

**Community Board 8  
Webex Virtual Meeting  
June 14, 2021  
6:15 PM**

**Members Present**

Kiermoni Allison  
Glinda Andrews  
Desmond Atkins  
Lisa Atkinson  
Princess Benn-James  
Julia Boyd  
Gail Branch-Muhammad  
Robert Callahan  
Nora Daniel  
Dian Duke  
Kevin Farley  
Andrea Ferris  
Drew Gabriel  
Nizjoni Granville  
Igenie Harris-Blenman  
Marva Henry  
Xeerxeema Jordan  
Regina Kinsey  
Frances Langley  
Sarah Lazur  
Kwasi Mensah  
Kalvis Mikelsteins  
Alicia Nosenzo  
Fior Ortiz-Joyner  
Robert Puca  
Yahya Raji  
Celene Rosado  
Adam Sachs  
Brian Saunders  
Audrey Taitt-Hall  
Mark Thurton  
Greg Todd  
Ethel Tyus  
Gib Veconi  
Kimberly Watson  
Irsa Weatherspoon  
Robert Witherwax  
Deborah Young  
Vilma Zuniga

**Members Absent/Excused**

Gerri Buchanan  
John Buckholz  
Helen Coley  
Aisha Dotson  
Fred Frazier  
Tamika Gibbs  
Mireille Lemaine  
Elaine Mahoney  
Meredith Staton  
Karmisha Superville  
Yves Vilus

**Elected Officials**

Yvette Clarke, 9<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

**Elected Official Representatives**

Orlando Ross, Congresswoman Yvette Clarke  
Arna Lipkind, Councilwoman Laurie Cumbo  
Petula Hanley, Assemblywoman Stefani Zinerman  
Raul Rothblatt, Councilman Robert Cornegy  
Kim Robinson, Councilwoman Alicka Ampry-Samuel  
Khalid Jemott, Assemblywoman Diana Richardson

**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 6:20 PM by Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chair. Ms. Tyus, conducting her final meeting as Chair of the Board, made a heartwarming statement of thanks, stating that during the past two years, she was “shown the promise of this wonderful community district and the conscientious members that have chosen to serve on the board.” Across the city, she stated she is proud to say that the way CB 8 works together, is among the greatest of all the Boards that she had seen in action at meetings of various kinds and worked with on various projects. Ms. Tyus stated that she is proud to pass the torch to long time members to continue working on affordable housing, education, economic development, and others—which is why so many people want to live here in CB 8, and that she applauds the newly elected officers and will continue offering her support when called upon.

She then announced the newly appointed members: Ms. Gerri Buchanan, Ms. Aisha Dotson, Ms. Dian Duke, Ms. Frances Langley, Mr. Kwasi Mensah, Ms. Alicia Nosenzo, Ms. Fior Ortiz-Joyner, and Ms. Celene Rosado, giving all those present an opportunity to say a few words about their interests.

Ms. Duke stated that she is a previous member of the Board and glad to be back. She stated she will continue to do whatever is needed to improve the community, and looks forward to working with everyone.

Ms. Langley stated that she has lived in the community at least 30 years and currently sits on the Seniors and EST committees. She is excited to be a voting member of the full Board after participating for so long as a community resident, and looks forward to working with everyone.

Mr. Mensah stated that he is also a previous member of the Board and glad to be back to be working to improve the community at large.

Ms. Nosenzo stated that she joined the board because community involvement is enjoyable and also necessary to be helpful in improving the area and to know what is going on in the community.

Ms. Ortiz stated that she has been an active resident for 14 years now and is very passionate about the community. She stated that she looks forward to working with everyone.

Ms. Rosado introduced herself as the co-owner of Sweet Brooklyn Bar on Nostrand Avenue. She stated that she joined the Board because she felt that too often, business owners were not aware of what is going on in the community, and she wanted to make sure that resources were available in all networks.

Ms. Tyus welcomed everyone, and Ms. Duke and Mr. Mensah back to the Board, stating that she hopes their time is fruitful and enjoyable. She then asked for roll call.

**ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES** – Mr. Callahan made a motion to accept the minutes of the May meeting pending completion of a correction submitted by Irsa Weatherspoon. The motion was seconded by Mr. Todd and carried unanimously.

**CORRESPONDENCE** – CB 8 newsletter and other important information was distributed to the community via email.

Ms. Tyus acknowledged Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, and invited her to say a few words.

### **Congresswoman Yvette Clarke**

Congresswoman Clarke thanked the Board for its leadership through the pandemic, specifically citing the great work done by Ms. George and Ms. Tyus. She made a heartfelt statement about James Caldwell, long time president of the 77<sup>th</sup> Precinct Council, who recently passed, referencing his tireless community advocacy and works. She stated that the time is now for some new individuals, herself included, to pick up the mantle of the community organizing legacy passed to us with his transition.

In terms of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Congresswoman stated that she does not think the pandemic is over, and we need to continue to be vigilant in the face of Covid. Those that have not been vaccinated need to consider the many positives of vaccination and educate themselves on the facts. She cited herself as an example for those ambivalent to the vaccine, stating that she has been vaccinated since December 2020 and has no side effects. The vaccines created by Pfizer and Moderna are safe and effective in warding off susceptibility to the virus. The more that are vaccinated, the more New York City and the country can go back to, and maintain normalcy sooner rather than later.

Congresswoman Clarke mentioned quite a few of the wonderful things provided by the American Rescue Plan (ARP), which is the largest plan for the people in over four decades. Many in Congress say it is the largest plan for the people since the New Deal in terms of funds and services. The community needs to avail itself to as much as possible from the plan, and the way to do that is to learn about it. One of the greatest parts of the ARP is the Child Tax Credit, which has the potential to lift many children out of poverty. Over 17 million workers are eligible for this, including those that had once made too little to qualify for it. It provided over \$3000 for each child under the age of 16 and even more for children under 6. It is a repeating credit.

Additionally, the ARP offers a burial benefit of up to \$9000 per person transitioned or a max of \$35,000 for families that lost multiple people during the pandemic to the virus. You can apply for multiple benefits, and for family members that shared costs, each can apply on the same application for reimbursement. The idea of the benefit is to help as many people speed up their financial recovery sooner rather than later after incurring unexpected costs. If you would like to apply for the benefit, call 844-684-6333.

Also part of the ARP is the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, an FCC program that helps families to cover broadband services. There are two components to the program, inclusive of a one-time benefit of up to \$100 for reimbursement of a smart device such as tablet or laptop, and also a monthly service discount on internet service. The pandemic illustrated just how critical it is that all eligible households enroll and take advantage of affordable high speed internet. Due to its critical nature, legislation has been drafted to make this a permanent benefit.

In terms of legislation under review in the House, Congresswoman Clarke mentioned the Income Fairness Act, noting that New York City is not the only city struggling with income disparities in the AMI. To address this, Congress is looking at major HUD investment as well as redlining legislation to acknowledge the countries "original sins" creating crisis in BIPOC communities. There are other pieces of legislation, including the American Jobs Plan that Congress is hopeful will be brought to fruition. Unfortunately, there continues to be obstruction on the Senate, and it

is doubly unfortunate that some democrats do not see the urgency in the nation, especially in relation to voting rights and police and accountability act.

Ms. Tyus stated that it might be beneficial to get the service providers to lower their prices for the FCC to get more out of the program. She also noted that it is counterproductive that every time a home buyer seeks lending opportunities, it causes their credit score to drop due to the hard inquiries by each lender. There has to be a way that people can test the market without fear that their credit scores will drop. Congresswoman Clarke responded and stated that Congresswoman Maxine Waters is chair of the Banking Committee and is actively seeking a way to remedy this.

