

Community Board 1, Meeting Minutes

February 16, 2016

Board Member Attendees – List Attached.

Opening – 7:00 pm

Public Hearing Items

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: Greets everyone and introduces the representative from the Department of Consumer Affairs.
- Artee Seemangal, Department of Consumer Affairs (See Attachment): Ms. Seemangal began by saying that she was there to speak about the new NYC's Commuter Benefits Law which went into effect January 1st. She stated that if you are an employer of 20+ full time employees they now must offer you this tax free benefit by law. She also noted that if you live within the 5 boroughs you can spend up to \$255 tax free a month. She told everyone that if they need further information, to enroll or place a complaint if your employer is not offering this benefit to go to their website: www.nyc.gov/commuterbenefits. She indicated that every Thursday they have an Open House at 2 pm at their offices, 42 Broadway, 11th floor for employers or the general public.

*There was a brief Q&A with Board members.

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman thanked her for the presentation. He introduces John Katsanos who will discuss the Consumer Affairs item.

Department of Consumer Affairs

Item: #16830-2015-ASWC-GG33 Corp., D/B/A Lefkos Pyrgos 33-02 Ditmars Blvd., Astoria. An application to obtain the license to operate a new Unenclosed Sidewalk Café with 16 Tables and 32 Chairs.

- John Katsanos, Chair, Consumer Affairs Committee: He asks the representative to sign in, state her name and describe their hours of operation, accessibility etc.
- Naya Georgopoulos, Representative, George Georgopoulos Architects: She introduces herself and said she is representing Lefkos Pyrgos. She states that they would like to operate an unenclosed sidewalk café and the hours of operation are Monday through Sunday from 7am to 12 am. She said they are proposing a total of 16 tables and 32 chairs, there will 4 tables and 8 chairs on the Ditmars Boulevard side and there will be 12 tables 24 chairs on 33rd Street and that customers can access them by entering through Ditmars Boulevard and 33rd Street. She also indicated that they have provided a 3 foot clearance for service and that at no point will there be any service crossing the existing residential entry on 33rd Street. She said that all sidewalk clearances have the 8 foot minimum allowed. She stated that they re-opened up approximately 2 months ago and that they mainly serve Greek pastries and coffee.
- John Katsanos: Opened the discussion to the Board Members for questions and comments, to be followed by the public.

*Discussion ensued.

- Laura Spaeth: Lives across the street. Concerned about the drinking, noise and garbage factors.

- Naya Georgopoulos: She stated that the garbage gets picked up daily and that when they were located on 31st Street and 33rd Avenue there were never any violations.
- John Katsanos: Asked her if they are willing to sign a stipulation saying they will abate noise, streets are to be kept clean and monitored throughout the day and no congregations of people smoking.
- Catherine Davis: Lives in the building next to Lefkos. Concerned about the noisy air conditioning system and about the smoking with the outdoor seating.
- Naya Georgopoulos: Stated that they do not allow smoking on their premises or the sidewalk café.
- John Katsanos: Reiterated that they are willing to sign a stipulation which will include the smoking issue and will take it all into consideration.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman stated that the Committee will make a recommendation after a break-out session. The chair then welcomed the representative from the New York City Department of Health.

Presentations

NYC Department of Health

- Pauline Ferrante, Representative, NYC Department of Health: Ms. Ferrante greeted everyone and said she came to inform the community about the Zika Virus at the request of the Mayor and the Commissioners. She stated that 80% of the population that get the virus do not exhibit any symptoms. She said that one of the major concerns linked to Zika is that it may cause birth defects like a smaller than normal head, the condition is called “Microcephaly” which cause development problems, so their biggest outreach is for woman trying to become pregnant or who are currently pregnant. She also said they are asking people not to travel to the places that are of great risk like Central America, South America, the Caribbean, and Mexico. She indicated that there is no cure but your body can flush it out on its own. She also said they want to caution people and the most common symptom are fever, rash, headaches, joint pain and conjunctivitis. Ms. Ferrante said most of the ways of transmitting it is by getting bit by a mosquito and that there are no major concerns that people in New York can get the Zika Virus here unless you are traveling to the places that are at risk, we do not have that species of mosquitos here. She indicated that there have been reports that it can be transmitted sexually but Zika is not spread from person to person by casual contact. She ended by saying that she is happy to answer any questions.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman asked Ms. Ferrante if anyone had questions or would like more information, where and who do they contact.
- Pauline Ferrante: She said you can reach out to her via Florence Koulouris, District Manager, CB1 or via their website: www.nyc.gov/health . She said they have all the latest updates on the Zika Virus and information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), they keep it updated regularly.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman then asked if there is a number at the NYC Department of Health that someone can call.
- Pauline Ferrante: She said they can call: #347-396-4145.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: He asked if the Board had any questions.

