

**COMMUNITY BOARD #14  
VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING  
JUNE 8, 2021**

\*\*\*\*\*

**PRESENT**

Audrey Amsterdam-Handy, Mark Anaya, Gabrielle Bennett, Yaakov Berger, Lailah Boyd, Giselle Carter, Natasha Carter, John Cori, Rosemarie Duggan-Gulston, Ahmad Edwards, Jack Epter, Yitzchok Goldstein, Randy Hall, D. Brian Heffernan, Paul King, Maggie Larkins, Betty Leon, Denise Lopresti, John McCambridge, Isa Mitchell, Sonia Moise, Daniel Mundy, Dolores Orr, Dr. Harold Paez, Linda Plummer, David Rood-Ojalvo, Karen Sloan-Payne, Chris Tedesco, Jose Velez, Wanda Warden, Lisa Williams

**ABSENT**

Louis Caucig, Andrea Colon, Eric Diaz, Dr. Gerald David, Noreen Ellis, Temina Feldman, Felicia Johnson, Annette Lord-Cohen, Ife Maijeh, Nancy Martinez, Rosalyn Mason, Helen Montero, Al Moore, Eugene Pasternak,

**GUESTS**

Malik Sanders – Rep. Queens Borough President Donovan Richards, Dan Brown – Rep. Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, Max Lawrence – Rep. Councilmember Selvena Brooks-Powers, Stephanie Castillo-Samoy - Rep. State Senator James Sanders Jr., Sandee Doremus – Rep. State Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr., District Leader Lew Simon, Ciara Donnelly – Rep. City Councilman Eric Ulrich,

\*\*\*\*\*

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

**MINUTES FROM APRIL 12, & MAY 4, 2021**

Motion by Betty Leon to approve April 12, 2021 minutes as corrected was seconded by Rosemarie Duggan-Gulston. Motion passed.

Motion by Betty Leon to approve May 4, 2021 minutes as corrected. Motion passed..

**REPORT OF THE CHAIR**

The Chair asked board members to remember 10 year old Justine Wallace and his family. Justine was killed in a random shooting over the weekend. Today would have been Justine’s 11<sup>th</sup> birthday.

There are concerns from over the weekend regarding traffic backed up for hours from the Marine Parkway Bridge to the Riis Park parking lot booths. The Chair requested Jonathan to reach out to the National Park Service to determine what has changed at the parking lot that has caused this dangerous situation with emergency vehicles being about to get into Rockaway from Brooklyn and residents from Roxbury and Breezy Point being able to travel east on the peninsula..

The Chair reminded everyone that at the last board meeting – Community Boards are on a summer break - next meeting will be in September.

**REPORT OF THE DISTRICT MANAGER** –Jonathan Gaska, District Manager reported that the glass of the Far Rockaway Library is almost completed and Dolores and I are proposing to name the Far Rockaway Library after former QBP Helen Marshall, who made it initial allocation of \$10 million that started the development of a new Far Rockaway Library.

### **ELECTED OFFICIAL CALL- IN**

#### **STATE SENATOR JOSEPH ADDABBO JR.**

Sandee Doremus reported that the electronic recycling event held on Sunday at St. Camillus Church was a big success.

#### **STATE SENATOR JAMES SANDERS JR.**

Stephanie Castillo-Samoy reported that Senator Sanders Jr. is having a Men’s Health Fair on Saturday, June 19, 2021, at Beach 17 Street on the boardwalk. The event is being held 9:00am to 1:00pm. All are invited to attend. Stephanie Castillo-Samoy advised this would be her last Community Board meeting, as she was leaving the Office of State Senator Sanders. She thanked the Community Board for always welcoming her and she learned much while being the Senator’s rep to Community Board #14.

#### **CITY COUNCILMEMBER SELVENA BROOKS-POWERS**

Max Lawrence, Community Liaison reported he handles community issues on behalf of the Councilmember. The issues do include quality of life complaints and other issues. Please contact the office or email issues, complaints, or concerns. Mr. Lawrence can be reached at [mlawrence@council.nyc.gov](mailto:mlawrence@council.nyc.gov)

#### **NYC SCOTT STRINGER COMPTROLLER’S OFFICE**

Elaine Fan, Queens Director of Community Affairs reported that the Quarterly Cash Report for NYC is available at the NYC Comptroller’s website [@comptroller.nyc.gov](http://comptroller.nyc.gov).

