

**Community Board 8  
Webex Virtual Meeting  
May 13, 2021**

**6:15 PM**

**Members Present**

Kiermoni Allison  
Glinda Andrews  
Desmond Atkins  
Lisa Atkinson  
Wayne Bailey  
Princess Benn-James  
Julia Boyd  
Gail Branch-Muhammad  
John Buckholz  
Robert Callahan  
Nora Daniel  
District  
James Ellis  
Kevin Farley  
Drew Gabriel  
Tamika Gibbs  
Richardson  
Nizjoni Granville  
Marva Henry  
Xeerxeema Jordan  
Regina Kinsey  
Dr. Sarah Lazur  
Mireille Lemaine  
Elaine Mahoney  
Kalvis Mikelsteins  
Robert Puca  
Yahya Raji  
Adam Sachs  
Brian Saunders  
Meredith Staton  
Audrey Taitt-Hall  
Mark Thurton  
Greg Todd  
Ethel Tyus  
Gib Veconi  
Kimberly Watson  
Irsa Weatherspoon  
Sharon Wedderburn  
Robert Witherwax  
Deborah Young  
Vilma Zuniga

**Members Absent/Excused**

Hanjy Charles  
Helen Coley  
Andrea Ferris  
Fred Frazier  
Igenie Harris-Blenman  
Karmisha Superville  
Yves Vilus

**Elected Officials**

Edu Hermelyn, District Leader 43<sup>rd</sup> Assembly

**Elected Official Representatives**

Khalid Jemmott, Assemblywoman Diana  
  
Kim Robinson, Councilwoman Alika Ampry-Samuel  
Orlando Ross, Congresswoman Yvette Clarke  
Raul Rothblatt, Councilman Robert Cornegy  
Nickolas Perry, Comptroller Scott Stringer  
Nan Blackshear, Borough President Eric Adams  
Karen Chambers, District Attorney Eric Gonzalez

**CB 8 Staff**

Michelle George, District Manager  
Julia Neale, Community Coordinator

The regular meeting of Community Board 8 was called to order at 6:20 PM by Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chairperson. Ms. Tyus announced that due to inability to secure meeting spaces, the board would likely have to continue meeting virtually for the next coming months until facilities feel comfortable allowing their spaces to be used for meetings. The chair asked for roll call.

**Acceptance of Minutes** -- Mr. Veconi made a motion to accept the April minutes with any necessary corrections. The motion as seconded by Mr. Raji and carried unanimously.

**Correspondence** -- Important information was emailed to the community.

Ms. Tyus opened the floor for comments by elected officials and elected official representatives.

**District Leader Edu Hermelyn** announced that despite it being a long year, he is looking forward to working with the Board in the coming months. He stated that many are adjusting to the virtual world quite adeptly while others are experiencing difficulties that he is looking to work to address with other elected officials. District Leader Hermelyn acknowledged the Crown Heights North Multi-Block & Tenant Association (CHNMBTA) for the neighborhood cleanup day and flower planting day recently held. He gave special recognition to Mark Thurton, stating that it was a pleasant experience working with him and everyone in CHNMBTA during the successful events.

**Mr. Orlando Ross** from Congresswoman Yvette Clarke's office announced that the Restaurant Revitalization Fund is now active and proprietors can apply online. Additionally, videos are available on the Congresswoman's YouTube page on the American Rescue Plan and the Infrastructure Plan that will bring money into community via various projects.

**Ms. Kim Robinson** from Councilwoman Alicka Ampry-Samuel's office wished a happy belated Mother's Day to all mothering entities. She announced that the Section 8 voucher waitlist will be open from May 17<sup>th</sup> thru 28<sup>th</sup> for new applications. Recently, Councilwoman Ampry-Samuel and the Council passed the Ranked Choice Voting Education Bill, mandating educational campaign for ranked choice voting because too many people in the city do not understand the new way of voting. It is urgent that voters have a clear understanding of what it means and how it will impact elections in the future. Furthermore, the Councilwoman is working on legislation for women returning to the workplace and what women in the workplace means. As mothers, women do so much, and more support for working mothers is needed. Finally, the Councilwoman's office remains closed to walk-ins, but in-person visits remain by appointment only.

