



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, April 22, 2020 via [Zoom Webinar](#).

Attendance:

Board Members Present:

Jagir Singh Bains, Carolyn Baker-Brown, Edward Chung, Susan D. Cleary, Kenneth Cohen II, Maria DeInnocentiis, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Marc A. Haken, Michael Hannibal, Robert Harris, Tami Hirsch, Steven Konigsberg, Paul S. Lazauskas, Elke Maerz, Mary Maggio, Dilip Nath, Tamara Osherov, Simon Pelman, Wendy Phaff, Jesse Rosenbaum, Seymour Schwartz, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Mohammed Tohin, Jacob Weinberg, Stanley Weinblatt and Albert Willingham.

Board Members Absent:

Dilafroz Ahmed, Dr. Allen J. Bennett, Robert H. Block, Allen Eisenstein, Florence Fisher, Carolann Foley, Joshua Glikman, Fakrul “Delwar” Islam, Bright Dae-Jung Limm, Mitch Lisker, Frank Magri, Jennifer Martin, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Charlton Rhee, Douglas Sherman, Martha Taylor and Rachele Van Arsdale.

Others Present:

Susie Tanenbaum representing Acting Borough President Sharon Lee, Honorable Council Member Barry Grodenchik, Honorable Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, Honorable Council Member Rory Lancman, Jabeen Sheema representing State Senator John Liu, Daniel Blech representing Assemblyman Daniel Rosenthal, Michael Steigman from Down to Earth Markets, Marie Adam-Ovide, CB8 District Manager and Jatnna Reyes, CB8 Staff Member.

Call to Order:

3rd Vice-Chair Michael Hannibal called this Board Meeting to order at 7:46 p.m.

Elected Officials’ Announcements:

Honorable Councilman Rory Lancman – CM Lancman informed us that the City Council had their first virtual meeting today. He is excited to see that Community Board 8 is up and running. His office remains open (virtually), anyone can reach out via telephone: 719-217-4969 or email: rlancman@citycouncil.nyc.gov. They are also on social media: Facebook, Twitter, etc. They send an email blast with updates daily. To subscribe, you can call their office and provide your contact information. They’ve been having town halls virtually about education. Next week, they will have another one which will focus on senior citizens. All 51 Council Members are geared up to try to put their budget in shape and get it done by the June 30, 2020 deadline.

Honorable Councilman Barry Grodenchik – CM Grodenchik informed us that he is doing much better. His family is also doing well after going through the COVID-19 virus. They have been delivering food to the most vulnerable on the eastern part of his district. His office has been actively functioning during this crisis. They have been working hard to make sure everyone is fed. They have been working with Common Point and SNAP which delivery senior services throughout Eastern Queens. The Council and the Mayor added about \$200M in funding to feed individuals. He thanked all frontline workers for the magnificent job they are doing. He looks forward to meeting with everyone in person coming soon.

Jabeen Sheema on behalf of State Senator John Liu – Ms. Sheema informed us that Senator Liu’s office is open virtually to assist all constituents with any issues they may have. They can be contacted by telephone or email.

Honorable Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz – DA Katz thanked everyone who wished her well while she and her family were dealing with the COVID-19 virus. Everyone is doing well now. They are working at the DA’s office virtually. They are practicing the social distancing guidelines as mandated. They are doing hearings, arguments, etc. via Skype. Burglaries are up in commercial stores. Some numbers of certain crimes have gone down which are confusing (i.e. Domestic Violence). Most of these crimes go un-reported and it is suspected that it is on the rise now due to the circumstances we are in now. They have a lot of resources to help victims of domestic violence. A lot of non-for-profits are still running. They are shelters for victims of domestic violence. They have created a hotline to assist those victims. They can call: 718-286-4410. This hotline is available 7 days week, 24 hours a day. A live person is ready to assist anyone in need. If it is an immediate emergency, she advised that they call 911 first. A lot of hate crimes are being reported and most of them are due to the coronavirus. Riker’s Island went from 9,718 few years ago to now having 3, 921. They have let out about 100 people that were City sentenced at Riker’s. They are working on cases of those inmate who are requesting to be released due to the COVID-19 and those who have health related issues. She can be reached at: Katz@queensda.org.

Salute to the Flag

3rd Vice Chair Michael Hannibal led the salute to the flag. He asked that everyone stand in their own way (*an image of the salute to the flag was shown during screen sharing*).

