Civic News

The newsletter of the Park Slope Civic Council

Spring 2013

ANNUAL MEETING JUNE 6 Elections for Officers and Trustees, Awardees Honored, Much More... Everyone is Invited!

The Civic Council's Annual Membership Meeting will take place on Thursday, June 6, starting at 7:00 PM, in the Cafeteria at New York Methodist Hospital. We will vote on a slate of new Board members and officers that the membership was notified of by letter dated April 4. We will also receive reports of grants and scholarships presented and present our annual Loyoten Awards for Professional Service and Volunteer Service to the community. A pot-luck party will follow - bring your favorite food or beverage to share! It is a fun time for our members,2 associates, elected officials and other visitors. We will also vote on changes to the By-Laws that have been approved by the Board. These changes, summarized below, are made to reflect more accurately how the Civic Council does business.

Proposed By-Laws Changes

This is a summary of the principal changes to the By-Laws approved by the Trustees on April 4, 2013.

- The position of Financial Secretary is replaced by that of Assistant Treasurer, and many of the duties of the Financial Secretary are transferred to the Membership Secretary.
- The title of Secretary is changed to Corresponding and Recording Secretary.
- Specific responsibilities of Officers are abolished in favor of a periodic review of these responsibilities by the Board of Trustees.
- The size of the Board is changed from 30 members to between 24 and 30 members.
- All formal notices to the membership may be made by either postal mail or electronic mail.
- Payments may be made electronically, and the Board shall determine the requirements for approval of expenditures.
- The Civic News is no longer the official organ of the Park Slope Civic Council, the Web site now being the de facto official organ.
- The Code of Conduct that the Board approved in 2012 is appended to the By-Laws.
- The presentation to the Board of the annual operating budget is changed from the September meeting to the March meeting.

From the President...

What, the Civic News is down to four pages?

With this issue we’re going back to basics, in print anyway. Those of you who have been around the Civic Council for a while remember that for many years Civic News was a newsletter. With two great editors, Ezra Goldstein and Dave Herman, Civic News became a polished publication with many excellent articles about life and advocacy in Park Slope. In 2011 we gave Civic News a magazine format that allowed us to explore issues in depth – and for the first time it was printed in color. We hoped that we would get more advertisers with the new format. We were not altogether successful in that and after two years it was time for us to step back and take a fresh look at what we were doing.

At the same time, we did a top-to-bottom revamping of our Web site, and it has become our primary means of disseminating information and keeping in touch with the membership. On the Web and in social media, we’re putting out timely information as well as some in-depth pieces about what’s going on in and around Park Slope. It is how news is gathered and disseminated in the early 21st century.

The success of our online presence has led us to re-think Civic News. There are plenty of people who are doing something about what the Civic Council is doing in print, and this revamped Civic News is for you. And this version of the Civic News will let the community know what the Civic Council’s committees are doing in their respective roles, for the work of the Civic Council is done at the committee level. This issue includes succinct summaries of our committees and their work. After a reasonable time we’ll once again assess our communications strategies and see what we’re doing well and what could be improved.

In all of this several things are certain. We are not stuck in one way of doing things. We’ll try something after considering it carefully, and we’ll see whether it works. We’ll pay close attention to those issues where we can have a timely, positive impact. And we will communicate those issues, and what we are doing about them, in the most effective way possible.

Michael Cattl

Calendar

Check Web site for locations.

Every Month: Civic Council Board meetings, first Thursday (except July and August), 7:00 PM

May: Mayoral Candidates Forum, May 6, 7:00 PM, Congregation Beth Elohim, 274 Garfield Place

September: Membership kick-off meeting, September 5, 7:00 PM

October: Food for Thought fundraiser, October 9 at 6:30 PM, at the Prospect Park Picnic House

Fall Civic Sweep

December: Annual Civic Council holiday party, December 5

Jingle Bell Jamboree

Toys for Tots

Forth on Fourth Avenue (FOFA)

WHO WE ARE: FOFA arose from the Civic Council’s 2010 public forum, The Future of Fourth Avenue, and a walking tour of 4th Avenue eight months later. A full Civic Council committee as of February 2012, FOFA is an active forum and voice for people who live, work, and make use of 4th Avenue’s Flatsbush Avenue to Flatbush Avenue Prospects Expressway. Our goal is to help create and maintain a safe, multi-use, clean and green streetscape for the diverse users of 4th Avenue.

