

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

**October 8, 2020**

**Members Present**

Kiermoni Allison  
Lisa Atkinson  
Princess Benn-James  
Julia Boyd  
Gail Branch-Muhammad  
John Buckholz  
Robert Callahan  
Nora Daniel  
James Ellis  
Kevin Farley  
Drew Gabriel  
Nizjoni Granville  
Igenie Harris-Blenman  
Marva Henry  
Xeexxeema Jordan  
Regina Kinsey  
Sarah Lazur  
Mireille Lemaine  
Elaine Mahoney  
Kalvis Mikelsteins  
Robert Puca  
Yahya Raji  
Adam Sachs  
Brian Saunders  
Mark Thurton  
Greg Todd  
Ethel Tyus  
Gib Veconi  
Irsa Weatherspoon  
Sharon Wedderburn  
Robert Witherwax  
Deborah Young

**Members Absent/Excused**

Glinda Andrews  
Desmond Atkins  
Wayne Bailey  
Hanjy Charles  
Helen Coley  
Andrea Ferris  
Fred Frazier  
Tamika Gibbs  
Janola Soko  
Meredith Staton  
Karmisha Superville  
Audrey Taitt-Hall  
Yves Vilus  
Kimberly Watson  
Vilma Zuniga

**Elected Official Representatives**

Godfrey Bayalama, Senator Zellnor Myrie  
Orlando Ross, Congresswoman Yvette Clarke  
Kim Robinson, Councilwoman Alicka Ampry-Samuel

**CB 8 Staff Present**

Michelle George, District Manager  
Julia Neale, Community Coordinator

---

The Public Hearing to gather additional items to include in the Capital and Expense Budget for FY 2021 was called to order at 6:15 by Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chairperson. She started with Roll Call.

The following issues were requested to be added for consideration by members and the community:

- Add traffic calming measures for Rogers/Bedford intersection at Dean Street
- Request re-allocation of funds for DSNY (Dept. of Sanitation) to create two organics drop off locations in each community board catchment area. Drop off is more effective and economically fundable than curbside pickup.

Mr. Ellis made a motion to give authority to CB 8 staff to use the items given at the public hearing as well as via email, the many surveys submitted over the last few months, as well as information received during the Covid-19 Pandemic to craft a list of needs for the community for submission in the Capital and Expense Budget for FY 2021. The motion was seconded by Ms. Wedderburn and carried with a final tally of 28 in favor with 0 opposed and 0 abstentions.

Ms. Tyus thanked everyone that provided feedback and input and closed the public hearing at 7 PM. She then called the regular meeting of Community Board 8 to order.

**Acceptance of Minutes** – The minutes of the last meeting were accepted with any necessary corrections.

**Correspondence** – Important information for the community as well as the CB 8 newsletter, were distributed electronically.

Ms. Tyus asked Ms. LaRay Brown, CEO of Interfaith Medical Center, to give an update on One Brooklyn Health.

Ms. Brown provided a substantial breakdown on the number of ICU beds available at Interfaith Hospital Center, stating that the number of ICU beds increased from 13 to 43, including 4 pediatric patient unit beds. She stated that due to the daily stresses on the pediatric unit over last 3 years being particularly low compared to years past, there was extra space available to expand the ICU department without causing any harm to other units and departments.

One Brooklyn Health includes Brooklyn Hospital Center, Interfaith Hospital Center, Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center, and ten local nursing homes and ambulette centers. They provide a continuum of care for patients and residents across Central Brooklyn, including pediatric care, women’s health, preventative care and services, asthma treatment, etc.

Ms. Tyus thanked Ms. Brown for the information and asked for a report from the following committees:

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

The SLAC committee met on Monday, October 5, 2020 via Webex. The committee discussed the following applications:

## **Renewals:**

- Cheryl's, 236 Underhill Avenue – Full
- Essence Lounge, 1662-1666 Atlantic Avenue – Full
- Bar 704, 704 Nostrand Avenue (rear yard, live music, DJ, patron dancing, security) – Full

The committee voted to support the three renewal applications in hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

Mr. Veconi made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Ms. Branch-Muhammad and carried with a final tally of 30 in favor, 0 opposed, with 0 abstentions.

## **New Application: BK Lobster, 643 Vanderbilt Avenue – Wine/beer/cider**

Details of the application are as follows:

- 4 tables with 8 seats each, maximum capacity 28 (non-covid specs)
- Hours of operation: closed Monday, Sunday Noon to 8 PM; Tuesday through Thursday Noon to 10 PM; Friday and Saturday Noon to 11 PM
- No outdoor space
- During covid, will take advantage of curbside seating and offer takeout and delivery services
- This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> location for BK Lobster, the second of which will have an on-premises license

The committee voted to support the application as presented by a final vote of 12 in favor, 0 opposed, with 0 abstentions and hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

Dr. Lazur made a motion to support the committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gabriel and carried with a final tally of 29 in favor, 0 opposed, with 0 abstentions.

