

SEP 12 Primary Election Day
OCT 31 PLG Halloween Parade

A neighborhood tradition! At press time details were not complete, but if history is any guide, the annual "Safe Halloween Parade" sponsored by the 71st Precinct will start at 5pm at the corner of Rutland Road and Flatbush Avenue and wind throughout the neighborhood. Everyone welcome!

NOV 4 LMA Fall General Meeting

At Church of the Evangel on Bedford Ave. (between Hawthorne and Winthrop Sts.), 10am–noon.

NOV 7 Election Day

Exotic Flavors Make for Beguiling Dining at Honey Badger

by Milford Prewitt

The most unusual restaurant to debut in the neighborhood in recent times—Honey Badger in Prospect Lefferts Gardens (yes, that's the full name)—does not have any exterior signage. But neighborhood foodies who have long hungered for a truly eclectic and healthy dining experience away from home should have no problems finding it.

Like one of those chef-driven restaurants that once made Soho, TriBeCa or NoLiTa hip dining meccas years ago, Honey Badger is a thrill ride for the taste buds.

As one Yelp reviewer put it: "Expect the unexpected."

Located at 67 Fenimore St., the absence of a sign is quite intentional, a strategy intended to give the place a private, speakeasy mystique. The restaurant seats 20 diners and even the owners admit, "it's not for everyone."

The restaurant fits no cookie-cutter culinary category. With wellness, freshness, organic and locally sourced the guiding principles, Honey Badger's cuisine is closer to spa food than it is your cornerside mom-and-pop operation.

Some meals are served on small plates and practically every item that comes out of the kitchen is homemade—even the breads and the soft drinks.

Junayd Juman and wife, Fjolla Sheholli, have fashioned a menu that hits all the environmental and natural ideals of the conscientious restaurant-goer, too. As much as possible, every ingredient and center-of-the-plate meat and seafood are sustainable, organic, locally sourced from Northeastern farms, and foster wellness.

Diners are guaranteed to eat something they've never tried before and the menu changes daily based on season and ease of farm delivery.

Among recent menu items were:

- Cold Botanicals, a salad with the spellbinding purslane (a weed in the succulent family with a lemony, peppery aftertaste), furry gooseberries (that sneaks up on the palate in a burst of indescribable effervescence), and blue cheese at \$13.
- Ostrich, sourced from farms in New Jersey, gets a star turn in an ostrich carpaccio for \$16; and
- Blue green algae, renown for its nourishing and cleansing properties, features prominently in a sea vegetable gazpacho soup for \$10.

The intensely flavorful enoki mushroom and even bison sirloin also factor on the menu from time to time. Even the buns for the lamb burger are a mixture of a heritage grain and vegetable charcoal dough.

Checks average about \$25 but a tasting menu consisting of five plates is \$74. A party of three recently had a table tab of \$116.

Honey Badger doesn't serve wine or liquor currently but Community Board No. 9 recently approved their liquor license.

Searching for Exotica

Juman, who is Trinidadian, and Sheholli opened the place in December. They met working in the catering business. He also had worked for years managing the dining rooms of hip restaurants. She grew up on a family farm in Kosovo.

Sheholli named the restaurant after the smart, resourceful and ferocious weasel native to Africa and not after any of the various slang definitions for the term.

Juman is an amateur food scientist and says he spends a lot of his time researching uncommon foods and ingredients for his dishes. When he hears of a new product or food item, he finds out how other chefs are using it and then "researches the hell out of it."

"This is the thinking man's cuisine," he says. "We're bringing ingredients that people normally don't cook with or are unfamiliar with and much of it is foraged in the wild.

"You can be sure that if I haven't heard of a new ingredient, no one else has it." He states. "And when I do find that new ingredient, then I make it Honey Badger's. The more unusual, the better."

Juman has a high regard for vegetables and spices that are sustainable, organic and grown in the wild.

"There's a neighborhood lady who forages mountain vegetables for us," he says. "We just don't use words like organic and sustainable like it's some common catch phrase. It means something to us. It's biodynamic when you are serving things that are grown the way the forest grows them. No tilling. No fertilizer. All natural."

