

**Community Board 8
General Meeting
Webex Virtual Meeting**

November 12, 2020

Members Present

Kiermoni Allison
Princess Benn-James
Julia Boyd
Gail Branch-Muhammad
John Buckholz
Robert Callahan
Hanjy Charles
Nora Daniel
James Ellis
Kevin Farley
Andrea Ferris
Drew Gabriel
Tamika Gibbs
Nizjoni Granville
Igenie Harris-Blenman
Marva Henry
Xeerxeema Jordan
Sarah Lazur
Mireille Lemaine
Elaine Mahoney
Robert Puca
Yahya Raji
Adam Sachs
Brian Saunders
Mark Thurton
Greg Todd
Ethel Tyus
Gib Veconi
Irsa Weatherspoon
Robert Witherwax
Deborah Young

Members Absent/Excused

Glinda Andrews
Desmond Atkins
Lisa Atkinson
Wayne Bailey
Helen Coley
Fred Frazier
Regina Kinsey
Kalvis Mikelsteins
Meredith Staton
Karmisha Superville
Audrey Taitt-Hall
Yves Vilus
Kimberly Watson
Sharon Wedderburn

Elected Officials Present

Edu Hermelyn, 43rd AD District Leader

Elected Officials Representatives

Kim Robinson, Councilwoman Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Kara Clark, Senator-Elect Jabari Brisport
Karen Ford, KCDA Eric Gonzalez
Orlando Ross, Congresswoman Yvette Clarke

CB 8 Staff

Michelle George, District Manager
Julia Neale, Community Coordinator

The regular meeting of Community Board 8 was called to order Nov. 12, 2020 at 6 PM by Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chairperson. She thanked everyone that participated in the general election the previous week, and stated that voting is a very efficient way to effect change. She opened the floor for elected official representatives.

Ms. Kara Clark, Chief of Staff with newly elected Senator Jabari Brisport, announced three positions available with the Senator's office. She provided a link in the chat for the job announcements and

application process. Additionally, Ms. Clark announced an upcoming Healthcare Town Hall sponsored by the newly elected Senator, again posting a link in the chat to the flyer.

Healthcare Town Hall: https://actionnetwork.org/events/healthcare-town-hall-w-phara-souffrant-forrest-jabari-brisport?source=direct_link&

Employment Opportunity:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q8VOsK5QMkK0oEJJ2g6bSXgS8vgi_vFA/view

Ms. Kim Robinson from Councilwoman Alicka Ampry-Samuel's office wished everyone a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season. She stated that 2020 will be the start of new family traditions and ways of celebrating as we revel socially distanced style. She impressed upon everyone the importance of wearing a mask and keeping close family gatherings small, and also normalizing testing.

Ms. Karen Chambers from Kings County District Attorney Eric Gonzalez's office announced that most of the office continues to work remotely as they are adhering to the state mandate of 25% staff capacity. However, she remains available via telephone at 718.250.4877 to help address any concerns.

Mr. Edu Hermelyn, District Leader with the 43rd Assembly District, introduced himself to the Board and stated that he looks forward to working with us. His background includes 23 years of government service and education, and he is an active member of Alpha Kappa Psi Fraternity and operates the Brooklyn/Queens Chapter. He looks forward to partnering with CB 8 on outreach opportunities.

Mr. Orlando Ross from Congresswoman Clarke's office thanked the Board for partnering for delivering hand sanitizer. Ms. George participated in a video tribute to the Congresswoman. He stated that newly elected President-elect Biden should mean assistance and better leadership in the COVID fight. He wished everyone a happy and healthy holiday season.

Ms. Tyus thanked the elected officials and their representatives for their announcements and asked for the following committee reports:

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

The SLAC Committee met on Monday, November 2, 2020 via Webex. The committee entertained a new liquor license application for Trini Girl West Indian Cuisine, 628 Nostrand Avenue for a beer/wine/cider license.

Details of the application include:

- Hours of operation: 10 AM midnight Sundays; 8 AM to 1 AM Monday through Saturday
- Outside of COVID-19, indoor seating will be 4 tables with 8 seats and one bar with 8 seats. Maximum patron capacity capped at 20.
- There was no outdoor space indicated on the application outside of COVID, but all establishments are allowed curbside seating in the parking lane provided there is neither a bus stop nor a hydrant.

