



# BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #1

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BETTY BRYANT-BROWN  
CHAIRPERSON



CEDRIC L. LOFTIN  
DISTRICT MANAGER

## FULL BOARD MEETING

February 25, 2021  
MINUTES

The Chairperson Ms. Betty Bryant-Brown commenced the meeting with a prayer.

**Ms. Lavender Ross Crisis Counselor from New York Project Hope North side** said that Northside was founded by Dr. Kenneth and Mamie Clarke and they are famous for this thing called the Black/White Doll study. What that did was that it was crucial in ending legal segregation I'm going to give you the simplified version what they did was show kids a white doll a black doll and the black kids would say the white dolls were beautiful, the white dolls are smarter just better in every way. That study helped end segregation and they took they're Doctorate and Psychology training and opened up Northside Center in Harlem it's been going for 75 years, actually it's the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year.

I am a Crisis Counselor with Project Hope which is basically a statewide crisis counseling response organization and we're basically trying to help your constituents understand their emotions during this time. Helping to provide resources during this time we're lacking so many we reach out to schools and after schools and try to assist those especially the children and the families struggling with remote learning. Then we realized that there is so much more that we can offer and there are so many other areas of people that need assistance. So we're reaching out to all the Community Boards and trying to figure out what it is you guys need and how we can help. So we start by offering various resources for housing, food banks, financial planning, childcare, health needs, education and so many other things that we plan to offer to the people in your community. So we're here today to present this and see what you guys need and understand that everything we offer is free and confidential. We're seeking to partner with you all that way you can help to promote the services that we offer. We also offer a hotline for anyone in need no matter if you need someone to speak to or find a local resource whatever it is, we're not limiting our resources to anyone. We're aiming to accomplish this within your community and we're hoping that we can partner with you if there's anything that you feel that you need that the community doesn't already have.

### Questions and Answers

**The roll was called.**

**Motion made** to approve the agenda as presented. Motion duly seconded. Motion called and passed.

**The District Manager Cedric L. Loftin** said that this follow up item to a presentation at the Economic Development-Land Use & Housing Committee meeting of this past month. There's a presentation coming to us related to a ULURP item that has to be dispensed with this evening. The firm engaged in city policy, which is HPD, does HPD have personnel here to discuss the item as part of the presentation.

**Ms. Kay Real HPD** said that we're here to present to you the newest scattered site development project which spans Community Boards 1, 2 and 3 which we're referring to as the Melrose Open Door Cluster. The project is made up of 12 scattered development sites which total approximately 70 cooperative homeownership units and in Community Board 1 there's are 28 units. The project was a winning proposal in 2014 that invited applicants to submit proposals for clusters that would otherwise be too small and too difficult to develop on their own. So this is a ULURP Application and the actions that you will be voting on tonight are the application of the site as an Urban Development Area and disposition of city owned land. In addition we're also proposing an amendment to the Mott Haven North Urban Renewal Plan. The Mott Haven North Urban Renewal Plan was created in 1994 and included in the cluster are Urban Renewal sites 675 Eagle Avenue and 672 St. Ann's Avenue. The floor area and the ratios are not consistent with the current zoning requirement and the parking requirements in the plan are prohibitively restrictive. So adhering to these plans would prohibit construction on these sites so that's why were amending the plan to accept these plans from their restrictive requirements. So after years of only being able to develop low income housing which we're still committing to doing. We're very excited about this project to expand homeownership and to provide opportunities to residents with moderate income. So I'll turn it over to MAHANY that will provide more details.

**Ms. Ismene Speliotis Executive Director MAHANY Management** said that HPD selected MAHANY Management as the developer of these homeownerships in Community Boards 1, 2 and 3. We've come twice before the Economic Development-Land Use & Housing Committee last year before COVID and then last week with updated information. MAHANY owns and manages many units of housing in Mott Haven and those units are 100 percent affordable to extremely low and low income families, so we're excited to bring this homeownership opportunity to the neighborhood.

