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Almost immediately Mr. King arrives. He is an African American male in his sixties or more, with white hair. He is dressed in business casual, with a trench coat over slacks (and I think a suit jacket and tie, not sure), presenting a “distinguished gentleman” look. He says hello to everyone in a booming baritone and marvels that “everyone’s already here.” Cator introduces to him his mother and father, who both stand to shake his hand.

Mr. King walks around the front of the pews to take the spot next to Grace. Fialka arrives almost immediately afterwards and she sits in the front pew.

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Taken from the last meeting’s minutes, posted online at <http://122-street.tumblr.com/post/16995854>

Present: Cator Sparks, Walter King, Astrid Storm, Rukaye Overo, Marie A. Pinto, Roscoe Clark, Haja Worley, Jubal Battisti, Lucy Lang, Fialka Semenuik

Cator began to pass out the agenda for the night. He also passes around a sign-in sheet. He begins the meeting by announcing why three people can’t make it. I don’t catch the first two names, which might be listed above, but I catch Jubal’s name. Jubal has an infection resulting from an injury from dance, and is in the hospital.

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At some point Cator also says something appreciative of Fialka being there, that her firm is short-staffed so it’s generous for her to be there.

I pay attention to the side-conversations around who the pen belongs to and who needs the pen rather than the very important first item on the agenda: the legal/tax status of the group. [Later I saw last month that they debated whether to become a charity vs. a civil group.] I lend my pen to Haja and have to fumble for another as Fialka says their balance is \$2867.89, not counting T-shirt sales, which brought in \$93. Mario repeats \$93! [Later Fialka passes out the t-shirts, and nearly everyone has bought one, Haja 3. Were t-shirts sold to members at cost? Who else bought a shirt? \$93 divided by \$17, the price for the shirt, is 5.5 shirts.] Mr. King suggests that we should have another movie made, it’s highly profitable. [I need to follow up with this]

Cator continues with the next items, asking if anyone attended the 28th Precinct meeting, which the agenda says is every second Wed., 6:30pm. I don’t think anybody did. [The 28th precinct goes from 110th to 127th streets and Morningside Ave to 5th Ave. The 32nd precinct goes from 127th to the river, from St. Nicholas/Douglass to 5th ave, from http://home2.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/precinct_maps/precinct_maps.shtml]

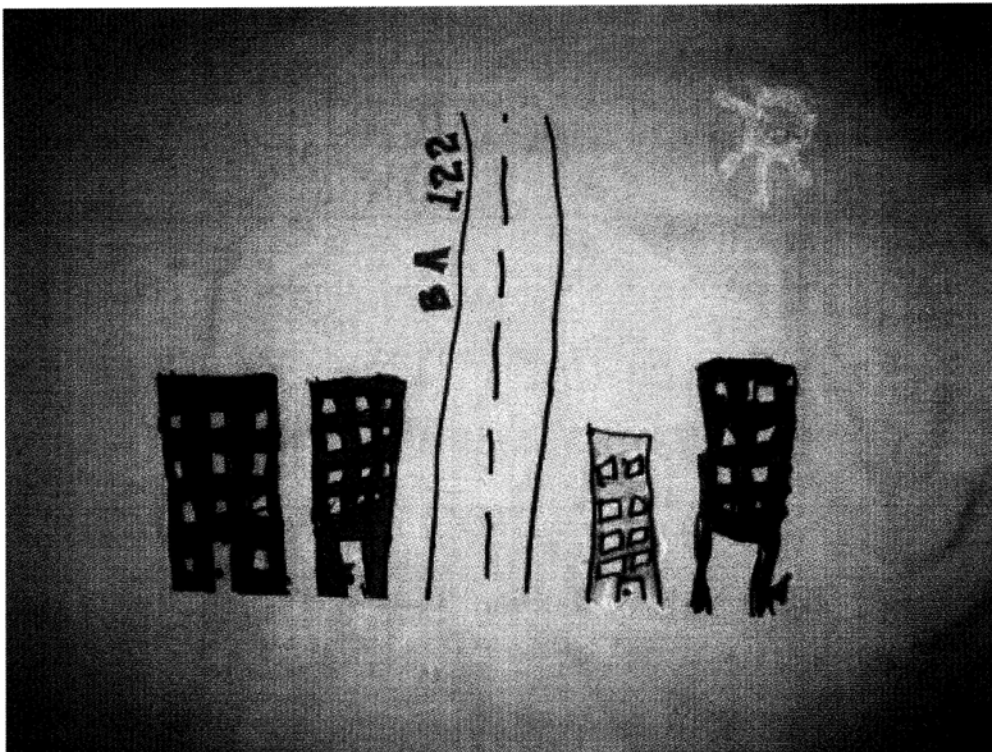
Mr. King starts talking about drugs on the block, happening in front of his house and Cator’s house. Much of this comes from 7th Ave (Powell). He said, “The police put it on “low priority because there’s been no violence.” Somebody asks what they can do, and Mr. King says nothing, we’re low priority.

