

**Black Rock
NRZ** **Black Rock NRZ Report for the
Period July through December 2009**



Bill Finch
Mayor, City of Bridgeport
City Hall Annex
999 Broad Street
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604

Subject: 2009 Black Rock NRZ Report

Date: February 3, 2010

Dear Mayor Finch:

This is the second report for 2009 of the Black Rock NRZ submitted in accordance with the NRZ Bylaws Section 6.08. (The bylaws require status reports at intervals of six months for the first year and annual reports thereafter). This is the second report for the first year covering the period from July 2009 through December 2009.

The Black Rock NRZ was approved by the City Council in April 2008 and the implementation committee was organized at the end of 2008.

Organization

In September 2009 the President of the NRZ resigned. An election of officers was held and the following people were elected to the executive board:

President:	Joseph Ianniello
Vice President:	Kristine DeMarco
Treasurer:	John Lee
Secretary	Katherine vanRenesse

The following are also members of the Implementation NRZ Board of Directors:

Phil Blagys	Jackie Heneage	Gerry Manning
David Barbour	Scott Hughes	Kraig Steffen
Frank Basler	Bishop Kelly	Miguel Tomasio
Donna Curran	Laura Hurwitz	Bruce Williams
Don Greenberg	Holly Kotos	

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The City Ex Officio Board Members are:

Susan Brannelly
Martin McCarthy
Angie Staltaro

} Ex officio members are specified by the Bylaws to be the City Council members from the 130th District and one member from the City's NRZ office.

The NRZ bylaws require the board elect a Nominating Committee to be a standing committee. The purpose of the Nominating Committee is to review the qualifications of potential Board Members and prepare a slate of potential Directors for presentation to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting in June and to fill Board vacancies as they occur. The Nominating Committee consists of 4 members as follows:

- ❖ One member of the Executive Committee (President, Vice President, Treasurer, or Secretary)
- ❖ 3 Board Members.

The following people were elected to the Nominating Committee at the October 2009 Board meeting:

John Lee (Chairperson)
Frank Basler
Laura Hurwitz
Holly Kotos

In addition to the Nominating Standing Committee, the Bylaws defined six Standing Committees that drive the implementation process. The Standing Committees, their tasks, and task status are listed below.

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Standing Committee (See Bylaws Article VII Section 2)	Projects/Tasks	Time Frame (years)	Status
1. Business & Economic Development	✓ Establish Black Rock Village District and guidelines	1-5	In process
	✓ Create incentives for sustainable development <i>[Also an issue for Design Review & Development Standards]</i>	1-5	Part of Village District Task
	✓ Develop plan for streetscape improvements	1-5	Part of Village District Task
	✓ Create commercial rehabilitation and façade improvement programs	1-5	Part of Village District Task
	✓ Identify, encourage and support high-priority development opportunities	1-5	In process
	✓ Establish a liaison within the City for business and neighborhood development.	1-5	Completed
	✓ Develop parking garage behind Black Rock Arts Center	1-5	
	✓ Recruit appropriate businesses for important neighborhood locations ✓ Create database of developable properties, approach owners, and encourage development	1-5 1-5	In process

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Standing Committee (See Bylaws Article VII Section 2)	Projects/Tasks	Time Frame (years)	Status
2. Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Improve infrastructure at Black Rock & Longfellow Schools √ Increase children's access to education, including transportation to neighborhood events √ Emphasize Black Rock educational partnerships √ Identify additional funding for education √ Increase community support by recruiting volunteers √ Keep Black Rock School a neighborhood school 	1-5 1-5 1 1-5 1 1	In process In process In process In process
3. Arts, Entertainment & Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Promote arts & cultural activities √ Develop marketing plan for Arts industry in Black Rock √ Identify developer/funding and site for artist loft development √ Identify funding to create/support an Arts Center 	1 1-5 1-5 6-10	On-going In process In process
4. Land Use, Development, & Historic Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Influence Ordinance re-draft to include denial of zone changes in historic districts √ Eliminate inappropriate commercial uses 	1-5 1-5	
5. Outreach and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Develop & implement strategies to involve more community members on NZ task forces, especially people living East of Ellsworth Street & North of Fairfield Avenue √ Communicate task force/NRZ priorities (as they emerge) to the Black Rock Community and other Bridgeport stakeholders 	N/A N/A	On-going On-going

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Standing Committee (See Bylaws Article VII Section 2)	Projects/Tasks	Time Frame (years)	Status
6. Quality of Life, Environment, & Public Safety	√ Develop Brewster Street Gateway and other neighborhood gateways	1	Part of Village District Task
	√ Investigate potential for neighborhood trolley route	1-5	
	√ Plan for the further development of Brewster St.	6-10	Part of Village District Task
	√ Improve existing municipal parking lots	1	
	√ Develop parking plan for Black Rock Library	1-5	
	√ Explore expansion of municipal parking on available sites	1-5	
	√ Provide traffic lights or other traffic-calming devices at trouble spots	1-5	
	√ Implement on-street parking regulations	1	
	√ Participate in redesign of Ellsworth Park	2009	Completed
	√ Identify property owners/developers for potential waterfront access at Burr Creek	1-5	
	√ Participate in re-design of PT Barnum Park	1-5	
	√ Identify funding for Black Rock Linear Park	6-10	
√ Develop guidelines and ratify Conservation Overlay Zone	1-5		

Operations

There were seven meetings of the Black Rock NRZ Board of Directors in 2009.