#### **QUEENS BOROUGH PRESIDENT DONOVAN RICHARDS**

Malik Sanders – Office of Queens Borough President Donovan Richard advised that Mrs. Scott from QBP Office has been working on the issue regarding the sunken barges at Beach 79 Street and would be reaching to arrange a meeting with the responsible agencies, elected officials, CB#14 and community residents towards the end of the month.

Malik Sanders announced upcoming RSVP events which are the following:

- Virtual Job Recruitment Fair on Thursday, June 17, 2021 @ 2pm
- Father's Day Event on Thursday, June 17, 2021 @ 6pm
- Juneteenth Event on Saturday, June 19, 2021 @ starting at 9am.

A link will be provided to RSVP.

### **QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY MELINDA KATZ**

Dan Brown reported that upcoming events are the following:

- Thursday, June 10, 2021, will be hosting a 2021 LGBTQ Pride Day Celebration event online. Those that are interested can register online at Queensda.org @6pm to join in.
- On June 12, 2021, the DA office and NYPD will be hosting a Gun Buy Back Program in Springfield Gardens at St. Madeline Roman Catholic Church from 10am to 4pm. If you bring an operating gun, you receive \$200 bank card and an Ipad. For more information can be found at Queensda.org.

### **NOMINATIONS FOR SECRETARY/TREASURER**

The Chair read section XI of the Community Board By-Laws regarding vacancies on the Executive Board. The Chair announced that she will take nominations from the floor to replace the open elected executive board position for Secretary/Treasurer. One nomination was made for Jose Velez to fill the open position. Mr. Velez was asked if he would accept the nomination and he agreed. Since there were no other nominations, the Chair asked for a motion and a Board hand vote to accept Jose Velez as Secretary /Treasurer. The vote was unanimous.

**PUBLIC SPEAKING** – The Chair opened the floor for public speaking. Four residents signed up to speak. All were recognized and heard. The Chair closed public speaking.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **COMMERATIVE COMMITTEE**

Betty Leon Chair of the committee reported that a virtual meeting was held on Monday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The agenda item for discussion was regarding a requested street renaming for Beach 46<sup>th</sup> Street between Beach Channel Drive and Rockaway Beach Blvd. to be renamed "Steve Cooper Way".

At this meeting only committee members were allowed to speak, ask questions and comment. The meeting began with the reading of the following documents:

1. Letter written by Janet Rashes (435 E. 14<sup>th</sup> St., Apt 4c, NYC 10009), his partner of 33 years and talked about the fact that Steve Cooper lived on

Beach 46<sup>th</sup> Street for most of his life. He was a member of CB 14 for over 30 years, and the President of Frank Avenue Civic Association for over 30 years. The letter also talked about his accomplishments, such as his involvement in the Closing of the Edgemere Landfills and the fact that he worked with the Bayswater Civic Association, Beachside Bungalow Association and other associations on the Peninsula. He was a strong advocate for the Edgemere Farm on Beach 45<sup>th</sup> Street and was often seen walking throughout the community distributing flyers for upcoming meetings.

2. Letter of support from Jacqueline Rogers, Vice President of Edgemere Community Civic Association (ECCA) was also read. The letter recognized Stephen's dedication, leadership and accomplishments and was in full support of the street renaming.

According to CB14 By-Laws, Article, and XX: Street Naming (4), also states the fact that the petition must have 75% of the residents on the block in favor of the proposed street renaming. Since this information was not presented to the committee, there were questions concerning this requirement. As of the date of the meeting, it was understood that less than 75% of the signatures were collected and promised that the required amount of 75% would be reached prior to the June 2021 board meeting. Because of claims of opposition to this street renaming, both Jonathan and Betty Leon independently visited the area. There are 19 homes on the block, 4 of the homes look abandoned, and 325 Beach 46 Street appears vacant with no lights and grass 2 feet high.

