

- 1. Welcome:** thank you all for coming out tonight to attend the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Brooklyn Heights Association. A quick word of thanks to Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims for opening this historic sanctuary.
- 2. BHA Business:**
 - a. As usual, we'll waive the reading of last year's annual meeting minutes. Copies are available at the table in the entry.
 - b. A brief financial report by Irene Janner.
 - c. I will now briefly call on Alexandra Bowie from our Nominating Committee to present the 2012 Class of Governors.
- 3. Greeting & Acknowledgement of Officials:** I would also like to acknowledge the attendance tonight of a number of our elected officials:
 - a. Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, with Richard Bearak, John Benguiat from his Planning & Development Office
 - b. Councilman David Yassky and his district director Marian Wood
 - c. Councilman Bill DeBlasio and his Chief of Staff Tom Gray
 - d. Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez & her Chief of Staff Dan Wiley
 - e. Yvette Clark is represented by Deanna Bitetti
 - f. State Senator Daniel Squadron & the director of his Brooklyn office Ellen Weest
 - g. Assemblywoman Joan Millman & her Chief of Staff Paul Nelson
 - h. our 52nd Assembly District Leader, Joanne Simon
 - i. John Dew the Chair of Brooklyn's Community Board 2
 - j. Caroline Saunders-James from the Mayor's Office of Community Assistance
 - k. From the 84th Precinct, Captain Frank DiPaolo & Officer Sal Forante
- 4. Annual Report:** Preparing for this evening, I was forced to look back at all that has happened over the last year, what our expectations were for 2008 and what we accomplished. Here are some highlights:
 - a. We were concerned about the steep rise in land value and the development pressure this caused on our historic district. That problem through a series of very unfortunate events seems to have solved itself. This year the threat of a new condo development is about as common as a hailing a Checker Cab, although I did see one last week on Henry Street, and we do have the Dock Street proposal at hand.
 - b. We were excited by the prospect of resident permit parking – which ended up as collateral damage when Mayor Bloomberg's congestion pricing proposal failed.
 - c. We were also excited about our new listserv – which one year later seems a rather quaint idea compared to the proliferation of blogs, Facebook and Twitter.
 - d. We were excited about the Waterfalls – or at least I was. While celebrating the power of water, they seemed to have sadly underestimated the power of wind. Many of the plantings on the Promenade were damaged by the salt spray and Spring will bring a renewed sense of hope as we watch to see how things come back.
 - e. A year ago we were congratulating the naming of David Kramer as the new Board President of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy, and looking forward to another year of exciting programming within the Park and we saw initiation of its construction. Sadly, NY State Parks recently rescinded its agreement with the conservancy as permitting agent severely limiting their ability to provide its very popular programming.

- f. We were working with the Cobble Hill Association to keep a developer from getting a waiver of the 50' height limit and building rooftop cabanas on a new building at Atlantic Avenue off of Court Street. Despite success defeating that waiver, the developer built them anyway calling them stair bulkheads, and marketing them as penthouses. Final resolution has yet to take place.

- g. At Alfred T White's worker housing complex at the foot of Joralemon Street, an application to construct a two story parking garage in the large garden courtyard was brought forward. The applicant represented the parking complex as a garden restoration with the inclusion of a green roof roughly half the size of the existing green space. The BHA's Landmark Committee worked closely with the tenants of the complex to fight this project, and while ultimately the applicant won approval for an underground facility, the tenants face the loss of the stand of fully grown trees and car traffic within the "restored" garden. Together with the tenants we are keeping a close eye on the project as it progresses through the permit process.

- h. The BHA has been one of the PS8's biggest boosters, and we've been delighted to see the children and the school flourish under the leadership of principal Seth Phillips. Not that there's any regret, but you have to be careful what you wish for. PS8's success has produced overcrowding and a dire need for a new Middle School. The SCA and the city has been loathe to recognize a district need for additional Middle School seats (not notwithstanding the Dock Street proposal), curbing any efforts to locate potential sites. One site that the BHA recommends possible is PS8 itself, which offers ample additional room for construction of a Middle School facility. The potential for this site was recognized by the SCA in the form of an elementary annex that they are working on at break neck speed, and we may see construction initiated by this Summer. Needless to say their rush to solve one of the problems may come at the expense of solving both. We are still in search of potential Middle School sites.

