

NYC COMMUNITY BOARD 9, BROOKLYN

COMMENTS ON

THE AGENCIES' RESPONSES

TO THE

COMMUNITY BOARD'S CAPITAL AND EXPENSE BUDGET REQUESTS

IN THE

FY 2010 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

FEBRUARY 24, 2009

Below are Community Board 9's comments on the responses to our Capital and Expense Budget requests for the FY 2010 Preliminary Budget. These comments reflect the community's testimony at the Board's public hearing held on Tuesday, February 24, 2009.

The Board's comments are addressed to specific agencies and are based upon the priority needs of this district.

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

Community Board 9's Budget

Community Board 9 is comprised of 40 non-salaried individuals of varying expertise and capabilities, and a paid staff of two, including the District Manager. That the Board has been able to carry out any of its Charter mandated responsibilities is not at all indicative of its "sizeable" budget allocation, but is in large part due to the commitment and sacrifices made by these individuals. The Board is therefore hard pressed to absorb the sizeable cut that is being proposed.

Community Boards have been able to exist and function on their small budgets due to District Managers and non-salaried board members (comprised of architects, engineers, teachers, social workers, managers and others) who donate thousands of dollars in valuable time, energy and expertise to carry out their Charter mandated responsibilities. We do this to make this City the kind of place where people will want to establish their businesses and families will want to raise their children.

Community Board 9, as with all Boards, continues to deal with land use matters, respond to citizens' complaints (in spite of 311) and participate in the City's overall budget process. The Community Board is your basic "grass roots government" fulfilling a Charter mandated responsibility to the communities they represent. We take this responsibility seriously and would like to continue to fulfill our responsibility in an efficient, effective and productive manner.

Community Board 9 not only has its own website, but continues to use this technology to conduct the business of the board, through web postings and email. The Board's web address is: www.communitybrd9bklyn.org. This advancement in the Board's operations brings with it the need for continued technical support from a qualified computer consultant – an expense that is absolutely vital and necessary, but which will soon be beyond the capabilities of the Board's limited budget, and if not addressed will hamper the Board's ability to stay current and vital through the use of this technology.

In addition, empowered by the provisions of the New York City Charter, the Board has embarked upon the formulation of a 197-a Plan for this district. Although authorized by the Charter, there has been no commitment of funds by the City to achieve this major undertaking. Agencies that traditionally assisted community boards with land use matters no longer do so.

They are faced with their own staff shortages, thus hampering their ability to fit the Board's needs into their schedule.

Budget constraints have made it more difficult to successfully undertake the work necessary to complete a comprehensive long-range plan for the district. The Board's undertaking of this plan will provide the City with a blueprint that will assist the agencies as they seek to improve their services to this district. Although we have sought and continue to seek pro bono expertise in the development of this plan, funds for research, equipment and other important technical support is still needed.

Community Board 9 is proud of its commitment to fiscal responsibility which is demonstrated by the effective management of its office operations within the limits of its current budget allocations, while at the same time increasing efficiency and professionalism

While we understand that City agencies must do more with less, we appeal to the Mayor and the City Council to reconsider the proposed cuts to the Community Board's budget and to restore the funding.

DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION

Permanent Location for District 9's Sanitation Garage

The Department of Sanitation has put in a lot of hard work in diligently searching for a site for the relocation of Community District 9's sanitation garage. 757 Rockaway Parkway, Brooklyn was identified as an ideal location for the placement of the garage. It is presently a large rubble-strewn vacant lot with abandoned construction containers and gigantic chunks of cement. It is an eyesore and blight to the surrounding area. The construction of a modern state-of-the-art Sanitation garage at this location, that will house all trucks, equipment and personnel indoors, will vastly improve the area and become an asset to the district.

757 Rockaway Parkway, Brooklyn, is within the confines of Community District 17. This site was identified as an ideal alternate location because there are no viable locations within Community District 9 that could accommodate this facility. This site was identified because not only would it have transformed the location from what it is right now, but it would also have allowed for the planned expansion of the SUNY Biotechnology Park on Parkside Avenue, which promises to have far-reaching effects on the borough of Brooklyn and its residents. This facility will make Brooklyn more competitive with Long Island and New Jersey in the biotechnology market. In addition, being able to attract giant pharmaceutical companies to Central Brooklyn's Biotech Park will bring thousands of jobs to Brooklyn, helping to revitalize the borough's economy and its neighborhoods.