Dr. Lazur mentioned that the money that was given to New York State for rent relief (that the state did a terrible job of distributing to those in need) still has not gone to many tenants in need. There have been statements that the money would have to be returned to the federal government once the looming deadline to spend it is reached. Dr. Lazur asked if the deadline could be extended as there are numerous individuals with great need that have not gotten the intended assistance because of issues with the system, lack of assistance with applying etc. Also, she stated that the housing market is speculated in a severe way with major real estate firms buying up all the distressed homes during the pandemic. A nation of renters rather than homeowners is becoming a reality. The Congresswoman stated she will look into the possibility of extending the deadline with her colleagues, and also stated that one of the challenges of distressed properties in NYS is that most homes are privately held properties. Some homeowners may be underwater and might receive the most money they will ever receive in their lives when speculators come knocking. Brooklyn is specifically unique because the borough has large land lots that are desirable to developers. One thing that is being considered to combat this is to look at federally backed mortgages to make sure people have tools to stay in their homes.

After a few more questions and answers, Ms. Tyus thanked Congresswoman Clarke for attending and making a thorough report. She then opened the floor to elected official representatives.

**Ms. Petula Hanley** from Assemblywoman Zinerman's office announced that the Assembly is on the verge of closing a very productive legislative session. She congratulated Ms. Weatherspoon on her new role and thanked Ms. Tyus for her leadership over the last two years. She also provided platitudes for James Caldwell's community service prior to thanking everyone that had come out to the Recovery and Restoration Block Party the previous weekend.

Ms. Hanley provided information on recently passed legislative bills, especially one for Reparations, which was co-sponsored by Assemblywoman Zinerman. Also passed was a bill sponsored by Assemblyman Baron related to the rehabilitation of multiple dwelling requirements. Finally, small business recovery remains key, with \$800 mil is available. Apply at [www.nysmallbusinessrecovery.com](http://www.nysmallbusinessrecovery.com). Finally, the Healthy Families Healthy Summer Initiative is providing free summer essentials for children 0 to 5 years old including swimwear, swim diapers, diapers, wraps, summer footwear, and other summer accessories. The giveaway will be held on Saturday, June 12, 2021 from 1 to 3 PM at 1585 Fulton Street. For more information, contact Assemblywoman Stefani Zinerman's office at 718-399-7630.

**Mr. Khalid Jemmott** from Assemblywoman Diana Richardson's office announced that a Gun Violence Bill was recently passed on the floor. Please sign up for the Assemblywoman's newsletter, as there are a number of fun and exciting events coming up, including an elite

learning seminar, My Voice Theater, basketball tournament events, and of course, Juneteenth celebrations. To get on the mailing list for the newsletter, call the Assemblywoman's office at

**Ms. Kim Robinson** from Councilwoman Alicka Ampry-Samuel's office stated that it was a pleasure working with Ms. Tyus the last two years and that she looks forward to working with Ms. Weatherspoon as Chair. She also wished all male nurturing figures a Happy Father's Day.

**Mr. Raul Rothblatt** from Councilman Robert Cornegy's office stated that he is sad to see Ms. Tyus leaving the position of chair, but knows and trusts that the Board will be in good hands in the future. He, too, issued condolences to everyone affected by loss of James Caldwell, who was always extremely active and a real asset to the community to the very end.

Mr. Rothblatt announced many events coming up, details of which can be found on the Councilman's Facebook page. He mentioned the Shared Economy event, Promote a Small Business Forum, Wellness Wednesday free food giveaways, and many more coming down the pike. Please visit the facebook page often as it is constantly updated and new things/information added.

**Ms. Arna Lipkind** from Councilwoman Laurie Cumbo's office also offered condolences to community and family of James Caldwell. She stated that the Majority Leader is focusing a lot of attention on gun violence, which is predominately in the Crown Heights community. She recommended that those interested in combatting gun violence should reach out to their local Community Affairs office and NCOs to see what can be done to make the community feel safer. The Majority Leader will send a group to all future Build the Block meetings.

In regards to upcoming events and information pertinent to the community, Ms. Lipkind announced that a Housing Resource sheet is available on the councilwoman's facebook page. Also present on the facebook page is how to connect to the rent relief program. Everyone in need of the funds and services is encouraged to apply to get the grants they need. The One Crown Heights Annual Neighborhood Festival will be held on August 15<sup>th</sup>. There will be many resources available as well as entertainment. Finally, Ms. Lipkind wished a Happy Father's Day to all fatherhood figures.