The committee voted 10 in favor with no abstentions or opposition to support the application in hopes that the full Board supports its recommendation.

Prior to the vote, Mr. Ellis updated the Board on current restrictions on liquor licenses and gyms starting Friday, November 13th, as well as an update on sidewalk permitting. Additionally, he announced MEND NYC, a City program designed to share concerns and issues with hospitality establishments to work through the issues rather than seeking assistance from regulatory and enforcement agencies. MEND is offered through the office of tribunals and hearings that allows neighbors to work with businesses through mediation, encouraging neighbors to speak with businesses prior to contacting regulatory agencies unless there is a health issue.

Dr. Lazur made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gibbs and carried with a final vote of 26 in favor, 0 opposed, with 1 abstention.

Land Use – Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chair

The Land Use Committee met on Thursday, November 5, 2020 via Webex. The committee presents the following resolution for consideration:

ACTION ITEM - RESOLUTION

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 Ave in the Crown Heights North Historic District (CHNHD)

Whereas Guy Kohn, of Kohn Architecture, presented plans and photos describing the project; and

Whereas two of the seven condominium owners at 875 St Marks Ave implored the Land Use Committee to understand the financial burden caused by the prior owner's cavalier treatment of the building's extraordinary details (curved windows in the turret, stone and wood detail accents on the turret facade surrounding the fenestration, among other singular treatments) by removing those details; and

Whereas the project proponents presented the application as a hardship case and a cost-saving attempt to rectify damage done by the prior owner notwithstanding that apparently no research has been done into historic preservation requirements, related tax credits, or grants; and

Whereas damage done by the prior owner includes placing a modern, multi-unit mailbox in the front areaway; and

Whereas Committee members 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 project work as presented, Committee Member Deborah Young moved the Committee to withhold support for legalizing inappropriate façade work, with a second by Sarah Lazur; and

Whereas 11 Committee members voted to withhold support for the project as presented, with none against, and no abstentions;

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

Extensive discussion ensued, including the reading of prepared statements from the Crown Heights North Association, the condo board, and other statements. Additionally, Mr. Veconi countered Mr. Kohn's implication that the committee was laying blame on the owner's for the current predicament. He stated that were the Board to approve the changes, it would set a precedent for others to not adhere to the process of getting approval for work prior to completing it. It is not a referendum on the people in the building and rather a necessary attempt to maintain the integrity of the historic district. A number of people concurred. Ms. Tyus suggested that the homeowners can avail themselves to property tax credits available in many census tracts still considered distressed to cover the cost of restoring the building to its proper glory.

Mr. Ellis made a motion to send the item back to committee for review and if they will withdraw from their scheduled LPC hearing. Mr. Kohn agreed and requested that the document be circulated to the Board, which it was during the meeting. Mr. Witherwax stated that implicit in the motion is that the applicant will not file again with LPC until they have met with the committee.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Weatherspoon. It carried with a final vote of 28 in favor, 0 opposed, with 1 abstention.

Economic Development – Mr. Brian Saunders, Chair

The Economic Development Committee met on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 via Webex. The Committee heard a presentation on Banking Development Districts, which seeks to encourage the establishment and/or profitability of commercial bank branches in specifically designated locations, known as "Banking Development Districts" (BDDs) as established based upon a demonstrated need for banking services in the community and supported via NYS and NYC low-cost deposits to those institutions.

Mr. Saunders stated that the presenters asked for the Committee's support and a resolution, but that he did not feel comfortable enough yet taking a vote without having ascertained committee membership. With that, he made a call for members to come on board to determine needs of the community before the initiative is presented before full board.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 8, 2020 via Webex, details of which can be found on the Board's calendar.

Youth and Education – Ms. Nora Daniel, Acting Chair

Ms. Daniel announced that the Youth and Education Committee did not meet in the month of November, but that the Committee would meet on Tuesday, December 1st via Webex, details of which can be found on the Board's calendar.

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

Mr. Witherwax announced that EST will meet on Tuesday, November 17th, a week earlier than usual to accommodate the Thanksgiving holiday. Details can be found on the Board's calendar.

