



*The City of New York*  
*Borough of Queens*

**Community Board 8**

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Chairperson, Martha Taylor

District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

Minutes of Community Board 8 Board Meeting held on Wednesday, December 13, 2017 at the Hillcrest Jewish Center, 183-02 Union Turnpike in Flushing, New York.

**Attendance:**

**Board Members Present:**

Dilafroz Ahmed, Jagir Singh Bains, Carolyn Baker-Brown, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Susan D. Cleary, Kenneth Cohen II, Florence Fisher, Kevin Forrestal, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Joshua Glikman, Marc A. Haken, Michael Hannibal, Robert Harris, Fakrul “Delwar” Islam, Steven Konigsberg, Paul S. Lazauskas, Bright Dae-Jung Limm, Mark J. Lefkof, Elke Maerz, Mary Maggio, Tamara Osherov, Simon Pelman, Frances Peterson, Seymour Schwartz, Douglas Sherman, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Rachele Van Arsdale, Jacob Weinberg and Albert Willingham.

**Board Members Absent:**

Dr. Allen J. Bennett, Monica Corbett, Maria DeInnocentiis, Allen Eisenstein, Carolann Foley, Howard A. Fried, Tami Hirsch, Mitch Lisker, Frank Magri, Jennifer Martin, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Charlton Rhee, Jesse Rosenbaum, Steven Sadofsky and Stanley Weinblatt.

**Others Present:**

Jessica Douglas representing Mayor Bill de Blasio, Facia Class representing Congresswoman Grace Meng, Ari Gershman representing Councilman Barry Grodenchik, Henry Yam representing Councilman Rory Lancman, Andrew Taranto representing State Senator Leroy Comrie, Anthony Lemma representing Assemblyman David Weprin, Daniel Blech representing Assemblyman Daniel Rosenthal, Marie Adam-Ovide, CB8 District Manager and Alma Karassavidis, CB8 staff member.

**Call to Order:**

Chairperson Martha Taylor called this Board Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**Public Participation:**

**John Amato** – Mr. Amato, CB8 resident, spoke about the potential for serious issues within the community regarding street trees. He stated that within the last 6 weeks in walking around the neighborhood he has reported 1,550 trees to NYC Parks via 311. Most of the updates for these complaints show that they have either not been addressed completely or closed and given C and D ratings by Forestry, which is the lowest priority. Mr. Amato stated that the specific locations must be looked at by the Queens Parks Commissioner. He requested help from the board in addressing this potentially dangerous situation. *(Chairperson Martha Taylor asked Mr. Amato to submit the list of locations to the Community Board for review).*

**William Buzzone** – Mr. Buzzone is the Treasurer of the 107<sup>th</sup> Precinct Community Council. He spoke on behalf of the Meals on Wheels Program, for which he is a substitute driver. The program has 4 Kosher and 6 non-Kosher routes with services available to seniors 60 and older. Hot meals are delivered 5 days a

week and 2 weekend meals. The program is administered through SNAP, telephone # (718) 454-2385. Informational flyers were left on the table.

**Tamara Osherov** – Ms. Osherov is a CB8 Board Member. She read a letter which she sent to Vicky Morales, Director of Community Boards, Queens Borough President’s Office explaining her account of what occurred at the CB8 general meeting on November 8, 2017. Ms. Osherov’s letter states that she announced the upcoming Queens Town Hall which was being organized by Empire Divisible. During her attempt to explain that Empire Divisible was about the IDC and mentioned that Senator Tony Avella was a member, she states that she was abruptly interrupted by Chairperson Martha Taylor saying that she could not proceed due to the political nature of her announcement. Ms. Osherov stated in her letter to Ms. Morales that she is of the understanding that anything can be spoken about during the public participation portion of the meeting and Ms. Morales agreed. She was informed after the November meeting by Chairperson Taylor that a letter was sent from Senator Avella to Queens Borough President Katz stating that he was not having a Town Hall nor was he attending this Town Hall. He claimed that she provided false information on his behalf and accused her of abusing her position as a CB8 Board Member and must be removed from the board. Ms. Osherov insists that these accusations are completely false and unwarranted. She informed the board that Chairperson Taylor agreed that Senator Avella’s letter was inaccurate and was supportive with regards to Ms. Osherov’s CB8 membership. She advised that she would be objecting to the approval of the Minutes from the November 8, 2017 Board Meeting.

