeting at 8:20 PM. The next meeting will be held on Oct 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:15 PM, details of which can be found on the CB8 website.