



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, December 14, 2016 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, Dr. Allen Bennett, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Susan D. Cleary, Kenneth Cohen II, Monica Corbett, Maria Deinnocentiis, Allen Eisenstein, Florence Fisher, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., Michael Hannibal, Robert Harris, Sylvia Hernandez, Tami Hirsch, Fakrul “Delwar” Islam, Steven Konigsberg, Mark J. Lefkof, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Mary Maggio, Jennifer Martin, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Tammy Osherov, Frances Peterson, Charlton Rhee, Jesse Rosenbaum, Seymour Schwartz, Douglas Sherman, Harbachan Singh, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin and Albert Willingham.

**Board Members Absent:**

Carolann Foley, Joshua Glikman, Marc A. Haken, Bright Dae-Jung Limm, Paul S. Lazauskas, Frank Magri, Simon Pelman, Steven Sadofsky, Rachele Van Arsdale, Jacob Weinberg and Stanley Weinblatt.

**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, Andrew Taranto representing State Senator Leroy Comrie, Muhammed Rahman representing Assemblyman David Weprin, Marilla Li representing Assembly Member Nily Rozic, Honorable Andrew Hevesi, NYS Assembly Member, Officer Pete Capozzi of the NYPD 107<sup>th</sup> Precinct, 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.

*Chairperson Taylor changed to the order of the Agenda to accommodate Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi. She announced that Public Participation will follow after the presentation.*

**Chairperson Taylor stated that Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi introduced legislation into New York State Legislature to address the homeless crisis. She invited Assembly Member Hevesi to make his presentation. (Hard copies of the PowerPoint presentation were made available).**

**NYS Assembly Member – Andrew Hevesi**

- We are in the worst homeless crisis since the Great Depression.
- NYC shelters have over 60,000 homeless individuals.
- More than 80,000 households are on the brink of homelessness Statewide.
- Inadequate Shelter Allowances + Lack of Rent Supplements = Exploding Homeless Crisis

Assemblyman Hevesi stated that there is consternation with Mayor de Blasio for his proposals to put shelters in our communities. He explained that the Mayor is under a legal “band-aid” to shelter the homeless. If he did not shelter the vast number of people who are homeless, he would be violating the law. Assemblyman Hevesi is working with the Coalition for the Homeless, The Legal Aid Society and the Empire Justice Center on this proposal which will assist Mayor de Blasio with the NYC homeless crisis.

*(The following is a brief summary of Assembly Member Hevesi’s presentation):*

**Home Stability Support (HSS) is the Solution –**

- ❖ New statewide rent supplement for families and individuals who are on Public Assistance and facing eviction, homelessness, or loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous conditions.
- ❖ HSS will replace all existing optional rent supplement.
- ❖ HSS will save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.
- ❖ HSS would save \$27,236 per household of three (3) per year and \$16,060 per individual per year in comparison to temporary housing (current cost for shelter).

**Three areas of savings:**

1. *Reduced shelter utilization.*
2. *Other homeless service cost savings.*
3. *Prevention of future evictions.*

**Key Components of Home Stability Support –**

- HSS will be 100% Federally and State-funded, using *ZERO* City tax dollars.
- The first 5 years of benefits for anyone on Public Assistance will be paid by the Federal Govt.
- HSS will bridge the difference between shelter allowance and 85% of the local Fair Market Rent.
- Roughly 80,000 households would be eligible.
- HSS will include a one-year transitional benefit for households that increase their earnings enough to leave public assistance.
- Landlords will not be required to take tenants to housing court in order for tenants to qualify for HSS.
- HSS will include a differential for housing that does not include heat in the monthly rent.

The purpose of this proposal is to get the State to step up and pay its fair share. Within the next couple of weeks, Assembly Member Hevesi advised that he will be releasing a letter to the Governor signed by an overwhelming majority of Assembly Members, including Democrats and Republicans, urging him to put this into the final budget. He stated that Public Advocate Letitia James and 30 Council Members, as well as Borough President Katz are in favor of this proposal. Assembly Member Hevesi stated that other than this program, he has not heard of any other solution to the homeless crisis. He believes that this program is designed to reverse the trend of growing homelessness. If people are on the brink of homelessness, the program will keep them in their homes. People who are already homeless are given a chance to get out of the shelters. The majority of those people in shelters are working people who have jobs that cannot sustain them in [paying for] rent and food for their family. He believes that this is the right way to handle the homeless crisis; it is far cheaper and safer for families.

