



Chairperson, Martha Taylor

The City of New York
Borough of Queens

Community Board 8

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

Minutes of Community Board 8 Board Meeting held on Wednesday, February 8, 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, Susan D. Cleary, Kenneth Cohen II, Monica Corbett, Maria DeInnocentiis, Carolann Foley, Kevin Forrestal, James Gallagher Jr., Joshua Glikman, Marc A. Haken, Michael Hannibal, Robert Harris, Tami Hirsch, Fakrul “Delwar” Islam, Bright Dae-Jung Limm, Mark J. Lefkof, Mitch Lisker, Mary Maggio, Frank Magri, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Tammy Osherov, Simon Pelman, Frances Peterson, Charlton Rhee, Steven Sadofky, Douglas Sherman, Harbachan Singh, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Jacob Weinberg, Stanley Weinblatt and Albert Willingham.

Board Members Absent:

Dr. Allen Bennett, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Allen Eisenstein, Florence Fisher, Howard A. Fried, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, Sylvia Hernandez, Steven Konigsberg, Paul S. Lazauskas, Elke Maerz, Jennifer Martin, Jesse Rosenbaum, Seymour Schwartz and Rachele Van Arsdale.

Others Present:

Susie Tanenbaum representing Borough President Melinda Katz, Ari Gershman representing Councilman Barry Grodenchik, Daniel Rosenthal representing Councilman Rory Lancman, Matt Bayley representing State Senator Tony Avella, Anthony Lemma representing Assemblyman David Weprin, Facia Class representing Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz, Marilla Li representing Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, Marie Adam-Ovide, CB8 District Manager and Jatnna Reyes, CB8 staff member.

Call to Order:

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

Public Participation:

Elizabeth Daniele – Ms. Daniele is a Caregiver Support Specialist from Sunnyside Community Services’ Care NYC. Sunnyside Community Services (SCS) is a multi-service, community-based, not-for-profit agency that provides programs for individuals of all ages. They support people who care for those with Alzheimer’s disease, demetia and serious health conditions. Caregiver Support Specialists provide reliable information and access to services including: respite services (in-home or adult day care), applying for Medicaid and other benefits, counseling with understanding professionals, peer support groups, wellness activities, cultural trips to take with your loved one and much more. To find out more about this program call: 718-906-0669 or email carenyc@scsny.org.

Dan Miner – Mr. Miner is from Forest Hills. He is a volunteer for 350 NYC, a climate change group. He mentioned that it was reported that 2016 was the warmest year in world average weather on record. 350 NYC has partnered with other groups to have a climate mobilization march on Saturday, April 29, 2017 in Washington, DC. For more information, please visit: www.350nyc.org.

Marc A. Haken – (CB8 Board Member & Youth, Education & Library Committee Chair) Mr. Haken announced that NYC Neighborhood Library Awards nomination period is now open from February 7th to March 13th. He encouraged everyone to nominate a local library for a chance to win up to \$20,000. Please visit: nyclibraryawards.org for more information. In addition, he invited everyone to attend the Borough President’s Black History month event on Thursday, February 16, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Helen Marshall Atrium located in Borough Hall. They will be awarding five \$1,000 scholarships to five high schools students from Queens. They will also be honoring outstanding community members from our area.

Mel Dozier – Mr. Dozier is a Powur partner. Powur is a solar technology company affiliated with Solar City. They install solar panels all across America. He encouraged everyone to discover the benefits of going solar. You can join the movement to connect the world to sustainable technologies and get paid. He invited everyone who was interested in this topic to speak to him after the meeting. For any questions, he can be reached at: 718-916-8795.

Ari Gershman – (Councilman Barry Grodenchik’s Chief of Staff) Mr. Gershman provided an update regarding the participatory budget progress that Councilman Barry Grodenchik is offering in District 23 again this year. The projects have been finalized for the ballot. The voting will take place in late March and early April for about 10 days. There will be an event at that time the projects will be presented to the community. The project presentation will take place in this district at the Fresh Meadows Library on March 13th at 6:00 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend!

