

**COMMUNITY BOARD #14
VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 13, 2020**

PRESENT

Audrey Amsterdam-Handy, Khaleel Anderson, Andrea Colon, Dr. Gerald David, Ahmad Edwards, Noreen Ellis, Jack Epter, Temina Feldman, Joanne Fogarty, Yitzchok Goldstein, D. Brian Heffernan, Felicia Johnson, Paul King, Betty Leon, Denise Lopestri-Neibel, Annette Lord-Cohen, Ife Maijeh, Nancy Martinez, Sonia Moise, Helen Montero, Al Moore, Daniel Mundy, Dolores Orr, Dr. Harold Paez, Isaac Parsee, Eugene Pasternak, Dr. Eli Shapiro, Karen Sloan-Payne, Chris Tedesco, Michael Tubridy, Jose Velez, Wanda Warden, William Gordon

ABSENT

Louis Caucig, John Cori, Eugenia Gibson, Tamara Jacobs, Rosalyn Mason, Alicia Mazyck, John McCambridge, Kevin Morgan, Linda Plummer, Edwin Williams

Chair called the meeting to order at 7:28pm.

MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 8, 2020

Dr. Gerald David made the motion to approve the minutes with one correction. Page 2 first word even should be evening. The motion was seconded by Jose Velez. The motion carried.

REPORT OF THE DISTRICT MANAGER

District Manager, Jonathan Gasket reminded everyone that is choosing to vote by absentee ballot that your ballot can be tracked once it is mailed.

The Board has until November 23, 2020 to hold a committee meeting and public hearing on the Averno East ULURP.

The Board will submit the FY2021 Capital & Expense priorities to The NYC Office of Management & Budget.

Participated on citywide call for Community Boards that have COVID-19 Hotspot Zones and requested for more enforcement of mask wearing along boardwalk and in all of the parks in District #14 including the Ferry Terminal. Also, calls will be made to the Army Corp. of Engineers for a schedule of jetty/groin construction.

ELECTED OFFICIALS CALL-IN

STATE SENATOR JAMES SANDERS JR

Stephanie Casitllo Samoy, Rockaway Representative of State Senator James announced that she can be reached by email at samoy@nys.gov or 718-327-7017.

QUEENS BOROUGH HALL

Irving Poy, Representing Queens Borough President Sandra Lee advised that he can be reached by email at ipoy@queensbp.org.

COMMITTEE REPORT

1. BUDGET COMMITTEE

Jonathan Gaska, District Manager noted that the office posted the revised FY 2021 Capital & Expense budget on the CB#14 website and sent out copies through the office email list for the third and final review. The Board also asked if the public would like to testify and one person signed up to comment speak on the issue.

Dolores Orr recommended that since DOT has completed a study of curb parking at the Rockaway Dog Park at Beach 82 Street/Rockaway Freeway and has approved the addition of curb parking there is no longer a need to fund a study for the creation of a parking lot within the dog park. Therefore this item can be removed from the FY2021 Capital & Expense budget.

PUBLIC HEARING - FY 2022 Capital & Expense Priorities

The Chair opened the floor for a public hearing regarding the draft FY 2022 Capital & Expense priorities. One person signed up to speak was recognized and heard. The Chair closed public participation.

The Budget Committee's motion for the Board to approve the FY 2022 Capital & Expense priorities. The motion was seconded by Paul King. The motion carried.

2. PARKS & PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE (summary of meeting)

Jose Velez Co-Chair of the Committee reported that a virtual meeting was held on September 10, 2020. The agenda item for discussion was regarding Parks presentation for the Arverne East nature preserve to be located adjacent to the boardwalk from Beach 44 St. to Beach 56th Place (35 acres).

Guests present were representatives from: NYC Parks, HPD, L&M Developers, Triangle Equities, and Star Whitehouse Landscape Architects and Development).

The nature preserve is a component of the larger Arverne East development project. The site is between Bch 56th Place and Bch 44th St. bordered by Edgemere Avenue on its north side and the boardwalk on its south side. The site is currently owned by HPD, once the nature preserve is completed it will become Park's property. The goal of the project is to promote biodiversity by protecting natural landscapes and enhancing existing habitats along with providing refuge for endangered species seen on site.

There are a number of leftover streets and roadways that need to be removed in order create links between existing habitats and create a larger natural preserve. Existing vegetation will be improved and invasive species removed. This will create a space for the community to enjoy and help to bring in the larger community of nature and wildlife lovers. There will be paths leading to the boardwalk.