Board at its March meeting, supporting the continued existence of the library functioning in place, authorizing submission of a request for evaluation by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and supporting continued work by the subcommittee. FOFA represents the Civic Council in the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce’s outreach initiative to merchants along 4th Avenue. FOFA has been active in Council Member Levine’s first Participatory Budgeting efforts.

Co-Chairs: SJ Avery and Elise Selinger

Meetings: Every second Tuesday of the month, 7:45 AM, at the Fifth Avenue Committee office, 621 Degraw Street near 4th Avenue.

E-mail: fofo@parkslpceviccouncil.org

Grants

WHO WE ARE: The Park Slope Civic Council awards community grants each year, which support a variety of active, creative organizations in Park Slope who contribute greatly to our community’s diversity and vitality.

Chair: Gilly Youner

Meetings: as needed

E-mail: grants@parkslpceviccouncil.org

Historic District

WHO WE ARE: The Park Slope Historic District — established in 1973 as one of New York City’s first such zones — played a strong role in Park Slope’s renaissance in the 1970s and 1980s. Our objective is to expand the district so we can preserve our neighborhood’s special architecture and character. Launched in 2007, the committee advocates with the community, elected officials, and other stakeholders; informs homeowners of what it means to be within the historic district; conducts extensive outreach at community events and by canvassing homeowners within proposed expansion areas; and drives the designation process forward through our persistent follow-up with the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission.

WHAT WE DO: This has been an historic year for the Historic District Committee. In 2012, the LPC capped five years of the Civic Council’s concerted outreach and advocacy, expending the Historic District by approving the addition of 600 buildings in the South Slope. This was the district’s first expansion since its creation and made the Park Slope Historic District the largest in New York City. In March, the LPC presented the boundaries of a second expansion to about 70 North Slope homeowners who attended a meeting about the landmarking process and the responsibilities of a property owner within a historic district. The proposed addition of 400 buildings was strongly welcomed by the homeowners in attendance. A public hearing by LPC was expected later this year, with approval of the North Slope extension taking place as early as 2014. We will continue to reach out to homeowners to build community support for the proposed North Slope Extension and later
Historic District expansion phases. We need volunteers for this advocacy effort, which includes writing letters, producing brochures, tabling at community events, and conducting a door-to-door outreach campaign to property owners. We have also joined forces with FOFA to preserve the Pacific Branch Library at 42 Avenue and Pacific Street. In addition to serving residents of Park Slope and Boerum Hill, the library is an irreplaceable historic asset by virtue of being the first Carnegie Library in Brooklyn.

Chair: Peter Bray
Meetings: as needed.
E-mail: historicDISTRICT@parkslopeciviccouncil.org

Sustainability

WHO WE ARE: The Sustainability Committee advocates for responsible use of natural resources in our community and promotes better practices for the environment. Our goals are to provide information on sustainability issues; encourage practices that reduce waste and increase recycling; raise awareness of sustainability and carbon-footprint issues in our selection of food and other goods; and work with other groups, providing them with publicity and assistance.

WHAT WE DO: This year we organized Civic Sweeps in October and April where we bring the community together for a day of cleanup and beautification of our commercial streets. The health of trees on our commercial streets is another focus as we continue to engage merchants who will commit to caring for long cherished and newly planted trees along our many blocks. We have also contributed to the Arbor Day tree planting in Prospect Park, with funds raised from the Civic Sweep events. We have been closely involved with GreenSpaces creating a native-plantings garden and a site for community events at the long-vacant lot at 46 Avenue and Sackett Street. We anticipate 2013 will be the year where Sackett Street plans go into effect—so watch that space and our Web site! Finally, we are adding an indoor focus to our planning, with possible initiatives that will promote energy efficiency measures for our neighborhood brownstone owners.

Chairs: Robert Gilbert and Chandra Murthy
Meetings: Every third Monday of the month, 7 p.m., e-mail for location.
E-mail: sustainability@parkslopeciviccouncil.org

Toys for Tots

For the last 18 winters, the Civic Council has organized a Toys for Tots gift collection drive to help children and families in need celebrate the holiday. And every year, Park Slope shows its true community spirit by brightening their holidays with hundreds of donated toys and books.

Chair: Thomas Mikell
Meetings: as needed
E-mail: toys4tots@parkslopeciviccouncil.org

The Park Slope Civic Council also produces the annual Halloween Parade; co-sponsors (with the Prospect Park Alliance) Mulchfest every January; is a founding member of BrooklynSpeaks, which works for open governance and development of the Atlantic Yards project; and is a stakeholder member of the Grand Army Plaza Coalition.