So that was 2008! Not that last year was a total disaster, let's just say it did not quite go as planned. Therefore I hereby officially call for a "do-over" and offer the following as a list of things the BHA will be doing in 2009 :

- a. We will now focus our preservation concerns on pressures brought to bear by the steep decline of land value: the vulnerable properties within the heights that have long suffered neglect will only continue to do so. A number of properties have been on the community radar, including a house on Willow Place with a rear wall in danger of collapse, a house on Columbia Heights facing the promenade whose roof was partly blown off in a recent wind storm, and a property at the corner of Monroe Place and Clark Street that was nearly entirely demolished by the City after a large portion of it collapsed in heavy rains last spring. We intend to work closely with both the LPC and the Brooklyn Department of Buildings to both stabilize and preserve these houses and push the current owners to take the appropriate actions toward their preservation, whether that is engaging in restoration themselves or selling to someone who will. Second, across the river in Manhattan, St. Vincent's Hospital proposes to demolish a contributing building in the Greenwich Village Historic District and this is close to being approved by the LPC based upon the Hospital's assertion of hardship. While the details of this proposal and the claims of hardship are very complex, approval of the project has the potential of punching a massive hole in the protection currently offered by our districts; making it possible for any not-for-profit group to demolish and develop their property based upon financial hardship – which will undoubtedly be much more common. As a community organization we do not relish the prospect of being adversaries to our churches & synagogues, cultural organizations, and charities. Along with other preservation groups in the City, we hope to find the right solution to this growing issue.

- b. We will support Assemblywoman Joan Millman's sponsorship of Bill AO 3957 to amend the vehicle and traffic law to allow the City of New York to provide residential permit parking. She along with our newly elected State Senator Daniel Squadron are in the majority to promote this initiative. We have long advocated for an area-wide pilot program and hope that this time around we gain some ground on this issue.
- c. Running up to the BHA's centennial year in 2010, we will be unveiling a newly designed web site that we hope will present more of what is going on the neighborhood and a greater potential for participation. We have also invited our new US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand to speak sometime early this Spring. She has already spent time in the borough reaching out to area leaders and we look forward to having time with her in our community.
- d. This year we will also be keeping an even closer eye on the promenade plantings and we hope to see the start of a new gardening initiative through the Parks Department.
- e. Speaking of park projects, we are urging the State Parks officials to find an equitable way to allow the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy's free programming to continue in recognition of their longstanding commitment to the creation of Brooklyn Bridge Park. If you've enjoyed the movie series, last summer's pop-up park, the floating swimming pool, then you should know that these types of events are at risk without State Parks authorization of the Conservancy's role. Through our web site, you can write letters to the State, advocating for their continued programming.
- f. We're continuing our efforts to work closely with our neighboring community groups on issues that affect us as a whole. Our collective success rate is much higher when we recognize the problems and solutions that we share and activate our communities as a single voice. The most obvious example is the opposition to the proposal for construction of a large residential building adjacent to the Brooklyn Bridge – the Dock Street proposal. While this project offers a number of favorable amenities; inclusionary housing, potential LEED certification, and a new Middle School, the scale of the building poses threat to the historic scale of the site especially in relation to the bridge that spans above it. We are not alone in our position: the Dumbo Neighborhood Association, the Fulton Ferry Landing Association, Boerum Hill Association, Ft Greene Association, Vinegar Hill Association, the Cobble Hill Association, the author David McCollough, the artists Nicholas Evans Cato and Norris Church Mailer, the Historic Districts Council, the National Trust for Historic Preservation along with elected officials including City Council Members David Yassky, Bill deBlasio, Tony Avella, 52nd Assembly District Leader Joanne Simon...to name a few, agree that this project is simply too large. Today finds us roughly midway through the 6 month approval process for the project's requested re-zoning. Yesterday was the deadline for the Borough President's findings, and I'd like to ask our great borough president himself, Marty Markowitz to say a few words to you directly.

5. Tom Stewart & Community Service Awards: Now I'd like to introduce one of our favorite neighbors, and one of Channel 13's favorite employees, Tom Stewart who will present this year's Community service Awards.

6. Guest Speaker - Floyd Norris: Tonight I have the pleasure of introducing Mr. Floyd Norris, the Chief Financial Correspondent and weekly columnist for one of our local newspapers, the New York Times. As I have no answers, and only worries, I will simply ask the question "just how fixable is the economic mess we're in? and turn over the podium to Mr. Norris.