Salute to the Flag

Chairperson Martha Taylor led the salute to the flag.

Approval of Minutes:

Mark J. Lefkof made a motion to approve the minutes of January 11, 2017, seconded by Michael Hannibal.

Count in favor 34 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0

Board Members who approved the minutes:

Dilafroz Ahmed, Jagir Singh Bains, Carolyn Baker-Brown, Susan D. Cleary, Kenneth Cohen II, Monica Corbett, Maria DeInnocentiis, Carolann Foley, Kevin Forrestal, James Gallagher Jr., Joshua Glikman, Marc A. Haken, Michael Hannibal, Robert Harris, Tami Hirsch, Fakrul “Delwar” Islam, Bright Dae-Jung Limm, Mark J. Lefkof, Mitch Lisker, Mary Maggio, Frank Magri, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Tammy Osherov, Simon Pelman, Frances Peterson, Charlton Rhee, Steven Sadofky, Douglas Sherman, Harbachan Singh, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Jacob Weinberg, Stanley Weinblatt and Albert Willingham.

Board Members who did not approve the minutes:

None

Chairperson Martha Taylor asked Stanley Weinblatt to introduce the Guest Speaker Kenneth Stewart, Customer Relations Director – NYC Transit.

Stanley Weinblatt – Mr. Weinblatt explained that he has been a client of Access-A-Ride for a long period of time. The last 7 years of his employment were successful due to the services provided for him to and from home. He introduced Mr. Stewart. Kenneth Stewart is the Director of Customer Relations for the Paratransit Division at MTA New York City Transit which oversees Access-A-Ride. The program provides transportation for 150,000 residents who are disabled and registered for its service. Kenneth and his staff inform and assist customers and those who advocate on their behalf by documenting and resolving issues. Staff members are responsible for public outreach events, publications, an accurate website, and working with the Paratransit Advisory Committee whose 15 members provide on-going advice. Feedback is also shared with colleagues and service providers to help improve operations.

Guest Speaker:

Kenneth Stewart, Customer Relations Director – NYC Transit – He explained that Access-A-Ride provides transportation for people with disabilities whose disability prevents their use of accessible mass transit, public bus, or subway service for some or all of their trips.

These are some of the main highlights of Access-A-Ride:

- Access-A-Ride (AAR) is part of the NYC Transit and MTA family.
- Access-A-Ride has over 150,000 customers and transport over 30,000 customers per day.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that individuals with disabilities who are unable to use accessible mass transit for some or all of their trips must be provided with paratransit.
- Access-A-Ride covers the entire City including Nassau County and Westchester.
- In 1990 Access-A-Ride was part of the Department of Transportation. After legislation the program was transferred over to NYC Transit and it has greatly expanded since then.
- Yearly they serve approximately 7 million rides to nearly 10 million customers including their guests and personal care attendants.
- Registering for Access-A-Ride is not based on age, although the average age of customers is between 70-75 years of age.
- They also provide “Feeder Service” which is a trip that is made partly by paratransit and partly by fixed-route bus or subway.
- AAR operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Private carriers under contract to NYC Transit provide this service by lift-equipped vans (40%), ramp-equipped vehicles (20%), or sedans (40%). In addition, service is provided by private taxis, livery and black car services (20%). AAR does not ensure a particular service or type of vehicle unless accessibility is mandatory.
- In Staten Island they have what they call intraborough service, where they have taxi services transporting customers to different locations.
- Funding is always an issue with AAR. Their yearly budget is almost half a billion dollars. It is always a challenge to get proper vehicles and improve the service.
- Whether you are applying or recertifying for AAR, you must call eligibility to schedule an appointment at an assessment center in the borough where you live. Appointments are scheduled Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information you can call: 877-337-2017. Option 5 is a line that is open 24/7 to help customers with any issues they may have. This number can be used to apply for AAR, recertify, reserve a trip, cancel a trip, to complaint or make suggestions about AAR.
- 80 -85% of people who apply for ARR are approved, if a person is denied, they can appeal .
- Pickup time is the time you wish AAR to arrive. Since AAR is a shared-ride service, you may be offered a pickup time that is up to an hour earlier or later than the time requested. They are always 95% on time for their pickup times and 90% of their drop-off times. Due to unforeseen traffic conditions there are always delays between pickup and drop-off times.
- AAR fares are the same as full fare on public transit. AAR Metrocards cannot be used to pay for Paratransit vehicle trips. AAR drivers do not provide change and do not accept roundtrip fares.
- They have taken initiatives to improve service. GPS service was installed last year in all vehicles to help drivers with directions. They have a command center that can view where the vehicles are and where they are going.
- They are encouraging all customers to have cell phones. Only 60% of the people who registered have cellphones. Over 95% of the general public have cellphones. Cell phone users can call eligibility and request that their cell phone number be entered into the manifest notes in their permanent record so that dispatchers can contact them before they leave.
- They are testing smart phone technology. This will allow an application for people with smart phones to be able to dial in and find out where the vehicle is and what kind of vehicle will pick them up.
- You must cancel same-day trips no later than two hours before your scheduled pickup time by calling travel services. Call reservations if you know one or two days in advance that you won't be taking your scheduled trip.