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At 7:34 a homeless-looking black man asks something about somebody helping him to catch the train. Mr. King refers him to the station attendant at the subway station.

[Everything so far has happened in less than 4 minutes, which gives a sense of how quickly Cator goes.]

Cator reports that the website is now up, that Jubal put some great Halloween photos up. Haja says softly, "Yay." I stop paying attention to the meeting and start looking around the church, drawing a map of the church in my notebook. I miss items II and III: did the block party t-shirt winner receive her shirt, and any new news on the BA [block association] non-profit tax-exempt status. [These are the t-shirts Fialka is passing out; a neighborhood child drew the winning design, pictured below.]



[I should have listened better to the update on the Wilson Garden, but I think it's basically that they are waiting to see if the developer accepts the land swap.]

Someone, I think Astrid, asks Haja for the name of the owner, and he says Serjay. He spells it for her, S-A-G-E-G.

Cator talks about street lamps.

In response to Cator, Fialka says the dues are \$24, whenever you can pay. Mr. King pulls out his wallet and says he'll pay now. [What for? No sliding scale? Are these mostly homeowners here? Even if not, white-elephant-of-a-racial-and-class-line.]

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Cator asks Haja about the Christmas party. He reports that it's probably around the 11th but they haven't set the date yet. He asks people to contribute toys, for 3 to 14 year olds. Cator asks what's the best time for people to stop by, and he says Saturday, any day. Cator asks if there are any other concerns or questions, and Grace looks at Mario. She asks if the new streetlamps will raise their taxes, or something like that, embarrassedly saying she doesn't know how to ask the question. Mr. King replies, "We should find out." He says that they have such low taxes because of the 1-4 families. He compares their low taxes to Nassau County. Mario says that buildings over 4 apartments have a much higher tax rate. [Do Mario and Grace own a building with more than 4 units? How many buildings have more than 4 units?]

Grace then brings up something that she says is a concern of her mom. She asked if people knew about the "iron thing that covers the sidewalk." Mr. King asks, "On the curb?" Apparently a piece is sticking out and punctured the tire of a passing sanitation truck. Cator's mom says in a Southern accent and an outraged tone, "Well that's a repair not an improvement," as if clearly, this should be taken care of. Mr. King says that he's call the DoT [Department of Transportation].

Mario explains that if you don't shovel [snow] and somebody falls, no one is liable. If you shovel and somebody falls, then you are liable. The logic is that people shouldn't be walking in unshoveled snow, they walk at their own risk. Once the snow is cleared, if someone slips on ice then liability is involved. Mr. King says the building at 265 is going to sell for 2.3 million, for 2 units.

A google search reveals a beautiful website: <http://www.265west122.com/>

Discrete luxury is the hallmark of this new construction elevator townhouse which is thoughtfully designed and constructed to harmonize with the beauty of the surrounding pre-war buildings. It is a four unit residential condominium located on a historic tree-lined street in Harlem. Live on a block that feels like a small town while being only steps from the dynamic and evolving shopping and entertainment on 125th Street including the Magic Johnson Movie Theatre, NY Sports Club and Citarella. Conveniently located near the A,C,B,D subway lines and many bus routes. Come see for yourself why so many savvy New Yorkers are calling Harlem home.