*There was a brief Q&A with Board members.

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman thanked her for the presentation and told everyone if they have questions or concerns that they have the information where they can contact them via the website or their telephone number. The Chair then indicates there is a presentation by the Department of Transportation on 3 topics; the Shore Boulevard Street Improvement Project, the 20th Avenue Improvement Project and the Hoyt Avenue, North-Street Improvement Project.

Department of Transportation

- Shawn Macias, Project Manager, NYC Department of Transportation (**See Attachment**): Mr. Macias made a Power Point presentation. He indicated that he came to talk about the Astoria Park Access and Safety Improvements on Shore Boulevard, 20th Avenue and Hoyt Avenue North. He said they are asking that the Board or the Transportation Committee provide 3 separate letters of support, one for each project. He indicated that he would discuss the background, some of the neighborhood outreach that was done and the initial study area and discuss the 3 proposed projects individually, follow-up with a summary and then pass it on to the Board for a vote. He shared that on October 28, 2015 they hosted a Community Street Safety Workshop, co-hosted by Councilman Costa Constantinides and Assemblywoman Aravella Simotas. The workshop goal was to acquire feedback. As a result of the workshop they identified the following 4 community priorities; Shore Boulevard from Ditmars Boulevard down to Astoria Park South, 20th Avenue from 37th Street over to Shore Boulevard, Hoyt Avenue North between 7th and over to 19th Street and 19th Street Astoria Park South.

*There was a Q&A with Board members.

**Discussion ensued.

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman announced that there will a break-out session so that the Consumer Affairs Committee and the Transportation Committee can meet to discuss their recommendations.

Office of the New York State Comptroller

- Aliya Flake, Project Coordinator and Research Specialist, NYS Comptroller's Office: Ms. Flake greeted everyone and said they are conducting a survey on neighborhood noise. She said they are asking members of the community and members of the Community Board to take the survey. She indicated that noise can be hazardous to public health, it can disrupt sleep and it can affect children's learning ability. She shared that between January 2010 and November 2015 residents of this Community Board filed more noise complaints than any other Community Board in Queens. Ms. Flake said they would love for everyone to participate in their survey; to share their experiences with noise complaints, how you feel about noise, how you respond to it and your experience making noise complaints, if you have. She said they are also seeking ideas and suggestions for reducing noise in the community. She also indicated that they are doing the survey throughout the city, that the survey is available online in English, Spanish, Mandarin and Russian. Ms. Flake said that Florence Koulouris, District Manager, CB1 is cooperating with their office and that she will be emailing the survey each week for 5 weeks to the community. She added that the survey closes on March 15, 2016 at 11p.m. and is urging everyone to take a moment and do it before the deadline. She ended by saying that if anyone has questions to please email them @: www.sgappdu@osc.state.ny.us and thanked everyone for listening.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman asked her if they were specifically looking for members of the Board or for members of the Community to respond to the survey.

- Aliya Flake: She responded that they are looking for members of the Community and looking for the resident's feedback.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman said he assumes that the complaints were made via 311 system, the NYC Police Department has record of the complaints as well as the Department of Consumer Affairs. The Chair said that the office would be happy to put it on the website and sending it out via Facebook. He ended by thanking her and asked if anyone had any questions. The Chairman then announced that there would be a 10 minute break for the Consumer Affairs Committee and the Transportation Committee to break-out.

