

LenoxFive 127th Street Block Association

General Meeting Minutes

May 5, 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 2/17/15 General meeting.

2. Treasurer's Report

It was reported that a bank account has now been established for the BA at Banco Popular.

3. Announcements

- Resignations

Due to work commitments of a new job, Kaylie Stansfield resigned her position as Sargent at Arms in February.

In March, Board Chairperson, Kathy Smith, resigned her position. An announcement was issued describing the context of the resignation.

Olu pointed out that the focus of the inaugural Board has been to establish a sound structure for the Block Association. The results have been the ratification of a set of ByLaws, BA incorporation, the launch of a website and Google Group and the opening of a bank account. Our focus now shifts from transitioning from an interim Board to an ongoing Board.

- Questions:

Kathy Smith wanted to know if any dates had been secured for a block party. Olu responded that the BA needed to establish

committees, particularly a social, committee, in order to begin work on events like a block party.

George Duran wanted to know the best way to bring up new business, issues and concerns. Olu responded that members should email the Board at LenoxFive127@gmail.com or post to the BA google group or post to the website. At BA meetings, the floor will be open for new discussions at the end of the agenda.

4. Nomination Forms and Process

Marilyn explained that all Board positions are open. They are Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, Sargent at Arms and 2 Directors. For those interested in running for a Board position, nomination forms and position descriptions were made available at the meeting. The Board also plans to post forms and descriptions on the website for members to download and complete.

At our next General Assembly meeting, those wishing to run for a Board position will have the opportunity to introduce themselves and deliver a brief description of their qualifications and why they wish to hold a Board position.

Elections for Board positions will be held in June.

The new Board will serve a two (2) year term.

Kathy Smith wanted to know if she could use one form in order to nominate a slate of candidates or would she need a form for each candidate. Olu replied that the forms weren't designed to accommodate a slate of candidates and that one form per candidate was required.

5. Questions from the floor - The floor was opened for general questions, issues and new business

- Tony Hillary, founder of Harlem Grown, introduced himself and his organization. Harlem Grown is a youth development organization, which promotes sustainability and a healthy lifestyle. Harlem Grown (HG) takes lots, like the Park on our block, and converts them into thriving urban farms with a big community space, but they are not community gardens. They have many programs for adults but concentrate on children and lead them towards healthier lifestyles. The children do all the planting. HG does all the tending with the help of

volunteers. When it is time to harvest, HG sends the food home with the children. But for the community, HG provides free yoga every Saturday, live music, family movie nights, and all kinds of workshops about health, cooking etc. HG will facilitate our ideas. They bring all sorts of resources to the block. They connect with a lot of local schools. Those children own the space and they won't destroy what they worked hard to create.

Tony explained that the intention was not to takeover ownership from Abyssinian Development Corp. (ACD) but rather to gain access to it and have the ability to transition it from it's current state to a viable garden and community property much like that at 118 West 134th Street, which 4 years ago was an abandoned community garden that had become a hangout and junk yard. That year HG grew 40 pounds of produce. Four years later, they grew 1,786 of organic produce that was all given to the children. This year, their target is one ton of produce. They have composted over 6,000 pounds of food scraps.

Reggie Chambers asked if HG had done this sort of conversion before and who was the property owner. Was it ACD? Tony replied that it was Green Thumb, a City owned lot. HG built a hydroponic greenhouse next to the 134th Street garden where they grow 10,000 vegetable plants a month and which feeds 52 families. When the City put these lots on the market 3 months ago for development, they wanted to take that greenhouse. HG got over 7,000 signatures, which were delivered to City Hall and City Hall responded wanting to know how this issue could be resolved. Tony emphasized that there is strength in numbers and ADC can be targeted with that strength.

Tony explained that HG is a non-profit with strong backing from companies like Price Waterhouse Cooper, Google, Target and Aetna. HG is a youth development organization that covers a lot of hot button topics such as childhood obesity, underserved youth, after school programs.

Kathy Smith said that ACD sold the Park and other properties on the block 2 months ago to a company called Winn Management Company. (NOTE: subsequent research has turned up no record of the sale and when Mr. Watson of ADC was questioned about the status of ADC's ownership of the site, he replied that no sale had occurred and the Park

was still the property of ACD). Olu said that based on the recent research conducted by the Columbia students of the CEC, that even if ACD had sold the space, the land disposition agreement ACD has with the City requires that the Park remain a recreational space for 20 years after the 2001 purchase, so nothing can be done there that excludes public use of the property before 2021.

- George Duran expressed concern about dog owners not picking up after their dogs and also allowing their dogs to urinate on our trees, which is killing the trees. He suggested that we organize some kind of movement to address this problem.

Olu suggested we use George's suggestion to segue to the topic of Committees.

- Marilyn introduced six committees that we would like people to sign up for. They are social, sanitation, membership, web, community liaison and elderly. Marilyn then read descriptions for each committee (see attached). A sign up sheet was then passed among members. Amber Chretien suggested that we post the sign up and committee descriptions to our Google Group so that people could study the committees and sign up using a Google Doc.
- The subject of the Park was reintroduced. George Duran wanted to know what next steps might be. Kathy Smith suggested that we explore Harlem Grown as well as other organizations that might help with the Park. Reggie Chambers suggested that we establish a committee specifically for the Park and no other purpose. Kristine Naylor suggested that she might be able to connect us to Whole Foods as a sponsor.
- Katharina Wilson wanted to know how we pay dues. Olu responded that we will be prepared to accept dues at the next meeting.

- Sandy Benvides asked for clarification regarding Board nominations and Committees. Olu responded by saying that people interested in serving on the Board should fill out a nomination form and elections will be held in June. If you are interested in being on a committee, simply add your name and email address to the sign up sheet.
- Members were reminded that dues are \$25 per year. This is a per person fee, not a per household fee. For businesses on the block the dues are \$100 per year.

Olu said we would send out an email prior to the next meeting informing the membership of payment methods.

- Olu then asked for everyone to stand and introduce themselves.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 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.
- 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.