**Ms. Karen Chambers** from Kings County District Attorney Eric Gonzalez's office brought greetings from the DA announcing that the office is open, with the majority of staff having returned to the office. If you are a constituent in need, please call 718-250-4877. DA Gonzalez will be hosting a gun buyback on May 22, 2021 from 10AM to 2PM at 90 Watkins Avenue. Guns can be exchanged for cash gift cards.

**Mr. Khalid Jemmott** from Assemblywoman Diana Richardson's office wished everyone a happy belated Mother's Day. The Assemblywoman's office remains closed, but constituents can call for updates on various legislative efforts. There are weekly food distributions in the community for those in need at various locations. Staff is currently assisting older residents with SCRIE applications for reductions in rent and property taxes. If you need assistance, please call 718- 771-3105.

**Mr. Raul Rothblatt** from Councilman Robert Cornegy's office announced that he is pleased to support Councilwomen Laurie Cumbo and Alicka Ampry-Samuel for their recently introduced motherhood legislation. Additionally, Mr. Rothblatt announced the Artists' Fund with \$25 million dollars to help artists cover the costs of the challenging covid-19 pandemic. It is imperative that local artists have access to these funds and not just the organizations like BAM and the Met. Details on the fund are still unfolding, but those interested can remain in contact to ensure that they have access.

Mr. Rothblatt also updated the Board on legislation co-sponsored by Councilman Cornegy, including one that increases penalties for defacing houses of worship. There is a cultural heritage bill supporting the intangibles of cultural heritage. New bills introduced include air testing of subway air quality as well as air quality in schools. Those that would like additional information are encouraged to visit the Councilman's Facebook page as there is a lot of information on there and it is updated daily. Finally, food distribution continues every Wednesday at locations in the 36<sup>th</sup> District, and also every Wednesday evening, the Councilman hosts a Facebook live discussion.

**Mr. Nickolas Perry** from Comptrollers Scott Stringer's office announced that the Office of Diversity Initiatives focuses on assisting women and minority owned businesses get access to city business via the procurement process. Via the initiative, the MWBE University as it is called, holds a series of webinars for MWBE's to assist them with increasing their chances of securing contracts and bids. The next webinar will be held on June 9, 2021 at 11 AM. For more information, please call 646-499-0749.

**Ms. Nan Blackshear** from Borough President's Eric Adams' office announced that the reappointment of current members and appointment of new members is currently under review. Letters will go out by the end of May for those either newly appointed or reappointed. If you have not received a letter of reappointment by June 1, 2021, please contact the Boro President's office at 718-802-3700.

BP Adams recently held a ranked choice voting training in April to help Brooklynites understand the new way of voting. If you visit the BP's YouTube page, you will be able to access the recording and the training in its entirety. Finally, Ms. Blackshear announced that when the federal government extended the tax deadline to July 15<sup>th</sup>, BP Adams' immediately requested Gov. Cuomo to do the same for New York State taxes, and the governor approved the request.

Ms. Tyus thanked the elected official representatives for their reports and asked for a report from the following committees:

**Nominating Committee** – Mr. Adam Sachs, Chair

Mr. Sachs stated that the Nominating Committee has counted all the ballots and announced the newly elected officers for Community Board 8. A record amount of participation was obtained with 43 of the 46 appointed members participating in the election. The officers are as follows:

Chairperson: Irsa Weatherspoon  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair: Gail Branch-Muhammad  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair: Deborah Young  
3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair: Nizjoni Granville  
Secretary: Princess Benn-James  
Treasurer: Yahya Raji

Sergeant at Arms: Drew Gabriel

Their term will begin on July 1, 2021 and run through June 30, 2023.

Ms. Weatherspoon made the following personal statement after the slate was read:

“I am honored to have been elected as the new Chair of the Board. I thank all the members that supported me and participated in this election. Congratulations to all other newly elected Executive Board members, and I look forward to continuing the great working relationship with Robert Witherwax and other members on the Environment/Sanitation/Transportation Committee, as well as all other committees. Robert and I both ran for the position of Chair but we did not run against each other, and that illustrates the respect we have for each other. The time now is a great opportunity for us as a Board to get poised, take a moment to recalibrate, and do all we can do to work together for the greater good of all of District 8’s residents. I look forward to serving as chairperson of Community Board 8.”