Ms. Tyus thanked the elected official representatives for the updates and asked Mr. Sean O'Learey from the NYC Campaign Finance Board to say a few words on Ranked Choice Voting.

### **NYC Campaign Finance Board** – Mr. Sean O'Learey

Mr. O'Learey announced that this is a major voting time in the city, as every major office and two-thirds of the council, all five boro presidents, and three district attorney seats are up for grabs. Additionally, this year, primary elections will be done by Ranked Choice voting (RCV), where each voter can rank up to five candidates for the same seat.

Mr. O'Leary showed a brief video explaining how RC works. RCV can lead to a more diverse winning candidate scenario. Currently, it is used in numerous counties, cities, and other voting events nationwide. The process eliminates run-off elections if no one gets more than 50 % of first place votes. In this case, the votes move up based on preference until there is a winner. Voters can indeed still only vote once, but the great thing about ranking up to five choices (if available) is that your voice carries longer and farther. However, a candidate cannot be ranked more than once. If a

candidate wins more than 50% of first place votes, they automatically win, but in the case that this does not happen, counting is done in rounds if no one wins outright. Each round, the candidate with the least number of votes get dropped. Votes of dropped candidates move upward, which is why ranking multiple candidates gives you more say in the election outcome.

Showing a sample ballot of how voting will take place during the upcoming primary election, Mr. O’Leary illustrated that you pick your first-choice candidate and completely fill in the oval next to their name under the 1st column. If you have a second-choice candidate, fill in the oval next to their name under the 2nd column, and do this same procedure for your top five choices should five be available. He stressed that ranking other candidates does not harm your first choice. If your top-choice candidate is eliminated first or quickly, your vote goes to the next highest ranked candidate on your ballot.

What are the benefits of Ranked Choice Voting?

- Ranked Choice Voting gives you more say in who gets elected. Even if your top choice candidate does not win, you can still help choose who does.
- More civility and less negative campaigning. Candidates who are not your top choice still need your support as your 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th choice. This makes them more likely to appeal to a wider audience.
- More diverse and representative candidates win elections. Cities that have implemented Ranked Choice Voting have elected more women and more women of color, making their elected officials more representative of their communities.

Mr. O’Leary did an interactive ballot to show how to properly fill it out and also to show how the votes “move up” if no candidate gets 50% of first place votes. No candidate gets the same ranking.

After a few questions and answers centered around ballot errors, Ms. Tyus thanked Mr. O’Leary for the information and advised everyone to start looking into candidates to create their voting plan. She then asked for a report from the following committees:

**SLA and Sidewalk Café Review Committee (SLAC)** – Ms. Irsa Weatherspoon, Chair; Mr. Robert Witherwax, Vice Chair

The SLAC Committee met on Monday, June 7, 2021 via Webex. The committee discussed the following liquor license applications:

### **Renewals**

- Banhmigos, 636 Park Place – Beer/wine/cider (lot line sidewalk café)
- Art Bar, 884-886 Pacific Street – Full (patio/deck)
- Bar Meridian, 406 Prospect Place – Full (juke box, licensed sidewalk café)
- Bar Chuko, 565 Vanderbilt Avenue – Beer/wine/cider
- Burrito Bar, 307 Flatbush Avenue – Full (licensed sidewalk café)
- Free House, 644 Franklin Avenue – Full (licensed backyard)

The committee voted to support each of the above renewals and hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

Mr. Atkins made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Dr. Lazur and carried with a final motion of 31 in favor, 0 opposed, with 1 abstention.

The committee also heard a renewal application for **Heights Grill located at 766 Classon Avenue** (full license). The proprietor was not on the agenda, nor had the District office received a 30-day notice to municipality for the establishment whose license has been expired for a year now. The committee heard the applicant's presentation and voted 12 in favor to support the renewal application with the condition that the NYS Liquor Authority confirms that the applicant will not be treated as a new application. The committee hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

Mr. Saunders made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Dr. Lazur and carried with a final tally of 33 in favor, 0 opposed, with 2 abstentions.

