

Community Board 9 Manhattan
Chairs Report
March 2014

Attended Borough Board meeting:

Community Board Application Process

Aldrin Bonilla, Deputy Borough President, gave an update on the CB Application process. Everyone that applied (almost 600 applicants) will be invited to participate in the Group Interview process. They will be looking at attendance records and contributions for existing members and accomplishments and community interest for new applicants.

Role-Playing Exercises that encourage team building and consensus based solutions.

Ruth Messinger did the process this way and it is more transparent for the applicants themselves, more fun, and provides opportunity for different applicants and current members to get to know each other. **Borough President Report**

Gale thanked her staff and praised CB 5 for their fantastic Town Hall on Mega towers. The MBPO is being proactive on Land Use issues by starting early and trying to plan.

Gale thanked Tony from NYC TV for filming the Borough Board meeting.

Solid Waste Advisory Board (SWAB): needs more members of color – if you have candidates interested in composting, waste disposal, and recycling – please put them in touch with our office so that they can apply.

Met with Committee Chairs and or members of Health, Youth (telephone conferences), Landmarks, Economic development, Senior's, Transportation, Strategic Planning, Housing/Land Use and Arts/Culture to explore issues and goals, discuss plans for presentations, forums and events, go over committee agendas etc.

Met with the Global Charter School they have out grown their current space and are seeking additional space in the district. Gave information on several possible organizations that have space as well as shared the request with other community groups one of which they visited to date. Also referred them to YEL for further assistance.

Attended 26th Precinct council meeting.

Discussions with EDC regarding street scraping being extended to Morningside Ave, very positive feedback. For the construction of streetscape improvements between Old Broadway and Morningside the cost is between \$1.5 million and \$2 million.

Met with State Park Regional Director to discuss the vacancy opportunities and staffing at Riverbank Park.

On the Riverbank organization chart, there are many positions or 'lines' that remain vacant. The Physical Plant Manager position has been vacant since 2010. The NYC Regional Office assigned a higher level of expertise to Riverbank from its Capital Facilities staff to oversee management of the very technical aspects of this State Park. The Associate Park Engineer, who technically is assigned to 125th Street Office, is based at Riverbank and spends roughly 85% of his time on Riverbank issues. This method of assigning Regional technical expertise is now being expanded so that the Physical Plant Manager position, reporting to the APE, would be utilized throughout the NYC Region as needed though based at

Roberto Clemente. Management staff from other State Parks with specific expertise to serve more Regional needs have been allocated to RBSP. For example, the Park Manager from Clay Pit Ponds is a horticulturalist and will now serve a portion of his time on Regional projects. He has spent time at Riverbank to evaluate the trees and is supervising the company providing arborist services. Regional specialist assignments will be repeated with programming and fundraising staff working with Riverbank and other parks. These are methods that have been put in place to do more, and do it more efficiently, with less. Resources are being allocated from other parks and the Regional Office to Riverbank to insure that facilities are maintained and patrons are served as effectively as possible. State Parks have received no increase from last year's budgeted amounts, so there is a need to make cuts in the operating costs. However, a large proportion of NY Works Capital Funds have been invested in upgrades at Riverbank over the last 2 years. They anticipate that these significant improvements will assist park management by reducing the major issues in the operation of the physical plant.

On behalf of the Eco/Dev committee met with the 125th Merchants Alliance. The West 125 Merchants' Alliance is the steering committee for the 125th Street BID's expansion to the Hudson River. The project aims to determine and address needs of the area; to establish partnerships with businesses and property owners on 125th; to promote businesses in the area; to create a forum for businesses west of Morningside Avenue to meet on an ongoing basis. Some of the businesses in attendance included: Rite Check, ECDO, Amalgamated Bank, Duane Reade, Papa Johns/Checkers and My Time Academy; in addition to community representatives from the NYPD 26th Precinct, L&M Development Partners, and Special Guests included: NYC EDC, who provided an update on the West 125th Street scrape project, The next step in the process involves assessing the needs of the property owners, which is in progress. The next meeting will be held at the end of March 2014 .

Discussions with DOT regarding the new LED lighting that is being installed east of Morningside Ave. DOT is assessing the cost and will submit to us, WHDC has been involved in discussions as well to assist with developing a plan to fund the lighting west of Morningside. After many months of collaborating with DOT and B. Meeker the "H" has been approved for installation.

Discussions with 1st VC and communication staff as to facilitate better notification of absences to members regularly. Attendance sheet will be included in monthly GB packet in addition to the quarterly review in Executive Mtg.

Attended briefing on Illegal hotel activity – the illegal short-term rental of whole apartments in multiple dwellings – has been a growing and persistent problem in our district since 2005. With the growth of popular online services such as Airbnb and Wimdu, this illegal activity has spread to tens of thousands of apartments all across New York City.

In anticipation of further growth in constituent concerns throughout all of our districts, as well as an industry-backed campaign this year to undermine the State and City laws that allow NYC to take action against this illegal activity, the city is developing a stronger enforcement system. The "Illegal Hotel Law" (Chapter 225, Laws of 2010) was passed in response to the proliferation of illegal hotels through the mid-to-late 2000s. Thousands of rental apartments have been removed from an already tight housing market, putting upward pressure on rents, disrupting the lives of the permanent residents living in multiple dwelling buildings, creating fire hazards and other dangers for tourists, and decreasing the City's tax base.

Transient use of housing meant for permanent occupancy in multiple dwellings has been illegal for decades. The 2010 law clarified ambiguities in State and City laws which made it impossible for the City to effectively crack down on offenders and protect residents.

There has been a lot of confusion about the law and what is allowed – some of it spurred by misleading rhetoric from industry players such as Airbnb. For instance, one and two family houses

are not subject to the Illegal Hotel Law because they are not multiple dwellings, and the law explicitly allows renting out rooms while the permanent occupant is also present – yet many constituents have called our offices, confused and misled on these issues.

Attended 30th Precinct Officers Award ceremony which honored officers who performed their duties in an exemplary manner.

Coordinating “Tax day” with the comptroller’s office, for free income tax preparation for low income residents.

Meetings with Manhattan Legal services to establish new service to provide free legal services to eligible youth or their parents who live in West Harlem in the areas of education (attending detention hearings) immigration, employment (helping to remove criminal information in “sealed” cases etc. and to deal with student loans which are preventing hire), and consumer law. WHYLAP’s goal is to provide holistic legal services to economically disadvantaged youth, helping enhance employment and education outcomes for individuals, stopping the school-to-prison pipeline, creating safer, more stable neighborhoods, and spurring economic development for the community as a whole.

I am an advocate for affordable housing, I lobby annually in Albany and I am very open and out spoken about the need for affordable housing in our district and throughout our city. The report in the DNA info and Daily News was all based on hypothetical conversation. CB9 has had no discussions with any groups or individuals about developing luxury housing. A public figure at the Landmarks committee meeting threw out an idea (which the owners did not come to present nor discuss) and quotes that were reported were based on the hypothetical idea that the Hamilton Theater could be restored by the owners building luxury housing to fund the restoration. The owners are not even in the residential housing business they are commercial developers. Would it be wonderful to have a Cultural Center there yes it would but at this time there is no request, proposal or interest on the part of the owner (expressed to CB9) to develop luxury housing, they are interested in providing new “Retail” space.

A board member contacted the Chair seeking a copy of the contract between CB9 and the Cathedral. CB9 and the Cathedral do not have a written contract, the agreements that have been made (over the past three years) have been verbal; there will be a written CBA once the Cathedral works out all the details with the developer.