Ms. Tyus congratulated Ms. Weatherspoon and stated that she hopes the incoming officers work with those that are leaving their position.

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

The SLAC Committee met on Monday, May 3, 2021 via Webex. The committee discussed the following liquor license applications:

### **Renewal Applications**

- Bearded Lady, 686A Washington Avenue – Full (sidewalk café)
- Ode to Babel, 772 Dean Street – Full (DJ, live music, local talent, security, patron dancing, karaoke)
- Born Thai, 293 Flatbush Avenue –Full (backyard)
- Stocked Burger, 663 Washington Avenue –Beer/wine/cider

The committee voted to support all four renewals in hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

Ms. Gibbs made a motion to support the committee’s recommendation. The motion was seconded by Dr. Lazur and carried unanimously with 36 in favor.

### **New Applications**

**Ozakaya**, 635 Vanderbilt Avenue – Beer/wine/cider

- Applicant also owns Nourish Thai at 637A Vanderbilt Avenue
- Hours of Operation: Noon to 10 PM Sunday thru Thursday, Noon to 11 PM Friday and Saturday
- 12 tables with 21 seats; 5 seats at one bar; max capacity interior 38
- Outdoor patio with 20 seats at 5 tables, 20 being max capacity to operate daily from Noon to 10 PM
- Applicant is taking advantage of roadway street seating as well, also operating from Noon to 10 PM as well

- 6 total service employees

The committee voted 9 in favor, 0 opposed, with 1 abstention to support the license with the condition that the applicant remove outdoor speakers. The applicant agreed, and the committee hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

Ms. Branch-Muhammad made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Dr. Lazur and carried unanimously with 36 in favor.

**No. 7 Restaurant**, 599 Vanderbilt Avenue –Full

- This is the third time applicant has presented before the Board for their removal application to relocate their establishment into District 8
- Hours of Operation: closed Monday; Noon to 10 PM Sunday; 5 Pm to 1 AM Tuesday thru Thursday; 5 PM to 2 AM Friday; Noon to 2 AM Saturday
- No outdoor service area at this location

The committee voted 10 in favor to support the application as presented and hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

Mr. Atkins made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Ms. Weatherspoon and carried unanimously with 36 in favor.

The next SLAC meeting will be held on Monday, June 7, 2021 via Webex, details of which can be found on the Board's calendar.

**Land Use** – Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chair

The Land Use Committee met on Thursday, May 6, 2021 via Webex. The committee discussed the following:

**1. Committee Hearing on ULURP Application for a Private Rezoning of 840 Atlantic Ave (C210249ZMK and N210250ZRK) (55:17)**

This is the third presentation an application from Vanderbilt Atlantic Holdings LLC for a zoning map amendment for block 1122, lots 1, 9, 10, 68, 69, 70 and 71 to change from M1-1 and R6B to C6-3X and a zoning text amendment to designate a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) area and allow flexibility in the location of the street wall in order to facilitate an 18-story mixed use development with 316 dwelling units (95 affordable units), 50,650 SF of retail and 7,490 SF of community facility space in the Prospect Heights neighborhood. The proposed site is directly across the street from the Prospect Heights Historic District, an area that is also listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Stephanie Marazzi and Benjamin Stark presented a revised plan for the project, downsizing it as compared to the plan presented to the Committee in March and April. 2021. Mr. Stark indicated that the project:

- will have a maximum height of 145' along portions of Atlantic Ave,
- was certified with MIH Option 2 but will move to MIH Option 1 (and 3),
- will provide for dance space/creative/performing arts center/space on the ground and second floors in perpetuity,
- will sign a restrictive declaration that aligns with the CB M-CROWN Resolution,

- will adopt an R8A envelope in part with stepped down density, bulk and height, with R6B on Pacific St., and
- will hire 32BJ members.