*[Chairperson Martha Taylor granted additional speaking time to Ms. Osherov.]*

**Moses Ojeda** – Mr. Ojeda is Principal of Thomas Edison CTE High School. He was here to support the amazing students and incredible teachers who develop these students. He also mentioned that he wanted to inform the Community Board that he would always be available to help with solving any community issues. Mr. Ojeda thanked Marc Haken for taking him under his wing when he first became Principal and helping him to become a better leader in the community. He added that Mr. Haken educated him on the community and thanked him for giving back to the community where he grew up.

**Donna Thompson** – Ms. Thompson is a resident of Community Board 8. She has concerns about the homeless population in her community. Ms. Thompson stated that there is a “gang” of 4 homeless men that have taken over her neighborhood. She lives on GCP at Parsons Boulevard and states that she is regularly approached by these homeless individuals and she is fearful. She has contacted 911 on several occasions but has not received any help. Ms. Thompson advised that she has been to the 107<sup>th</sup> Precinct and also spoke to Rory Lancman. She states that these homeless men leave their carts and feces on neighbors’ front yards. This is an ongoing issue that happens every day. Ms. Thompson is trying to get a petition going to get rid of this “gang” of men who are panhandling.

**Ari Gershman representing Council Member Barry Grodenchik** – The City Council passed the Council Member’s legislation on the J-51 which is a property tax exemption and abatement for renovating residential apartment buildings and condos. This was passed on both City and State levels. It is retroactive to July 1, 2017 which is the current fiscal year. He wished everyone a Happy Holiday Season and Happy New Year on behalf of Council Member Grodenchik.

**Special Guest Speaker:**

**Chief David Barrere, NYPD Queens South** – Chief Barrere wanted to extend warm wishes to everyone during the Holiday Season. He introduced Sergeant Ashak of Community Affairs. He stated that after the meeting the Sergeant will speak to Ms. Thompson to see if they could help with the homeless issue she spoke about. Chief Barrere thanked the Community for working together with the NYPD in achieving another great year.

*Chairperson Martha Taylor instructed the resident, Donna Thompson to speak with the Sergeant after the meeting regarding the homeless issue.*

## **Salute to the Flag**

Chairperson Martha Taylor led the salute to the flag.

## **Approval of Minutes:**

Marc A. Haken made a motion to approve the minutes of November 8, 2017, seconded by Mark J. Lefkof.

Count in favor 32                      Opposed: 1                      Abstained: 0

## **Board Members who approved the minutes:**

Dilafroz Ahmed, Jagir Singh Bains, Carolyn Baker-Brown, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Susan D. Cleary, Kenneth Cohen II, Florence Fisher, Kevin Forrestal, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Marc A. Haken, Michael Hannibal, Robert Harris, Fakrul “Delwar” Islam, Steven Konigsberg, Paul S. Lazauskas, Bright Dae-Jung Limm, Mark J. Lefkof, Elke Maerz, Mary Maggio, Simon Pelman, Frances Peterson, Seymour Schwartz, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Rachele Van Arsdale, Jacob Weinberg and Albert Willingham.

## **Board Members who did not approve the minutes:**

Tamara Osherov

## **Guest Speaker:**

### **Mohammed Khan – Thomas Edison CTE High School: Student Shop in a Box Presentation –**

Mr. Khan thanked Community Board 8 for allowing them to be a part of this meeting and had the students introduce themselves to the community; Jaelan Scott, Elvin Valdez, Arwa Lokhandwala, Mariah Young and Kameza Harun. The students are part of the Model UN class at Thomas Edison CTE High School. He stated that their class represents student leadership and initiative. They prepare and participate in various conferences and debates throughout the year. During these conferences many issues that plague the world are discussed and they try to find real solutions. In order to find solutions, first they must identify the problem.

In the USA, there is an 83 percent graduation rate, however; 50 percent of these graduates are deficient for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce and careers. Thomas Edison CTE High School offers shop classes which include Mechanical Technology, Automotive, Computer Repairs and numerous other courses. Student learn skills that can be used and taken to the workforce. Upon completion of the courses, students take an industry recognized certification exam. These certifications can allow these student to enter the workforce immediately after graduation from high school. This is how Shop in a Box was created. The basic fundamentals were fit into boxes providing the materials and access to manuals that teaches them how to use the boxes. There is also a website where the users can log on and see how the boxes are used. The students presented the boxes and demonstrated how they could help the community.