There has been no success in reaching a consensus on acquiring 757 Rockaway Parkway for the relocation of District 9's sanitation garage. Twenty-five years later, we are back to the drawing board. Community Board 9 must now put its head together with the agency and our

elected officials to see where we go from here with finding another suitable site for the location of the garage. A lot is riding on the outcome of this new search. There can be no further delay. We call on everyone involved to work with us in an expeditious manner to accomplish this goal.

Sanitation Police

We are pleased that the agency will “...try to accommodate this issue within existing resources” as it is vital that an adequate number of sanitation police personnel be available to ensure enforcement of sanitation codes and the apprehension of violators who illegally dump in our district. The city will benefit from revenue gained from fines, and residents will gain a cleaner, healthier community.

AGENCY FOR CHILDREN’S SERVICES

Day Care and Head Start Programs

Community Board 9 is counting on the agency to address the current shortage of adequate day care programs in the district. Every year we receive the same response to this request “approval of this request depends on sufficient Federal/State funds.” However, the lack of adequate day care providers to address the significant needs in the district still exists. The community needs to see some tangible improvements that will begin to address the problem. We therefore call on our Federal and State representatives to take a closer look at the inadequacy of the funds that are provided to New York City for these purposes and address the inequity that currently exists.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Clove Road - Contract No. HWKP166

The “Bedford Pass” of the American Revolution

Community Board 9 discovered through research of historic maps, books and documents, that our Clove Road played a significant role in the American Revolution. As such we are desirous of having the reconstruction of this roadway treated in a manner that will reflect its historic nature. The site has retained its Revolutionary War integrity as the original Bedford Pass. It is an intact roadway, exactly where it was during the revolution, with its topography intact.

We appreciate the agency’s cooperation in helping us document and confirm the historic significance of this location by engaging the expertise of an archaeologist to conduct a preliminary investigation into the history of the site. We are pleased that as a result of the consultant’s findings, the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission has recommended that a preliminary archaeological “dig” be conducted at the site.

Archaeological Dig for Clove Road

The archaeological dig is a critical next step in the process of documenting the historic significance of this location. We are extremely appreciative of our council member's commitment to the project with the allocation of the necessary funding to conduct the archaeological dig. We await the selection of an Archaeologist for this project.

The board will continue to work with all of our elected officials to fully fund the restoration of this historic roadway into an educational resource that will disseminate both historical and environmental information to residents and visitors, as well as providing a passive, secure landscaped public plaza/promenade.

Empire Boulevard from Flatbush to Utica Avenues

The Board considers Empire Boulevard to be the "gateway" to Community District 9, and to our important facilities and historic institutions - Prospect Park, The Brooklyn Botanic Garden, The Brooklyn Museum of Art, Medgar Evers College and, The Brooklyn Public Library – to name a few. This is an important throughway in our district and features prominently in our 197a planning efforts.

This crucial length of roadway is in need of reconstruction. The agency is aware of this and had previously scheduled this street for reconstruction but the project was shelved due to lack of funds. The street was resurfaced instead. It is now nineteen years later and there has not been any movement on this project. The agency's response to this request every year, is that the "project is included in the ten year plan". This Board and community would like to know: "which ten-year plan is the agency referring to?"

We seek the cooperation of our City Council members to allocate the necessary funding to enable the agency to move this project forward. Nineteen years is an awfully long time to wait for a ten-year project.

Traffic Calming

Community District 9 is a residential community, home to thousands of families with children. About fifteen years ago the Department of Transportation, at the Board's request, conducted a Traffic Calming study of the district. The recommendations in the study were not implemented and now 15 years later with changing demographics, the findings from that time most likely no longer apply. The district still endures the negative impact of speeding vehicles, traffic congestion, truck traffic, and the like, all impacting upon the safety of our residents. A new traffic calming study of this district is necessary. We find hope in the agency's response and will contact them to work on the start of a new study.

