

MINUTES FROM BLOCK ASSOCIATION AND GARDEN MEETING
MARCH 23, 2011

- The meeting was opened at 7pm with introductions from everyone present; below is a list of those in attendance:
 - Mat Osicki
 - Jim Streaker
 - Scott Ahlborn
 - Diane Mellon
 - Sebastian Morell
 - Jackie Albano
 - Aaron Albano
 - Denise Rivera
 - Venus Combs
 - Daisy B. Jones
 - Lamont Alston
 - Kermit Romer
 - Syderia Chresfield
 - David Schommer
 - Eve Byam
 - Cornelius Parker
 - Omar Davis
 - Leslie Phipps
 - Priya Ganapati

BLOCK ASSOCIATION

- It was agreed that elections for the Block Association Secretary position would be postponed until next meeting
- Block Improvements
 - Two priorities for the Block in 2011 is a fence for the front of the Garden facing 123rd street and a message board that can be used for posting community notices
 - The Garden was awarded a New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods grant from the Citizen's Committee for New York City of in the amount \$985; the money will be used to purchase the message board.
- Block Association Treasurer Aaron Albano provided an update on finances:
 - As of March 23, 2011, the BA account held \$1,483.65
 - For anyone wishing to see current account activity, please contact Aaron directly at Ming@habitatmusic.com
- Aaron also discussed efforts currently underway to establish 501 (c) 3 status for the BA in order to support fundraising activities
- Current Membership
 - It was requested that everyone please check in with Aaron to make sure their dues are paid and Membership status is accurate
 - For those interested in becoming members, forms were available for both the Garden and the BA.
- Community News (Church, MMPCIA, Outreach to other BA's)

- Eve Byam made an announcement and circulated a petition for meeting attendees to sign supporting Ephesus's plans to hold a community health fair on west 123rd street – the block will be closed to traffic for the day.
- Syderia Chresfield, president of Mount Morris Park Community Improvement Association (MMPCIA), talked about several upcoming events in the neighborhood, including:
 - My Park Day – May 21
 - Ribbon cutting ceremony for Marcus Garvey Park Amphitheater – June 2
 - House Tours – June 12 (tickets are \$20, contact Syderia directly if you're interested Syderia@aol.com)
 - MMPCIA Membership Drive – April 26, 7 – 10pm at The Winery, 257 west 116th street
- Jackie has been in touch with people from the 119 and 122 Block Associations; we hope to partner with them and other BA's in the area on future projects
- Jackie gave updates on activities the BA is currently working on, including:
 - Easter Egg Hunt in the Garden with the 123rd Street Youth Program – date is set for April 16
 - There was a call for anyone with any ideas for activities to contact Jackie or Lamont Alston, head of the 123rd Street Youth Program
 - Garden History Project – as a way to commemorate the founding of the 123rd Street Community Garden, the BA and Garden would like to work on gathering the history of the Garden from its founders. The project will also help demonstrate the value and relevance the garden has to our neighborhood's community history
 - Volunteer programs – as a way to give back to the community, the BA would like to set up a volunteer program offering block residents a chance to get involved with public service projects; the BA would like to partner with the Youth Program to identify projects.
- Jackie asked for meeting attendees to offer their own thoughts for block projects:
 - Dave Schommer suggested holding an impromptu drum circle on the block – questions were raised about if there would be issues with noise complaints, but it was agreed that the idea should be pursued further.
 - Kermit Romer raised a point about the need for people on the block to communicate more and be more flexible regarding block-related activities; the split between neighbors on the block was detrimental to improving our quality of life and we needed to start working together in order make real change

GARDEN

Jim Streacker, new head of the New 123rd Street Block Association Community Garden, provided several updates on projects in the Garden, including:

- The shed has been cleaned out and organized – please be mindful that everything is kept neat and put back in its proper home

- Heritage Rose Garden – spearheaded by Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, the City is partnering with the Heritage Rose Foundation to develop a Heritage Rose District in New York City, with our garden being the first in Harlem to plant the Harlem heritage rose
 - We need to purchase 24 rose bushes for \$15 a piece; the Garden and BA needs to fundraise for the bushes – suggestions were made to solicit local businesses to purchase individual bushes and/or have buildings on the block buy a bush
 - Planting will start on April 30
- Composting – Jim asked for volunteers to be in charge of the compost in the Garden
- New boxes – six additional vegetable are being made, please see Jim if you are interested in a box
- Volunteer group coming to help in the Garden on April 4 & 5
- Leslie Phipps from Ephesus' youth group Pathfinders introduced herself and would like to start working more closely with the Garden and also the BA
- Jim asked for people to contact him directly if they had any time to help keep the garden open – as per GreenThumb rules, the Garden must be kept open to the public 40 hours per week
- Sebastian Morell talked about the budgetary difficulties facing GreenThumb and the need to think about the future of the Garden without the support of this agency
- Diane Mellon introduced WHINGS (West Harlem Initiative for Garden Sustainability) and encouraged members to join and participate with neighboring gardens who face similar concerns