

**COMMUNITY BOARD 9
890 NOSTRAND AVENUE
BRROKLYN, NY 11225**

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY BOARD MEETING
HELD ON November 22, 2011
MIDDLE SCHOOL 61 AUDITORIUM
400 EMPIRE BOULEVARD, BROOKLYN NY 11225**

Board Members Present

Robert Agyemang
Pastor Robert Ambrose
Dion Ashman
Stuart Balberg
Gwen Carter
Michael Cetera, AIA
Aldith Clarke
Josette Coicou-Brioche
Edmund Fanning
Shelia Foster-Golding
Charlene Gayle
Theopia Green
Rabbi Nochum Gross
Sylveta Hamilton-Gonzales
Edu Hermelyn
Ruby Hodge

Board Members Present

Maurice Jean-Baptiste
Demetrius Lawrence
Samuel Marmulzsteyn
Carl Morgan
Dwayne Nicholson
Rosemarie Perry
Gerald President
Myrtle Roberson
Karlene Robinson
Mary Rollerson-Blackett
Brenda Scott
Rabbi Joseph Spielman
Denise Thomas
Timothy Thomas
Jacqueline Welch
Evelyn Williams

Board Members Absent

Rev. Phyllis Brown - sick
Negous Clark
Veta May Clarke
Julian Daniels
Brian Dean
Geraldine Dease
Shawn Francis
Rabbi Jacob Z. Goldstein – military duty
Tessa Hackett-Vieira
Aron Hershkop
Brenda Hutto-Lucas
Yaakov Katz
Frank Nicholas
Eleanor Rollins
Roosevelt Rose
Chanina Sperlin
Victoria St. Clair
Yvonne Straker

Elected Officials/Agency Representatives Present

Hon. Eric Adams – Reuven Lipkind
Kings County Hospital Center - Debra Lesane
Hon. Marty Markowitz – Ann Marie Adamson
Hon. Letitia James
Medgar Evers College – William H. Boone

Hon. Hakeem Jeffries – Lee Church
Hon. Darlene Mealy – Arna Lipkind
Hon. Karim Camara – Samuel Light
Hon. Olanike Alabi
Hon. Walter Mosley

PUBLIC SESSION

The meeting was chaired by Ms. Gwen Carter, First Vice-Chairperson, in the absence of the Chairman, Rabbi Jacob Z. Goldstein.

Ms. Jeneen Johnson, Community Outreach Specialist, HRA Office of Child Support Enforcement, will discuss the agency's public awareness campaign to educate custodial and non-custodial parents and children on the benefits provided to them by the Office of Child Support Services, and how to engage the system to help provide healthy child development and responsible parenting, as well as keeping children and families out of poverty

Ms. Jeneen Johnson informed of the obligation parents have to pay for the support of their children. Low income families have services available to them regarding the amount of support they have to pay. There are free services from the Office of Child Support Services. One doesn't have to go to court, once can go to the Child Support Services Customer Services at 151 West Broadway, 4th floor, New York, New York, bring a few documentations along. You do not have to go to court to get your arrears taken care of.

DNA testing is being offered for \$30 per person. Mediation is also offering job services. If you know of anyone who needs these services if they are in arrears, invite them to the Child Support Services customer service. Bring driver's license, Medicaid or Medicare card, Food Stamp card, etc.; any form of benefit card is acceptable. Flyers are in the back of the room.

Ms. Carter thanked Ms. Johnson for her presentation.

Presentation and Open Discussion on the Medgar Evers Campus Quad Project – the proposal to close Crown Street between Bedford and Franklin Avenues for the establishment of a Landscaped Pedestrian Plaza for use by the College and the community

Michael Cetera, AIA, Chair of Community Board 9's Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee; ULURP and 197a Committees.

Mr. Cetera explained that under Chapter 197a of the New York City Charter, communities can plan for themselves. Mr. Cetera did a Power Point presentation showing Community Board 9's 197a Plan for Community District 9 that was voted on and adopted by Community Board 9 in 1996. The plan was developed to show the lack of open space within the district and the recommendations for creating open space in the community to serve the approximately 30% youth population in the district.