Street Resurfacing

Wear and tear from snow and salt, street openings and excavations by utility and private companies, all lead to the deterioration of our neighborhood streets. An increase in the asphalt allocation will help a great deal in street maintenance and street resurfacing of those badly deteriorated streets in the district. We will contact the agency as requested to further discuss this request.

Curb Replacement

There is an urgent need, at various locations throughout the district, for the replacement of broken, damaged and missing curbs. We look forward to working with the agency to address this critical issue.

DEPARTMENT of PARKS and RECREATION

The creation and expansion of parks, playgrounds and open space is a top priority in Community Board 9's 197-a Plan. Parks and playgrounds serve as a safety valve for the energies of our youth. Research has shown that green spaces have a positive impact upon the citizenry. Research also shows that in the Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 9 has the least amount of open space and one of the largest, if not the largest, youth population in the city. The Board feels that the provision of adequate open space and positive activities is vital to the overall well being and development of our community's youth population – our future.

We are pleased to note that the provision of open space has been given a high priority in the Mayor's PlaNYC 2030. Many of the ideas contained in the plan have been priorities that Community Board 9 has consistently advocated for over the past twenty-five years. It is refreshing to see in PlaNYC that the importance of parks and open space to the population is finally being recognized and given the prominence it deserves.

The Department of Parks and Recreation, whose budget has been steadily cut for the past 15-16 years is finally taking its rightful place as an agency that provides vitally needed city services. With the current budget crisis the agency is again being hampered in their ability to provide their Charter mandated responsibilities. This seriously impacts upon Community District 9, and the city as a whole. Community Board 9 urges the Mayor and the City Council to increase the level of funding to the agency that will comprehensively address capital projects already on the drawing board and the ability to develop additional open space for the immediate future.

Community Recreation Center

This community is urgently in need of a recreation center for the youth in our district. This center would be a place, in the neighborhood, where their energies can be channeled into

constructive activities, helping to build character and sportsmanship. The agency's response was that their funds are "insufficient for this project ..." and recommended that we contact our elected officials for help. We will continue to call on our elected officials – city council and the borough president - to respond to the needs of the children in our community and to provide the necessary funding to make this vision a reality.

Capital Reconstruction Projects Hamilton Metz park

The Board and community are very pleased with the allocation of funds to continue the rehabilitation of Hamilton Metz Park. The addition of an "exercise area" in this park is a need that has been expressed by the community and brought to the attention of our elected official. While we understand the budget constraints that the City is facing, we support the community's request and will continue to work for the inclusion of this amenity in the park. The community is looking forward to a positive outcome for this request.

Mount Prospect Park

Mount Prospect Park is another of the beautiful park spaces in the district, perched strategically between the Brooklyn Museum and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. The work done on the playground, stairs and paths during the late Council member Mary Pinkett's tenure was a welcomed improvement to this park. However, the opportunity exists for more amenities and creative use of this space. This project has been brought to the attention of our City Council member and the Borough President to provide the necessary funding. We continue to encourage them to fund a reconstruction project for this park focusing on improving the park's facilities as well as improving access for the public.

Reconstruction of Wingate Park and Land Acquisition for Park Expansion

Community Board 9 is pleased that funding has been allocated for the renovation of Wingate Park and that a scope is underway.

The Board would like to remind the agency that Wingate Park is a largely athletically oriented park attracting users from around the Borough. On any given day Wingate Park attracts scores of residents, not only from this district, but from other parts of Central Brooklyn as well. The demand for this park has outgrown its size and has led to the deterioration of the park facilities. In addition, Community Board 9 feels that the athletic focus of this park should be complimented by additional recreational facilities. Acquisition of the existing property adjacent to the park would provide much needed parkland and the opportunity to provide the type of facilities currently lacking at this park.

We understand that although this is a worthwhile project, the Department of Parks and Recreation, with its budget stretched to the limit may not have sufficient resources to fund this project. We therefore appeal to the Borough President and our City Council members to provide the necessary funds to acquire the available property adjacent to Wingate Park for park expansion. This is a worthwhile project and will enhance the lives of the residents in our community, both young and old.