The next meeting of the SLAC Committee will be held on Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> via Webex, details to be found on the CB 8 website.

## **Land Use** – Ms. Ethel Tyus, Chair

The Land Use committee met on Thursday, October 1, 2020 via Webex. The committee heard an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (LPC-20-09908) for 920 Park Place/959 Sterling Place (Block 1242/Lot 1), an open area on the same zoning lot as a Romanesque Revival/Gothic Revival style institutional building designed by Mercein Thomas and built in 1888-89, with later extensions designed by William Kennedy and built in 1911-13. Application is to demolish a portion of the existing building and reconstruct the exposed façade, and construct a new building with excavation and a curb cut. The site is the current Hebron S.D.A. bilingual school, formerly the Methodist Home for the Aged. The application was presented by the Hebron Congregation

of the Northeast Conference Corp. of the Seventh-Day Adventists, Hope Street Capital, and 959 Sterling Partners.

The following details were provided during the presentation:

- The decision to sell the portion of the property came as a result of requests from the church over the years as the Hebron School is currently unable to operate in the building because of the dilapidation, and floors 3-5 are under a vacate order by the City of New York.
- The proceeds of the sale will allow the church to repair the building and bring students back into the building.
- The proposed building size of 6-stories and the scale is considered “as of right” as far as current zoning laws and regulations of R6 zoning codes
- 182 apartments of which 30% would be affordable
- LEED building, which will ameliorate run-off concerns from residents about the loss of open space

The following main issues were raised by concerned residents and Hebron parishioners:

- Line of sight of the school building obstructed by the mass and scale of the new building, with full obstruction of an entire wing of the ornate building
- Light blocked for adjacent neighbors and for the entirety of the block
- Loss of green open space will exacerbate health conditions for children in the area
- Building as presented is institutional looking and not becoming of the area, and the small apartments are not designed for long-term stay and growth in the community/designed for transiency or short term stays by younger people
- Parishioners state that Hope Street Capital’s presentation was misleading and confusing as many congregants do not speak English and the presentation was entirely in English. Additionally, it was reported that when the church voted, the younger, English speaking congregants were “kicked out of the presentation” and not allowed to participate in the vote.
- The “affordable housing” being generated will not be affordable to those that live in the community, and definitely not the congregants of Hebron
- The negative net impact of the project on the community is too great to ignore, along with Hebron being contacted numerous times prior to Hope Street Capital to get grants for the school renovations and restoration of the property

There were, however, remarks about Hope Street Capital’s commitment despite the current economic uncertainty in the budgets for the State, the City, and the Nation. Attendees’ remarks referenced other commitments that led to unfinished developments that blighted the community for decades. Attendees referenced the need for the jobs to be generated by construction with counter arguments that the construction jobs would be available for the community.

A motion was made and seconded for the committee to withhold support for the project as presented. A committee member offered an amendment to the motion for the committee not

to support the application unless developers add a set-back at the 4th floor on the Sterling Place side of the building to reduce the mass and scale and allow it to better match the shorter row houses, and for the developer to commit to Affordable New York Option A. The amendment was neither accepted by the original motion maker nor seconded. The committee then voted to withhold support for the application as presented with a final vote of 14 in favor, 2 opposed, with 0 abstentions; and hopes the full Board will support its recommendation to NOT support the Hebron project as presented.

Many community residents and community organizations read statements regarding the project. Statements were read by Ms. For Ortiz-Joyner on behalf of Friends of 920 Park Place; Tiffany Raspberry, the lobbyist representing the Hebron Project, read a letter rebutting the allegations made at the Land Use meeting and requested that the letter and statement be sent to the board members, mailing list, and Land Use google group.

Additional comments culled from the chat were from a commenter “rjohnson” to all panelists: As an affected resident I would like to comment that only 4% of NYC is landmarked. The community fought for this designation and appreciate the protection of landmarked districts. This project is in direct opposition to LPCs purpose of safeguarding of buildings and places that represent NYC’s cultural social economic political and architectural history.

Robb Mandelbaum asked: Can someone from Hebron explain the breakdown of \$21.6 million? How much is cash compensation and how much is in-kind rehabilitation? How does the SDA intend to use the cash proceeds? How much of the cash proceeds will be used expressly for this congregation and school?

Rob Witherwax stated that this structure is one of the gems of Crown Heights. An integral part of its beauty is the set back from the street front. I would oppose any proposal that enlarges the existing building envelope, for any purpose.

There were repeated comments in the chat that the Board needs to focus its comments on only those things that fall under LPC’s purview rather than focusing on things that have nothing to do with the landmarking agency. It was suggested that the main focus should be on the fact that the proposed development is out of scale in too great an architectural contrast to the existing landmarked building that is a artistic masterpiece; that the existing building’s best and most prominent features would be entirely obstructed by the development; the contrast of the building as it compares to other projects in the area.