***Board Back in Session**

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman stated that there is an item for an application for an unenclosed sidewalk café. He stated that the Consumer Affairs Committee met and that John Katsanos would give the report.
- John Katsanos: He stated that the Consumer Affairs Committee met and they recommend for approval of the unenclosed sidewalk café, 7 to 2 for Lefkos Pyrgos with stipulations. The Committee also discussed a renewal of a liquor license of an establishment, company named Ifeta Corp., D/B/A Diwine, located at 41-15 31st Avenue. They are also recommending approval with stipulations to keep their premises clean, reduce smoking, etc., the vote was unanimous.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman asked if everyone was in favor of the recommendation for Lefkos Pyrgos. It was seconded by Gerald Caliendo. All in favor. He then asked if anyone opposed the recommendation (one of the two Board Members said, yes). The Chair suggested a roll-call for the motion.
- Jean Marie D'Alleva, Third Vice Chairperson: Roll Call, 33 in favor and 2 against.
- John Katsanos: He said there was a motion made to recommend approval of liquor license of Diwine. It was seconded by Ed Babor and Nancy Silverman.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman announced that the motion was approved for the application of Lefkos Pyrgos to obtain a license to operate the unenclosed sidewalk café for 16 tables and 32 chairs. Mr. Risi also announced that there was a motion to approve a liquor license for Diwine which was seconded. All in favor. The Chair then introduced Bob Piazza, Chair of the Transportation Committee.
- Robert Piazza, Chairman, Transportation Committee: He stated that the Committee met and the members voted unanimously to approve the motion to send a letter to DOT approving all 3 improvement projects with a stipulation that they do not want bicycles back in the park, not on the bicycle path, not on the pedestrian path or anywhere in the park. They do not want a child killed by a bicycle and that this recommendation will help avoid this.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman stated that the Committee is recommending approval of the Shore Boulevard Street Improvement Project, the 20th Avenue Improvement Project and the Hoyt Avenue North-Street Improvement Project with the stipulation that once the bicycles are removed they will not be put back in the park. The Chair asked if the Board Members had a second to the motion. It was seconded by Melonie LaRocca. All in favor. He stated that the vote was 34 to 1 approving all of the improvement projects. The Chairman then introduced Captain Fortune from the 114th precinct and thanked him for coming to our meeting.
- Captain Peter Fortune, 114th Precinct: He said he came to talk about the women's shelter at the Verve Hotel located at 40-03 29th Street. He indicated that it opened up in August, slowly becoming filled and now it is almost at maximum capacity which is about approximately 200 women. He said he wanted to share some of the incidents that have happened in the last couple

of weeks, most notably on February 11th when they were called for a roommate dispute where one hit the other with a metal object over the head. They arrested her and she was taken to Manhattan, Cornell Hospital to the Psychiatric Emergency Room. He proceeded to report that when they were getting out of the ambulance she assaulted one of the officers who sustained a couple of injuries and had to be treated. The next day a resident got angry because she had to go through the metal detector and was unhappy, she got into words with security so she proceeded to break the metal detector and she subsequently started to throw chairs around. He said they responded to the incident, they arrested her and had to take her to Manhattan, Cornell Hospital for a psychological exam. He stated that the Police Department's procedure is that the officers have to stay with the prisoners while they are in custody including in the hospital. He said while they were guarding the first prisoner, the other prisoner picked up the metal IV Pole and hit the officer on guard and kicked her. He added that the officer had to be treated for injuries in the emergency room as well. Captain Fortune said that at their initial meeting with them, the Verve, they said they would have mobile patrolling. He continued and said they have heard and received complaints from constituents that the residents are out in the street harassing constituents and the business owners as well. He said that they have also mentioned there being no mobile patrolling as promised. He stated that there has always been a quality of life issue with that area and we are trying to do our best to improve that. Captain Fortune said to keep in mind that we have 2 shelters in the 114th, the Verve and the Westway. He expressed that these last couple of weeks have been quite busy with these incidents and various others and that it has been a challenge for them. He shared that they have a scheduled meeting soon with the Verve staff and Homeless Services. He said that they also have a percentage of the residents have alcohol and substance abuse problems. Captain Fortune said they will continue to work with the Verve and the Board to come up with a solution and do the best they possibly can. The Captain ended his report by adding that these issues have also affected their man power for other 911 emergencies. He added that is their latest update and asked if anyone had any questions.

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman asked him how he thinks specifically the Community Board can assist the 114th.
- Captain Peter Fortune: He said he feels a letter to Acacia and Homeless Services asking them to be more cooperative and better coordination. He stated they had no idea some of these incidents had taken place. He said the community has been great. Captain Fortune added that the Board can assist by reaching out to them for more help.
- Antonella Disaverio: She stated that she recalls before the shelter opened, there was a meeting at St. Patrick's Church with Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer and representatives from the Mayor's Office were in attendance at the meeting and they said they would be supportive to the 114th precinct. She suggested that we follow-up with the Councilman's office and the Mayor's office to see if there has been any progress.
- Florence Koulouris: She stated that she has been attending all of their CAB meetings for the Verve. She reported that they have been using a "roving guard", where they use a car and they are supposedly roving the neighborhood. She added that they have been saying there is a problem with the vehicle and that it is in the shop so instead, they have supposedly been using unmarked private cars for this. She said she feels that it is unacceptable because the residents of the Verve have the right and are allowed to be out and be around however, if they do not see the cars their level of awareness is down and they tend to act inappropriately, more easily. She said there is a lot of petit larceny which the Captain did not mention. She also shared that the crime has gone up 1000 percent in that area since the Verve was turned into a homeless shelter. She added that there is very aggressive pan handling. She shared that she was going to speak about

all of this in her report. She continued to say that there are reports that they go to the local pharmacy and unfortunately steal. Ms. Koulouris said there is a lot to address and that she contacted DHS when she spoke with the Captain earlier that day.