**Mr. Matthew Feis Architect** said that we're been working with MAHANY over the last couple of years and with HPD to design new construction homes for homeownership. We've been looking at all 12 sites together as a cluster. Predominately about our firm we've been working in the affordable sector for years we have a long history and practice of dedicating ourselves to affordable homes throughout New York City you can see here in Community District 1 there are 4 sites in total. So the first site we're looking at 627 St. Ann's Avenue and all of these sites are vacant so there is no existing building and because of the nature of this project it is difficult to build between two existing buildings on a lot so we're dealt with the difficulty of building where there is nothing on a very narrow site. This allows us to basically be held to 4-stories and we've tried to be very cautious to make sure that what we do design to mix not only with the adjacent buildings but surrounding area. Almost all the sites similarly carry the same characteristics it's basically a vacant lot of historical context. Here we see 675 Eagle Avenue this is

## Pg. 3

a narrower site they vary from 18 ft. to 25 ft. wide here we see this is only 4-apartments in total one apartment per floor, 672 Cauldwell Avenue again we're sandwiched between two buildings the constraints are 4-stories and only allows us to put 8-apartments. Here we're looking at 840-842 Tinton Avenue this is a corner site and having as much openness at the site not encroaching on anything around. Something that you may have seen throughout the project we will be having an energy efficient heating system all the appliances will be stainless steel and modern each apartment will have its own washer/dryer hookup and what we're looking at all the buildings on the first floor will be ADA accessible, all the apartments on the other floors will be ADA adaptable there will be no elevator only stairs. In the basements we will have bicycle storage and paved roofs in the front yard we're trying to have trash containers where applicable. By the nature of the project being a coop the utilities and electricity would be the obligation of the homeowner.

**Ms. Ismene Speliotis** said that when we thought about these sites we thought to build a feasible like 3-family with rental cooperative ownership and settled on cooperative ownership for a couple of reasons, we're actually able to generate 70 homeownership and so we thought for affordability and a number of owners in the neighborhood we thought that this was a better way to go so that is what you are seeing 16-and what we decided to do. We are extremely focused on affordability and long term affordability so the concept that we introduced and spent some time with the committee on that we're actually engaging in you know during the time of construction and development hopefully if the project goes forward. We would really like to engage with the Community Board members and the community at large around the reality and concept of the Land Trusts they've been around forever but have taken some traction W there's a kind of a balance on affordability and equity and a return on their investment and how that works doing it is a longer conversation that we can't get into tonight but I'm making a firm commitment to do this with you hopefully if you're interested. So we're looking at cooperative homeownership over the long term placing it on the Community Land Trust we've been ensured that the unit is affordable for subsequent homeowners. So they'll be a sale and a number with the equity on it to be affordable to the next purchaser. There's a lot of information on this slide and we've tried to actually respond to many of the questions last year in 2020 and then last week. So this is actually showing you across the whole project all 12 buildings of 70 units. We are absolutely going to have time for questions and answers so people know we're available to you as long as you want us tonight.

So basically there are 13studios, 26onebedroom, 15twobedrooms, 13threebedrooms, and 4fourbedrooms in this 70 unit complex. Last year one of the concerns had been on the sizes of the units and the Architect went back we don't have last year's numbers but I can tell you all the apartments increased in size. The Architect took up all of the area that they could in order to make the units as large as they could as large as HPD would allow us so I think they did a good job. The units range because they're between two buildings and so they have limitations not just by the zoning of that particular lot but what can happen when you're building something sandwiched between two properties. As I said MAHANY has developed and owns several properties 100's of units are the lower income level so we're excited to bring in this mix and units of housing that would be available to moderate income households and the ranges of sales prices are due to the fact that some units are smaller than others. Not only in the studios are there different sizes but in the 4bedroom, so you can see here that the prices range for each type of apartment. What we've done for you here is actually told you the range of income that would be needed and be able to purchase a coop apartment in the sales price range that we're showing you. Then the big question that the people asked at the meeting last week so one question is, how much does it cost up front, second question is what does it cost every month what do I need to have available. So these again are