*Assembly Member Hevesi opened the floor for questions:*

**Susan Cleary –**

***On page 13, it states HSS will replace all existing optional rent supplement. Does that include rent stabilization and rent control?***

**Answer:** Absolutely not. They are not rent supplements. This does not go nowhere near rent stabilization and rent control.

**Mark J. Lefkof** –

*Are there landlords waiting to rent apartments at 85% of market value in the City of New York? I heard a report that it is costing \$600 per day to house the homeless in the City. Is this true?*

**Answer:** The \$600 per night did actually happen but it was an isolated incident. The City is consistently paying more than it should for hotels because they have no place to put the growing number of homeless and they are trying to comply with the law. They are struggling to handle the situation. As to your other question: *Are there landlords willing to do this?* There is not enough housing stock; we have an affordable housing crisis. This does not solve the problem. The Mayor and the Governor have separate plans to create affordable housing. Affordable housing is going to have to be created primarily because the census of NYC continues to grow. The landlords do not love the way the City currently runs rent supplement programs for a variety of reasons. One way to structure the program is to have the support that is created is not given to the Public Assistance participant but goes directly to the landlord. The landlords will be willing to do it at the lower price; however, in the City of NY, it is not going to be 85%. It will probably be 100%.

**Chairperson Martha Taylor** –

*As I understand it, this will keep people in their existing homes. So they are not looking for landlords to participate, is that right?*

**Answer:** It is both actually. First, it would keep the 80,000 who are in jeopardy of homelessness in their homes. They would not have to go anywhere. Second, it would give the people in shelters a chance to leave the shelter and be able to get into the housing market, which would cause the need for more affordable housing.

**Monica Corbett** –

*How does this differ from Section 8 housing?*

**Answer:** Not that much. However, the Section 8 program is a Federal program that is almost gone. It is stagnant. Certainly under the new administration, we aren't anticipating getting any more Section 8. This Home Stability Support only applies to people who live in private housing.

**Maria DeInnocentiis** –

*Is your program only awarded to the working poor?*

**Answer:** It is only for people who are on Public Assistance. In order to qualify for Public Assistance in NY State you have to work a 35 hour week. That is a Federal Government Mandate, with exceptions. Some of the exceptions are mental illness and/or disabilities; so there are some people receiving Public Assistance who don't work. However, the vast majority do work. The only qualification for us is to be on Public Assistance. The 80,000 people that are on the brink are the ones we are going to help first.

*My concern is that the landlords, knowing that the people living there are subsidized, will unscrupulously increase the rents so that they will get a bigger portion. What will be done to prevent this from happening?*

**Answer:** If the landlord raises the rent, he will only get up to the Fair Market Rent. The Fair Market Rent is set by the Federal Government, so landlords can raise themselves out of the program.

*In NYC we are experiencing gentrification. The working poor are being forced out of their homes into shelters because the landlords want to convert those buildings.*

**Answer:** The answer to that is to build more affordable housing. This program will attack the symptom, but will not solve the problem of rising rents and stagnant wages.

**Michael Hannibal** –

*How the HSS will impact the homeless children in NY. Do you have a number for that?*

**Answer:** Within all of the 80,000 households we are looking to target, we will get almost all of the 150,000 children.

***Are talking about NYC or NYS?***

**Answer:** NYC is the worst piece of the bigger NY State problem. The upstate cities; Rochester, Syracuse, Buffalo, etc., have some of the highest child poverty rates. Rochester is the fifth highest in the country, at over 50%. Syracuse and Binghamton and the others are right behind the 40% line. We are going after a statewide problem.

**Chairperson Martha Taylor asked what we can do to support this.**

Assembly Member Hevesi asked that we consider passing a resolution. He stated that he will send us the draft language and would be honored if we would support this. He asked everyone to inform as many people as possible and to visit the website at [www.homestabilitysupport.com](http://www.homestabilitysupport.com) where there is a petition to be signed and a lot more information about the program.

