

Chair Report
September 12, 2019
Executive Committee Meeting

Budget Season (and Succession Planning) Begins

I hope that the committee meetings that we have held so far have helped get us back into the rhythm of our regular calendar! I am happy to report that my review of the committees' membership and the assignments for the new Board members is complete. Members will be notified shortly about their new assignments.

We are now in the point in the year where we as committees must begin preparing our Statements of Needs and our priorities for the City's upcoming expense and capital budgets. I encourage committees to not only use last year's statements as a starting point, but to also take advantage of the statistical information provided by the Department of City Planning on their "Community District Profiles" page. Our budgets should reflect the priorities we have as a community for what we want our future to hold.

As I have told many of you in-person, we must all remember that we are now term-limited, thanks to the amendments to the City Charter that passed in November 2018. While I and many other members of the Board personally opposed those amendments, they are now law. That means that we all must constantly be carrying out our work with an eye toward preparing those who will come after us to continue this work with as much institutional knowledge and experience as we can give them. It is our job, as Executive Committee members, to make sure that we are educating and empowering our Committee Members, giving them responsibilities, and helping to nurture their relationships with the agencies and organizations that our committees' must interact with. After all, the new members joining your committees now will almost certainly be the ones to whom we will have to entrust leadership roles when we step down due to term limits. I strongly encourage all committee co-chairs to take the time to talk to their committee members one-on-one to get a sense of what they are interested in, what additional information and experience would be helpful, and how we can best help them grow into their roles as committee members. I would also encourage co-chairs to take time, perhaps during the beginning or end of a meeting, to talk about your committee's goals for the coming year, as well as the committee's mandate.

As I stated last month, I look forward to undertaking this work with you all, and I know that it cannot be done alone. I will ask you to give me guidance as Chair, correct me when I make a mistake, and suggest alternative paths forward when you see a better way.

Thank you for serving our community of West Harlem.

Barry Weinberg

Census 2020

Former Chair Padmore John set our Community Board up for success by building a relationship with the Census 2020 team and working with the Manhattan Borough President's Office to ensure a complete count of everyone in West Harlem. We will continue that engagement with the new Census Director Julie Menin and her team. Now that the federal government's illegal efforts to suppress census response rates has been prevented by the courts, we must spread the word so that *all* of our neighbors know that it is safe and important to be counted. Our response rate was 62% in 2010 compared to the national average of 76%. This relative under-response means that we lost more Congressional seats, school funding, public housing funding, senior center funding, Head Start funding, and infrastructure money because of the undercount. It is imperative that, this year, we have a complete count of all New Yorkers.

The Census Outreach team is already beginning to recruit volunteers to talk to their neighbors about responding to the Census next year and why it is so important. The office will be sending around opportunities to sign up to volunteer and eventually attend workshops and training on how to get involved in making sure we have a complete count. I have also asked former Chair Padmore John to continue to lead our work on this effort.

Methadone Clinics and Opioid Addiction Treatment Sites

While the community achieved a victory in blocking the establishment of a methadone clinic in a historic brownstone at 730 St. Nicholas Avenue, more organizing remains to be done to ensure that our neighborhood has a thoughtful, well-planned response to opioid addiction that does not violate the City Council's Fair Share Criteria or the spirit of Section 203 of the New York City Charter. Importantly, we must make sure that sites with detrimental effects on street life and public safety are not unfairly clustered in our neighborhood of West Harlem beyond the capacity needed to provide for the members of the community. I have confidence that the efforts of the Health and Environment Committee on these matters, working in concert with other groups and individuals in the community, will allow us to get a more comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities we face.

Third Party Transfer Task Force and Tenant Interim Lease Buildings

As many of you know, thanks to years-long efforts by Community Board 9 led by April Tyler and Signe Mortensen and the HDFC Coalition we helped to establish, the City has been forced to convene a task force to review the use of the "Third Party Transfer Program" to transfer ownership of HDFC co-operatives and even single-family homes to private developers, even in cases where the buildings do not owe back municipal charges (water/tax bills) or fall under the statutory requirements defining a distressed building. This is a critical component of our work to defend West Harlem from the Housing Development and Preservation Department's illegal depredations on homeowners in our community and across the city. We will be working to make sure that stakeholders from affected buildings and advocacy groups are on this task force, and that is not simply made up of HPD officials, developers, and HPD contractors.

Our Ongoing Relationship with Columbia University

I had the opportunity earlier this month to sit down with the team from Columbia University's Office of Government and Community Affairs. We explored ways that the Community Board and Columbia can better partner in areas including community-engaged scholarship and the retail environment of Morningside Heights and Manhattanville. I hope to have further updates in the near-future regarding potential for collaborations, particularly around our questions about the impact of the proposed Amsterdam Avenue redesign on air quality and local health.

Harlem Jazz Festival

As part of the Harlem Week Festivities, the West Harlem Development Corporation partnered with the Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to put on a Harlem Jazz Festival at the end of August. While the concerts were a wonderful success, the Arts and Culture Committee looks forward to seeing more opportunity for input and collaboration from both CB9 as well as local artists as planning begins for the 2020 Jazz Festival.

Induction of Officers

Planning is still underway for a ceremony for the induction of our newly-elected Officers. Similar to those held by former Chair Rev. Morgan-Thomas and the late former Chair Pat Jones, the ceremony will provide an opportunity to get together as a Board, celebrate our past successes and future efforts, and build relations amongst Board Members and elected officials. Former Chair Rev. Morgan-Thomas has graciously agreed to assist in the planning of the ceremony. If you have any ideas on location or program, please email Eutha and Rev. Morgan-Thomas and cc me. Be on the lookout for further updates from the Board Office.

Respectfully Submitted By,

Barry Weinberg, Chair