ranges and what we've done here instead of inundating you with numbers on the chart we actually tell you what's included. So basically in a coop there are certain costs that are covered by the coop underlying mortgage, HPD is putting money into this project the state is putting some money in but there will be a mortgage. The coop will have a mortgage along with each individual homeowner so this number reflects the portion of the coop mortgage you will be paying there are no real estate taxes because there will be an abatement. There's water and sewer bills there's gas and there will be the public hall and exterior light electric shared among the cooperative shareholders. There is insurance for the property separate from the homeowner insurance which is also included in here but there's two types of insurance and then you'll be doing an audit so you'll have accounting costs. You have the maintenance person cleaning up the building for you and there's certain filings so this number in red is monthly carrying charge for a homeowner that would own a studio, or one, two, three or four bedrooms. There is also the AMI so we've taken the income required to purchase where they fall within the New York City Median income. Then just another piece of information we gave you is how much money do I have to have saved in order to purchase and again that's a range with a 30 year bank mortgage with as little as 5 percent down you could put more. A lot of people even at these income levels don't have savings New York City is expensive so the bank has programs so this will give you a sense of what the down payment would be and what's another benefit is that New York City has a House Assistance Program. All of the units that are below 80 percent of Area Median Income which means there are two-bedrooms, one-bedrooms and studios and families that are eligible for those units are also eligible for HPD's First Time Homeowner Down Payment Program which is up to \$40 thousand dollars in closing costs. The units above 80 percent those are federal funds that pass through the city so that's an added bonus for some lower income perspective homeowners. That's a lot you guys can decide which slides you want to keep up for questions.

**Mr. Matthew Feis** said that we're doing as much as we can to move the project forward basically with the sale of the homes in 2023. You can see construction takes nearly two and a half years and I can't speak for Ismene but there will always be seminars, ongoing workshops, and discussions throughout the project.

**Ms. Ismene Speliotis** said that MAHANY has been approved for homeowner counseling and so we will begin immediately during construction running seminars, we run seminars now and we'll really focus the Community Boards where the homes are coming up to make sure people are ready for this homeownership opportunity and can avail themselves of it.

#### **Questions and Answers**

**Mr. Nestor Rojas resident** said I'm here to stop this particular project on our street. Given that it's just going to be a sore eye not going to be helpful to anyone.

**Ms. Arline Parks Chairperson Economic Development-Land Use & Housing** said that concludes my report to the Board that we approve this application subject to the parcel at 675 Eagle Avenue with these condition that MAHANY has to continue to work with the homeowner to find some solution to the blocking of his windows to mitigate it and that's what we approved.

Pg. 5

**Motion made** for Board to approve the application subject to the parcel at 672 Eagle Avenue that there be some continuing dialogue with MAHANY and the owner there to try to work something out. Motion duly seconded. The roll was called with 13-Yes with condition and 6-No. Item passed with condition.

### **Public Hearing Closed**

**The representative from the Honorable Bronx Borough President' Office Ruben Diaz, Jr.** said good evening Board Members and residents of Board 1, first of all thank you all for your continued work through these virtual meetings I know it's not the best way to conduct meetings especially not to have these meetings for such important topics. But I do appreciate all the good work you have done over the 10 months we've had to endure this meeting setting. Just a couple of quick items I do want to share with all of you is we shared our last Borough President Newsletter with you which has the most updated information on COVID vaccination locations and a host of other items over the last couple of weeks including a laptop given to students that contacted our office those who are in need of laptops. We had a philanthropist donate a couple of hundred laptops which we were able to distribute to young people in all grade levels to have laptops of their own to continue their education. If you go to our website under education there is a form there who for any child that does not have a laptop or chrome book can fill that out when additional laptops become available, we will be able to distribute to those children. Reappointment applications for Board Members were due on February the 5<sup>th</sup>. I know again with COVID and mail and being able to find a Notary it sometimes has been difficult but if you have not submitted your application and you're up for reappointment I ask you send the application in even if it's not notarized so that we do know that you're interested in returning and we can begin the process with the Council Members. Finally, all of you should have received through your personal email the cycle 3 Sexual Harassment Training Course which you are required to take as Community Board Members. Please be careful that the email that came is probably an email that is not familiar to you so don't ignore it, it's from DCAS and it has your link and it has your password for the course. Once you've taken the course you will then receive a certificate two to three days after you've completed the course, once you've got that please forward it to me or Cedric as long as it gets to me at some point. Once again on behalf of the Borough President thank you for your commitment to Community Board 1.