- Debra Tharrington: She stated that she took all the notes and said that the representative that attends the meetings had not reported any of that information. She said that will share it with their Chief of Staff and the representative the next day because this is not acceptable. She said she will be reviewing her notes with Captain Fortune to make sure it is all correct.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman thanked her.
- Antonio Meloni: He stated that as mentioned by the Captain that DHS had no knowledge of this but we know that homeless services pays a lot of money to all of their contractors. He said security should be their primary goal. He said he feels that as a Board, they should know exactly what is going on. He added that DHS is the primary source of money for the contractor and they are not doing their job, it is not acceptable.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman stated that he agrees. He said that the fact that Councilman Van Bramer knows about this, he will follow-up and say something regarding it and that the Community Board will too. The Chair thanked Captain Fortune.
- Yawne Robinson: She stated that she attended the meeting as well and that they said would work with other community organization to keep the public safe they should report why they fell short, so she feels the Board should write a letter. She added that this is something that is concerning for public safety. Ms. Robinson said they promised they would push for additional police officers to be put into the 114th and that these are some of things that should be addressed with the Mayor's Office.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman said he would take that as a motion on these suggestions to address with the Mayor's Office in a letter. It was seconded by Rose Anne Alafogiannis.
- Melanie La Rocca: She said she was at the first meeting that the Councilman organized just before they opened the shelter. She suggested to add to the motion a letter that the Board calls on DHS to have more CAB meetings, at minimum once a month instead of every 3 months so that the members of the CAB and our Board have a much more robust idea of what is happening so that we are not in a situation finding out about these unfortunate incidents a month or so after the fact.
- Captain Fortune: He said that they have a representative at all of the CAB meetings and the crime statistics are discussed at every single meeting.
- Dominic Stiller: He stated that he is on that CAB and that he lives a block away from the Verve. He said what the CAB and the local residents would like from the Board is that there be more meat in that mustard. He said the united request is that there should be good quality of management from Acacia. He stated that some of the residents felt that the last CAB meeting was very fluffy/nice. They want to accept the Verve but they need the best management company/the best vendor they can have, if they have to live with this, they want to have the best shelter possible. He said that they are all in agreement that if there are other vendors that have 30 hours of programming per resident and we have 20 hours, we want to ask why. He asked that the Board come to the next meeting and please wear that hat, it would help the community. He thanked everyone.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chair thanked him.
- Daniel Aliberti: He said quite a few of the concerns that have been mentioned are that the patients have mental issues and substance abuse issues. He thinks the Health Department and particularly the Office of Mental Health need to be more involved in overseeing these situations

because these individuals need case management and they are not getting adequate care which is why they are running into issues. He feels these agencies need to attend the meetings.

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman thanked Captain Fortune for coming to the meeting that evening and added that this is a very serious issue and will try to rectify this.
- Florence Koulouris: She clarified that there was a motion to send letters to the Mayor's Office and to DHS. She asked if they were both seconded.

*All Board members said yes.