The students brought 5 of the 9 available boxes to present at the meeting. Some of the courses available with the Shop in a Box Program are:

- *Mechanical Technology* – The essentials of architecture come to you in this box, designed to introduce users to the possibilities of mechanical technology careers. Users will build a house out of balsa wood while learning key skills in design.
- *Water Filtration* – Access to clean water is an international problem, one which the box hopes to alleviate. Two containers, a hose, a filter, and clean water to those who need.
- *Commercial Arts* – Providing not only a pathway to artistic success, but also the potential for art therapy with a focus on team building and mental health. These boxes have been sent to children in Haiti, Costa Rica and to elementary students in Coram, New York.

- *Medical Assisting* – The Medical Assisting Shop in a Box teaches how to provide basic health care like blood pressure readings, first aid and hand warming techniques.
- *A+ Computer Repair* – The A+ Computer Repair Shop in a Box is one designed to educate about the basics of computer building, and computer management. It provides the components and instructions required for computer assembly.

Numerous opportunities have opened up within the community to provide students with these programs. These programs will enrich Community Board 8 by giving students a means to express themselves, providing them with community engagement. There are 350,000 children in NYC between 16 and 24 who feel that they are disconnected. They either do not go to school or do not have jobs. These boxes will not only educate these children but will hopefully inspire them.

*The students invited any questions or discussion.*

**Marc A. Haken** – Can you tell us again where you have sent some of these boxes?

**Mohammed Khan** – These boxes have been sent to Coram Elementary School in Long Island. They have also been sent to Haiti, Costa Rica and North Carolina, which was the first school to purchase these boxes. The other boxes were also donated through previous donors. In fact there was a school in Haiti that was effected by the hurricane that used the Medical Assisting box to teach children. There was also another school in Costa Rica where 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders were using the boxes to illustrate how they felt and to express themselves.

**Rachele Van Arsdale** – What is some of the feedback that you have gotten from the schools and students? Did they have any suggestions on things you could fix or make better?

**Mohammed Khan** – Those who used the boxes loved them. We are working with the school in North Carolina to improve the A+ Computer Repair Shop in a Box, as well as a new box in development. Each of these boxes are still not at their final stage. There is always room for improvement. These boxes are student run. It is the ideas from the students and previous alumni as well as future students that help develop these boxes.

**Carolyn Baker-Brown** – Thanked the students for a wonderful presentation.

**Susan Cleary** – Has the school thought of reaching out to the Wounded Warriors Project with the art boxes? PTSD is greatly impacted by allowing them to express themselves.

**Mohammed Khan** – We have not currently reached out to Wounded Warrior Project but we are always open to new donors or participants that would like to purchase these boxes.

*Chairperson Martha Taylor congratulated the students on their impressive presentation on this excellent program and commended Mr. Ojeda for being the leader of this wonderful school. She acknowledged the presence of Queens Chronicle reporter, Ryan Brady. She invited him to take a photo of the students with their principal and teachers. (Members of the community applauded).*

**Mohammed Khan** – In conclusion, he asked that the community invest in these boxes. They can be implemented into the YMCA, local schools or other community programs. Each box has a suggested donation of \$250.00. They will help enrich the lives of young students as well as adults. Contact cards and flyers were left with the Community Board for anyone interested in donating.

#### **Chairperson's Report – Martha Taylor:**

- Chairperson Martha Taylor sent best wishes to Dr. Allen Bennett and Susie Tanenbaum, who are both recovering from surgery.
- Chairperson Martha Taylor stated that Public Participation is done by all Community Boards. Some have it at the beginning of the meeting, others have it at the end. We have decided not to do it at the end since nobody stays to listen. Public Participation is not

responded to. We hear what each person has to say. Then if later on, there are issues that happen to come up, our staff will be happy to talk to you about it. Tonight, Ms. Thompson has Chief Barrere to talk to about her issues.