Health and Human Services – Ms. Elaine Mahoney, Chair; Ms. Tamika Gibbs, Vice Chair

Ms. Mahoney announced that the first meeting of the newly re-developed Health Committee will be Thursday, November 19th at 5 PM via Webex. Details can be found on the Board’s calendar. She stated that the committee will be setting all priorities for 2021, and she is excited to hear input about the health priorities for the district.

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

The Housing Committee met on October 14th and discussed the recently postponed again Tax Lien Sale. She stated that the committee is going to write letters regarding fully canceling the tax lien sale as well as levels for affordable housing. The next meeting will be Tuesday, November 10th, a day before the normal date in honor of Veteran’s Day. Details can be found on the Board’s calendar.

Parks – Ms. Glinda Andrews, Chair

The next Parks Committee meeting will be Tuesday, December 1st via Webex. Details 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 October 26th via Webex. Deputy Inspector Buttacavoli of the 77th Precinct was in attendance and the committee discussed scooter laws and legality. He announced that Det. Pierre-Louis of Community Affairs was recently transferred to Community Affairs in 1 Police Plaza. The next meeting will be November 23rd via Webex, details that 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, November 4th via freeconferencecall.com. Ms. Muhammad stated that each meeting serves as a wellness call for participants to ensure that they have everything they need. The challenge is meeting via telephone conference as many seniors do not have computers or smart phones or other technology to allow them to meet via video conference. Members expressed interest in obtaining fresh food vouchers, and the District office was able to obtain some to be distributed next week. Additionally, 300 meals were delivered to seniors by Assemblywoman Richardson’s office, but 250 boxes had to be returned because the seniors could not be contacted to avoid spoilage. Ms. Muhammad also announced a number of Thanksgiving meal opportunities.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, December 2nd via freeconferencecall. Details can be found on the Board’s calendar.

By-Laws Committee – Mr. Robert Witherwax, Chair

Mr. Witherwax repeated the changes proposed to the By-Laws that was sent to members for review. Changes include the following in brief:

- 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.

Feedback is still being accepted and members are encouraged to send statements to the district office. The vote will be at the December 2020 meeting.

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

Ms. Elaine Mahoney announced that the tax lien sale has been delayed until at least 2021. Also, if you find yourself on the lien sale, the right thing to do is to contact your elected and use social media instead of a traditional letter writing campaign. Affordable housing is indeed based on gross and not net income, which is absolutely unsustainable, but is also outside of local authorities and set by the federal government.

Ms. Ethel Tyus announced that Land Use and Housing met jointly on November 10th. The committee discussed the HPD Lot project for the two lots on Bergen and Dean Streets. Members feel that the RFP is premature as there is not enough information available. The committees are in the process of planning the HPD Report Back meeting in December.

Ms. Cathy Iselin thanked Ms. Granville for acknowledging and listening to the concerns of residents in Northern Prospect Heights with the regards to the HPD project. She stated that since the zoning has not been announced yet, the RFP request is callous as zoning will be baked into any proposal when an RFP is announced. City Planning needs to engage in a holistic approach, and so far, this is not a holistic review and proposal. She stated that she and other residents supports affordable senior housing, but they are asking for further discussion and need greater input from DCP.

Mr. Veconi clarified a few issues that have arisen related to the project. He stated that across the district, the gamut of housing being built is middle-income housing, not necessarily affordable housing. Middle income rent rates are nearly market rate. As these properties are city-owned, there is no reason not to make the properties ELLA (extremely low affordability) housing. He stated that he shares many of the concerns about the zoning analysis, but stated that it is also not possible for HPD to release the RFP without mentioning zoning. Currently, HPD's website on the project mentions an increase from R7A that creates challenges developers as they must bid based on zoning envelope.

Mr. Veconi made a motion to formally request that the District office request the official zoning boundary from HPD prior to the meeting on the 18th. Mr. Puca amended the motion to ask for the zoning boundary for each site, not just the R7A currently being discussed. The motion was seconded by Dr. Lazur and carried with a final vote of 28 in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstentions.

Ms. Tyus thanked everyone for attending and wished everyone a happy holiday. She adjourned the meeting at 8:15 PM.