Mr. Cetera identified the color coded areas of the plan which highlighted the current available open space, Wingate Park, Metz Park, etc., as well as proposed open space which included the closing of Crown Street to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden; the development of Clove Road, the area documented in the American Revolutionary War of 1776; available land on the grounds of Kingsboro Psychiatric Center for housing and open space.

Representatives from City University of New York (CUNY) Medgar Evers College came to Community Board 9 with the proposal to develop one block instead of two blocks for the benefit of the college, its students and the community, to relax and enjoy. Thomas Balsley Associates is the Architectural firm for the project. CUNY will invest \$16 million in the community to develop the area between Bedford and Franklin Avenues along Crown Street.

District Manager Pearl Miles said that before we go any further, that the ULURP application had been withdrawn by CUNY, to conduct an additional traffic study, since the community felt that the traffic patterns had changed since 2008 when the current traffic study was done. Upon completion of the study CUNY would be resubmitting the ULURP application. Ms. Miles said that the Board was doing this presentation/discussion to hear from the community; the Board had not done one before and wanted to take the opportunity to hear the community's concerns.

Before opening the floor to speakers, Ms. Carter said that she is aware that this is a highly emotional topic; everyone had the right to express his/her opinion; however, everyone should be respectful of the other persons opinions. Each speaker had three minutes.

Speakers on the Item

Michelle Waterman informed that she is the pride and joy of Ebbets Field and a student of Medgar Evers College. Watching the developments which have taken place in that area over four years, she doesn't think that there is a reason to change anything. Why do we need a lawn? The fact that they want to cut off the block to people who drive on the block she thinks is a waste. Speed humps can be placed in the streets to slow the traffic down. There is already a parking lot where the youth collective once stood. There are other ways to use the area without cutting off the block. I believe with the proposed new bus system on Nostrand Avenue where will be increase of traffic, do not close the street.

Thomas Thomas said he is a homeowner and resident of Crown Street for forty years, also a Professor of Architecture for over forty years. He now has underway a proposal which will study the expansion of the University of the Bahamas to its outer islands so he knows a little bit about architecture and a whole lot about transportation. He was at a meeting at the Full Gospel Assembly about a week ago where Community Board 9 people were in attendance, block association people, elected officials. There was a presentation by a Medgar Evers gentleman selling the idea on the need for green space and how families will be welcomed to come and enjoy this open space. As the others said, I too believe that if we need green spaces we can go to the Botanic Gardens and enjoy the huge Prospect Park.

There was virtually nothing said about the transportation impact. The fellow of your Transportation Committee expressed to me that the traffic study will be made available to me. I gather whether or not this plan will have anything to do with traffic study. I guarantee you right now if Crown Street is closed westbound the traffic from Empire to Eastern Parkway will be a mess. So at the end of the meeting in order to gage what the attendees thought about this program I asked my neighbor Michael Liburd who is in favor of this thing? There was a resounding zero.

The elected officials who were there informed that the proposal came to their desk and they were against it. Representatives from Marty Markowitz, Letitia James, assemblyman, all said if it comes to their desk they would nix it. It had no support at that time. I don't know why we are here discussing it, because it was quite clear that this "... proposal started as a red herring and should now be a dead duck."

Rawle Ponceleon said that he lives on Crown Street between Rogers and Bedford Avenues. This is the first time he is attending this meeting. I was under the knowledge that the proposal was nixed. Literally I am lost. I don't know why I am here for this discussion.

District Manager Pearl Miles advised that no public hearing was held on the proposal. What was held at the Gospel Assembly was not a public hearing. The proposal was withdrawn to do another traffic study.