**Harbachan Singh –**

***Some hotels, for example: Pan Am (on Queens Blvd.) were not complying with regulations in relation to the cooking facilities. Are the present hotels being assigned all compliant? Do you have any statistics?***

**Answer:** Some of them are compliant and some are not. I can't quantify how many because it is an ever changing number. Every night they have different numbers of people coming in and they have to find them a place to sleep. Queens has been particularly hard-hit because we have airports and there are hotels near airports. This makes us more susceptible to the City Administration opening up shelters, which is unfair.

**Chairperson Martha Taylor –**

***That was a point that you made at the the Borough Board; that there are people coming here from other parts of the country because they know they will get help.***

**Answer:** It was reported a few years ago that people from out of state or out of the country were coming here to take advantage of New York's shelter system. Bloomberg would give them a bus ticket to send them back to where they came from. He actually went so far as giving someone plane tickets and sent them back to Europe. However, in speaking with the Coalition for the Homeless, they stated that according to HRA, in the Fiscal Year 2016 there were only 54 households in NYC shelters from out of state, out of 60,000.

**James Gallagher Jr. –**

***Does this apply to people who are receiving SSI?***

**Answer:** If they are on Public Assistance.

**Florence Fisher –**

***Do the landlords that participate get tax breaks?***

**Answer:** No. There is no break for the landlord, except that they know that their rent is going to get paid. They will be getting paid directly by the NYC/NY State on time.

*Chairperson Taylor asked for a motion to support the Home Stability Support Program.*

Dr. Allen Bennett made a motion that CB8 support the HSS (*Home Stability Support*) program, seconded by Mark J. Lefkof.

**Chairperson Taylor took a hand count on the motion to support the Home Stability Support Program.**

Count in favor 38                      Opposed: 0                      Abstained: 0

**The motion passed unanimously**

Assembly Member Hevesi thanked everyone for the support and stated that he would send us the draft of the resolution. He wished Happy Holidays to all.

**Public Participation:**

**Susan Cleary** – (CB8 Board Member) Ms. Cleary made a statement wishing everyone Happy Holidays. “*Not everyone celebrates a holiday at this time of year but I would like to wish you all a Happy Holiday season no matter the holiday you celebrate. Our holidays started by marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan and ended with Eid-al-Adha in September. Now as we bring this holiday season to an end we celebrate Christmas, Chanukah and Kwanzaa. My wish to you is to be happy and be kind to each other.*”

**Kevin Forrestal** – (CB8 Board Member/President, Queens Civic Congress) Mr. Forrestal reported on a meeting he attended for the NYC Council Committee on Governmental Operations, where there was a presentation and discussion about 10 (ten) bills pertaining to the BSA (*Board of Standards and Appeals*). He stated that a large number of the bills were endorsed by the BSA. One of the bills deals with applicants filing incorrect or negligent plans; there would be a \$25,000 fine for providing false information. The bills refer to a series of issues regarding accountability, notifications of expired variances, etc. There is substantial possibility that improvements can be made with BSA applications. Mr. Forrestal testified with the Queens Civic Congress in support of the intent of those variance bills. He urged the Community Board to take a look into this subject to see if they would be interested in endorsing these bills.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Dr. Allen Bennett made a motion to approve the minutes of November 9, 2016, seconded by Mark J. Lefkof.

Count in favor 37                      Opposed: 0                      Abstained: 0

**Board Members who approved the minutes:**

Dilafroz Ahmed, Jagir Singh Bains, Carolyn Baker-Brown, Dr. Allen Bennett, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Susan D. Cleary, Kenneth Cohen II, Monica Corbett, Maria Deinnocentiis, Allen Eisenstein, Florence Fisher, Kevin Forrestal, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., Michael Hannibal, Robert Harris, Sylvia Hernandez, Tami Hirsch, Fakrul “Delwar” Islam, Steven Konigsberg, Mark J. Lefkof, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Mary Maggio, Jennifer Martin, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Tammy Oshero, Frances Peterson, Charlton Rhee, Jesse Rosenbaum, Seymour Schwartz, Douglas Sherman, Harbachan Singh, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin and Albert Willingham.

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

None

**Salute to the Flag**

Chairperson Martha Taylor led the salute to the flag.