Committee members asked questions on: the number of dwelling units in the revised plan, the number of affordable apartments, rental rates/SF, and the revised number of parking spaces, among others. Mr. Stark indicated he would send a revised presentation.

Mr. Gib Veconi made a motion to deny support for the project until the following conditions are met:

- That in lieu of the proposed C6-3X district, lots 70 and 71 be rezoned R7A with a C1-4 overlay, matching the zoning on blocks to the south on Vanderbilt;
- That in lieu of the proposed C6-3X district, lots 68 and 69, and the portion of lot 1 fronting Pacific Street be rezoned R6B, matching the zoning on lots to the east on Pacific;
- That in lieu of the proposed C6-3X district for the remainder of lot 1, as well as lots 9 and 10, the following action be taken:
  - a. The applicant removes these lots from its applications, and files a zoning text amendment to create a contextual variation of the existing C6-1 zoning district with required non-residential frontage consistent with the regulations of the Special Enhanced Commercial District (SECD), with base FAR of 6 and incentive FAR of 1 for non-residential use.
  - b. If (a) is not possible, in lieu of the proposed district, then Applicant makes a binding commitment subject to the establishment of C6-2A zoning to restrict residential use on the lots to 4.6 FAR.
  - c. If (b) is not possible, the lots be rezoned C4-5D.
  - d. That all lots be mapped to MIH options 1 and 3, and that the applicant make a binding commitment to offer the required affordable units under MIH option 3.
  - e. That the applicant makes a binding commitment to restrict the use of 8,000 sq. ft. to UG 9A (limited to studios), the latter to ensure a permanent facility for a creative arts sector studio.

The motioned was seconded by Dr. Lazur and the Committee voted 15 in favor of denying support (disapproving the project), with two against, and one abstention.

The conditions requested would align the project more closely with the Community Board's M-CROWN proposal for mixed-use commercial/residential density along Atlantic Avenue than does the existing proposal. The Land Use Committee vote/recommendation with conditions will be before the full Board on May 13, 2021 for ratification, and will go before the Borough President on May 17, 2021. Mr. Stark offered to provide a written revised plan which is expected on May 11, 2021 but had not been received by the general meeting.

Ms. Tyus and Mr. Veconi both announced that revised plans of the proposal were to have been sent to the district office prior to the meeting but were not. Some revisions were presented at the Land Use meeting but not included in the files that the committee was able to review; as such, there is some confusion about the exact details of the project and the revisions.

There was much discussion about revisions and the ramifications of some proposed plans as it relates to maximum heights and square footage. Additionally, the applicant was asked if they

would be amenable to agreeing to the recommendations put forth by the committee and they stated they would not be because the limitations placed on the usage of the space does not allow for a changing community's needs.

Mr. Witherwax asked what the major differences are between the initial proposal, the changes, and the MCROWN proposal. He was informed that the Board is working with the applicant in good faith to avoid unfairly confusing residents with information not grounded in fact. Mr. Veconi showed multiple maps that illustrated that this proposal might equate to up to 39% more density on Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Street compared to what MCROWN is seeking.

After a brief question and answer period during which the applicant responded to Mr. Veconi's assessment of a 39% increase in density, Dr. Lazur made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Ms. Henry and carried with a final vote of 34 in favor, 1 opposed, with 1 abstention.

The next Land Use Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, June 3, 2021 via Webex, details of which can be found on the Board's calendar.

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

The Seniors Committee met on Wednesday, May 5, 2021 via Free Conference Call. Ms. Branch-Muhammad thanked Mr. Kalvis Mikelsteins for assistance with food distribution. She stated that the committee is looking to have a presentation on CBD and marijuana for medicinal purposes at an upcoming meeting. The most recent presentation on Elder Abuse from the District Attorney's office was quite informative.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 2, 2021 via Free Conference call, details of which can be found on the Board's calendar.

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

Mr. Thurton announced that the Public Safety committee met on Monday, April 26, 2021 via Webex. The committee discussed the recent changes to marijuana laws, and Mr. Thurton announced that the NYPD is still in training on how to handle the new laws. He made a sad announcement about the passing of Officer Mundy of the 77<sup>th</sup> due to COVID.