### **Questions and Answers**

**Honorable State Senator Luis Sepulveda** said that first of all I hope everyone's safe and healthy and taking care of themselves. The COVID rate for our county is still the highest in the city we are 5.70 percent so I'm still telling everyone to please continue wearing face masks. During the COVID crisis my office alone has given out over 45 thousand masks and we have many more to give out so if you or anyone you know needs masks please reach out to us our information is in the chat. One of the things that we have been working diligently on the last few weeks is getting people vaccinated we've created our own wait list we are working with many providers throughout the Bronx to get people appointments.

Anybody that needs help please sign in on our wait list vaccination sheet you'll see it on the chat. On the people that have signed up we have a 90 percent success rate. I know earlier when we started the meeting someone was asking about signing up for the vaccine, I believe that this is one of the best ways we've done about 175 people and this week we anticipate doing 200 people. So my staff has done a fantastic job to make sure that people get vaccinated we're a resource here to help. At the Senate level we passed series of bills that will impact Nursing Homes on the reporting of deaths. What we did is we passed a packet of legislation that will have a direct care ratio for Nursing Homes. Many of you might not know but most Nursing Homes are for profit now and they're not spending enough in terms of patient care and keeping most of the profits. We're going to create a taskforce mandate a disclosure of Nursing Home rates, they are rated and if they have a terrible rating people should know that. We're going to require more infection policies by Nursing Homes for state officials to conduct more thorough inspections. This is about accountability we cannot let those deaths that happened in Nursing Homes. We also passed a series of Utility Legislation that will hold utilities accountable for restoring service to insure, that utilities do not pass on the cost of legislative lobbying. They have lobbies like many organizations and entities but it's not fair that they pass the cost of lobbyists to the consumer we got to put an end to that practice. That's also going to clarify the medical equipment that is essential with electric service. These are some Qof the bills that we're pushing through we're going to have Consumer Advocate within the Service Commission to look out for our interest vis-a-vie utilities. I'm proud to announce I had two of my bills passed the Senate this week one is legislation that is going to direct the Department of Civil Service to make efforts to hold examinations for State Civil Service positions on the campuses of SUNY educational opportunity centers. Now these opportunity centers usually are up north not down south. Down south we know that most of our student's come from communities of color so they will not be given the same information, availability for them to apply for Civil Service jobs and start a career. We also passed a that's going to prevent double bunking in state correctional facilities with the advent of COVID and what's happening at correctional facilities passing away from COVID we want to make sure that we make things as safe as possible. Our office is closed but we're working through phones, email and text and we have done 700 unemployment claims to help people with because my staff has learned how to streamline the process anyone who has difficulty give us a call and we'll help. We're also making sure that people are not illegally evicted, I do the evictions myself or assist, if anyone feels they're getting evicted let us know because the landlord is supposed to send you a hardship form. If you've suffered hardship because of COVID they cannot evict you because of that. Landlords that own 10 or less units in a building can get foreclosure protection you can keep your property. So please use us as a resource we're here to help the community.

#### **Questions and Answers**

**The representative for Honorable State Senator Jose M. Serrano** said that so we're also always available to help you can reach out to us at 212-828-5829. We also continue helping people with housing issues, unemployment, evictions so you can always reach out to us.

**The representative from Honorable Assemblywoman Chantel Jackson** said that one of the things I want to highlight the Assemblywoman has been distributing PPE's and also partnering up with Bronx County to give food giveaways and we're looking to do more in the future, so if anyone needs please put in a request. I know that the Senator highlighted on what most of the Elected Officials are working on but one big thing that she passed was the Clean Air and Water bill which will guarantee everyone access to clean air and water. Also some of the things we're working on we're still working

remotely we're still providing some of the help with our constituents. So if anyone has any issues regarding unemployment, we're partnering up with our local organizations so that we're taking care of our constituents. I will provide my information and team information if anyone needs help.