**Chairperson Taylor introduced Jim Mituzis, NYC Parks Capital Projects and Nathan Harris, ABB Landscape Architects to deliver their presentation on Redwood Playground in Cunningham Park.**

**Guest Speakers:**

**Jim Mituzis – NYC Parks Capital Projects –**

**Nathan Harris – ABB Landscape Architects –**

Jim Mituzis, along with Nathan Harris addressed the Board and began their presentation on the redesign and improvement of Redwood Playground, which is the lower playground located in Cunningham Park on 193<sup>rd</sup> Street. The proposal included the following: [*A hard copy of the presentation is available at the CB8 office*]

- ADA compliant access from playground to the comfort station and upper playground.
- Addition of new play equipment with a focus on equipment for ages 2-5.
- Provide new water spray feature.
- Provide additional seating.
- Make 193<sup>rd</sup> Street playground entrance more welcoming.
- Improve landscape/planting within the playground.

**Chairperson Taylor commented that these improvements are desperately needed and she could not remember the last time this playground was renovated.**

*Mr. Mituzis replied that the last renovations were in 1999.*

*Chairperson Taylor opened the floor for questions:*

**Mark J. Lefkof –**

*What type of security, with regard to the fencing, will be in place? Will the children be able to move in and out easily? There could be a potential for danger if the children were able to run into traffic on 193<sup>rd</sup> Street. How secure will it be?*

**Answer:** The playground is completely fenced in.

*How high will the fence be? We want to prevent teenagers from coming in at Midnight to hang out in the playground.*

**Answer:** It will be four feet. As a safety feature we will be adding four lights that will remain on all night. Currently the site does not have any lighting.

*My concern is even though the park is theoretically closed, will people be able to enter the park at night?*

**Answer:** The parks, of course, all close at dusk. The fences are four (4) feet high. The NYPD will pass by and if they see someone in the park, they will know that they are not supposed to be there. Cunningham Park is a very open area.

*Will the lighting be focused into the playground so that it does not become a problem for the adjacent homeowners?*

**Answer:** It will be the park security lighting that we have for all of Cunningham Park on 12 foot poles. It will be within 30 feet diameter of the playground.

**Susan Cleary –**

*What is the projected budget and start time and completion?*

**Answer:** The projected budget is \$1.7M total and the final design is going to be transmitted in June 2017. After that the project goes into procurement which lasts about nine months. From there we bid out the job and we have a year of construction.

**Chairperson Martha Taylor –**

*When will it be completed?*

**Answer:** Fall 2018.

**Robert Harris** –

*Along 193<sup>rd</sup> Street there is a fence within a fence containing a green area. Will they tear down the middle fence? Also the area outside the playground?*

**Answer:** Yes, that middle fence will be removed. The area outside is not in the scope of this project but hopefully with the improvements within the playground some measures can be taken further.

**James Gallagher Jr.** –

*Will the children’s sprinkler have a sensor device so that when the children are not there, the water stops coming out?*

**Answer:** It has a push button so it is not on until the button is pushed.

*Chairperson Taylor asked if the Board’s approval was needed.*

*Mr. Mituzis replied that they would ask that the Community Board send a letter of support for this project.*

Mark J. Lefkof made a Motion for CB8 to approve the Redwood Playground Project, seconded by Susan Cleary.

**Chairperson Martha Taylor took a hand count on the motion to support the NYC Parks Redwood Playground Project**

Count in favor   38                        Opposed:   0                        Abstained:   0  

**The motion passed unanimously**

**District Manager’s Report, December 2016**

**DOB**

Community Board 8 continues to have a surge in the number of complaints for our district. We already surpassed the number of New Building (NB) and Alteration 1 (Alt1) applications that we’ve had in recent years. The number of applications for the borough of Queens has increased as well.

The DOB has received many requests from the elected officials and community boards about plumbing repairs that require a reconnection of gas service. The following steps must be followed:

- Hire a master plumber
- File a Limited Alteration Application (LAA)
- Once work is completed, the master plumber may either:
  - Request an inspection (*This can be done online.*)
  - Self-certify the work (*This takes longer*)
- Master plumbers must be the ones to notify the utility company for reconnection to occur.

The DOB is doing an awareness campaign on illegal conversions (*more information will follow*).