As part of the Bylaws the NRZ supports other Black Rock groups. In 2009 the NRZ worked with the following groups:

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- ❖ Ash Creek Conservation Association (ACCA)
- ❖ Black Rock Garden Club
- ❖ Black Rock Business Association (BRBA)
- ❖ Black Rock Community Council (BRCC)
- ❖ Black Rock Families for Excellence (BRFE)
- ❖ Black Rock Historic Preservation Association (BRHPA)
- ❖ Black Rock Homeowners Association (BRHA)
- ❖ Mayor's Beautification Awards Program
- ❖ Friends of the Bridgeport Public Library (FBPL)

Highlights of the 2009 year-to-date activities of each of the Standing Committees are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Standing Committee 1: Business and Economic Development

- ❖ Began development of a Village District concept along Fairfield Avenue modeled after the zoning document for the Downtown Village District and the West End/West Side Design Guidelines. Met with Michael Nidoh of the OPED to get guidance on how to approach this.
- ❖ The BHA presented the Albion Street project at an NRZ Board meeting.
- ❖ Worked with the City's NRZ, OPED, and Grants departments in applying for a grant to support the City's effort to sell the Bank Building on the corner of Fairfield Avenue and Brewster Street. Although the grant was not awarded to the City the work to write the application helped the City develop the RFP and a prospective developer talked with the NRZ and submitted a bid. Unfortunately the developer after being selected by the City decided not to proceed.

Standing Committee 2: Education

- ❖ The major activities of this committee have been to bring Black Rock and Longfellow parent/school associations together and to keep the Black Rock School open.
- ❖ Black Rock Pilates offered an after-school yoga/dance fusion program at the Pilates studio. They are doing a spring yoga program at Ellsworth Park for kindergarteners pro bono.
- ❖ Pursuing partnership with Ash Creek Conservation Association for school programs.
- ❖ Began development of a boating program.

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Standing Committee 3: Arts, Entertainment, and Culture

- ❖ Worked with Black Rock Public Library and the Friends of the Bridgeport Public library and began a series of "Community Forums". The first forum discussed the Bridgeport political system – theory and practice. A Fairfield University professor explained the Bridgeport Charter and a local media personality – the "Only in Bridgeport" editor – discussed the history of politics in Bridgeport. The well attended forum was held in the Community Room of the Black Rock Library.
- ❖ Sponsored the Black Rock Art Walk along Fairfield Avenue on two Friday evenings each month during the summer.
- ❖ One role of this committee is to facilitate art performance, education, and exhibition by identifying, cataloging, and connecting local artists and usable spaces. The newly renovated Black Rock Library was used for an exhibit of the work of an artist.

Standing Committee 4: Land Use, Development, & Historic Preservation

- ❖ This committee and the Black Rock Historic Preservation Association continued their activity to ensure the proper restoration and maintenance of the historic house at 340 to 344 Brewster Street.

Standing Committee 5: Outreach and Communications

The function of this committee is to find people to serve on the other committees and do a special outreach to people in the area between Ellsworth Street and Bostwick Avenue that was added to the traditional Black Rock area during the NRZ process.

- ❖ Met with the PT Barnum Residents Association to explain the history, functions and strategic plan of the Black Rock NRZ and asked for their involvement.
- ❖ The condition of the PT Barnum parks and recreational areas is discussed under Standing Committee 6.

Standing Committee 6: Quality of Life, Environment, & Public Safety

- ❖ The NRZ and Black Rock Community Council co-sponsored a forum with the City's Facilities and Parks Department to get community input for the upgrades to Ellsworth Park. The forum was held at St Ann's School hall and was attended by about 150 people. Thirty people spoke at the forum.
- ❖ An issue was brought up at the Community Forum on parking at Ellsworth Park during little league games. A follow-on meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2010 with the Police Department to address the parking problems.

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- ❖ Members of the NRZ met with Enviro Express to discuss their proposal for a construction and demolition debris transfer station at 555 Wordin Avenue.
- ❖ A meeting with Public Facilities personnel is being scheduled to address improvements to safety, utility and upkeep of the five parks in the PT Barnum area of Black Rock. Generally, the parks are in good shape but some improvements can be made.
- ❖ A Black Rock bike path route is being planned with the City administration and the Police Department. The City's NRZ Department is securing funding for the Black Rock section of this bike route as the first for the various NRZ's that are part of a larger effort to connect with the bike/walking route that extends to our neighboring towns.
- ❖ Met with the Director of Public Facilities and Parks to discuss the environmental importance of the beach grass planted at the sand spit at the Northern most end of Saint Mary's. The Ash Creek Conservation Association got the Town of Fairfield to provide the beach grass to repair damage to the sand spit that occurred during their dredging operation. The beach grass was planted by volunteers coordinated by the Black Rock Garden Club.

Communications and Fund Raising

- ❖ Continued establishing an NRZ web site for Black Rock. The web site is being "Alpha" tested.
- ❖ The NRZ is preparing the paperwork to become a 501 (c) 3 organization. In a meeting with the City's NRZ Department, it was determined that a change was required in the NRZ bylaws to conform to state statutes. The change was approved at the November Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted;

Joseph W. Ianniello
President, Black Rock NRZ