Not For Everyone

With the lean, lithe build of a marathoner, Juman is a spasm of motion, flaying arms and exuberant facial expressions when discussing his passion.

"What you should know is that I know all of my farmers," he says. "Everything is organically sourced. I go to their farms. I know those animals. They have names, they don't have numbers; and that is important.

"We serve ostrich, emu, heritage hogs, all of it sourced in the Northeast corridor."

Juman says he knows Honey Badger is not for everyone, and that's fine with him.

"This restaurant is for people who want to explore, to try something different," he says. "If you want to get fat and full, there's a restaurant down the block that sells fried chicken for four dollars."

Juman admits he never went to culinary school. Instead, he worked for 14 years mainly in Manhattan's restaurant scene, usually as a maitre d' in (continued on page 2)

Candidates Vie to Represent a Changing 40th District

Top Priorities in City Council Race: Affordable Housing, Ending Displacement

by MILFORD PREWITT

The caliber, dedication and service backgrounds of the candidates running for the 40th District council seat in the Democratic primary are bound to make some voters lament that only one person can win on September 12th.

The election pits three earnest, appealing and capable first-time office seekers—each of them with roots in the community and respectable records of public service—against an affable and savvy incumbent looking to win a third term.

Affordable housing—often a contradiction in terms in hot Brooklyn, where it used to mean paying no more than 30 percent of household income on rent—and ending residential and commercial displacement are the issues that unite the candidates. But strategies for achieving solutions divide them.

The district, which encompasses Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Ditmas Park, Kensington, Flatbush, East Flatbush, Midwood and Crown Heights, is one of the city's most populous and diversified when it comes to class, race and ethnicity.

Two of the four candidates have lived in the district or Prospect Lefferts Gardens virtually since birth.

Brian Cunningham, a student advocate counselor who became a staff aide in both the state Senate and city council, was born in East Flatbush in 1975.

Pia Raymond, a wife, mother of two, business owner, social worker, long-serving board member of Community Board No. 9, vice president of the Lefferts Manor Association, president of the Nostrand Avenue Merchants Association and recently recipient of a prestigious women's empowerment award from the New York State Senate, has been in PLG since birth.

Jen Berkley, a housing rights activist and veteran daily newspaper reporter who says she has dedicated her working career to affordable housing and neighborhood preservation, has lived in Ditmas Park with her husband for the past 10 years

The incumbent, Dr. Mathieu Eugene, touts a long record of achievement "fighting for my people," in what

would be his third term and tenth year in office. At a candidate debate at Brooklyn Commons in July, he depicted himself as a popular politician "who gets things done" and one who can't walk down the street without constituents eager to greet and thank him for his service. His challengers say otherwise. To them, Eugene can be aloof and disengaged from the community.

In their debate, websites, and news profiles, the candidates express confidence that they have the professional experience, neighborhood cred and collaborative spirit to be strong advocates and defenders of a district undergoing dramatic social and economic change.

While many neighborhoods like PLG are piggybacking on Brooklyn's booming real estate values, surging population of affluent newcomers, evolving nightlife, entrepreneurial start-ups and cultural amenities, gentrification symbolizes a troubled future for many.

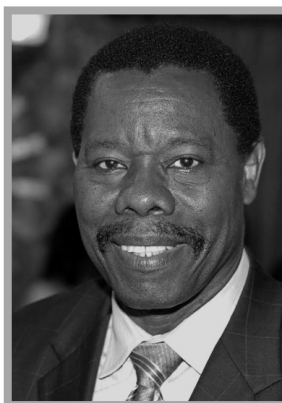
Throughout the district, soaring rents and complaints of harassment by landlords are uprooting longtime residents. Small-business owners are being evicted by landlords who mothball vacant properties in anticipation of higher-paying commercial tenants. Earlier this year, nearly a dozen shuttered storefronts could be counted along Flatbush from Empire Boulevard to Parkside Avenue.