Public Comments

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman asked if anyone in the public would like to make a statement or who may have a question, he indicated that would be the time.
- John Tritt, Build Up NY: He introduced himself and said he is there as a representative for Build Up NY. He indicated that they were involved with Astoria Cove process and are a coalition of working men and women in NY fighting for good jobs and responsible development. He said he was there as a resident as well who lives at 30th Street in Astoria. He stated that they were there on multiple occasions in 2014 talking about the neighborhood safe jobs Astoria Cove development he said ultimately the Community Board voted against the project unanimously with the understanding that developers too often don't follow those recommendations. He added that at the time, at the end of the ULURP process along with positive changes that were passed as a result of the work of this community board and the city council input, there is an agreement for good jobs that they could negotiate a project labor agreement before the work begins at a site. Mr. Tritt said that unfortunately, they became aware that construction had begun at the Astoria Cove site and no POA had been negotiated and most troubling the contractor at the site has a history of working with dangerous hazardous materials. He ended by introducing Lucia Gomez from Laborers Local 78 who can would share more information and how these problems affect the community.
- Lucia Gomez, Director of Organizing and Strategic Partnerships of Local 78: She started by referring to pictures on poster boards of some work sites that they had with them. She said she is a representative of Local 78 representing 4000 immigrant members mostly from Poland, Ecuador and of various Latino countries that work with Asbestos and other hazardous materials. She said she was there to talk about a company called Tri-State involved with removing Asbestos and doing the work at the Astoria Cove Project. She said they follow Tri-State wherever they go in New York City. She said they use all sorts of illegal and unsafe practices when removing Asbestos. She described all the illegal forms of getting rid of Asbestos which is what Tri-State does. Ms. Gomez said they have a garage at the corner of 8th Street and 27th Avenue and that their truck does not move from there for several hours with all of the hazardous material in it. She added that she does not understand why they are bringing it back to the community. She said that she has spoken with DEP who get over 9000 filings every single year of Asbestos Abatement that take place in the City of New York and there are not enough inspectors to go around.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chair asked her to confirm that she had notified DEP.
- Lucia Gomez: She said yes DEP the city agency was notified and DEC which is the State agency was notified as well. Ms. Gomez said they are the police for bad jobs and for worker safety with bad practices and bringing proof to the proper agencies. She said that people do not see the effects of it within a short period of time but in 10 years, they will. She added that these individuals are removing the Asbestos unsafely/improperly, are bringing back on our trains, into our communities and bringing it back home to their own families. She ended by saying that

unfortunately these individuals care more about having \$20 in their pocket than the consequences of potentially getting Cancer in 15 years. She also asked that people please call 311.

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman asked her to call Florence in the office to tell her what agencies she had made complaints to and she will make sure they are acted upon. He added that this is something the office could help them with. The Chair asked if anyone from the audience would like to make any comments.
- Damion DiCosta: He introduced himself and said he was born and raised in Astoria. He moved away, came back and has been living here for 15 years now on 33rd Street, same block as Lefkos. He said they have a big dumping problem on the block. He said the first location is in the Keyfood parking lot also at the alleyway that leads up to the subway from the municipal parking lot. Another issue he discussed is the noise on 33rd Street. He said that the noise coming from the late night garbage pick-up (12am–4am) is unbelievable. He indicated that he has placed complaints to 311 but they said they would have to have someone physically be there to monitor the noise but because there is no exact time it makes it difficult. He would appreciate it if something can be done about these issues because he feels it is a very big problem.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman told him that these issues would be brought to the attention of the proper agencies at the next Cabinet meeting.
- Pat Lowenhaupt, Queens World Film Festival: Ms. Lowenhaupt announced that the 6th Annual Queens World Film Festival this year begins on March 15, 2016 through March 20th. She asked that you go to: www.queensworldfilmfestival.com to see all the films that are available and that you please tell your friends, neighbors and children. She said that on March 20th, the family friendly films that are showing at P.S. 69, all day long. She added that 144 films were chosen from 550 entries, 29 of the films that were accepted are from Queens and 13 are from this community. She asked that the community please support these filmmakers. She mentioned that she had cards with the information of their Executive Director and if you know of a place that would like to show their films to please reach out to them. She said she is part of the young filmmakers program, they go to schools and teach the children about filmmaking. Ms. Lowenhaupt ended by thanking the community.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman thanked her.

*Several filmmakers spoke about filmmaking and about their films that are showing in the month of March.

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chair offered to promote the Festival and all of the showings on the Community Board's website, Facebook, etc., and he thanked them as well.
- Norman Chan, NYC Parks Department: He introduced himself and said he was there on behalf of the Capital Division and Partnerships for Parks Division. He said he wanted to give the Community Board an update in regards to the Community Parks Initiative (CPI Program) and their work in particular at the Astoria Heights Playground and the Van Alst Playground. He said the funding was received on August 20, 2014 to begin the revisions for these playgrounds. He also mentioned that they had community meetings on November 19th as well as on December 3rd and working closely with the Community Board in looking and finalizing the plans. He announced that Public Design Commission (PDC) has approved the final plans which is exciting news. He said now they are moving onto the procurement process. This is tracking contracts, soliciting bids and getting approval from the Comptroller's Office which will take about 6-10 months and the construction phase will take about 12-18 months. He also said that they also received word that they have funding for 2 more projects, Playground 35 and Astoria Health

Playground. He said they will be reaching out to the Board to advise their public vision sessions. He added that the CPI Program are expanding their programming in the local parks in Astoria starting in the spring which include more movie nights, more dance nights and other family friendly events. Mr. Chan said if you have any questions you can call their Outreach Coordinator, Nicole Henderson @718-520-5913 or call Florence Koulouris the District Manager at CB1. He said she has been very helpful during this whole process. He ended by thanking everyone.