- Mr. Stewart stated that if any organization, centers or groups are interested in having presentations in the community about AAR, they can contact him to arrange one.
- He invited everyone to visit the main website: www.mta.info for more information on this service and other services provided by AAR. Also you can follow them on Twitter.

Mr. Stewart asked if the Board Members had any questions.

Susan Cleary –

You mentioned that sometimes customers miss their rides. Do you have the capability of billing their insurance company for their missed rides?

Answer: [Mr. Stewart] – We are trying to minimize missed connections. We’ve realize that sometimes it is the customers and sometimes it is us. If the customer doesn’t show, sometimes it is because they don’t feel well. This is why we encourage customers to cancel as soon as they can, at least two hours ahead of the trip if possible. Customers incurring excessive missed trips may be suspended for a reasonable period of time.

Marc A. Haken –

I have a large number of seniors within my development. You spoke about on-time percentages. What is the window for pickup time?

Answer: [Mr. Stewart] – There is a 30 minute window for AAR to pickup customers. If there is a pickup for 8:00 a.m. the pickup time can be from 8 to 8:30 a.m. If it delays more than 30 minutes, the cause can be traffic congestion.

I’ve been told that when someone is being picked up they have to be standing outside on the stoop. I was at a medical center and there was someone with a wheelchair and it was pouring rain. The AAR driver came and went because the customer wasn’t outside on the stoop. Is that true?

Answer: [Mr. Stewart] – It is not supposed to happen but sometimes it does. This is the real world, we don’t expect you to be outside at all times; however, the standard procedure is, if the driver pulls up and doesn’t see the customer they are supposed to get out of the vehicle go up to and inside the building or the entrance to try to make contact with the customer. If the driver does not see the customer they contact the dispatcher and they will try to contact the customer.

Tami Hirsch –

I understand that there is a time frame of half hour between the customer and the driver coming. If the driver doesn’t show within half hour, can the customer call a cab and AAR pay for it?

Answer: [Mr. Stewart] – A customer can always call our toll free number. We will tell them where the driver is. If the customer has an appointment or a destination that they need to arrive to on time and the driver doesn’t show up in appropriate time to get you to your destination, you will get authorization to take a taxi or car service. We will issue a reimbursement. The other option is we may have a floater vehicle available which we will send to pickup the customer.

James Gallagher Jr. –

Does AAR go to Northwell in Manhasset?

Answer: [Mr. Stewart] – Yes. Northwell is also a transfer point for destinations further into Nassau County.