Ms. Young made a motion to support the committee’s recommendation to not support the project. The motion was seconded by Dr. Lazur and carried with a final vote of 28 in favor, 2 opposed, with 0 abstentions.

The next meeting of the Land Use Committee will be Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 6 PM via Webex, details of which can be found on the CB 8 website.

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

Mr. Saunders announced that the Economic Development committee will next meet on November 10<sup>th</sup> and that the committee needs members. Anyone interested in helping the community rebuild post Covid should attend. Details for the meeting can be found on the CB 8 website.

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

The Youth and Education Committee met on Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup> via Webex. The committee discussed a possible survey for educators and parents regarding remote learning. There will not be a meeting in the month of November.

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

The EST Committee will meet on October 27<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM via Webex virtual meeting platform, details of which can be found on the CB 8 website. The committee will discuss some of the issues given to the District office regarding Open Streets and Open Restaurants during the Covid-19 Pandemic and how to make the programs better in the community. Additionally, the pandemic has illustrated just how important street usage is, so the committee will focus on more equitable street usage over the course of the meeting season.

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

The Housing (Advocacy) committee will meet on October 14<sup>th</sup> via Webex, details of which can be found on the CB 8 website. The committee will be discussing building security.

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

The Parks Committee met on October 6<sup>th</sup> via Webex. The committee will not meet in the month of November due to Election Day. The next meeting will be the first Tuesday in December, details of which can be found on the CB 8 website.

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

The Public Safety Committee met on September 28<sup>th</sup> via Webex. The committee understands that the Neighborhood Coordinating Officer (NCO) meetings are resuming via Facebook live, and are awaiting the calendar to distribute to the community.

Mr. Ellis asked if the precinct provided an update on package thefts in the community. Mr. Thurton stated that Crime Prevention Officer Vidal did mention package thefts and a few ways to deter thieves, most of which are inconvenient for those that do not have the luxury of teleworking. However, Mr. Thurton encouraged everyone to participate in the Public Safety committee meetings to obtain ideas on how to remain safe.

The next meeting will be held on October 26<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM via Webex, details of which can be found on the Cb 8 website.

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

The Seniors Committee met on October 7<sup>th</sup> via conference call. Mr. Darryl White from Attorney General Letitia James' office was on the call and provided valuable information to the seniors. Additionally, Orlando Ross from Congresswoman Clarke's office announced that the Congresswoman would like to donate supplies to the seniors.

Ms. Branch-Muhammad stated that even though the Seniors' meetings are working via the conference calls, it would be more beneficial for the seniors if they were able to meet via a video platform like the other committees as it would help them avoid feeling further isolated. In order for that to happen, however, the seniors need to be equipped with tablets or other smart devices. She implored the elected officials and their reps present at the meeting to consider funding to ensure that all seniors have access to technology.

The next conference call for the Seniors Committee will be held on Wednesday, November 4, 2020 at 6 PM.

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

The Health committee will have its first meeting as a newly re-formed committee on October 15<sup>th</sup> via Webex. Since the committee has been defunct for a while, the committee will focus on planning for the future of the committee.

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

Mr. Witherwax announced 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 31<sup>st</sup> of year.

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

Ms. Tyus thanked the committee chairs for their reports and opened the floor to public comments and elected official representatives.

**Mr. Orlando Ross** from Congresswoman Yvette Clarke's office announced that the Census 2020 is still ongoing. He provided statistics on CB 8 response rate and other Brooklyn response rates. Early voting is key for the upcoming elections. He mentioned absentee ballots and the issues occurring with the incorrect names and addresses, as well as title at the top of the ballot.

The Hero's Act is being considered in the Congress and the Senate would have to vote on it. It would provide much funding for states suffering during Covid. The George Floyd Justice in Policing Bill is currently in discussion. He stated that all information was posted in the chat.

**Ms. Kim Robinson** from Councilwoman Alicka Ampry-Samuel's office reminded everyone to keep safety first, remembering to wear a mask when outdoors at all times. Please vote next month, get a voting plan, if you can please consider volunteering to drive people to polls, or deliver water, etc.

**Mr. Godfrey Bayalama** from Senator Zellnor Myrie's office announced that the office is open by appointment only. The last day to register to vote is tomorrow the 9<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Tyus thanked the elected official representatives for their announcements and opened the floor for Old Business.

### **Old Business**

Ms. Tyus announced that Dept. of City Planning has asked for suggestions for planning, and the Board will use the MCROWN area. The Land Use committee, starting shortly, will discuss population and demographics for the area as it is imperative to get DCP to start educational outreach to make it easier for the Board to ask pertinent questions to developers as more applications come in.

### **New Business**

Ms. Cathy Iselin read a statement from the North Prospect Heights Association on zoning issues. The statement was specifically related to the HPD lots on Dean and Bergen Streets in Prospect Heights, that is seeking a potential zoning change that could affect a much larger area.

Ms. Tyus thanked everyone for participating and adjourned the meeting at 9 PM.