As formidable as housing and community preservation are, the district faces several other issues making residents restless. Improving the dependability of public transportation, strengthening the district's infrastructure, updating rezoning for the modern age, continuing crime reductions, advancing the improvement in police relations, creating programs for neighborhood youth after school and social daycare centers for senior citizens, are also on the candidates' radar screens.

With no Republican running, whoever wins in September's primary wins the seat.

What follows are mini-profiles of the candidates and their policy positions and priorities on some of the issues.

[Editor's Note: Pia Raymond's role as vice president of the Lefferts Manor Association, which publishes the *Echo*, had no influence on this article.]



Mathieu Eugene (Incumbent)

Snap Bio: Two-term councilman seeking a third. Ten years in office. First Haitian American to win a New York City council seat. Physician by training. Started in politics as a community organizer and health educator. Founder of YES, a non-profit youth organization that promotes self-esteem, discipline and skills training for success in school and life.

Committee Assignments: Health, Civil Rights, Fire and Criminal Justice Services, Immigration, Small Business, and chairman on Youth Services.

Selected Quote: During a discussion about (continued on page 2)



Jen Berkley

Snap Bio: Great-granddaughter of Eastern European immigrants who settled in New York City. Earned Bachelor's degree in politics and journalism and Master of Science in Urban Affairs/Policy at Brandeis University. Interned for former U.S. Rep. Joe Kennedy in Boston. Award-winning reporter and editor for weekly newspaper chain in Boston area. Has lived in a rent-stabilized home in Ditmas Park with husband for past 10 years. Communications Director for Queens State Assemblyman David Weprin. Special Assistant on Brooklyn housing issues for (continued on page 2)

Pia Raymond

Snap Bio: Fifth generation Brooklynite who has lived in Lefferts Manor her entire life. Wife and mother of two. Licensed social worker. Fluent in Spanish. Small-business owner who runs family's famed trophy store. Vice president of the Lefferts Manor Association. Vice president of the Nostrand Avenue Merchants Association. Chairperson of the Economic Development Committee of CB9. Co-creator of "Shop Local CB9." Founder of Creating Legacies, which engages families in multicultural and multigenerational activities. Recipient of the New (continued on page 2)



Brian Cunningham

Snap Bio: Born in East Flatbush in 1975 to a single mom from Jamaica. Attended New York City public schools throughout his entire education. Started career as a student advocate counselor with CAMBA. Became an aide to State Senator Kevin Parker. Developed vocational program to prepare underprivileged youth for tech jobs and financial careers. In 2013 became chief of staff for Council Member Laurie Cumbo. Dove deep into the housing crisis working with Nazareth Housing. Secured "opportunity of a lifetime" working with President Obama on (continued on page 2)



Photos courtesy of the candidates

With Pet-Loving Newcomers Surging, Furry Pawz & Clawz Pet Salon Enhances Services

The inspiration for many successful business start-ups is an entrepreneur whose lifestyle needed a product or service that wasn't readily available and rather than suffer from want, a business was born out of need.

Take Tay James and Andrea Lopez as a case in point.

James, who did business development work for global law firms, and Lopez, a clothing designer for a major brand, are both pet lovers who needed grooming, pet-sitting and veterinarian check-ups for James' dogs and Lopez's cat.

Four years later, the two are business partners in Furry Pawz & Clawz Pet Salon on the corner of Rogers Avenue and Rutland Road.

The business is a spa for dogs and cats offering a wide variety of services including grooming, in-house care, boarding, daycare, dog walking, veterinary care, pet photography, and pick-up and drop-off services.

After being in Prospect Lefferts Gardens for more than four years now, James and Lopez have spruced up the establishment with a new paint job and a large photo gallery of the animals who make up Pawz & Clawz's "clients."

A merchandising display features Lopez's branded pet clothing line, Anallo Pet Couture.

At the same time, the business

has created an informative and wide-ranging website that offers articles on topics such as government regulations, pet vaccinations, health and dental tips, ways to potty-train dogs, and charitable causes.

One of the unofficial team members at the spa is a terrier named Gatsby who escorts nervous, unsocial dogs or anxious first-time spa clients into the back of the facility for grooming.