Rawle, I don't see if this proposal passes how it will benefit us. This will be more of a burden than a benefit. For the life of me how a park in the middle of the block would help me particularly the people who live on Crown Street. Closing off that block would be chaotic. Most of the people here do not live on that block. I live on that block. Medgar Evers students come around, they sit on the block. None of us understand what is going on. There is some politics going on. I spoke to some of my neighbors they believe that maybe because

it is a black neighborhood and maybe it is not politically correct for them to do something about it. In a nutshell we and others on the block do not understand why a park in the middle of the block. Another thing we don't understand how Medgar Evers can look at us with a straight face and say it will have a positive effect to the area. They are on the outside coming in. they have to look at it from the inside. I don't even know why we are here.

Michael Liburd – Crown Street between Bedford and Rogers Avenues. I was here at the June meeting with Medgar Evers President and the Architect. The presentation was beautiful. There were representatives from the block. After the June meeting some of us organized the meeting at the church to dialogue the closing of Crown Street. There were people from Crown Street, Montgomery Street, President Street, Union Street, Sullivan Pl, Sterling Street – no one was in favor. There was no one from the Community Board. After the meeting Tom asked who likes the plan? No one raised his/her hand.

The July meeting was well attended. Elected officials were there. We were told that they will not close Crown Street block, the CUNY application was withdrawn. Coming out of the meeting at Markowitz office with the President of Medgar Evers College and CUNY, I believed it was over. I don't know why this is happening. As my neighbor said, I don't know why we are here. Why close the street, why continue when we know it will be rejected. Closing the street is a nightmare. We don't need a traffic study. We have seen what happened when the construction was going on when the road was closed for the construction it took me twenty-five minutes to get to First Avenue for my daughter's school. I don't know who is pushing it. Why can't we have a conversation with everybody? Closing the block doesn't make sense. I will direct this question to Ms. Miles, who is pushing it?

District Manager Pearl Miles – there was a representative from the Community Board at the July meeting. Michael Liburd – who is continuing to push it when Medgar Evers says no and everyone else is saying no we don't want it?

District Manager Pearl Miles – you said that at a meeting in July many people were there and President Pollard said they withdrew the plan.

Michael Liburd – That is not what I said. I said the meeting in July the community came together with the elected officials, when asked at the meeting who favored the plan no one raised their hand. At a meeting at the Borough President's office with elected officials, Dr. Pollard. Marty Markowitz came out of his mouth and said go back to the drawing board and come up with a plan that does not present the closing of the street. Dr. Pollard said that we are not closing the street.

District Manager Pearl Miles – between July and August the Board received from the Dept of City Planning certification of the ULURP action. We have 60 days to conduct a hearing. We received it late August early September, so that was after your meeting. This was an official communication from the City of New York that this plan was on the table for the ULURP process. We now had to schedule a meeting of the ULURP committee before bringing the matter up for a public hearing.

A meeting of the land use committee was scheduled for early October, all parties were notified about the meeting, including the block association chairs for Montgomery Street and for Crown Street – Demetrius Lawrence and Dwayne Nicholson. On the day of the scheduled ULURP meeting representatives from all parties involved with the proposed project were present at the meeting. Community residents were notably absent. We learned from Jessie Hamilton that the meeting had been cancelled by the Borough President's

office. I told Mr. Hamilton that no one had the right to cancel a meeting scheduled by an independent NYC Government agency but the agency itself.

I contacted Demetrius Lawrence and Dwayne Nicholson to find out why they were not at the meeting and was told by Demetrius that he had gotten a call from Dwayne telling him that the meeting had been cancelled. I told Demetrius that the meeting had not been cancelled that the meeting was being held as scheduled. Dwayne Nicholson told me that he had been informed by Council member Letitia James office that the meeting had been cancelled.

At the meeting, the plan was presented. During discussion Medgar Evers College representative said that they would be willing to go back and look at the proposal. I asked if they were withdrawing the ULURP application, because the Board was on the clock; to which the representative replied, "It is not my decision, I will let you know tomorrow..." Subsequent to that, on the following day, the board received a letter from CUNY stating that they were withdrawing the ULURP application to do a further traffic study and that they would be resubmitting the proposal when the study was completed. That being the case, the board is having this meeting tonight. (I noticed there were copies of the letter at the back of the room tonight.)

