

LenoxFive 127th Street Block Association

General Meeting Minutes

May26, 2015

1. President's Report

The Acting Chairman, Olu Oni called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

The Secretary, Marilyn Byrd, read the Minutes for the 5/5/15 General meeting.

2. Treasurer's Report - Olu gave the Treasurer's Report on behalf of Reggie who is away on business.

A PayPal account has been established and details are posted on the website. An announcement of this was also posted to the Google Group. If you would like to become a dues paying member and do not have a check or cash with you tonight, you can visit our website and pay using the new PayPal option.

Link:<http://lenoxfive127.org/pay-membership-dues/>

The \$400 balance from the previous block association has now been transferred over to our new bank account.

3. Nominations

No one from the inaugural Board wanted to run for re-election and no one from the General Assembly put their name forward to self nominate.

MB said in reaching out to neighbors on the block about serving on the Board, we learned a few reasons why people might be hesitant to serve as Board members.

A BA has been attempted twice before and those members who served on the Boards want others to step up. Many of those people are regular attendees to our General Assemblies and remain interested in our block and our association, but they simply don't want to serve as Board members

Many of our members are young professionals with, families and their time is limited and Board positions require a good bit of time and work

Many people would prefer to commit to committee work and focus on one issue rather than the variety of issues that the Board addresses

At this point, Olu opened the floor for suggestions on how to organize the Block Association, to move forward without Board leadership.

We discussed extending the nomination period for an agreed period of time.

Our temporary Board winds up in June. Perhaps we create a "caretaker" period until people feel more comfortable with committing their time.

Marilyn spoke with an organizational development professional, who lives on our block and was advised that we might want to consider allowing the BA to work as an amalgamation of committees for a period of time, until people feel more engaged and more confident in the BA and our ability to work together and affect change.

It was suggested that we organize committees who will establish their committee chairs and appoint a "caretaker" to work with the various chairpersons as well as maintain oversight of the GG, email and bank account.

Sandy Benavides asked if we would need to change the Bylaws and Olu responded that we would need to add an amendment but at this point in time, we don't know what the amendment would say. It would be best to trial run this solution and then craft language to cover this type of situation.

A vote was taken and passed unanimously to make Marilyn the "Caretaker", whose duties are described above.

4. Dues – Having resolved the issue of the BA's viability, the membership agreed that we should continue our plan to collect dues. Dues were collected and recorded.

5. Committees

❖ The Park

Susan Stair wanted to endorse the work that Tony Hillary has done with Harlem Grown and recommended that we pursue an association with HG as we focus on the Park and try to clean it up and hopefully turn it into a useable space.

Marilyn said that we have been in touch with Tony and Tony had scheduled a meeting with ADC that was to have taken place the end of last week. The outcome of that meeting is unknown.

Victor Dorizio, who lived on the block when the Park first opened, related that it quickly became a drug hangout and arguments broke out among the neighbors over how the Park was to be used. Ultimately, it was closed and locked.

Susan reported that back when she served on the Board, Dr. Laroche donated \$500 for Community Day, which was very successful. He wanted to go further and offered to pay for a design for the space (not the building costs) that would include the needs of the community maybe using an urban planner.

Marilyn mentioned that Dr. Laroche remains interested and has emailed the BA 2 or 3 times regarding the Park.

Olu wanted to know whether or not we had consensus on HG or whether we need to do some due diligence.

Victor said that he has researched the neighborhood gardens and parks and committees and organizations and grants and doesn't believe there is anything better than what Harlem Grown is offering.

Susan said that Michelle Obama has visited HG and they have a good bit of visibility.

NOTE: HG was recently chosen to be a part of the Huffington Post Next 10, a fundraising campaign launched by The Huffington Post.

“The Huffington Post turns 10 this month and Harlem Grown was hand picked to represent one of the ten cause spaces that are so important to the Huffington Post ethos - these are 10 issues under which The Huffington Post believes meaningful strides can be made in the decade to come. “

It was moved and seconded that we move forward with HG as our Park partner. The motion was unanimously carried.

Tal Marnin volunteered to not only be on the Park committee but also to serve as Chair.

Olu read the description of the Park committee:

- Come up with up to 3 viable and actionable proposals on how to use the space (including the current proposed [Harlem Grown](#)).
- Organize a 311 campaign to complain to NYSD of the Park’s current condition
- Keep the Board and General Assembly up to date on activity

Marilyn suggested emailing Community Board 10 regarding all 311 complaints as another means of adding muscle to our cause. Marilyn will post Community Board 10’s 311 email address to the Google Group.