"Gatsby is great," James says. "He was initially rescued from a puppy mill and was timid and shy and scared of loud noises. Now he gets other dogs to be comfortable when they come in for grooming. He's super good."

Furry Pawz & Clawz is open five days a week, Tuesday through Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. They are offering 10 percent off the price of all services to those who mention this article in the *Echo*. Offer ends September 30. For more information, call 929-234-6500.

Beguiling Dining at Honey Badger

(continued from page 1)

fusion restaurants with an Asian theme. Mission Chinese was one of his ports of call as was Soho House in Miami.

Part of his duties was to explain to guests how ingredients were sourced, prepared and cooked. He loved that element of the job so much that it motivated him to consider opening his own place, one that would take fusion dining to new heights.

But he has thrown out the rule book on dining-room management to run a far more easy-going place that makes the experience way more relaxed. Honey Badger is a one-room restaurant with an open kitchen that invites guests to see what's going on and interact with Juman.

"There are no chefs here," he says. "There are no line cooks. I'm the waiter. There is no front-of-the-house or back-of-the-house. All that stuff is thrown out."

"I want people who come here to feel like they are eating at my home, that we're having a dinner party."

They're Also Interior Designers

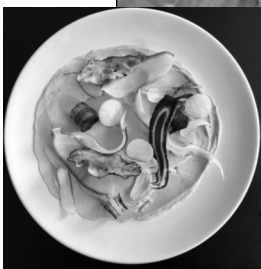
Indeed, the couple, PLG residents for about 10 years, were looking to buy a house in the neighborhood and had a substantial down payment from life savings ready to go when the space on Fenimore presented itself.

The couple had been negotiating for a larger restaurant spot with a basement on Bedford Ave. months earlier. But poor legal representation and some untenable lease clauses—such as one that forbade them from opening another eating spot within a ten-mile radius—doomed the deal.

Juman, Sheholli and their six-year-old daughter, Nina, showed their talents as interior decorators and designers. They made the geometric Moorish-style tiles on the walls. Sheholli polished the black concrete slab that separates the open kitchen from the dining room. The modern-designed chairs, tables and the lone banquette—which can seat a party of 12—sit low to the ground, a nod to the influence of Juman's previous stints in Asian-fusion restaurants.

Coming very soon and right next door, the entrepreneurial couple will open Wild Seed, a breakfast and lunch pop-up restaurant where the menu will feature the same high-quality organic natural foods and function as a retail pantry with fresh-baked bagels.

Honey Badger is open for dinner Wednesday through Sunday, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Brunch is served on weekends from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.



Junayd Juman, the co-owner of Honey Badger, is passionate about the food he serves including the avocado cream with dragon tongue carrots, kohlrabi, radishes and sunchoke chips shown here.



(Left) Back in July, nearly 500 people showed up right after work to hear the 40th District council candidates debate at Brooklyn Commons. While Jen Berkley makes a point, (above) her challengers are paying rapt attention. Left to right is Brian Cunningham, Pia Raymond and Councilman Mathieu Eugene.

Mathieu Eugene (continued from page 1) affordable housing at a candidate debate, Eugene referred to his opponents as "my friends," and stated: "My friends are telling you what they want to do. I'm telling you what I have already done."

Policy Positions and Priorities

■ **Affordable Housing:** Pushes programs and legislation that require developers to factor in the area median income, or AMI, when including affordable housing units in their projects. (The AMI is a federal government assessment that holds that tenants should pay no more than 30 percent of the local AMI for rent.) Supported recent city law that provides legal representation for tenants facing eviction.

■ **Public Safety:** Promotes programs that foster good police-community relations and good schools as key elements in reducing crime.

■ **Education:** Favors small class size as way to ensure quality education. Allocated thousands of dollars to district schools for building improvements, rehabbed playgrounds, gymnasiums and computer labs.

■ **Health Care:** Allocated funds to local hospitals to acquire state-of-the-art medical equipment and technology so district residents do not have to leave the neighborhood for quality care.