The meeting at the church was not a meeting called by this Board. The meeting that was held in June, Medgar Evers was asked to come and make the presentation to the Board. This meeting is in no way different from many meetings that the Board has had on projects proposed for this community. For example, Downstate will be coming to the Board to present the project that will build a campus for its nurses.

Michael Liburd – the question is who is pushing it.

Ingrid Martin – she is the Chief of Staff of Senator Eric Adams, when we left that meeting we thought we were on the same page. Senator Adams sent out a letter. In 1996 the project was good. Today it is not good. We know that with growth there will be changes. If you close the street off then there will be even more problems than parking spots. President Pollard said what if we put in street humps would that solve the problem? Medgar Evers has an amphitheatre which is under-utilized why not turn that into green space. At the meeting there was disrespect. The President said he would set a meeting with us and design the plan. The question is who is pushing the agenda?

People are talking about parking. I am not concerned about parking; we have garages at the back. We sent a letter based on the conversation we had with the President of Medgar Evers College. He said to me, how about we make some speed humps? I said exactly what I thought, perfect! You could plant trees on the sidewalk, whatever you want to do on the sidewalk.

Medgar Evers has an amphitheatre they use it once a year for graduation. Most of the people on the board don't even know about that. They have space that is under-utilized. They have Prospect Park, McNair Park, another little kiddie park. I don't know who is pushing this agenda, because the meeting Pearl is talking about, the Senator and I were away out of the United States. I called Jessie Hamilton, I told him, you have to go to this meeting. I also ask my sister who lives on the block to go to the meeting.

We have to be real. This is our community and we have a right to stand up for what we want and that the board is elected to listen to us. I expect the President of Medgar Evers College to be a man of his word. He said he will sit with us at the table and design a plan with us, so I do not understand why we are here today talking about the closing of Crown Street. Someone is pushing an agenda. It is not Senator Adams, it is not

Borough President Marty Markowitz, it is not Council member James, it is not the president of the block association. So who is pushing the agenda Pearl, and don't tell me you don't know about City Planning sent you a letter about resubmitting a letter, because President Pollard told me we would sit at the table and discuss the plan. So you are telling me Pearl CUNY is the one pushing the agenda.

District Manager Pearl Miles – CUNY is the one submitting the letter, call them up and ask them, I don't work for CUNY.

Ingrid Martin – I just want to be clear that this community board is not pushing the agenda. I expect our community board to stand up and advocate for us.

Council Member Letitia James – I am taking my prerogative and speak. Legally under the ULURP process they have to put an application before the board. There is no application before the board for consideration. We are considering something in abstract. I represent four community boards. When there is a withdrawal then there is no more discussion. A withdrawal says to desist all conversation because the application that may come back to you may change. What you are considering may be different from the future. You should be home taking care of your turkey or preparing to leave.

I supported Clove Road, I gave the board money. I proudly support Medgar Evers College. I champion their money under the leadership of Edison Jackson. I don't have a stake in it. I don't have a dog in this fight. Unanimously everyone says that they are opposed to it. My job, my responsibility, my accountability is to say when it comes to my desk I will rip it up because you are my boss. Community boards you are accountable to the people you serve and you should follow suit.

The closing of PS 161 is real. They are planning to close a school two blocks from here. That is what we should be discussing. "That is real and so I am offended, I am angry, I am upset and I believe in this community board it is time for change. I am telling you right now I am leading the charge for change because people need to be accountable to the community they serve, and I believe in term limits and term limits should be applied to this board."