**The Honorable Assemblywoman Amanda Septimo** said that I'm sure that people say it all the time but I mean it this is always my favorite Community Board to come because you guys take the work so seriously and it really is refreshing how intricate and how deep you dig into everything, so thank you for the work that you do. Senator Sepulveda took a lot of things I was going to say but that was a lovely report. So the two biggest things that I want to highlight we're in our second month but we're doing as much as we can so that we're doing as many PPE giveaways and sign up for vaccination and information giveaway because we know that there is a lot of genuine concern which we understand and we want and try to dispel any misconceptions and clear up any questions and help anybody with any information we can with regards current virus vaccine. Secondly hopefully you all are getting calls from our office in these couple of days to emphasize that our office is open to help with anything especially the hardship form as it relates to evictions. If any landlord wants to evict, they have to present the tenant with the hardship form and so we want to make sure that people know that they're protected in that respect and we help people to fill out the form. I'm here to help as is my office and thank you all for everything you do.

#### **Questions and Answers**

**The representative from the Honorable Councilman Rafael Salamanca** said that tomorrow we're going to have a mobile van outside our office doing rapid COVID testing. Monday we're going to have a food giveaway from our office at 9 AM in the morning. We are still working remotely so we will have constituent services by appointment only.

**The representative for Honorable Councilwoman Diana Ayala** said that our office is open a constituent services and the telephone and email is in the chat.

**The representative for Honorable Congressman Richie Torres** said that we've had a long hectic month and we're just getting operations together with the Congressman's team. We are doing in person by appointment only in particular circumstances and we're right here on Lafayette Avenue. So it's been a lot of piece work that we're getting and we're also trying to have an ear on the ground. I'm in a 10 block radius of most of you so whether we cover everything on this call or not you can always reach out to me I'll put my info in the chat. The three biggest things we've been working on have been a lot of immigrations, people here might of heard of the man from Honduras he was detained by ICE later and then taken again by ICE officials. Cases like that we go back and forth and there's a whole mess of misinformation and people from the Trump Administration fighting to deport as many people as they could. If you know of anyone whose been detained with or without any information on their rights please reach out to us. That's something that we're pushing for everyday and it's our biggest thing by far especially with a large population of African migrants and a growing population of Asians. People don't usually think of them in the Bronx you know it's not only English and Spanish of course we have a lot of Spanish speakers too the Dominican Republic so that's one thing. Another thing we work on a lot of Post Office issues and we've already heard a lot of those. It's a federal agency not as glamorous as the other

big groups if you know of any packages that are missing or especially what we've been seeing a practice called bleaching you get a money order and pay for it but then you get a letter of notification because it's been used to purchase something without your consent. That's a big case of fraud and some of the offices especially in our district give excuses they don't want to chase around to find out where the money has gone. Reach out to us whether missing package or missing money order. The third thing is tax policy as part of the Federal Relief Package the income levels and the amount you get on your taxes back was increased \$2,000 thousand dollars for children under 16 for \$3,200 for children under 6 you know the childhood poverty rate is putting money back into working families. So it makes it a little easier for people with families. So those three things immigration, post office and tax policy we're always looking for ways for things to keep pushing on. Reach out I'll put my phone in the chat I'm always happy to talk.

**Questions and Answers.**

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**The representative from the District Attorney's Office Honorable Darcel Clark** said that our office offers a virtual program for young people and we have an adult component as well Concept Program. So the program is a life-skills to give young people tools to form healthy relationships, strength in problem solving skills and become productive members of their communities. So I put my information in the chat. If anyone is interested in receiving these workshops on gang awareness, substance abuse this program is targeted from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade up to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. We have the adult workshops so if anyone is interested, for those free programs please feel free to email me or call me and I'll send you our brochure and we can go on from there. Additionally the DA is working to having another gun buy event. Right now we don't have a set date yet but hopefully by next month's meeting, will be able to provide you with that.