Expected occupancy is January 2008. Offered by prospectus only File # CD 07-0250.

Cator asks if they should buy salt, and Haja offers a space under his basement to store it. Cator asks Haja where they should buy it, mentioning a store I don't recognize, and Haja names two places, one on ? st between Convent and Amsterdam, and a store named Virgo by Settapani. Cator asks if there is somebody to help [with the salt?] and Haja

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suggests “Edwin, the guy who helps clean the house.” Somebody asks if Edwin lives on the block, and Haja says no, he doesn’t live on the block.

Cator asks, “What else? Any other questions, concerns?” Somebody asks, Are we going to have a meeting in December? Yes, and somebody says Dec 4 [which I could attend]. Mario asks Cator, “When are you leaving?” He says in January. Somebody asks for how long, and he says about 4 months.

Fialka mentions the Annual Potluck. Haja says, in a low voice, that it’d be a good thing to have. There is some joking about it being the Second Annual Potluck. [When did these people all move into the block, and what happened before it?]

His father suggests talking with other block associations, saying that greater numbers will help. Cator says he’s met a lot of block association presidents. They seem enthusiastic and once you email them you never hear back from them. Grace explains that some block associations meet only every 6 months. Cator says he’ll ask Lane for the list of block association presidents.

Grace asks again if anyone went to the precinct meeting. Mr. King replies, “Mrs. Cunningham. She always goes. She owns two brownstones and two empty lots. She spoke to the captain about the drugs.” Grace asks about improving the lighting in back of the precinct. Mr. King says, “As somebody born in New York City I don’t believe they’ll do anything.” Cator says that once those new condos open, they’ll be here. He asks if anyone has seen the flowers planted in Tubman Square. [I haven’t been there in 2 weeks—very recent?]

Mr. King says, “Money. Money *does* make the difference.” Cator makes a joke about giving a nice Christmas present to the police, like a bottle of champagne. Somebody says, the cops told them, “Our precinct is like the Upper West Side. There’s no crime.” [The implication is that it is much worse than the UWS.] Cator says that in meeting other presidents of block associations, they have to worry about a lot worse, like their kids dying. He gives the examples of 110th and 116th streets. People agree that drugs and crime are worse in other areas. Cator continues that there is a concentration of drugs and gangs in other areas.

Mr. King says, “I won’t be at the next one [meeting] because I’ll be out of town. When is the next one?” They decide Dec 18 after being worried at how close it is to Christmas.

At 7:57 Cator announces, “Meeting adjourned.” Fialka says, “And I’ll take donations for the church.” Mr. King says, “Just \$1 per person. I don’t believe in church.” Haja says something I don’t catch, and Mr. King says “That what we fought about (before).”

Afterwards I ask Haja about the possibility of talking with Cindy this weekend. He says to call her. I go to speak with Fialka, who is writing out receipts, I think for the t-shirts (she had given 2 to Mr. King, one for the membership dues). Astrid is asking her where she works. Fialka tells Astrid she’s an architect and that her deadline is tomorrow. When

I arrive I thank her for inviting me and she thanks me for coming. I tell her I probably won't be able to make the December meeting but I'd like to come back.

Meanwhile Haja is making sure that Grace and Mario are coming to Thanksgiving dinner. They say they are. [And Grace's mother?] I go to speak with Cator, who is getting ready to leave too. I introduce myself and say I'm looking at education in Harlem as Mr. King listens. I ask about the other block associations, and he gives me his card, asking if I knew So-and-so. I say no, and he explains that the person is at HCZ. I am confused. Mr. King says there is no umbrella organization for the block associations.

Cator said he and his parents were going to dinner as we all headed up the aisle. Cator turned out the lights as we filed out. At the outer door Mr. King bent down to move the cement block. Cator quickly bent down to pick it up and put it inside.

Questions for Cator

- Status as charity v. civil group
- movie
- Record Shack petition
- Work with other BA presidents
- Learning to be a block association president