Flatbush Avenue/Ocean Avenue/Empire Blvd

The site at this intersection is a city-owned property that is currently being used by employees of the NYC Transit Authority to park their cars. Community Board 9 does not feel that it is the taxpayers' responsibility to provide free parking for employees of the city. The Board has identified this site as a potential site for a passive park for the community. Not only will it rid the community of the current eyesore, but it will help in the quest for creating additional open space for the residents of this district. We will take the agency's advice and begin to work diligently for this vision to become a reality.

Prospect Park

Concert Grove

The response to this request is still "Department of Parks funds are insufficient for this project we recommend that this project be brought to the attention of your elected officials, i.e., Borough President and/or city council member." We are therefore, continuing to reach out to those elected officials who had provided the initial funds for the scope of work and had proposed allocations for several additional years, to take a second look at this project and to fund it to completion.

Oriental Pavilion

The Oriental Pavilion has been the site of many, many community sponsored activities. This ideal location in Prospect Park has served all of the Brooklyn community well and is in need of rehabilitation. There are insufficient funds in the agency's budget for this project therefore we must once again call upon Brooklyn elected officials to help in the restoration of this valuable community asset.

Forestry Program Tree Pruning/Stump Removal

Our community has been severely impacted by the lack of forestry service. Consequently, overgrown trees have not been pruned resulting in darkened streets and property damage and an indirect cost to the city. Restoration of at least 10% of the budget for forestry will impact in a small way on the current backlog of tree pruning/stump removal complaints.

Park Maintenance

Community Board 9 cannot overemphasize the importance of maintenance for our parks. We urge the Mayor and City Council to provide appropriate funding to maintain adequate staffing levels for park maintenance.

Park Enforcement

The Board will continue to advocate for personnel for park enforcement. The provision of a safe environment within our parks cannot be overemphasized. An infusion of funds by the Mayor and the City Council will help to restore adequate park enforcement and park rangers.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Reconstruction of District Schools

PS 91, PS 92, PS 161, PS 221, PS 241, PS 397

PS 352 and PS 375

MS 61, MS 391

These school buildings are in critical need of renovation. Except for some cosmetic work that is usually done over the summer, such as painting and fixing windows, these buildings have yet to receive the extensive work needed to restore them, in order to provide the type of environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Our old school buildings are in various states of deterioration and disrepair. These conditions have a negative impact upon our students and deny them their rights to be afforded an environment that is conducive to learning. These are critical needs that we are bringing to the attention of our elected officials. We urge that full funding be made available for the restoration of these institutions of learning.

Wingate High School Building

With the introduction of the new "Small Schools" housed in the Wingate High School and the Prospect High School buildings, and the phasing out of these high schools, it is evident that the school buildings would need to be reconfigured to address these new schools with the proposed smaller class sizes. Since the total student body in each of these new schools will not be more than 500, these large high school buildings can conceivably house more than one school of this type.

The Board feels that both the Wingate High School and the Prospect Heights High School buildings should be renovated to provide distinct accommodations for each of the new schools being housed in these buildings. We are pleased with the agency's response that "this project has been funded in a prior fiscal year and the construction contract has been let. We encourage the agency to make a presentation to the Community Board regarding the construction plans for this building.

School Playgrounds – PS 241, PS 221, PS 161

Community Board 9 is extremely pleased that after 10 years of submitting these requests, that they are being reviewed for inclusion as an “Open Space Initiative” site under PlaNYC. We are excited and pleased at these developments and look forward to working with the agency on ideas to transform these concrete fields into safe playing areas for our children.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

Land Acquisition for Housing

There is currently, on the grounds of Kingsboro Psychiatric Center, vacant land that can be used for housing (and open space.) One building on the site is currently being utilized by the Department of Homeless Services as a shelter for single men. With the acute shortage of affordable housing in the district, and in keeping with the Mayor’s plan to build and preserve 165,000 units of housing by 2013, this city-owned land would be an ideal choice to partially fulfill the city’s ambitious and laudable plan. The agency in its response to this request indicated that “further study of this new request is needed...” We will contact the agency to discuss.

DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Board 9 strongly believes that the funding allocated for community share in the past was woefully inadequate. The Board continues to advocate for an increase in the **Out of School Time** funding allocation for programs serving Community District 9. This funding would greatly assist our community-based organizations in providing much needed educational, social and recreational services to large numbers of deserving youth within the district.

DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING

The senior citizens in our community are one of the most vulnerable of our populations. This population is largely underserved in areas of transportation, meals on wheels and related services. Funding for the expansion of these services would begin to address this inequity. The Board recognizes that in order for the agency to effectively carry out its charter mandated responsibilities, adequate operational funding must be in place. We applaud the agency for their efforts to modernize the agency to strengthen and improve services to seniors. The Board is looking forward to improved service delivery in the areas of home delivered meals and senior center services. We urge the agency to work with other New York City agencies, such as the New York City Transit to improved transportation services to seniors through Access-a-Ride to improve transportation access for this segment of the population.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Police officers place their lives on the line every day for the people in this district. The Board believes that providing appropriate, safe facilities for police personnel to work will go a long way towards improving morale and maximizing performance. This Precinct house is in woeful, borderline derelict, condition, every part of it. Basic furnishings like desks and chairs are old and dilapidated. The phone system looks like the original one from when the precinct was built – it is obsolete. These conditions do not lead to maximum performance. They should not be allowed to exist in 2009. This is a matter for all elected officials representing this district to provide the funding necessary to correct these conditions.

Off Street Parking Facility

Community Board 9 is committed to accomplishing a “master plan” for this district. Inherent in this plan is the improvement of the quality of life in our community. One of the problems currently impacting on this quality of life is the one created by the Police Department which does not provide parking for agency vehicles and vehicles that are impounded in the course of conducting the work of the agency.

These vehicles are parked indiscriminately on streets and sidewalks surrounding the precinct, creating congestion and blocking sidewalks, forcing pedestrians into the street and into oncoming traffic. This situation is intolerable. The solution is to acquire available property in the vicinity of the 71 Precinct, either by **lease or purchase**, to provide the parking necessary for the Precinct. The successful realization of this project cannot be accomplished without an infusion of funds specifically earmarked for the acquisition of a suitable site. Since the agency’s “funding constraints...rule out including this project at this time”, we definitely need that infusion of funds from our elected officials. Although we are in tough economic times, the safety and well-being of our residents is of vital importance and should be a priority to all concerned.

Community Policing

While it may not be feasible to place a police officer on every block and corner of our district, we strongly urge an increase in police visibility within our community. This presence is an effective deterrent to the commission of crime and has a direct impact upon the feeling of safety and security that people feel when they see police officers on duty, on foot (or bikes) in the community. We urge the provision of the funding necessary to provide for the assignment of an adequate number of uniformed and civilian personnel, to conduct the business of the Precinct and provide protection for the district.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Safety Education

Over the years Community District 9 has been the scene of an unusual number of deadly fires. Just recently another Fire Department official, Lt. John H. Martinson, lost his life fighting a fire that had been started by a child.

Community Board 9 continues to strongly urge the agency to provide the necessary funding for increased fire safety education programs. The Child Fire Starter Program has proven to be an invaluable tool to educate children who might be at risk of starting fires. We urge the continuation and expansion of this program. The Board is convinced that educating our residents about the danger of fires will have a major impact in decreasing the number of fire related deaths. On too many occasions, we learn that children are found beneath beds and in closets, where in their innocence they hide to get away from fires, only to end up its tragic victims.

The Board wholeheartedly supports the expansion of the Fire Safety House program to provide hands-on fire-safety education for children. In addition, the continued funding of the Smoke Detector and Carbon Monoxide Detector Distribution Programs is critical. These equipments are life savers and the programs must be preserved. We also urge that adequate funding be provided for the purchase of CPR Kits.

Fire Marshals

The numbers of Fire Marshals in our city has been decimated over the years. Without adequate numbers of Fire Marshals to investigate fires, specifically suspicious fires, many arsonists may be getting away with committing arson. It is not only important to investigate the cause of some fires, it is important that all fires should be investigated to determine cause. Our city cannot be safe from arsonists without Fire Marshals. Funding should be restored to adequately provide this service.