Jessie Hamilton – I am not going over what was said. The night of the meeting I was there representing Senator Adams. About three o'clock I received a phone call that the meeting was cancelled. Nevertheless I went to visit my friend who is a dentist right next to the community board. As I sat in my car I saw about fifteen people walking into the community board office who were not from our community. They were not community residents. The Architects, representatives from the Dormitory were all there. I was a bit surprised because we had had a meeting at Full Gospel Assembly where we had community residents and here I looked and saw no one from the community. I thought they were there to vote on the new bus line to begin on Nostrand Avenue but transportation did not know what was going on.

I spoke to someone, I said I did not appreciate why I was told that the meeting was cancelled and your were not told that the meeting was cancelled. I wondered what was going on, I raised the question, I felt something was wrong. I was told this was a miscommunication. Then Pearl said we have to do this tonight or it is not going to happen because we have a time line.

Pearl Miles – that is not what I said. I asked the woman whether they were withdrawing the application because we are on the clock and she said tomorrow I will let you know. The next day we received a letter.

Jessie Hamilton – Pearl said, if you stick with me – **Pearl Miles** – I never said that! **Jessie Hamilton** – Pearl said if you stick with me – **Pearl Miles** – Jessie you are a liar, I never said that! **Jessie Hamilton** – I won't say anything more.

Fay Charles – I am a resident of Carroll Street between Bedford and Rogers Avenues since 1970 before there was a Medgar Evers College. I fought for Medgar Evers College because my children had to go to high schools which were predominantly white. I realized when my son saw a child murdered at his school that he was supposed to go to in September and another child was taken off the sidewalk who was hit with a bat, he told me if you send me to school in New York I will run away. At ten years of age I sent him to school in Florida. I drove from Florida to Atlanta, Georgia and put him in Morehouse College. It was such a feeling to see Morehouse College and the quality of education that my child was getting.

My daughter went to Howard University. She said Ma the education I am getting, the campus and the environment I can't believe it. I said what would happen if we could get a college or university in Brooklyn which would emulate Morehouse or Howard University, what a pleasure that would be. If I have a child going to Medgar Evers College, and I have to get out of my comfort zone, wouldn't I do that for the children? They are asking for one little block to sit outside and read. Why should they have to go to Prospect Park to sit out and read? My house value went down because of the sanitation garage, now because of Medgar Evers College my house value went up.

Give the children a chance. I didn't see the community on the streets when our children are being killed. Give our children a chance to experience something good. I stand here tonight for Medgar Evers College.

Patricia Jackson – I live on Bedford and Carroll. She is a student at Medgar Evers College. She lives in the community, she wants to get involved. If they are going to open up some more space and beautify the place, I am all for that. She would like to see the children get something good, she would like something good for the community.

Kevin Yard – a resident of Crown Street has lived in the community since 1959. I was born and raised in the community. I respect parks, I respect Prospect Park. I respect green spaces. The effect of traffic is devastating in Crown Heights. This community will be bogged down in the next twenty years. The funding from CUNY is a carrot dangling in front our fact. I respect what the Council member said about we should be talking about schools that are closing that is more important.

On another note Jessie when you see things like that happening in our community you need to reach out to the people in the community. We need to have feedback. We need support, we need to come together. The community is not about dividing anymore. Thank you for your support.

Maxine Bagaro – live on Montgomery Street between Bedford and Rogers. I was at the last meeting, I don't know what happened, I can't understand why we are here. All I am hearing is all about the study we had. What are we getting back, what about the new houses we have going on over here Bedford and Franklin, Nostrand and Sullivan. When I was finished they came over and said to me, "you know what a great idea, we need this."

People are coming here, they don't live in the neighborhood, they are doing all these things. We have to remind them. Greenspace is beautiful, I love green space, I am a gardener. We have the Botanic Garden guys, enjoy it. We have Prospect Park, why do we need to close the street. All the traffic we have now all the new

housing going up, think about it, what is going to happen? The traffic is not going to get better. This is all I have to say, think about it, we all that live here are seeing it happen. All the people who are coming from outside, you don't live here, you don't care. Think about it guys."