PARK SLOPE CIVIC COUNCIL
MISSION STATEMENT

The Civic Council’s mission is to understand the concerns of the various Park Slope constituencies and to select and implement effective responses through events, activities and advocacy efforts that enrich the community and enhance our quality of life.

Outreach

WHO WE ARE: Established in 2010, the Outreach Committee coordinates the Civic Council’s informational, marketing, and membership efforts. We focus on getting the word out about the Civic Council in both Park Slope and neighboring communities—who we are, what we’re working on, and how to get involved. The Outreach Committee develops strategies to improve the Civic Council’s efforts within the Park Slope community, including fund-raising efforts like “Food for Thought” and greater coordination with our local businesses.

WHAT WE DO: This is an exciting time for the Outreach Committee. The September membership meeting drew a large crowd and showcased the work of the Civic Council’s different committees. We successfully planned and executed the first “Food for Thought” fund-raiser for the Civic Council’s scholarship program. The event was a huge success, raising approximately $15,000, which allowed the Civic Council to increase the amount of each scholarship award from $1,800 to $1,500. Planning is already underway for this year’s “Food for Thought.” The Outreach Committee also assumed responsibility for the Civic News and its re-launch as a semi-annual publication. The revamped Civic News will be a condensed source of information about the Civic Council’s work in the community and how individuals can get involved. As always, we continue to spread the word about the Civic Council through outreach tables at various yearly community events.

Co-Chairs: Melinda Morris and Sarah Gersowitz
Meetings: Monthly
E-mail: outreachcommittee@parkslopeciviccouncil.org

Scholarships

WHO WE ARE: Each year, the Civic Council grants a Scholarship for community service to a college-bound senior at each of the three secondary schools in the John Jay building who has demonstrated meaningful volunteer service during high school. This scholarship tradition began when the building housed Manual Training High School until the 1960s and then John Jay High School, where we would present one or two modest awards of a few hundred dollars each. Once the Millennium school graduates its first senior class, that school will become part of our scholarship program, as well.

WHAT WE DO: As a result of our “Food for Thought” fund-raiser we are now able to present awards of $1,500 to each of three winners. These scholarships are awarded every June (see lead article) at our annual scholarship program. School staff, parents, and family are invited to share in this proud and moving event. The Scholarship award program has had a positive impact on our relationship with the current secondary schools, and we are honored to be welcomed and accepted by staff and students. Although the students have been typically from other neighborhoods, these scholarships offer us all the chance to connect in a most rewarding way.

Chair: Joan Emerson
Meetings: as needed
E-mail: scholarships@parkslopeciviccouncil.org

Livable Streets

WHO WE ARE: The mission of the Livable Streets Committee is to improve the use, safety, and quality of the streets, sidewalks, and streetscape of Park Slope, in cooperation with neighboring communities, in ways that enhance street life and safety for all users.

WHAT WE DO: This year we have lobbed the MTA to make improvements at the 46 Avenue F/G subway station. We drafted and passed a resolution to the PSCC Board to support a speed-camera demonstration project in New York City (NYC Council Resolution 916A and New York Legislature A3327). We joined forces with FOFA to survey Park Slope for potential bench locations throughout the neighborhood as part of a project by DOT. We met with Sanitation Department officials to discuss trash and litter mitigation strategies along 7th and 8th Avenues. Finally, we supported the April 20 Civic Sweep with graffiti removal teams.

Co-Chairs: Jeffrey Roth and Josh Levin
Meetings: first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 PM at the Park Slope Library community room.
E-mail: livable@parkslopeciviccouncil.org

PARK SLOPE CIVIC COUNCIL NEWS

Established 1896 as the South Brooklyn Board of Trade. Incorporated 1938.

Chair: Robert Gilbert, President
Treasurer: Bob Gilbert, Treasurer
Judith Lief, Corresponding and Recording Secretary
Cathy Sokol Milinkevicz, Membership Secretary
Trustees:
Sally Braun, Peter Bray, Lynn Casson, Darryl Cook
Joan Emerson, Sarah Gersowitz, Craig Hammerman, Lyn Hill
Kyle Johnson, Jon Klettner, Josh Levy, Kimberly Maier
Thomas Miskel, Melinda Morris, Chandra Murthy
Jeffrey Roth, Joe Rydell, Greg Sutton, Rebecca Welsh
Webmaster: David Herman

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The Park Slope Civic Council is a 501c3 organization.