Since there was no quorum for the committee meeting and despite the lack of the above requirement, the Committee still wanted to support the street renaming and as a result made a **conditional recommendation of approval for the renaming with receipt of the petition** with 75% of resident signatures.

Jonathan Gaska advised that Community Board #14 office did receive a petition with the 75% of resident signature prior to this evening meeting and as with all street renaming request, a random sampling occurred by calling residents who signed petition to confirm their support.

Betty Leon made the motion for the Board to support the request of renaming Beach 46 Street between Beach Channel Drive and Rockaway Beach Blvd. to "Steve Cooper's Way". The motion was seconded by Denise Lopesti. The motion carried by a roll call vote of YES 24 and 4 Abstentions .

### **By-Laws-Update:**

The Chair reviewed the amendments to the By-Laws as proposed by Queens Borough President Donovan Richards. The updates/amendments include:

1. Set a certain time to hear from the public at each public meeting either in person or online and formalize a process for accepting public comments. (*It was noted we already have a set place on the agenda*).
2. Establishing nomination and election procedures. (*It was noted that this is already in our By-Laws*)
3. Require a video-live stream of every board meeting and accessible online archives of those recordings. (*All community boards seem to be in support of this – however the Borough President’s Office or the City Council would have to provide the budget for this to be accomplished.*)
4. Keep website updated. (*Jonathan Gaska, District Manager advised that he does not have the ability to update the website- current procedure is for CB office to complete a form with changes/additions and it must be submitted to NYC IT Department for completion*).
5. Update with requirement that all community board members must follow NYC rules in terms of equity treatment to everyone.

The committee expressed concerns with videotaping, privacy and the difficulty in conforming the By-Laws of all the Queens Community Boards because of the uniqueness of the Rockaway needs/population/demographics. In addition, the committee asked what the BP would provide to the boards in order to accomplish this “Reform Initiative”.

Meetings to amend By-Laws will be scheduled during the months of June and July.

### **LAND-USE COMMITTEE**

Al Moore, Chair of the Committee reported that a meeting was held on June 2, 2021. Mr. Moore stated that there were 5 agenda items to discuss and therefore public participation will take place at the Board meeting on June 8, 2021. The first agenda item for discussion was regarding:

- 1) **106-20 Rockaway Beach Blvd – Block 161178 – Lots 1, 50, 60, 65, 70**  
Rezoning – Zoning map amendment from a R5B/C2-3 to a M1-3 District to allow for a new 6 story Self Storage Facility with additional public parking. Attorneys Richard Lobel and Amanda Lannotti, representing their client gave a presentation on the rezoning issue.

Richard Lobel stated that the current R5B/C203 zoning has been in place since 1961 and allows for a 4 story building but not Self-Storage. The proposed building will be 135,000 square feet and 6 stories. The property is

located adjacent to the elevated subway and the sewer treatment plant. Approximately 2 years ago the applicant met with this committee and the local civic association (RBCA). At those meetings, there was no objection voiced but there was a request for the applicant to add public parking. The applicant has revised the building plan and has included 83 public parking spaces.

The applicant Dino Tomassetti is a long time Rockaway resident and has been building and managing self-storage facilities for 12 years in Westchester and New Jersey. He has owned this property since 2015. Industry research shows a significant demand for storage. Using the industry standard of a 3 miles radius, the census records show there are 56,271 people living within that 3-mile radius. Usually, a 4 to 7 square feet space is calculated as the needed storage space per person, but applicant used 5 square feet per person which shows a demand for 280,000 square feet for the 3-mile radius. The applicant will be creating 100,000 square feet of storage, which is 1/3 of industry demand. There will be 1,200 storage units of various sizes. There is currently a self-storage at Beach 88 Street that has capacity is 40,000 square feet and they are currently at capacity. So even with two self-storage facilities (total 140,000 square feet) it is well below the industry standard.