NOTE: The CB10 Assistant District Manager in charge of constituent complaints is Terry Yeboah. His email address is tcarreyyeboah@cb.nyc.gov

Sandy Benavides mentioned that Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President, has recently opened an office at 431 West 125th Street.

NOTE: According to the website, walk-ins are welcome but appointments can be made by calling 212-531-1609.

❖ Community Liaison

It was decided that the Park Committee and the Community Liaison Committee were probably the most important committees to launch. The Park Committee already has a number of volunteers but the Community Liaison Committee could use some more people. Marilyn will send out an email blast with links to the Committee sign up. This is the easiest way to join a committee or demonstrate interest in volunteering a specific area of expertise (i.e. legal, assist with writing grant proposals, marketing and PR).

Link: <http://lenoxfive127.org/2015/05/sign-up-for-committees/>

6. Google Group

Google Groups is very proprietary and in order to be a member, you must have a Google account (although you don't need a Gmail address). Many in our block association don't have Google accounts and don't want one. George Duran volunteered to research other groups like Yahoo Groups as an alternative to our current GG.

7. Any Other Business

❖ 76 West 127th Street

Tal Marnin wanted some information on the abandoned brownstone at 76. Mike Benavides, who lives next door, said there were many 311 calls and once a month, someone generally comes around to clean up. Sandy said the latest update was that some bank in the Midwest now owns it and they will probably want to sell, which would be good because the previous owner did not want to sell. It is uncertain if another company is managing the property, now that the property is under new ownership (i.e. the bank).

❖ Public exposure of private acts

George Duran brought up his concerns about public urination, defecation and drunkenness happening more frequently, particularly on the corner. As the weather improves, this seems to be a more frequent occurrence, happening at all hours of the day and night and is problematic especially as it relates to all the young children on the block. George emphasized that the corner guys were an

important part of our block and add to the vibrancy and heritage of Harlem, but the public exposure of private acts needs to be addressed.

Olu mentioned that the Board had invited some of the corner guys to attend Block Association meetings. James Rich said that, Mr. White, was one of the older gentlemen on the corner and was well respected among the group. He said he thought Mr. White was very approachable. Mr. White might present an opening for us to start a dialogue with the group. James also thought that Mr. Shabazz who does odd jobs for several homeowners on the north side of the block might be another good advocate. Mr. Shabazz is very in tune with all the various activities on the block.

Mike said he had recently noticed a number of new faces and James said he had noticed the same.

❖ Our next meeting

We discussed meeting again in 3 months, but it was agreed that we would lose momentum if we waited that long and we resolved to schedule another meeting in a month's time.

A Motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Committee Descriptions

Social ([join](#))

Oversee logistics of securing a date, police precinct permissions and all aspects of organizing a block party

Organize refreshments following General Membership meetings

Organize all aspects of Halloween trick or treating on the block (including securing date and police precinct permissions)

Sanitation ([join](#))

Attend CB 10 sanitation committee meetings

Report to 311 or the sanitation department missing trash receptacles on the 4 corners of 5th and 127th and the 4 corners of Lenox and 127th.

Report on clogged drainage grates to the sanitation department

Organize block clean up days

Brainstorm ideas to keep the block cleaner on a daily basis

Membership ([join](#))

Organize flyer distribution to announce BA meetings

Greet and introduce new members and prospective members at BA meetings.

Contact all new members personally by phone or email to welcome them to the BA and encourage them to return to the next meeting

Create welcome kit or OneSheet with BA information (website URL, BA email address, Google Group invitation request, list of committees, Member in Good Standing requirements)

Brainstorm ideas to grow BA membership, General Meeting attendance and participation

Web ([join](#))

Charter: Maintain an inclusive, respectful web presence with content relevant to our block; and provide a platform for the BA to communicate with the BA community about notices, events relevant to the block and the BA.

Committee Descriptions

Post necessary announcements from the BA Board to the website – to include meeting announcements, minutes, event notices etc.

Maintain the BA blog (as time permits) in keeping with the BA online charter.

Moderate and approve comments posted to the website in keeping with the BA online charter.

Respond to membership requests to join the BA's Google group.

Monitor the availability of both the website and the Google groups

Park ([join](#))

Come up with up to 3 viable and actionable proposals on how to use the space (including the current proposed [Harlem Grown](#)).

Organize a 311 campaign to complain to NYSD of the Park's current condition

Keep the Board and General Assembly up to date on activity

Community Liaison ([join](#))

Through a rota system – provide attendance coverage at the following community meetings: 28th Police Precinct meeting (x1 a month), 32nd Police Precinct (x1 a month), Community Board 10 (x1 a month). All meetings occur weekday evenings.

Provide the BA Secretary with a summary of the meeting and any material items relevant to the block and the block community.