**DOT**

The Department of Transportation informed us that when foundation work is needed for street lights, that work cannot be done in the winter time. The work will be done in the spring (*i.e. 170<sup>th</sup> Street /Union Turnpike and 171<sup>st</sup> Street/ Union Turnpike lampposts*).

**Con Edison**

Con Edison wanted us to share with our residents that they do not call customers and ask them for information about their accounts. They already have that type of information. They do not contact customers on the telephone and offer them cost saving programs. Their workers always have I.D. and they are never in a rush to get into your home. You can call them and describe the person at your door. Customer service always have a picture of the Con Edison employee on their computer and will verify that the person is an employee.

**DEP**

Community Board 8 had an increase in noise complaints. They are mostly for the sirens of ambulances in the vicinity of Queens Hospital Center.

DEP’s goal is to decrease water consumption by 25 million gallons per day. This is in preparation for the repair of the Delaware Aqueduct. To reach that goal, they are giving funds of up to \$500,000 for water reuse work under the **Re-use Onsite Grant Program**. There will be a grant webinar, for those interested, scheduled for December 19, 2016 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Please register for the webinar by emailing [reusegrant@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:reusegrant@dep.nyc.gov).

**HRA**

The Department of Social Services is still trying to encourage seniors who qualify for SNAP (*aka food stamps*) to apply for the program. They would like the assistance of the clergy to reach those in need.

**DSNY**

The Sanitation Department continues to train their workers for the snow season. They are also preparing their equipment/tools.

**PARKS**

The Parks Department informed us that the work at Captain Tilly Park had to be delayed due to a dispute about the property lines with adjacent properties. The issue has been resolved; the fence has been erected and they are working there now.

The Christmas tree vendor is back at Cunningham Park for those interested in purchasing live trees. The TV show Homeland is being filmed at Cunningham Park as well.

**Mayor’s CAU**

CAU announced that the Mayor will have holiday parties for the Community Board Members and District Managers and staff. The first one was held on Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. The other one will be held on December 17<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Gracie Mansion.

**NYS Comptroller**

The agency is willing to come out to senior centers and other organizations to check if they have any unclaimed funds. She recommended checking every year, especially, if you have deceased relatives. Someone recovered a life insurance policy from a parent who has been deceased for over 10 years.

***Happy Birthday to Allen Eisenstein, Jesse Rosenbaum, Steve Konigsberg, Tami Hirsch, Tammy Oshero, Stanley Weinblatt, Seymour Schwartz, Bhitihara- Martha Fulton, Charlton Rhee, Dr. Allen Bennett and Delwar Islam.***

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### **Borough President's Representative – Susie Tanenbaum**

- Ms. Tanenbaum reported that on Tuesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, Borough President Melinda Katz, in conjunction with the Queens General Assembly hosted a multi-cultural holiday event called “Season of Peace”. This event was motivated by the rare occurrence that Christmas, Chanukah and Kwanzaa are going to overlap this year. BP Katz convened with community leaders to come together to deliver a message of peace, unity and diversity. Queens is the most multi-ethnic county in the U.S. and we serve as a model to the rest of the country and the world for a peaceful coexistence. The event featured a panel of presenters speaking about Kwanzaa, Chanukah and Christmas, as well as other faiths and community leaders representing the Hindu, Islam, Buddhist and Sikh communities. Our own Jagir Singh Bains was the presenter on Sikhism. Carolyn Baker-Brown shared a beautiful piece about Christmas. Tammy Osherov also attended the event representing CB8.
- Borough President Katz’ annual Menorah lighting will take place on Tuesday, December 27<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. on the front lawn of Queens Borough Hall, followed at 6:00 p.m. by the annual Kwanzaa celebration. Everyone is invited to both celebrations.
- Ms. Tanenbaum mentioned that Borough President Katz thanks Marc A. Haken and Harbachan Singh for being active members of the African American Heritage Committee and for all their hard work in organizing this year’s Kwanzaa celebration.
- Ms. Tanenbaum asked everyone to mark their calendar for the Borough President’s State of the Borough Address on Friday, January 27<sup>th</sup> at York College.
- She wished everyone a very Happy Holiday Season.

***Chairperson Taylor wished everyone Happy Holidays!***

### **Adjournment**

Michael Hannibal made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 8:38 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Alma Karassavidis, CB8 staff  
December 27, 2016*