

**Community Board 8  
Webex Virtual Meeting**

**December 10, 2020**

**Members Present**

Kiermoni Allison  
Desmond Atkins  
Lisa Atkinson  
Wayne Bailey  
Princess Benn-James  
John Buckholz  
Robert Callahan  
Nora Daniel  
James Ellis  
Kevin Farley  
Andrea Ferris  
Tamika Gibbs  
Nizjoni Granville  
Igenie Harris-Blenman  
Marva Henry  
Xeerxeema Jordan  
Sarah Lazur  
Mireille Lemaine  
Elaine Mahoney  
Kalvis Mikelsteins  
Robert Puca  
Yahya Raji  
Adam Sachs  
Brian Saunders  
Audrey Taitt-Hall  
Mark Thurton  
Greg Todd  
Ethel Tyus  
Gib Veconi  
Irsa Weatherspoon  
Robert Witherwax  
Deborah Young  
Vilma Zuniga

**Members Absent/Excused**

Julia Boyd  
Gail Branch-Muhammad  
Hanjy Charles  
Helen Coley  
Fred Frazier  
Regina Kinsey  
Meredith Staton  
Karmisha Superville  
Yves Vilus  
Kimberly Watson  
Sharon Wedderburn

**Elected Officials Present**

United States Senator Charles Schumer

**Elected Officials Representatives**

Godfrey Bayalama, Senator Z. Myrie's office  
Kim Robinson, Councilwoman A. Ampry-Samuel's office

**CB 8 Staff**

Michelle George, District Manager  
Julia Neale, Community Coordinator

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The regular meeting of Community Board 8 was called to order at 6:15 PM by Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chair. She read a personal statement that appeared in the monthly newsletter and announced that the illustrious United States Senator, the Honorable Charles Schumer, was present at the meeting.

## US Senator Charles “Chuck” Schumer

Senator Schumer thanked CB 8 for welcoming him to the meeting. Prior to giving updates on work in the US Senate, Senator Schumer broke the ice by providing a few lighthearted anecdotes that livened the air and eased tensions. He thanked appointed board members as well as community residents in attendance for participating in the meeting, stating that community service is the backbone of the community. He informed the Board that he was involved with community service for the majority of his life, that he rides his bicycle through district 8 as a Brooklyn resident quite often, and that he is cognizant of the many changes occurring in the community due to the community activism. CD 8 has moved up in socio-economic ranking as residents have striven to improve their quality of life, thus making CD 8 important not only to New York City, but also the nation as a whole. He stated that people in service in a volunteer capacity give and bring hope, and are much more necessary and important now than ever before.

The United States is facing its largest economic crisis since the Great Depression and the biggest health crisis since the Spanish Flu. Everyone is impacted in one way or another and no one is immune to Covid or its aftermath. The second challenge the country is currently facing is the risk to democracy by the current elected president, who is a despot. The good news is that most of the court cases have been thrown out. The greater news is that on Monday next, Joe Biden will be declared as the next President of the United States by the electoral college.

Senator Schumer announced that he is the one of the authors of the original Covid Bill, known as the Cares Bill, which gave \$100 million to NYC. The Cares Bill contained many programs that helped everyone from small businesses, those receiving unemployment, the MTA to help with cleaning to allow that money to go toward other things, and much more. An additional \$10 billion was allocated to States and local governments in need of assistance. Unfortunately, most of those programs have expired, and more than 12 million people will lose unemployment the day after Christmas if a new bill doesn't get passed. Everyone thought the Covid pandemic would be over by summer, but unfortunately, it is not and we are now square in the midst of an official second wave, which is proving deadlier than the first wave. Financial assistance is being held up by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who blocks every move before they (the bills) can be brought to vote. There are 20 people in the Republican Caucus that, regardless of the fact that millions of Americans are starving and being evicted, do not want to spend any government money to help the problem. Hopefully, the bill that recently passed in the House, the Heroes Act, will be passed in the Senate next week and signed immediately. Again, there is money for everyone in this bill as well, but Senator McConnell, in charge of determining what bills can go on the floor of the Senate, is stopping the bill from moving forward. Four Republicans have broken off and are joining Democrats to move it forward in an attempt to get another stimulus package and money to citizens and to distribute the vaccine to everyone for free.