Victor Filletti, the architect on behalf of the applicant gave a review the building design, which is the following:

- 3 loading bays will on Beach 106 Street. On Rockaway Beach Blvd there will be an entrance on the west end of the building that will provide 6 auxiliary parking spaces for storage users.
- One level up and entrance to go one level down for the 83 public parking spaces. All storage units will be above flood plain.
- There will be 24-hour access to storage units. It has not yet been determined if the public parking will be 24 hours access or long-term leases.
- Prices have not yet been set for the parking.. Public parking was added as an amenity for the community that was requested by this committee and the Rockaway Beach Civic Assoc.

The Committee expressed concerns and asked questions such as the following:

- Vacant Property needs to be kept clean
- Jobs? 100 construction job which will take 18-24 months. There will be 6-10 full time jobs and will be local hiring.
- Cost of Storage? 10 x 10 unit (100 square feet) will cost \$200-\$250 a month

- When someone does not pay? Follow standard industry procedures: Contact leasee by phone – if no response, overlock to deny access which usually results in leasee working out a payment/plan.

After the discussions John Cori made a motion for the Committee to recommend supporting the zoning change from a R5B/C2-3 to a M1-3 District to allow for a new 6 story Self Storage Facility with additional parking. The motion was seconded by Brian Heffernan. The motion failed by committee vote of 4 Yes, 2 No, 2 Abstain.

John Cori made the motion for the Board to support the zoning change from a R5B/C2-3 to a M1-3 District to allow for a new 6 story Self Storage Facility with additional parking. The motion was seconded by Brian Heffernan. The motion carried by a roll call vote of 20 YES, 5 NO and 3 ABSTAINED. Motion carried.

**2) Elevate Transit Zoning for Accessibility – Citywide text amendment– N210280-ZRY, Hallah Saleh – NYC DCP**

This is the second time the committee has reviewed this text amendment. This text amendment is not applicable to Community Board #14. It involves easement of commercial properties or residential R9 & R10 of which we have neither adjacent to subway stations that could provide easement for the installation of an elevator for accessibility. The Committee unanimously agreed not to vote on this item and recommends the Board do the same.

**3) Citywide Text Amendment – Hotel Text amendment – N210406ZRY Hallah Saleh – NYC DCP**

This Text amendment is to analyze and understand the potential impact of a citywide planning commission to create the requirement of a HOTEL SPECIAL Permit. Hallah Saleh advised that this text amendment has been updated to include a recovery proposal. The Committee unanimously agreed not to vote on this item and recommends the Board do the same.

**4) Health & Fitness Citywide Text Amendment – Hallah Saleh– NYC DCP**

This Text Amendment Zoning resolution is for all Gyms, Spas, Licensed Massage Therapy and other Health/Fitness facilities (Physical Culture) and to remove the requirement for such facilities to receive a Special Permit from Board of Standards & Appeal.

After a presentation by Hallah Saleh, Representing City Planning the Committee discussed that they were familiar since our recent approval of an up zoning on Beach 116 Street to allow for a gym. A motion by John Cori was made for the Committee to recommend supporting the Health & Fitness Citywide Text Amendment. Wanda Warden seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**FRESH (Healthy Food Program) update on N210380-ZRY City Text Amendment – Hallah Saleh-NYC DCP**

The Fresh program has been expanded throughout the city and in particular the eastern portion of Rockaway. This program promotes the development of FRESH supermarkets, which guarantees that 25% of the food stock must be fresh fruits & vegetables, meats & fish, daily. In exchange, the developer will be allow to build one additional square foot of residential space for every square foot of FRESH space. It must be new construction or the repurposing of an existing building (i.e. a warehouse converted to a supermarket). Parking requirements are: 1 space for every 400 square feet with a waiver of parking for development that would require 25 or less parking. This program is not available in R1 or R2.

Downtown Far Rock supermarket space would not be eligible for this since project already underway with approved plans and additional residential space granted under FRESH would require a redesign and re-permitting. John Cori made the motion for the Committee to support recommending FRESH Citywide Text Amendment. Wanda Warden the motion. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Sonia Moise made the motion for the Board to support N210380-ZRY Citywide text amendment for the FRESH Healthy Food Program update to expand the program to underserved city neighborhoods in the 5 boroughs and modify rules for Fresh Food stores. The motion was seconded by Wanda Warden. The motion carried unanimously by a hand vote in favor of the motion.

Respectfully Submitted By: M. Dunning