### **New Application**

Soccerroof, 1700 Atlantic Avenue (between Troy and Schenectady Avenues) – Full License (annexed recreational indoor soccer facility, DJ, occasional performances of live music, no licensed outdoor area)

- Unique venture as an indoor soccer facility with five fields on an underutilized manufacturing block with no residences and next to a strip mall
- Space will be made available for private events featuring live music and other entertainment, but no untrusted 3<sup>rd</sup> party promoters (as in the space will not be used as a nightclub or party space)
- Second establishment in Brooklyn of its kind as the proprietor operates a similar facility in Sunset Park, Brooklyn.
- Food and beverage area with 5 tables and 45 seats, and 12 seats at one bar
- Max capacity is 150 patrons
- Proposed hours of operation to 4 AM daily

The committee voted 12 in favor with 4 abstentions to support the application with the condition that the applicant close the premises by 1 AM Sunday through Thursday, and 2 AM Friday and Saturday. The applicant agreed. The committee hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

Ms. Ortiz-Joyner questioned if there would be security due to the fact that the space is on an underutilized block with no residences. She was informed that there would be security based on the rental and reservations to meet the very specific thresholds for security personnel.

Ms. Tyus made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ortiz-Joyner and carried with a final tally of 34 in favor, 0 opposed, with 1 abstention.

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

The EST Committee met on Tuesday, May 25, 2021 via Webex. The committee discussed the Zoning Text Amendment presented by the NYC Dept. of City Planning and NYC Metropolitan

Transportation Authority (MTA) to a joint meeting of the EST and Land Use committees on April 27, 2021.

The Elevate Transit: Zoning for Accessibility proposal is a citywide zoning text amendment that would enable many more subway and train stations to become more accessible for the millions of transit riders daily.

The proposed text amendment would:

- Expand the easement requirement, currently only high density districts, system-wide;
- Provide zoning flexibility to offset potential burdens of an easement on development feasibility; and
- Increase participation in the transit bonus program to support the provision of station improvements in high-density areas in the city.

If approved, all developments and enlargements on zoning lots of at least 5,000 square feet and within 50 feet of mass transit stations, in all applicable zoning districts (R5 or higher with a commercial overlay; all commercial districts with a C7 or C8; all manufacturing districts), would be subject to mandatory review by the MTA and Chair of the CPC regarding the need for and feasibility of a transit easement. (CB8 is R6 or higher.)

If it is determined that a transit easement is needed and feasible, the owner of the zoning lot would be obligated to provide such a transit easement for station improvements, such as elevators, escalators, and other means of improved access.

In exchange, acknowledging that these transit easements can have a significant impact on construction (reduced available floor area, reduced parking, and incompatibility with the surrounding streetscape), the zoning text amendment would provide relief, such as additional height, reducing the mandatory minimum number of parking spaces, providing parking waivers, and exemption from streetscape requirements, amongst others.

The committee voted 7 in favor with 1 abstention to support the zoning text amendment in hopes that the full Board support its recommendation.

Responding to a series of questions about the type of construction necessary to qualify for the program, Mr. Witherwax stated that it is only for ground-up construction new buildings, not renovation projects. Unfortunately, CB 8 does not qualify for the program at this time as we missed a number of opportunities, specifically at Franklin Avenue 2, 3, 4, 5 station for either an escalator or elevator when the building at the corner was constructed. Another opportunity was missed at the LIRR Nostrand Avenue station, so the elevator that was installed has consequently reduced valuable sidewalk space on a narrow portion of Atlantic Avenue.

Ms. Tyus made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Atkins and carried with a final tally of 34 in favor, 0 opposed, with 3 abstentions.

**Seniors** – Ms. Gail Branch-Muhammad, Chair; Ms. Regina Kinsey, Vice Chair

Ms. Branch-Muhammad announced that the Seniors committee held its last meeting for the current season last week and had a guest speaker from the NYC Emergency Response Team. The



committee was briefed on the essential items that should be in a prepared “Go-Bag” in case of emergency. Members also discussed RCV, which has been difficult for many senior and others to comprehend, and, ending on a lighter note, members discussed recreational and cultural events that seniors can participate in.