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman said they appreciate people like him that give them good news.
- Jessica Bathurst, Executive Director, Astoria Performing Arts Center (APAC): She introduced herself and said she attended the November meeting to introduce herself. She shared that they are celebrating their 15th year Anniversary with a benefit party on Monday, March 21st, she left information on the table and inviting everyone to join them. She said that weekend they are opening “Astoria Stories” playing the following weekend as well at the Good Shephard United Methodist Church and thanked everyone.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman thanked her. The Chair asked if anyone else wanted to speak, hearing none he said he was moving on to the Business session. The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes. It was seconded by Ed Babor.
- Frances Luhmann-McDonald: Ms. Luhmann-McDonald said she had an amendment to the minutes.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chair asked her if she had an amendment to the minutes.
- Frances Luhmann-McDonald: She said yes, in the Mount Sinai Hospital report, on a question that she asked about the new Coronary Care Center and the response she got from Ms. Schwab.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman said that the minutes would be amended with her question and the answer Ms. Schwab gave.
- Frances Luhmann-McDonald: She thanked the Chairman.

Business

Chairperson’s Report: Joseph Risi

The Chairman greeted everyone and reported that he did not have a report because that was his first day back and that he was recovering from his surgery which he mentioned he is feeling much better from and thanked everyone for their well wishes. Mr. Risi introduced Florence Koulouris and requested she provide her report.

District Manager’s Report: Florence Koulouris

Good evening, even though February numerically is a short month it always seems to be the longest month of the winter. Since we last met our community has been very busy. Durst Organization did the ground breaking ceremony on January 14th. We held our District Service Cabinet the same day. Our office held a transportation Committee meeting the 19th. The State of the Borough, held by the Borough President was January 21st. Our office made a presentation at the Borough President’s office for our Budget requests and emphasized the need to expedite the repairs to Charybdis Park Restrooms. We have since learned of the dilemma pertaining to the waste disposal. Also, on the 21st, our office attended the Verve Hotel CAB meeting. The homeless shelter is now known as Pam’s Place. The crime rate around the hotel has risen tremendously. There is a large problem with aggressive pan-handling and petit larcenies surrounding the shelter. Our police have great concern for the well-being of the clients in the shelter. There recently have been some very unnerving incidents with regard to altercations inside the

shelter and possible property damages, referring to the metal detectors. The DHS representative has assured this office they are looking into each matter and will expedite the handling of each matter. We will be in contact with the police as well as DHS for further updates. January 25th Costa Constantinides held a State of the Borough with a wonderful Power Point presentation regarding our district. On January 26th the 114 Community Council was cancelled due to inclement weather. February 2nd I attended the Astoria Civic and the Astoria Park Alliance meetings both in the same evening and on the third The Greek Home Owners Association. On February 5th UCCA held their Legislative Breakfast. OANA held their meeting on the 8th and had a presentation by Garrison Buxton Welling Court Mural Project a beautification project of our neighborhood that is a sight to see, his work and the people who work with him are remarkable. On February 11th I attended my first Dutch Kills Civic Association Meeting with Thea Romano. And here we are today. Our office has included in your folder several fliers. I ask you pay special attention to them all however, please try to attend the special meeting February 22nd for the information regarding the dewatering project to ensue for the Durst project. As follow-up for our Chairman, last month, he requested we gather information regarding the USTA, their contact number is 718-760-6200. You can ask questions regarding graduations and events there. Thank you and have a good evening.

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman thanked Florence. The Chair told the Board that he already assigned everyone to a committee and if anyone is unhappy or if someone thinks they want to be on a particular committee and can devote their time to be on a committee as a member, please give him a call at: # 718-278-2600. He said he will gladly speak to them on the phone and try to make everyone happy. The Chair then continued with the Committee Reports.