- Chairperson Taylor responded to Tammy Osherov's comments during Public Participation. Ms. Osherov spoke with Vicky Morales, Director of Community Boards at the Queens Borough President's Office. Ms. Morales agreed that you can, if you want to waste everyone's time, read the telephone book for 2-3 minutes. However, there is a restriction which Ms. Morales and Chairperson Taylor agree on, which is that political issues may not be discussed during Public Participation. She stated that there have been elected officials who come to talk about what is going on in their district. That is not campaigning. Community Boards do not allow campaigning or candidates to speak at Community Board Meetings. She also advised that the minutes are recorded and if anyone feels that there is a discrepancy in the minutes, they are welcome to go to the Community Board office to listen to the tape. She added that the minutes that were transcribed were exactly what was recorded on the tape.

**Tammy Osherov** – I do remember at times that Bob Freidrich spoke...

**Chairperson Martha Taylor** – We shut him down immediately.

**Tammy Osherov** – I don't think so.

**Chairperson Martha Taylor** – Oh yes we did. Both Alvin and I did. The NYPD was here also.

**Tammy Osherov** – Also there was a flyer that stated what it was about.

**Chairperson Martha Taylor** – We understand that. When you began to explain it, it became political. That should be the end of the discussion on this.

*Chairperson Taylor added a Public Service Announcement regarding MTA service advising that during the week of Christmas through New Year's Day (12/25/17 through 1/1/18) the subway tunnel will be closed on the E and M lines. Alternatively use the F or the R line instead.*

**Ken Cohen II** – Mr. Cohen thanked the Community Board for the letter of support that was sent to Charter Communications. He stated that he has been getting notifications from some of his friends from other NYC Community Boards that there are discussions amongst leadership all across the city in reference to the strike.

**Tammy Osherov** – I am definitely in favor of that letter in support of the unions, but I have to ask if that is political?

**Chairperson Martha Taylor** – It is not political. We took a vote on something and the Executive Board approved that Ken would speak on the topic. He spoke a few months ago. He is just responding to the board and thanking us for writing a letter. That is not political.

**Tammy Osherov** – I did in fact vote in favor of the letter.

**Chairperson Martha Taylor** – Fine. It is not political. Can we just stop with this now, it's enough!

### **District Manager's Report, December 2017**

**DSNY** – It is now "Night Plow" season. Recycling is being collected on the 4 p.m. to midnight shift. For any missed collections, please contact us the morning after (or call 311). Sanitation continues to monitor Park Drive East and remove materials that have been illegally dumped in the area.

**DHS** - Hope Count will be on January 22<sup>nd</sup> from 10:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. and volunteers are needed to count the number of homeless individuals in New York City. To learn more about the Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) survey of New Yorkers sleeping unsheltered, visit [nyc.gov/hope](http://nyc.gov/hope) or call 311.

The issues brought forth at the 24<sup>th</sup> Council District Mayoral Town Hall are being addressed. DHS has contacted the complainants directly to address them.

**DEP** – Recently mailings were sent to homeowners regarding the water bill abatements. It was stated in error that homeowners are to contact DEP. The Department of Finance and HRA are the agencies that identify who should receive this abatement. DEP are given a list of those who are eligible (recipients of SCHE, DRE and HEAP etc.).

There were 179 complaints for our district filed with 311 in November. The top five complaints were: sewer back-ups (25), leaks (21), water main breaks (14), clogged catch basins (12), and noise - barking dogs (11).

**DOB** – The agency in collaboration with FDNY are going to transportation hubs to inform the public about illegal conversions.

The Department of Consumer Affairs licenses laundromats throughout the City. Originally, these establishments were given until December 31, 2017 to submit either a Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) or a Letter of No Objection (LNO) issued by the Department of Buildings to update their licenses. That deadline was extended to March 31, 2018. DOB already received 200 requests for LNOs for laundromats in Queens.

Recently, DCA has given the laundromats another option. They can now self-certify with the Department of Consumer Affairs.

**OEM** – There is an App for Notify NYC. You can download it and provide your information (i.e. zip code). You will receive information from the Office of Emergency Management about the zip code that you specify.

**DOH & MH** – They are encouraging New Yorkers to get a flu shot. They announced that new HIV cases are down by 15% compared to last year. They also informed us that DOH does not abate lead at NYCHA. They only provide guidance.

**DFTA** – The agency informed us that the welcoming center for the hurricane evacuees is still open. They receive approximately 40 individuals daily. Complaints for Access-a-Ride had a 50% increase.