In brighter news, control of the Senate will be determined by the results of the Georgia run-off election on January 5<sup>th</sup>. If Democrats sweep both seats, he would be the new Senate Majority Leader and all of the proposed bills that are sitting dormant will be passed. He stated that Senate Democrats are focused on three topics composed of these goals for immediate dispatch if this happens: income/wealth inequality to make it easier for poor people to get into middle class and easier for people to stay; training for construction jobs in infrastructure to give every home broadband; make community college free for everyone and wipe out \$50 thousand in student loan debt; send money from Trump's slush fund to economically depressed communities to build

community capital; create a path to citizenship for all residents documented or undocumented, for if undocumented immigrants were free to live and work without fear, it would grow the gross domestic product by 3%; making democracy better by getting rid of Citizen United that allows the wealthy to influence so much; institute automatic voter registration: if you show up at the polls, you vote; Re climate: address climate change to produce great and well-paying jobs, especially in economically depressed communities to improve conditions and build capital. He reminded everyone again that if Democrats win control of the Senate, he would be the next Senate Majority Leader, and this would be the focus.

Ms. Tyus informed the Senator that there has been a movement to privatize NYC housing authority funding feeding fears that people will lose their homes. Senator Schumer informed her that in the infrastructure bill, housing and schools is considered infrastructure, and that NYCHA will get a large chunk of the \$100 billion set aside for the program. There is even potential for more funds if Biden says so, and the Senate can and will produce a much larger bill than just trying to cut into the damage caused by the pandemic.

Mr. Callahan inquired into the wealth transfer over last 10 years, and asked if the Senate would focus on the one-time wealth transfer or tax reform? Senator Schumer said that Democrats will issue a much more progressive tax policy, and the first thing they will seek to do should they gain control of the Senate is to repeal the Trump tax cuts to the rich. This will generate an immediate \$1.7 trillion. These funds will then be transferred to those that actually need it. Some will be used for job creation including training.

Mr. Atkins stated that he attended a seminar in early spring and the Community Reinvestment Act was discussed. He stated that this is still an inadequate vehicle to address housing issues in the City, and stated that he looks forward to the Senator bringing fair and better housing to the community via the program.

Dr. Lazur stated that the pandemic has made it impossible for many people to pay their back rent. Senator Schumer stated that \$100 million of the Heroes Act is designated to assist with rent.

Celine Rosado, owner of Sweet Brooklyn Bar, informed the senator of a number of issues she has experienced during the pandemic, especially in terms of maintaining staff to accommodate the restrictions but still using full resources with only a limited output. She was informed that small business would be getting a 6 month grant for operations.

With no further questions, Ms. Tyus thanked Senator Schumer for the information and for attending the meeting and opened the floor for public comments.

Ms. Tyus then opened the floor to elected official's representatives and public comments.

**Mr. Godfrey Bayalama** from Senator Zellnor Myrie's office wished everyone a happy holiday season and a Happy New Year. He informed the Board that the NYS Senate session begins on January 6<sup>th</sup> and that Senator Myrie has put forth a strong housing bill whose main focus is protecting housing and preventing eviction. A component of the Senator's housing bill is to prevent evictions for an entire year after the pandemic ends, not only for residents but commercial tenants as well. He informed the community that the Senator's office remains closed and working remotely due to second wave. If you have any issues you need to report, please email [myrie@senate.gov](mailto:myrie@senate.gov).

**Ms. Kim Robinson** from Councilwoman Ampry-Samuel's office, wished everyone a happy and safe holiday season, and also announced that the Councilwoman's office is also closed due to the second wave of the pandemic. If you have any constituent issues, please call her at 646-574-7661.

Ms. Deborah Young of the Crown Heights North Association (CHNA) thanked the district office for sending out the information regarding the holiday lighting competition. Additionally, Ms. Young announced that CHNA will be holding its first zoom meeting Wednesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM. There will be an update on the Hebron project and a CHNA fun fact quiz. To get meeting information, visit CHNA's website at [crownheightsnorth.org](http://crownheightsnorth.org).

Ms. Tamika Gibbs announced the Imperial Bikers Feed the Hungry event, which will feature food to go for the first time. Information can be found in the CB 8 newsletter.

