

Park Place - Underhill Avenue Block Association

Approved Minutes

02/17/2021

Attendees:

Libby Ashton	Peter Gordenstein	Heidi Rodewald
Phyllis Brody	Den Gordon	Richard Roth
Sharon Combs	Marc Gordon	Bennett Stein
Daniel Deverell	Drew Higginbotham	Teddy Theoharis
Jill Frasier	Robin Ketchum	Gib Veconi
Brian Fritsch	Susan Metz	Matt Weinstein
Adrian Gately	Diana Regan	Stacey Weinstein
Nicole Gonzalez	Ed Regan	

The meeting was held via Zoom and called to order by Marc Gordon, co-president at 7:34 PM.

Marc explained that the originally planned guest / featured speakers, the NYPD 77th precinct Community Affairs officers, had to cancel their attendance due to “unforeseen events”. Marc and Robin will try to arrange an alternate date for them to attend.

Co-presidents’ mid-term review

Marc Gordon noted that as the end of January marked the mid-point of Robin’s and Marc’s term as co-presidents, this seemed a good time to review the goals they had established for their term; progress made toward those goals; and to seek members’ input as how the block association can better meet the needs of the membership for the remainder of Robin’s and Marc’s term.

Marc reviewed the co-presidents’ goals set in September – to increase engagement (through activities; making meetings more relevant; and new member recruitment) and to improve connectedness (leveraging technology; sharing our membership list with members; improving accessibility of block association information). These were addressed with a busy fall schedule of activities; guest / featured speakers at each meeting; creation of the PPUABA website and populating it with news and reference information; distribution of the member list; and active recruitment of new members. Meeting attendance increased from an average of 16 per meeting last spring to an average of 22 this fall; membership increased 32% since September; and the website traffic shows many users accessing the site each month.

Marc requested and members provided feedback as to what they would appreciate going forward:

- Matt Weinstein: more proactivity in addressing shortfalls in municipal services
- Susan Metz: meeting topics on election procedures; a “learning community” initiative; a “needs and wants” post
- Peter Gordenstein: information about show shovelers for hire; increase ads in newsletter or on website
- Den Gordon: initiative to help families with young kids during the pandemic (tutoring, playground activities, etc.)
- Jill Frasier: meeting topic on effectiveness of NYC’s re-cycling programs
- Susan Metz: explore community-based Wi-Fi; initiative for “techies” to assist the “technology challenged”; initiative to sponsor children’s contests with prizes

Gib Veconi stated that the current leadership has been the most organized and productive in the 20 years he has been a member of PPUABA. Members attending the meeting concurred.

Grant Committee

Volunteers were requested to serve on the 2021 Grant Committee to evaluate proposals that have been received for the \$1,000 in available funding for grants to community organizations and projects. The committee will report its recommendations regarding the grant proposals at the March meeting. Members of the

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committee are Rick Roth, Jill Frasier, Stacey Weinstein and Teddy Theoharis. Rick will organize the committee's first meeting.

Nourishing Our Community

Jill Frasier reported on recent activities of the block association's food pantry and soup kitchen support initiative. In February, NOC participants purchased and delivered 4 cases of oranges to CHIPS soup kitchen, and 11 cases of fruit and vegetables to Chance For Children food pantry. Another delivery to Chance For Children will be made next week. The group now has enough contributions and volunteers to fund and staff 3 substantial shopping and delivery trips each month.

Land Use and BBG Fight For Sunlight

Susan Metz and Bennett Stein discussed recent developments regarding several re-zoning proposals in Crown Heights which if approved would significantly alter the density and character of the neighborhood, displace current residents and reduce the sunlight available to the Botanic Garden. The re-zoning proposal for 960 Franklin Avenue which would allow for construction of two 39-story towers near the Botanic Garden was 'certified' by the City Planning Commission on Feb 1, meaning that the application is complete and the re-zoning proposal now enters the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure ("ULURP"). Bennett summarized how ULURP works – it is a sequential process that over a period of approximately 6 months includes reviews by the Community Board, Borough President, City Planning Commission, City Council and the Mayor. The procedure includes several public hearings and opportunities for community input. Susan and Bennett will share more information about opportunities for community input as the dates become known.

PPUABA Business Items

A motion to approve the January meeting minutes was made by Den Gordon, seconded by Sharon Combs, and approved unanimously.

Robin Ketchum reported on two items of unfinished business from the January meeting which were subsequently discussed in the Officers' Meeting.

- A proposal was discussed for an outdoor block association event to be held on May 15th on the block of Underhill Avenue between Prospect Pl. and Park Pl. Rather than a traditional full block party, it is proposed to be modeled on our September "Meet Your Neighbors" event as a chance for neighbors to meet and mingle observing COVID safety protocols. It would include a plant sale but no food, book table, rummage table or pot-luck dinner to follow - so that participants don't have reason to remove their masks or repeatedly handle items on a communal table. It would not be advertised to the wider Prospect Heights community. If COVID conditions permit, a more traditional full block party could be considered in the fall. A motion to approve the overall format, the May 15th date and the location was made by Susan Metz, seconded by Stacey Weinstein and approved unanimously. Matt Weinstein will file the street closure permit application.
- Following the January discussion of the by-laws amendments, Stacey Weinstein had requested that the newsletter editor be made a block association officer position. This was discussed at the Officers' Meeting, and Robin reported that the officers unanimously agreed it was not appropriate to create an officer position of newsletter editor. The officers had reviewed the board structure of other community organizations, none of which have a newsletter editor officer position. Robin stated that given the existence of the website, the newsletter, a recording secretary and a corresponding secretary, the officers would perhaps over the summer consider how the communications functions might be better organized. The recording secretary will ensure that the newsletter editor receives a summary of the officers meetings so that key messages can be communicated in the newsletter.

A motion to adjourn was made by Gib Veconi, seconded by Diana Regan. The motion was approved unanimously at 9:03pm.