Committee Reports

- Daniel Aliberti, Access and Disability: No report.
- RoseMarie Poveromo, Airport Access: No report.
- Norma Nieves-Blas, Capital/Expense, Community Development: No report.
- John C.V. Katsanos, Consumer Affairs: No report.
- Thomas Ryan, Economic Development/Industrial/Commercial: No report.
- Linda Perno, Education/Library: No report.
- Joan Asselin, Environmental Protection: No report.
- Judy Trilivas, Health & Social Services/Senior: No report.
- Mary O'Hara, Housing: She reported that the Mayor's Housing Department made an implementation of the elimination of parking, of the parking of requirements for seniors at senior housing in transit zones. She also added that they plan to preserve 200,000 units of affordable housing.
- Elizabeth Erion, Land Use & Zoning: She reported that the review process for the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing and Zoning for Quality and Affordability. She said the Mayor is still pushing it. She said that 54% of Boards in the City opposed the text change and 12 out of 14 opposed it in Queens. She said the Commission voted on it and voted in favor of it. She added that there were some modifications and that the City Council has a hearing next month and she will report on the modifications in the zoning text. She also shared information about the Halletts Point Project by the Durst Organization, several thousand units of housing. She said there is an opportunity to find out what they will be doing and their timetable which is next Monday, February 22nd at 7 pm there at the Astoria World Manor. She ended by thanking everyone.
- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman thanked her and said he is very proud how her committee along with John Carusone and all the members of the Land Use and Zoning Committee

articulated the position that they took in favor of the zoning text amendment. He added that it was a great thing that they all did and hopefully City Planning will take some things into consideration.

- Richard Khuzami, Parks & Recreation/Cultural Affairs: He started his report by saying it was a busy month for parks. He began by advising that the sewer line built by Robert Moses in the 1930's from the Astoria Pool Complex and Charybdis Playground was emptying directly in the East River. This is no longer viable. Therefore, the sewer line must be connected to the city sewer system before either facility can be used. An emergency grant was received from the Mayor's Office that will allow repairs to proceed which will allow the pool to open this season. However, because it was not deemed an emergency, the repairs to the comfort station in Charybdis Playground will not be completed until 2019. The Parks Department has advised they will try and upgrade the temporary Trailer Comfort Station currently in use in the playground because of the closure. They will also make every attempt to upgrade the maintenance of the trailer. Mr. Khuzami replied to a question from Kevin Mullarkey, a Board member, that the Board would send a letter to the Parks Department to make sure the trailer is handicap accessible. On a positive note, a private funder will pay for renovations in the tennis courts at Astoria Park. Mr. Khuzami also shared that Councilman Costa Constantinides, in his State of the District Address, focused on making capital improvements in Astoria Park. While he is still seeking funding sources, he is looking to upgrades in erosion control, creation of a soccer field in the infield of the track, and completing renovation of the pool complex. Including comfort stations, locker rooms, terrace, and the performance space. Lastly, Mr. Khuzami reported that Phase I of the conversion of the diving pool to a performance space has encountered big problems. They put the RFP out, with a budget of approximately \$4 million for construction. However, only one contractor bid on the RFP, and he bid over \$7 million, leaving a shortfall of approximately \$3 million. Therefore, the Parks Department is redesigning Phase 1 to meet the new budget realities. This will probably mean that the pool tank will be filled in, but not much more than that. In effect, this will create more open space without specific use.
- John C.V. Katsanos, Parliamentary Procedures: No report.
- Antonio Meloni, Public Safety: No report.
- Ann Bruno, Street Festivals: No report.
- Robert Piazza, Transportation: No report.
- Jose Batista, Youth: No report.

New/Old Business

- Joseph Risi, Chairman: The Chairman asked if anyone had any new or old business, hearing none he announced the meeting is adjourned. It was seconded by Edward Babor. The Chair said the next meeting is on March 15th.

Meeting Adjourned – 9:45 p.m.

15-Oct COMMUNITY BOARD 1, QUEENS

Attendance Record

DATE 2/16/16

YES- Present
 NO- Absent
 EXC.- Excused

Community Board Member	YES	NO	Exc.
Rose Ann Alafogiannis	✓		
George Alexiou	✓		
Daniel Aliberti	✓		
Joan Asselin	✓		
Edward Babor	✓		
Jose Batista	✓		
Ann Bruno	✓		
Gerald Caliendo	✓		
John Carusone			E
Jean Marie D'Alleva	✓		
Joanna D'Elia			E
Dolores DeCrescenzo		✓	
Mary Demakos		✓	
Antonella Di Saverio	✓		
Katie Ellman	✓		
Elizabeth Erion	✓		
Mackenzi Farquer		✓	
Dean Feratovic			E
Evie Hantzopoulos			E
Amy Hau	✓		
Pauline Jannelli	✓		
Vanessa Jones-Hall	✓		
John Katsanos	✓		
Richard Khuzami	✓		
Nancy Konipol	✓		