Ms. Alison Brundrette informed the Board of the Honey Resolution currently in front of the New York State Senate. She stated that the resolution will affect how honey in the state is sold. As background information, Ms. Brundrette stated that honey, although a natural product, is highly susceptible to adulteration during processing. If passed, this legislation would reduce adulteration and thus could contribute to addressing the declining honeybee population. Surprisingly, she informed the Board that urban areas like New York City actually protect bees much better than suburban and rural areas because there is less need for pesticides. She stated that she would welcome the opportunity to speak at length with the Health Committee.

Ms. Michelle George, CB 8 District Manager, informed the Board that after over 20 years of advocacy by the Board, the MTA/New York City Transit has completed construction of the ADA accessible elevators at the Eastern Pkwy/Brooklyn Museum 2/3 train station. The MTA will be hosting a ceremony to celebrate the opening on Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 1:30 pm. All are welcomed to attend.

## **Roll Call**

**Acceptance of Minutes** – Ms. Gibbs made a motion to accept the minutes of the last meeting with any necessary corrections. The motion was seconded by Dr. Lazur and carried unanimously.

**Correspondence** – CB 8 newsletter and other information was distributed.

Ms. Tyus asked for a report from the following committees:

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

The SLAC Committee met on Monday, December 7, 2020 via Webex Virtual platform. The committee discussed the following applications:

- **Renewal application for James Restaurant, 605 Carlton Avenue – Full**

A quorum was not present for this item, but the committee discussed approving the application, and hopes that the full Board votes in support of the renewal liquor license.

Mr. Bailey made a motion to support the renewal application. The motion was seconded by Ms. Henry and carried with a final tally of 31 in favor, 0 opposed, with 0 abstentions.

- **Renewal application for Catfish, 1433 Bedford Avenue – Full**

The committee voted to approve the application with a final vote 10 in favor with 1 abstention and hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

Mr. Bailey made a motion to support the committee’s recommendation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Atkins and carried with a final tally of 33 in favor, 0 opposed, with 0 abstentions.

Mr. Ellis informed the Board that food and beverage outlets continue to suffer major plights this year, and he made a few announcements to increase awareness. He asked residents that see any issues with a business regarding covid operations to please contact NYC Mend, a program designed to provide mediation services to get establishments into compliance instead of contacting regulatory agencies. He stated that all are strongly encouraged to look at the NYC Mend program rather than bringing enforcement down immediately if it’s not a public health or violent issue. Additionally, if holiday shopping is within your means, please consider looking at local businesses in the community for gift giving.

**Land Use** – Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chair

The Land Use Committee met on Thursday, December 3, 2020 via Webex virtual platform. The committee presented the following action items:

**ACTION ITEMS - RESOLUTIONS**

**1. Application LPC-21-00136 for a Certificate of Appropriateness to legalize façade work and installation of a mailbox in non-compliance with Certificate of No Effect 16-7468 for 875 St. Marks Avenue in the Crown Heights North Historic District (CHNHD)**

Whereas Guy Kohn, of Kohn Architecture, made a second presentation of plans and photos describing the project which is mainly to correct illegal work done by the prior owner; and

Whereas Mr. Kohn updated the Committee by explaining that compared to his presentation of November 2020, Staff of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) had recommended cures for the previously cited violations (including moving the mailboxes closer to the sidewalk) and that the only violation remaining was a replication of the decorative detail and fenestration of the turret façade including the fishscale design and finish of the window surrounds and replacing the stained glass window; and

Whereas Mr. Kohn again described the project as a hardship case and indicated that part of a cost-saving approach is to use stucco to replicate the fishscale detail removed by the prior owner; and

Whereas Committee members again voiced concerns regarding setting undesirable precedents by supporting supplications from owners requesting forgiveness for out-of-character work done in violation of LPC permits; and

Whereas based on the revised scope of the project work as presented and on condition that the additional violations previously listed have been resolved at LPC Staff level, Committee Member Lazur moved the Committee to support the revised scope of work for legalizing inappropriate façade work, with a second by Ms. Young; and

Whereas 17 Committee members voted to support the revised project as presented, with none against, and one abstention;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Committee recommends support for the above described application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for correcting work done in violation of LPC.s permit and recommends that the full Board do the same.