**Parks** – District 8 is still without a Parks Manager; however, a decision will be made on December 18, 2017.

While the Capital Project is going on at Captain Tilly Park, there is no Parks personnel assigned. During that time, there was a homeless encampment. The situation has been resolved with the assistance of the NYPD, DHS and Breaking Ground. Services were provided to the homeless individuals and they are no longer there.

Phase I of the Cunningham Park Construction Project (the pathways of the core area) has been completed and accepted. A portion of the pathway is now open. Phase II (which includes adult fitness equipment, the picnic area etc.) is now scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2018.

At this time, the Christmas tree vendor is at Cunningham Park. He will be there until Christmas Day.

**Con Edison** – Please treat all wires that have fallen on the ground as live wires. Call 911 right away. The FDNY will respond and contact Con Edison.



*Allen Eisenstein, Jesse Rosenbaum, Steve Konigsberg, Bhitihara Fulton, Seymour Schwartz, Tammy Oshero, Stanley Weinblatt, Tami Hirsch, Charlton Rhee, Simon Pelman, Dr. Allen Bennett and Fakrul "Delwar" Islam.*

*Marie Adam-Ovide*

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*Chairperson Martha Taylor informed everyone that Susie Tanenbaum was unable to attend our meeting tonight as she is recovering from a medical issue. Vicky Morales was expected to be here to represent Borough President Melinda Katz, but was called away on some other business.*

**Committee Reports:**

**Bhitihara Martha Fulton, Parks Committee Chair** - Albert Mauro Playground Reconstruction Project Community Board 8 Parks Committee met on December 4, 2017 at the request of Meira Berkower, Director of Planning and Project Management, Queens Parks, to review a presentation for the redesign of the Albert Mauro Playground on Park Drive East. Ms. Berkower requesting an approval letter for the project. Also in attendance was James Mituzas, Design Director and Landscape Architect and Kusalee Vachananda, Project Manager.

Some of the main highlights of the presentation on the Albert Mauro Playground Reconstruction:

- Total Budget is \$5M. Funds were granted by Borough President Melinda Katz [\$4.2M in FY 2016] and Honorable City Council Member Rory Lancman, District 24 [\$800,000 in FY 2017].
- Albert Mauro Playground is part of the Flushing Meadows Corona Park separated by the Van Wyck Expressway.
- The comfort station is partially blocking the entrance of the play area and they will try to improve that.
- An inventory of the existing trees at the playground was conducted. Some of the trees will be removed due to poor condition and others will be removed due to design considerations.
- The Parks presentation plan was shown depicting how the playground would look after the re-design is completed.
  - The basketball courts will be re-constructed in the same place.
  - Benches will be added to the basketball courts.
  - Handball court will stay the same.
  - Fitness area will be bigger and geared with better equipment.
- The entry way is going to be less steep and accessible with hand rails, landings and seating around it.
- There will be a seating area near the comfort station as well.
- Currently there are 8 swings in the play area (one being ADA compliant). Two more swings will be installed for a total of 10 swings.
- There will be a musical instrument area including (babel drums and cajon drum).
- Proposed spray showers include: wall spray, wave (in wall), geyser and fountain spray etc.).
- The adult fitness area will have a combination unit of multi net, overhead ladder, vertical ladder, 7'6" height pull up bar, incline press and push up bars.
- A fence diagram showing the different heights of fences that are being proposed to be installed around the playground.
- Site furnishings include: concrete game table, picnic table, bottle filler, bike rack and public space receptacles.

A vote was taken and the Committee voted in favor of a letter being drafted in support of the plans for the redesign of the Albert Mauro Playground. Upon receipt of an approval letter they will submit a draft to the Public Design Commission. It will then be reviewed and approval will be granted for this project. Design should be completed by May 2018. After procurement is completed, they are looking to start construction by spring 2019. There will be some consideration, at a later time, whether to close the entire park at once and do the construction in one year or to do a two-phase construction, allowing half the playground to be open at one time.

**Susan Cleary** – If I remember correctly, at the Town Hall Meeting, Mayor di Blasio was putting the \$800,000.00 into the Willow Lake Park area and Council Member Lancman was putting \$1.7 million.

**Bhitihara Martha Fulton** – I am sure we could follow up on that.

*Chairperson Martha Taylor wished everyone Happy Holidays.*

**Adjournment**

Marc A. Haken made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 8:28 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Alma Karassavidis, CB8 staff  
December 27, 2017*