Questions & comments from committee/board members and public.

Q: Where will the pathways to the beach located? A: There will be 6 pathways, with 3 aligning with existing streets.- Bch 56th, 54th and 44th Sts.

Q: Signage? A: Currently being designed and will speak to the habitats and plant species.

Q: Will all benches have arms? A: Yes.

Q: Parks Building that will be located on B 44 St. The building will be used to house park staff and have approximately 20 parking spaces. Public bathrooms will be located here as well, operating hours of bathrooms will be 8AM to 5/6PM during winter season and closing around 10PM during summer season.

Q: Lighting of the Preserve? A: currently lighting is not being provided for this project

Q; Maintenance of the preserve? A: in addition to NYC Parks, the development team is committed to providing support for ongoing maintenance and operation of preserve.

Q: Will the nature preserve site be raised? A: No

Q: How will invasive species be removed? A: Multi-prong approach; Bulldoze old materials and grounds and start fresh on western end, with additional surgical removal with herbicide.

Q: Will there be bike paths and bike racks? A: Bike rack will be located at the 44th St. building, bike paths will not be on the site.

Q: Original agreement included widening of Edgemere Ave. to 4 traffic lanes, will this be done as part of this project? A: DOT was not there and no one was able to give a proper response to this question.

Q: The original RFP awarded to the developer required that the developer pay the cost of the nature preserve, why is the city now paying 22 million for it? A: Originally designated as market rate housing with some affordable units, the developer would have been responsible for the cost of the preserve.

Q: Does Arverne East get postponed if the nature preserve does not go forward? A: Yes, the preserve is a required condition of the project moving forward. The expected start date: Spring 2021, Completion approx. 18 months, depending on planting season of fall 2022.

A letter of Support was requested before the preliminary project is presented to DEC.

Chair opened floor for Board Members comments/questions/concerns.

1. Traffic lights and pedestrian crossings are needed at all north/south streets. Why is there only north/south access from the community north of the preserve? at Beach 52 & B 47 streets? There is still no commitment for street lighting on the north/south public streets in the preserve. A: Douglas Adams from the Mayor's Office stated that they have heard the community's concern but there is no money. DOT is looking at other measures such as stripping and the cost of street lighting.
2. There is a need for emergency beacons along the pathways within the preserve. A: Mitchell Loring from the Parks Dept. advised that is being discussed within the agencies.
3. What parking will be available? A: Sara Levenson from L&M Development stated there will be a parking lot with 20 available spaces for the public.
4. Concern stated that there must be lighting even if it is low lighting and will the Parks building have space for a concession?
5. Concern that residents taking the subway at Beach 44 Street will use the preserve parking lot as a commuter parking lot leaving no parking for those visiting the preserve. Currently there are at least 60 cars that park along the roadway between B 54- B 56 Streets. Also, long term construction at the site with only 2 lanes of traffic with a sidewalk that is not useable will cause traffic congestion for years to come. Additionally, the City should consider solar lighting within the preserve. A: Sara Levenson stated they there will be signs stating 2 hours parking limit. There will be solar lighting on Beach 44 Street

6. Community just north of the Arverne East project will be most impacted by this project therefore parking should be metered and lightening is absolutely needed. Also is there emergency call boxes and will there be any bike trails?
7. What funding is there to address flooding?
8. What measures the city will take to prevent dumping?
9. Will the Parks Dept. maintenance budget be increased to properly maintain these 35 acres?
10. How/ who will enforce the 2 hour parking limit?
11. Edgemere Avenue must be expanded to have four lanes of traffic and what is the Parks Department's budget to maintain the preserve?
12. What will the Parks building at Bch 44 St.be used for.? A Sara Levenson replied that it would be used for Parks Department staff, Park Rangers, community space and restrooms.

Khaleel Anderson made a motion to provide a letter of support provided there is additional/controlled parking and concerns regarding safety/maintenance be addressed? The motion was not seconded.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Harold Paez made the motion for the Board to send a letter to the Mayor De Blasio stating that CB#14 opposes the recent decision to close schools in the Far Rockaway (11691) area of our community in line with the growing consensus of the medical community that there is significant harm done to the psychological wellbeing of children in communities due to the severity and length of lock downs. The motion was seconded by Isaac Parsee. The motion carried.

Jonathan Gaska requested Harold Paez to send a summary of the points made relating to the above motion so that a letter may be sent.

Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted By: M. Dunning