Mr. Ellis made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion as seconded by Ms. Young and carried with a tally of 33 in favor, 0 opposed, with 0 abstentions.

## **2. Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to Install a Rooftop Stair Bulkhead at 97 St. Marks Avenue in the Prospect Heights Historic District**

Whereas Brian Ripel of Combined Architecture and Interiors, presented the owner's plans for a rooftop terrace and access to the proposed terrace requires a bulkhead opening in line with the existing staircase; and

Whereas, the proposed safety railing will be aluminum with glass balusters, and the surface of the proposed roof terrace will be porcelain pavers; and

Whereas the visibility of the proposed bulkhead was described as minimal from St Marks Ave, an assertion that could not be confirmed by a Committee member because a recent windstorm had blown down the mockup, and there was concern voiced regarding the color and position of the bulkhead but the concern was not pursued; and

Whereas Mr. Ripel indicated the project is scheduled for a Hearing before LPC in Jan. 2021 Mr. Veconi moved the Committee to support the proposal with a second by Ms. Weatherspoon; and 17 Committee members voted to support the motion with two abstentions;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Committee recommends support for the above described application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for construction of a rooftop bulkhead and recommends that the full Board do the same.

Mr. Veconi informed the Board of concerns that PHNDC had about the visibility of the mockup as well as concerns about the additional bulk created by the stacked condensers. He made a motion to support the application with the following conditions:

- Reduction of the size of the bulkhead, which was deemed much more visible from St. Marks Avenue than what the presentation said;

- Consideration of a different type of door;
- Not stacking the condensers as the stacking increases density and increases visibility, and possibly placing them elsewhere; and
- Changing the color of the railing to a painted black metal.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Mikelsteins and carried with a final tally of 31 in favor, 0 opposed, with 1 abstention.

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

Mr. Witherwax stated the four main areas of changes to the by-laws, outlining the following:

- Changes to membership: language for leaves of absence, notice for excuse, shorten notice requirement for removal.
- Changes to elections, escape clause in case we cannot meet in person.
- Vacancy in seat of officer, filled with vote of other officers.
- Chair is a non-voting member of all committees.
- Define chair emeritus and specify duties of other officers.
- Committee Vice chairs chosen in consultation with committee chair;
- Committees meet 4 times in year.
- Executive committee changes, chairs and officers only.
- Miscellaneous change: DM has authority over all personnel matters.
- Term for member or officers is defined by the two years you are appointed.
- Board year starts august 31st of year.

Mr. Veconi made a motion to support the changes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Callahan and carried with a final vote of 25 in favor, 1 opposed, with 1 abstention.

**Other committees:**

**Economic Development:** Mr. Saunders informed the board that the committee is seeking to travel avenue by avenue to dispense information to business owners to help them through the pandemic. The committee usually meets the second Tuesday of the month.

**Youth and Education:** Ms. Daniel informed the Board that the Youth and Education Committee continues to work on a survey to be submitted to educators and parents to see what would help them be more successful during remote learning through the pandemic.

**Health:** Ms. Gibbs informed the Board that the Health Committee had its kickoff meeting last month and will next meet on December 17<sup>th</sup>. They have set their priorities for 2021 with a dual focus on mental health and economic health. The committee will have speaker from THRIVE NYC this month, and will seek to partner with local food pantries to distribute fliers.

**Housing:** Ms. Granville informed the Board that Housing met the previous night and discussed the NYCHA Blueprint that would privatize NYCHA housing units.

**Parks:** Ms. Andrews informed the Board that the Parks Committee met on December 1<sup>st</sup> and informed everyone that Marva Henry is the new Executive director of Friends of Brower Park.

The Brower Park Leaf Crunch will be on December 12<sup>th</sup> from 11 AM to 1 Pm. The tree lighting was done as of December 9<sup>th</sup> with little to no fanfare due to Covid. The tree lighting coincided with Councilman Cornegy's gift give-away in the park.

**Public Safety:** Mr. Thurton announced that 77<sup>th</sup> precinct Community Affairs Officer Lavern Green will be leaving the 77<sup>th</sup> precinct and going to 1 Police Plaza. She is currently training the two new officers, PO Zennibar and PO Willen.

Ms. Tyus thanked the Committee Chairs for their reports. With nothing further to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.