Generators for Battalion 38 Including Engine Co 249/Ladder 113

The blackout that affected the city in the summer of 2003 was a wake-up call for everyone. The provision of a generator for Engine Company 249/Ladder 113, and for all Engine/Ladder companies in the city is obvious. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that funding should be provided for this purpose.

NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY

We request the Transit Authority, along with our elected officials to fund necessary improvements to the President Street and Winthrop Street subway stations. These stations

show various signs of deterioration and should be repaired and upgraded to meet standards projected for the rest of the subway system. There are leaks all over the ceiling and walls of the President Street Station, with torrents of water entering the tracks from rain and melting snow. The Winthrop Street station is heavily utilized by personnel, students, and patients at nearby Kings County Hospital and SUNY Downstate Medical Center. We strongly urge the agency to restore funding for the rehabilitation of these two subway stations.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Catch Basin Construction Project

Community Board #9 has repeatedly discussed with the agency the issue of a catch basin capacity problem in some areas of the district; and the absence of any catch basins at all in other streets in the district. These conditions lead to flooding when it rains and when the snow melts. While one of the locations identified for correction of this problem would involve another agency as the lead agency, there are still other areas which need to be addressed solely by the Department of Environmental Protection. We will contact the agency to further discuss this capital request.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Board strongly supports the improvement of our historic cultural institutions – The Brooklyn Botanic Garden and The Brooklyn Museum. These institutions represent just two of the many treasures that our Borough shares with visitors and residents alike and which must be preserved and enhanced.

HEALTH & HOSPITALS CORPORATION

Therapeutic Horticultural Center for Dr. Susan Smith McKinney Nursing and Rehabilitation Center

Dr. Susan Smith McKinney Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (DSSM), provides excellent nursing and rehabilitation services for its clients. The Center is constantly striving to maintain its leadership role in Communication Rehabilitation and has identified the provision of Horticultural Therapy to promote healing as a result of direct contact with the physical/natural environment. Community Board 9 strongly urges our elected officials to provide adequate funding for the establishment of a Therapeutic Horticultural Center at DSSM.

Anesthesia Machines for Kings County Hospital

Kings County Hospital Center's (KCHC) existing fleet of anesthesia machines are over seventeen years old. This places KCHC at a disadvantage in the quality of care that it must provide to the thousands of patients that it treats every year. The acquisition of five anesthesia machines will improve efficiency, safety, and quality of care while reducing risk-management issues. Community Board 9 feels strongly that these machines should be acquired immediately,

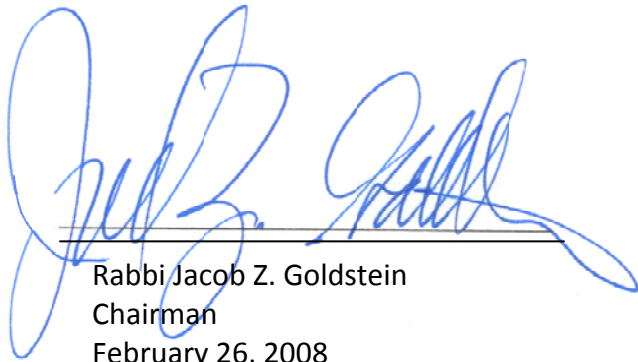
and should not linger in the limbo of the “ten year plan.” We therefore strongly urge our Brooklyn elected officials to provide the necessary funding in FY 2009 for the acquisition of these vitally needed medical equipment.

DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS


With the increasing number of building collapses and illegal renovations, there is need for constant inspections by the agency. There should be at least one inspector in each community district throughout the City and funding is critically needed to provide this improved service.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES

The Kingsboro Men’s Shelter has degenerated from a model that could have been replicated in other parts of the city to a place where homeless men roam our street and are not involved in constructive activity. Convicted sex offenders are housed at this shelter without regard for its close proximity to elementary schools in the neighborhood. This shelter is not being run under the terms that were agreed to by the Department of Homeless Services. We have tried to work with the agency to correct these conditions but we have largely been ignored. Community Board 9 wants funding to be restored so that this shelter is operated as agreed upon between the Department of Homeless Services and Community Board 9 when the shelter was established.



Rabbi Jacob Z. Goldstein
Chairman
February 26, 2008



Pearl R. Miles
District Manager
February 26, 2008