Carolyn Baker-Brown – **I ride with AAR. I have a general concern about their service. 90% of my trips are route services. The major problem is that they don’t identify themselves. I call and they’ll give me a number and tell me what the car is supposed to look like. When the car arrives, they never have the number. They might tell me that a white Sedan is coming but a blue one shows up. One time a blue van shows up, another time it was an ambulette. They never identify themselves.**

Answer: [Mr. Stewart] – This is a concern that we are aware of. As of last week there are decals that are being put in the front and back of the vehicles. We are in compliance with the law. We are making observations on how to better our service. This is an issue that is being addressed. If you have any other issues in the near future, you can always contact us and we will assist you.

Marc A. Haken –

You are part of DOT. Does DoITT work on your website or do you have a separate section on the DOT website?

Answer: [Mr. Stewart] – As I said before. AAR program was part of DOT back in the early 1990’s but after legislation it was given to NYC Transit. We work with DOT on a number of issues regarding our service but our websites are separate. Our website is: www.mta.info.

Lastly, you mentioned black cars. I believe you said, if they have another guest, they have a wait, they have a confirmation, they can remove their black cars within a short X amount of time?

Answer: [Mr. Stewart] – That’s what some people have done and here is what we are doing to prevent that. First, they should never do that. If a vehicle doesn’t show up again, contact us or contact me to get the issue resolved.

Chairperson Martha Taylor thanked Mr. Stewart for his time and asked that he personally makes sure Board Member Carolyn Baker-Brown’s complaint is addressed.

Chairperson Martha Taylor made a couple of announcements:

- Chairperson Martha Taylor offered condolences to Florence Fisher who lost her husband Stanley Fisher. The funeral will be on Sunday, February 12, 2017 at the Sinai Chapel [162-05 Horace Harding Expressway] at 11:30 a.m.

District Manager’s Report, February 2017

DOB

We seem to have a proliferation of commercial space being used as house of worship. Usually, all that is needed to be in compliance is a Public Assembly Permit when it is a store front. We also have other types of illegal businesses that are being conducted in residential areas. These complaints are handled by the DOB’s Padlock Unit. The Department of Buildings is in dire need of additional inspectors for this unit to address this growing problem.

Human Resources Administration

The following are the caseload statistics for CB8Q for 2016:

Benefit:	Recipients:
Cash Assistance	3,391
SNAP	18,171
Medicaid	21,249
Total Medicaid Enrollees	29,269

Parks

The renovation at Utopia Playground will start February 13, 2017 and will continue through October 30th. Residents will still have access to the park; however, some locations will be fenced in while the work is in progress.

The Philharmonic will be back again this year. Open Run continues to be successful with about 50+ runners every Sunday at 9:00 a.m. The Boy Scouts will have an event in May – Camp Read [*More information to follow*]. The Department of Sanitation was planning a recycling event in April; however, it is being postponed to the fall.

City Planning

There is no cap in the height of structures in commercial overlays. The height is dictated by the sky exposure plane. When a property is set back farther on the lot, it allows for a higher building.

Mayor’s CAU

Our representative did reach out to Jordan Crest from HPD to ensure that we have representation and to have our issues with the property at Charlecote Ridge addressed.

HPD

Two representatives from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development attended our District Cabinet Meeting; however, they did not give us a full report as promised. They claim to have inspected and observed that the property on Charlecote Ridge had running water, hot water and heat. There are still no permits filed with the Department of Buildings for this work. DOB requested a copy of the report. It is clear that they did not retain a licensed master plumber nor electrician. This appears to be a work without permit violation.

They also mentioned that a joint inspection was planned. At the time of the meeting they couldn't tell us with which agency. As of today, the agency has not followed through on any of its promises.

NYC Commission on Human Rights

The agency now has a mobile unit that can go to the community to educate people about their rights. Our district has mostly one and two family dwellings and they do not fall under the purview of the NYCCHR; however, they have jurisdiction under certain circumstance. It is illegal to advertise for apartments and require only male or female tenants. It is illegal to advertise for an apartment and ask that those with children need not apply. They are looking to partner with Community Based Organization by tabling at their events or on their premises, as to educate the people who they serve.