The next meeting will be held on May 24, 2021 via Webex, details of which can be found on the Board's website.

**Health** – Ms. Tamika Gibbs and Ms. Elaine Mahoney, Co-Chairs

Ms. Mahoney announced the committee's support of the many initiatives by Friends of Brower Park in the coming weeks. The next meeting will be on Thursday, May 20, 2021 via Webex, details of which can be found on the Board's website.

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

The Housing Committee met on Wednesday, May 12, 2021 via WEbex. Ms. Granville announced that the committee held a detailed discussion on Council Speaker Corey Johnson's planning proposal. The committee concluded that members and even the Board might be under-resourced

in terms of experience and information regarding planning and zoning, expertise, specialists, etc. The lack of resourced might also extend city-wide.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, June 9, 2021, details of which can be found on the Board's website.

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

Mr. Witherwax announced that the EST Committee will meet on May 25, 2021 and has a full agenda, including revisiting the Zoning Text Amendment of future developments near MTA transit and LIRR sites to incorporate transit infrastructure into the development. The committee will also finalize committee goals for the coming 2021-2022 meeting year.

Ms. Cassandre Davilmar made a comment about the sanitation issues on Utica Avenue, stating that at the Board's suggestion, she obtained a petition with over 1600 signatures of people upset about the sanitation issues in the area. Additionally, also at the suggestion of District office staff, she is currently drafting a letter to the local council representatives of the situation since the BK8 garage said that there is not much they could do about the sanitation concerns, inclusive of a lot of dumping and a dearth of corner baskets despite the plethora of bus stops and subway stations.

Mr. Atkins provided information on a sanitation initiative to remove corner baskets. Additionally, he stated, it is a matter of stronger legislation to disallow only one citation per month for repeat offenders and a need for more substantive reprimands.

**Youth and Education** – Ms. Nora Daniel, Interim-Chair; Ms. Marva Henry, Interim-Vice Chair

Ms. Henry announced that the Youth and Education committee met May 4, 2021 to discuss the upcoming CEC elections and also continued planning for their career and education series. The event will be held on May 25, 2021 and will have experts from the music industry present to discuss the many career opportunities in music. The event will be held on Zoom from 4 to 6 PM and outreach is currently being done in middle and high schools in Districts 13, 16, and 17. Ms. Henry issued condolences to Sharon Wedderburn over the loss of her mother.

Ms. Lisa Atkinson, a committee member, announced that MS898 is to become a magnet school.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, June 1, 2021 via Webex, details of which can be found on the Board's website.

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

Mr. Saunders thanked everyone that attended the last meeting on May 11, 2021. The committee discussed what the cannabis legalization laws mean and the many opportunities in economic development are available via the different licenses. He stated that another presentation will be made the next meeting on June 8<sup>th</sup> via Webex and a presentation before the full Board.

On June 12, 2021, a few committee members will have a walk thru of small businesses on Utica Avenue alongside the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. It coincides with the first day of early voting, so the committee is hopeful to get some elected officials or elected hopefuls to participate.



The goal of the walk through is to let small businesses know that they are not alone. Mr. Saunders also thanked James Ellis for his assistance in getting the committee up and running.

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

Ms. Andrews announced that the Parks committee met May 4, 2021 via Webex and discussed a number of events coming up at Brower Park. She announced the Juneteenth event; celebration of Brower's Winged Creatures on May 12, 2021; the 3<sup>rd</sup> virtual urban gardening event; pride games on June 26<sup>th</sup>. Information on any of these events can be found on Facebook and Instagram by searching for Friends of Brower Park. Finally, Imani Garden has a plant sale every Saturday and Sunday from 10 AM to Noon.

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

Ms. Tyus brought to the attention of the Board that the number of motorized vehicles on sidewalks complaints have increased. These incidents endanger pedestrians.

Mr. Ellis announced that on May 21<sup>st</sup>, the North Flatbush BID will be hosting a Bike to Work Day, that includes bike registration to help prevent bike thefts. There will also be a helmet distribution at the event to keep bikers safe.

Ms. Tyus thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 9:15 PM.