**Ms. Josephine Fernandez-Byrne Chairperson Education & Youth Committee** said that on Thursday, February 11<sup>th</sup> we and the Municipal Services Committee had a meeting with the Executive Director Richard Berlin of DREAM school and several of the other representatives from the school. The DREAM is actually being rehabbed right now on Bruckner Blvd. just before the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue bridge. The reason we tabled the letter of support of the project because there were several concerns of the safety of the children crossing. Most of you know the Bruckner and especially the Bruckner leading up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue bridge as busy as that is all times of the day and they wanted to put a new crosswalk in the middle of the block for the children to cross into the entrance. One entrance is going to be on Bruckner Blvd. and the other one is going to be on 132<sup>nd</sup> street and that's where the school buses and people bringing their children by car. But the concern there was that was a private street and I don't believe they had total permission to use that block to bring the school buses in or to discharge the children. So because of those concerns Mr. Yahmadi and myself decided that the Committee could not vote on a letter of support until everyone met with the Department of Transportation to find out what their concerns were if they were going to give them the right to have a new crosswalk in the middle of the block on Bruckner Blvd. So we will come back to the Board with whatever happens at the meeting with DOT.

**Ms. Brenda Goodwin Chairperson Health-Human Services and Seniors** said that I have a couple of things I want to report on. One an agency came before me they have acquired a building at 529 Morris Avenue Narco Freedom building. They are coming to us just for informational purposes and they will be at the next meeting. Care for the Homeless I'm not going to go into explaining anything I want

## Pg. 9

them to explain what they want to do at 529 Morris Avenue they will be at the next meeting. Secondly, I know everyone is into computers not everybody receives emails and we can't forget about our homebound seniors. They are having a hard time getting this vaccine, they're suppose to get the vaccine with their Home Attendant. Lincoln Hospital is reaching out to the homebound seniors and bringing them in for the vaccine with their Home Attendant. I need people to understand a lot of people are using up their minutes to try to get through to get tested for a vaccine date. If you know of anybody and you can help them please do so. We need to do a little better modern technology is fine but everyone doesn't do email and people are telling me that they stay on the phone forever just trying to get an appointment. We on the Community Board and Community Activist have to do more specifically for the seniors. Another thing I wanted to say we are doing our best out here I know some of my Health Committee members can't come out but I'd like to thank them because they always have open door policy. Anybody on the Community Board can reach out to me I'm going out and helping the seniors they're not being serviced as they should be. So please let me know if someway I can be of help.

**Motion made** to accept the Committee Reports as presented. Motion duly seconded. Motion called and passed.

## OLD BUSINESS

**The District Manager Cedric L. Loftin** said that the issue of long lines outside the various banks that we have in the District. I've reached out to the banks and waiting for a response to see if we can a meeting with those banks at the Economic Development-Land Use & Housing Committee. To see what can be done understanding this is a time of COVID. We understand some variables put in place before COVID are problematic and still are, so we're awaiting a response. As soon as I receive a response, I'll set up a meeting to see if we can get some structure. I just wanted to report back to the Board.

**Ms. Arline Parks** said that JP Morgan is sponsoring something called the 2021 North of American Early Insight Program. They're designed to introduce historically underserved students for the winter class of 2022 for a spring class of 2023 to the financial services industry for the development of development skills to define your opportunities. To register for these programs no later than Monday, April 5<sup>th</sup>. They have a total of 8 different programs for black pathways undergraduate this is at the college level and they have specifically pathways for women and then they've got programs for military vets native American's from different ethnic groups. So I will send you the flyer by email.

## NEW BUSINESS

**Board Member Freddy Perez, Jr.** said that you know we've had a pretty bad year in terms of robberies, shootings, stabbings in the District. All the networks have reported on this daily. I respectfully request that you reach out to the 40<sup>th</sup> Precinct and ask the Commander to give the Board a report during the next Full Board meeting about what is being done it's been months since we hear anything from law enforcement and they haven't been to our meetings in a long time we really need to hear from them. I respectfully request to have the come before the Board to tell us what they're doing to curb this trend especially since we're approaching the spring and things begin to open up, before you know it summer's here and all hell breaks loose.

**Pg. 10**

**The District Manager Cedric L. Loftin** said that would contact the 40<sup>th</sup> Precinct, PSA7 Housing Bureau and the MTA and a notification would be sent out to them tomorrow for them to present at the March Full Board meeting.

**Motion made** to adjourn. Motion duly seconded. Motion passed.

**MEETING ADJOURNED.**