Community Board Member	YES	NO	Exc.
Jerry Kril	✓		
Melanie La Rocca	✓		
Vincent G. Marsanico	✓		
Frances Luhmann-McDonald	✓		
Antonio Meloni	✓		
Prabir Mitra	✓		
Kevin Mullarkey	✓		
Stella Nicolaou	✓		
Norma Nieves-Bias			E
Mary O'Hara	✓		
Linda Perno			E
Robert Piazza	✓		
Rose Marie Poveromo			E
Gus Prentzas		✓	
Joseph Risi Jr.	✓		
Yawne Robinson	✓		
Thomas Ryan	✓		
Rudolfo Sarchese	✓		
Nancy Silverman	✓		
George L. Stamatiades		✓	
Dominic Stiller	✓		
Danielle Tharrington	✓		
Marie Torniali	✓		
Judy Trilivas			E
TOTALS			

NUMBER OF BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT 36

COMMENTS _____

**THERE'S A BETTER
WAY TO WORK.**

NYC'S COMMUTER BENEFITS LAW

Important Information for Employers

NYC's Commuter Benefits Law takes effect on January 1, 2016. Under the law, covered employers must offer commuter benefits to existing full-time employees beginning January 1, 2016 or four weeks after an employee begins full-time work, whichever is later.

EMPLOYERS COVERED/NOT COVERED BY THE LAW

Covered

For-profit and nonprofit employers with 20 or more full-time non-union employees* in New York City, including temporary help firms.

*A full-time employee is an employee who works an average of 30 hours or more per week in the most recent four weeks, any portion of which was in New York City.

Not Covered

- Employers whose employees are covered by a collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Exception: If the employer has 20 or more full-time employees who are not covered by the CBA, the employer must offer these employees commuter benefits.
- United States, New York State, and New York City governments, including any office, department, independent agency, authority, institution, association, society, or other body of the state, including the legislature and the judiciary.
- Employers not required to pay federal, state, and City payroll taxes.

EMPLOYERS WHOSE EMPLOYEES ARE NOT COVERED BY THE LAW

The law does not apply to:

- Part-time, temporary, or seasonal employees
- Full-time employees who are New York City residents but commute to their job outside of New York City
- Independent contractors
- Former employees

RECORDKEEPING

Employers must keep records that demonstrate that each eligible full-time employee was offered the opportunity to use pre-tax income to purchase transit benefits and whether the employee accepted or declined the offer. Employers must keep records for two years. Employers may use the model form available on the DCA website nyc.gov/commuterbenefits to document compliance for recordkeeping purposes.



Bill de Blasio
Mayor

Consumer
Affairs

Julie Menin
Commissioner

TRANSIT COVERED/NOT COVERED BY THE LAW

Covered

- New York City regional mass transit services, including Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) subway and bus; Long Island Rail Road; Amtrak; New Jersey Transit; and Metro-North
- Eligible ferry and water taxi services
- Eligible vanpool services
- Eligible commuter bus services
- Access-A-Ride

Not Covered

- Parking expenses
- Bicycling expenses, including CitiBikes*

*Under federal tax law, employees cannot use pre-tax income for the qualified bicycle commuting reimbursement benefit, and bicycle rental fees are not qualified transportation fringe benefits.

Important Resources for Employers

SETTING UP A COMMUTER BENEFITS PROGRAM

Under the Internal Revenue Code, employers can offer full-time employees a qualified transportation benefit that is excluded from taxable income, also known as a pre-tax benefit.

Below is a list of third-party providers that manage commuter benefits programs.

Provider	Website	Contact Information
Benefit Resource, Inc.	benefitresource.com	(866) 996-5200 Ext. 212 info@BenefitResource.com
Commuter Benefit Solutions	commuterbenefits.com	(800) 531-2828
Qualified Transportation Benefits	qtbservices.com	(516) 794-1953 Ext. 22 info@qtbservices.com
TotalBen, LLC	totalben.com	(718) 535-7070 info@totalben.com
WageWorks	wageworks.com	(866) 602-3887

This is not a complete listing of available providers. Providers are listed in alphabetical order.

All employers are advised to investigate and compare their options before signing up with a provider.

Employers who decide to manage a commuter benefits program without a third-party provider should consult their tax advisors and accountants to understand the administrative impact and how to comply with applicable laws, including the federal tax code and NYC's Commuter Benefits Law.

QUESTIONS?

Contact DCA in the following ways:

- Online Live Chat, available at nyc.gov/BusinessToolbox
- Email commuterbenefits@dca.nyc.gov
- Call 311 (212-NEW-YORK outside NYC) and ask for information about Commuter Benefits