Dion Ashman – I am a 47 year resident of Crown Street between Bedford and Rogers. I am going to say some things now that's going to piss some people off. I've been pretty much quiet on this who topic. As I sit here and listen to my friends, Rawle, Michael Liburd, they are asking questions and I am telling you right now Medgar Evers have done some wonderful things, Medgar Evers doesn't respect us. They don't know how to reach out to us, they are giving us a six for a nine.

Pearl this is not just about parking. We cannot get a place on our block for alternate parking, those students take over our block. The community says no. We have quality of life issues it is not a parking issue. We don't want it that's understood. Don't get me wrong Mike there are other issues which the other folks talk about that we should be pushing. One of the things is asthma, I looked up the statistics, there is going to be a rise in asthma. People when you are at the table when you have all the bargaining chips don't give up your ground.

Ruby Hodge – Bravo Dion

Brenda Scott – I feel compelled to speak on this issue. I am a past graduate of MEC. I want to know why they want to close off the street. MEC is self-serving they are not going to sit out in the sun, the rain, the snow to read books. Many days they won't be out there, but we need the street whether it is hot, cold, rain or snow. I have lived in Ebbets Field for over forty years. At 5:30 when I want to go to Bedford Avenue I turn on Crown Street, so I don't know why they want to detour all this traffic to where the schools are. MEC is self serving, as far as the traffic study, you don't need a traffic study to tell you how congested the streets are. Do not close the street.

Lee Church – representing Assemblyman Jeffries. My only reason for standing before you here tonight is because Assemblyman Jeffries would like you to know that the plan should not be completely dead, but rather be modified. He is here to address the problems of this community and he is part of the community in which Medgar Evers service. The subject tonight is the Medgar Evers College Quad – it is not under-privileged black youth, it is not raining outside. That is not the issue, the issue is our kids are underserved. Although Council member Letitia James and others support Medgar Evers the problem is the plan now, hopefully, they can work with the community and draw a better plan.

Demetrius Lawrence – I stand here as the president of the block association of Montgomery Street. I am totally against the closing of Crown Street block between Bedford and Franklin Avenues. I do not oppose Medgar Evers, I support what they are doing. Their vision to grow, they need to grow, my pet peeve is not on my block. I oppose the closing off of my neighbors' block because of the inconvenience that will occur. Graduation rate is poor at Medgar Evers. I am in favor of them growing on the block but not to close off the block.

Stuart Balberg – I came in thinking it was a ULURP application only to find out it was something else. In 1996 I was on the school board and the plan was to make President Street and Empire Boulevard like Eastern Parkway. Instead they put all these stupid barriers in the street making it impossible to drive. Now they are going to cut off Crown Street which will make President Street, Empire Blvd, and Eastern Parkway impossible for traffic. I will not support anything in this community that will become a traffic hazard.

BUSINESS SESSION

The business session began at 9:10 p.m. with 31 members present.

Minutes of the October 2011 Meeting

The minutes of the October 25, 2011 meeting was presented for correction and adoption. Motion was made by Ruby Hodge and seconded by Rosemarie Perry to accept the minutes as presented.

District Manager's Report

District Manager Pearl Miles announced that the Full Gospel Assembly will be having their Thanksgiving Brunch at two locations this year, 131 Sullivan Place between Bedford and Rogers Avenues, and 836 Franklin Avenue between President and Union Streets. Pastor Michael Bacchus is inviting the community to join them for lunch from 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm. There will also be a clothing give-away. If you know of anyone who might be alone this Thanksgiving, please invite them to come.

The District Manager wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, saying that we had much to be thankful for, including the right to speak our minds.

Committees' Reports

ULURP Committee – Michael Cetera, AIA, Chairperson – see written report

Education Committee – Demetrius Lawrence – see written report

Health and Social Services Committee – Dwayne Nicholson – see written report.

Public Safety Committee – Rosemarie Perry – see written report.

Adjournment

Ms. Carter wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. Motion to adjourn was made by Carl Morgan and seconded by Dion Ashman. Meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelia Foster-Golding
Secretary
December 12, 2011