DFTA

This month our representative from DFTA will go to the different senior centers to speak about scams. He will also offer them some tips about the winter (*i.e. putting calcium chloride on their sidewalks and walkways before a storm to make it easier to shovel*). He will also teach them how to properly reserve rides with Access-A-Ride.

Elected Official Reports

Assemblyman David Weprin is planning a town hall meeting for Thursday, March 23rd from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Location TBA.

State Senator Tony Avella is still working with DEP on getting an opt-out from the installation of bio-swales/rain gardens. He is also working on a cease and desist list for homeowners. This will prevent the realtors from sending advertisements to those who do not want to receive them.

Marie Adam-Ovide



Happy Birthday to Board Members: Kevin Forrestal, Paul Lazauskas and Bright Dae Limm.

During the District Manager's report Chairperson Martha Taylor made a comment on the conditions of 84-38 Charlecote Ridge. In anticipation of the snow storm that is expected for tomorrow there is a man squatting in this property. HPD has not ensured the Community Board of anything as far as safety of this house. He does not have heat or hot water. It is a disgrace!

Borough President's Representative – Susie Tanenbaum

- Ms. Tanenbaum offered condolences on behalf of Borough President Katz to Florence Fisher for her loss.
- She thanked Community Board 8 Members and everyone from the community who attended Borough President's State of the Borough on January 27th. These are some of the highlights of the State of the Borough:
 - Borough president Katz talked about accomplishments, challenges and opportunities. She called for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to return it's field office to Queens. From 2012-2015,

that field office was in Long Island City. They had a major flood and the office was moved to 26 Federal Plaza. Borough President Katz along with Congress Member Meeks is hoping for that office to be opened in the Federal Building in Jamaica, Queens. She will be advocating for that so that immigrants in our borough can apply for Citizenship more easily.

- She recommends expanding the vision for the great development at Willets Point, so that it includes options that are good for our community.

- She endorsed the proposed \$400M expansion of Resorts World Casino.

- She called for all self-projects in the City to go to a mandated public review process so that communities become aware of proposed hotels.

- She also mentioned that the City should go in parts that are specially designed for senior citizens in mind or at least have components that are more user friendly for seniors.

- Ms. Tanenbaum informed us that Borough President Katz received a courtesy visit from Ambassador Dani Dayan who is the Consul General of Israel in New York as of August 2016. He was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina and immigrated to Israel. He is the first Latino to serve as Consul General. He is interested in meeting all of our diverse communities. He will be coming back and Borough President will be get him to know our communities and also to look into economic development opportunities.
- On behalf of Borough President Katz she invited everyone to attend two events that are happening this month. The first event is organized by their African American Heritage Committee. The 2017 Black History Month Celebration on Thursday, February 16, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Helen Marshall Cultural Center at Queens Borough Hall. Awarding student scholars and recognizing outstanding community members. She acknowledged Board Members Harbachan Singh and Marc A. Haken for being long time members of the African American Heritage Committee.
- Borough President Katz will be having her first Lunar New Year celebration on Monday, February 27, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Helen Marshall Cultural Center at Queens Borough Hall. Winners of the Borough President's Lunar New Year Photo Contest will be presented. Light refreshments will be served. Space is limited and RSVP is required.

Committee Reports:

Capital & Expense Budget, Response to Mayor's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2018

Marc A. Haken, Budget Director:

The Budget Committee met regarding the response to the Mayor's 2018 Preliminary Budget. In the Board Member packet is the letter that will be sent to the Mayor. It does not require a vote. DM Adam-Ovide has a list of questions that she has already given to the appropriate agencies and we are awaiting their replies.

Mark J. Iefkof made a motion to accept the draft from Chairperson Martha Taylor in regards to our Budget requests, seconded by Carolann Foley.

Budget Director Marc A. Haken took a hand count for all those in favor of accepting the draft.

Count in favor 34 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0

The motion was passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Carolann Foley made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 8:35 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jatna Reyes, CB8 staff
February 16, 2017*