■ **Immigration:** Working with council colleagues to compel the federal government to extend the January 2018 expiration date of the Temporary Protected Status for Haiti, a special visa that allowed legal Haitian visitors and those living here illegally to remain in the country until living conditions improve enough from the 2010 earthquake to return home.

Jen Berkley (continued from page 1) New York City Council. Former Brooklyn Democratic Party Committee member. Housing advocate and tenant organizer at the nonprofit Tenants and Neighbors.

Selected Quote: "The issue that got me here and what I've been fighting for these past years is housing. We are in a housing crisis and we should face it head-on. But I feel that is not happening under the current councilman. I'll be a proud fighter for this community."

Policy Positions and Priorities

■ **Affordable Housing:** Would like to create a registry or database of landlords with long records of tenant harassment complaints so that they can be monitored by authorities and apartment hunters can be forewarned. Wants to create a "tenants' rights" agency that fights evictions and organizes apartment dwellers. Would like to explore a better way to build on vacant land without necessarily resorting to the 421a tax abatement program that gives developers a ten-year tax break on such sites.

■ **Transportation:** "We have to let the powers that be know that the service is not commensurate with what we are paying for," she stated at the Brooklyn Commons debate. "I would do whatever I can to make the service equal to what you are paying for." Recommends creation of a comprehensive rider survey the MTA can mine for real rider input versus third-party marketing and think tank analyses. Would advocate for the full restoration of the B train, seven days a week.

■ **Childcare:** Argues that childcare should be free or subsidized for working parents whose children are attending public school. She argues that parents shouldn't have to worry about affording childcare or after-school enrichment programs.

Pia Raymond (continued from page 1) York State Senate's 2016 "Women of Distinction" honor.

Selected Quote: "My story is really a part of your story. After forty-seven years in business, where we sold plaques, trophies and engraved gifts, our landlord did not want to continue our lease. He had promised a bank the property that we had pioneered successfully through the decades, despite the economy and crime. So I understand what it is like to be displaced. It's disheartening to see what is taking place in this community; so many closings on our corridors. We can do something from city council."

Policy Positions and Priorities

■ **Tenant Harassment:** Favors stiff fines, penalties and even incarceration for ruthless, harassing landlords. Supports creation of a database to identify the worst landlords. Supports new city council initiative to provide legal representation for tenants facing eviction. Advocates for programs to educate tenants about their rights.

■ **Affordable Housing:** Argues that the AMI calculation developers use in allocating affordable apartments to low-income tenants should be replaced with a "community median income," which would be a lower percentage of families' household incomes.

■ **Safer Streets:** A big advocate of alternative modes of transportation for exercise and commuting. Would like to see a safety education program—maybe linked to Citi Bike—to reinforce a safety consciousness for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists. Would like to see more bike lanes in the district.

Brian Cunningham (continued from page 1) the My Brother's Keeper Initiative. Former Brooklyn Democratic Party Committee member. Housing advocate and tenant organizer at the nonprofit Tenants and Neighbors.

Selected Quote: "I've been preparing myself my whole life to help this community and give back. I've worked on housing issues in both state and city governments. I want to translate my experience working for folks like you. I love this community. I was born and raised in this community. It's our time now to have representation that represents this community."

Policy Positions and Priorities

■ **Affordable Housing:** Believes the cost of housing can be reduced if nonprofit developers build on city-owned land since nonprofits don't have to turn a profit. Wants to work with state officials to figure out way to make 421a tax abatement for developers less onerous on fixed-income homeowners who cover the slack through higher property taxes. Wants to stop the decline of rent-stabilized housing and begin adding more units to the program.

■ **Transportation:** Supports Mayor de Blasio's Vision Zero, a \$100 million, multiagency initiative to eliminate pedestrian and cyclist fatalities. Wants to see better-designed bike lanes that will offer cyclists more protection from motor vehicles. Intends to study why MTA bus service is so undependable in the district and propose solutions.

■ **Youth Services:** Would like to see more after-school programs and later hours for students to have something to do and avoid conflicts with police.

■ **Small Business:** Wants to develop a version of rent control or rent stabilization for small commercial businesses.



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Dues: \$25 per household or \$15 per senior citizen household

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