**Economic Development** – Mr. Brian Saunders, Chair

Mr. Saunders invited everyone to join the Economic Development Committee of Community Board 8 on Saturday, June 12, 2021 from 12 PM to 3 PM for the first installment of The Commercial Corridor Walk through Series: Building Strong Businesses Block by Block. Merchants will have access to information on Business Loans and Grants; Funding and Partnership Opportunities; Public Safety Measures; Keeping Your Business Safe and others. Participants will meet at Lakou Café located at 195 Utica Avenue (between Park and Prospect Place) at 12 PM sharp. The event is brought to you in partnership with: NYC Dept. of Small Business Services; Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce; Kings County District Attorney’s Office; 77th Precinct; and Local Elected Officials.

Mr. Saunders wished everyone a Happy Fathers Day, thanked Ms. Tyus for trusting him with the committee and James Ellis for the assistance getting the committee up and running.

**Housing (Advocacy)** – Ms. Nizjoni Granville, Chair; Mr. Adam Sachs, Vice Chair

Ms. Granville stated that the Housing committee met last night and had an extensive discussion about the rent relief program and many of the defects that have been reported. Many have complained that the application process is not simple, the online only form disallows seniors in need of it to apply, the website crashing mid-application and the information not saving, and being unable to get a listing of agencies and organizations in a position to assist were among the chief complaints. She stated that the committee will start inviting electeds and their reps to the Housing Advocacy meetings to build a rapport and let them know the ongoing issues rather than waiting for the time when their assistance is needed.

**Youth and Education** – Ms. Nora Daniel, Chair

Ms. Daniel announced that the Youth and Education committee recently held the first of the series of events focusing on jobs and careers for youth. Additional seminars will be held over the course of the next months.

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

Mr. Thurton announced that there is a new commanding officer coming to 77<sup>th</sup> in the near future. This was the first time the community has had an opportunity weigh in on who is placed in the post. The committee discussed the trending spike in crime in the confines of the 77<sup>th</sup>. He stated that the NCO Build the Block meetings need more community participation. Public Safety will be joining with many of the other committees in the coming meeting season as there are many similarities of needs across them.

**Parks** – Ms. Glinda Andrews, Chair; Mr. Greg Todd, Vice Chair

Ms. Andrews announced that the Parks Committee held its last meeting for the season on June 1<sup>st</sup>. She also mentioned quite a few upcoming events in local parks and community gardens,

including a Juneteenth even at Brower Park and the Imani Garden Plant sale every Friday and Saturday.

**Land Use** – Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chair

Ms. Tyus announced that the Land Use committee did not meet in June, but the committee is planning multiple educational meetings over the summer before the start of the fall meeting season.

Ms. Tyus thanked the committee chairs present for their reports and opened the floor for public comments.

**Ms. Deb Young** announced the Crown Heights North Association's shredding event on June 19<sup>th</sup> from 9 AM to Noon. Stating that she is aware it is also Juneteenth and that there are many celebrations happening, interested individuals can drop their shredding off and then go around the corner to Brower Park for their celebrations. Additionally, CHNA started a Go-Fund-Me for the Hebron Development Legal Defense fund. LPC approved the development project that is out of touch with the surrounding landscape and detrimental to the community. An anonymous donor has agreed to match any funds donated on the page.

**Mr. James Ellis**, Executive Director of the North Flatbush BID invited everyone to Flatbush Avenue make music Celebration on June 21<sup>st</sup> which also marks the summer solstice. There will be many live performances, including performances by a Senior Quartet and Brazilian Drum quarters.

**Ms. Marva Henry** announced that Friends and Family of the Wrongfully Convicted is a service oriented facility that has a new location in our district on Dean Street at Classon Avenue. The organizations has food giveaways and provides support for family and friends of incarcerated individuals. They have pop up shops featuring local vendors to help cover support costs.

**Ms. Irsa Weatherspoon** thanked Ms. Tyus for her commitment and service to the board and community, stating that Ms. Tyus is very resourceful with information. She stated that she and other members appreciate her and the service she rendered.

With no additional items to be discussed, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.