Approval of Minutes:

Marc A. Haken made a motion to approve the minutes of March 11, 2020, seconded by Jacob Weinberg.

Count in favor: **31** Opposed: **0** Abstained: **0**

3rd Vice-Chair Michael Hannibal introduced Guest Speaker Michael Steigman, Market Operation Manager of Down to Earth Market.

Guest Speaker:

Michael Steigman – Mr. Steigman represents the Farmer’s Market at Cunningham Park. He informed that this year will be their fourth year having the market. These are some of the main highlights of her presentation:

- They will have the market this year beginning on Sunday, May 10, 2020.
- Due to the COVID-19, they will operate differently so that residents may purchase their groceries safely.
- Their original intention was to open the market with additional vendors. This may not be possible. They will have vendors 10 feet away from each other to practice social distancing guidelines as mandated.
- Social distancing will be practiced between shoppers while waiting in line.
- The main change they are implementing is an online marketplace for customers to shop with their vendors through an app in advance to the market. The app is called: Whatsgood Marketplace. This will enable shoppers to order ahead of time and reduce the in-person interaction at the market.
- They have rolled out this program in one of their Westchester locations. It has been working. They are implementing the use of the Whatsgood Marketplace ahead of time. They are also working on implementing the use of a time entry, where shoppers can pick a time when they can pick up their groceries.
- The market has increased in popularity over the years and the main concern of the residents have been limited parking. Perhaps, implementing time entry, will help alleviate this problem.

During the presentation, several concerns were raised by the Board Members. The following is a re-cap of the questions and the responses received:

Marc A. Haken – Are you going to be located at the same place as every year? There is only one entrance and exit at the parking lot right now.

Answer: [Mr. Steigman] – Our intention is to stay in the same place as always. They hope to expand the market a little bit towards the tennis courts.

He advised Mr. Steigman to get in contact with Gabe Echevarria, Parks Manager to have this well arranged ahead of time.

3rd Vice-Chair Michael Hannibal thanked Mr. Steigman for his presentation.

District Manager’s Report – April 2020

BUILDINGS

There are 1,300 DOB employees are working remotely. This includes the Intergovernmental Affairs’ office personnel. The workers in the office are not engaging with the public. There is a drop box at the office where applicants can submit paperwork. Most plan examiners are working from home. The Chief Plan Examiner is in the office and oversees workload and reviews the work of the plan examiners. There is a delay in getting audits done. Since the staff is working at home, there are issues with bandwidth, computer access (*only one computer at home with family sharing it use*).

As per the Governor’s Order only essential construction work can take place. They can repair a damaged roof; they can do plumbing and/or electrical work to provide essential services. Work that do not require permits with only one worker (i.e. a painter) can continue. If an applicant believes that a certain type of work is essential, he/she can reach out to DOB for permission. There is a \$10,000 penalty for disobeying this order. The agency is conducting sweeps to ensure compliance. They have gotten many requests from business owners who want to board up their establishments out of safety concerns.

TRANSPORTATION

There is a backlog with lampposts that need foundation work at the base. We have many complaints that have gone unresolved as they are waiting for the contractor to do the work. They are focusing on emergency conditions for repair. All traffic studies have stopped, as they would be accurate based on the current conditions. They are encouraging Community Boards to submit requests via webform or by email. Most of their office staff are working remotely; therefore, sending letters by regular mail will only delay any action.

SANITATION

We are no longer in night plow; however, the agency asks that residents continue to place all garbage and/or recycling out for collection the night before. If staffers need to stay home for self-quarantine, they must adjust with the situation. Collection could occur during different shifts.

Although we were prepared for the Chometz Burning stations, we could not follow through. This was due to the Governor’s order to maintain social distancing. We did arrange for sanitation to have the special collection for Passover on Wednesday, April 8, 2020. A flyer was sent about the special collection via email to the CB8 Members, elected officials, synagogues and civic associations.

DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING

All senior centers are closed. They changed from on-the-go meal distribution to home delivered meals. DFTA has been reaching out to the senior citizens to check on them. The senior centers should be doing that as well with their participants. DFTA is asking senior citizens to be wary of scams. DFTA and/or the senior centers will not contact any senior citizen to ask them for money or their account numbers.

QUEENS PUBLIC LIBRARY

As of March 16th, all Queens Public Library branches were closed. They have a digital platform and urge everyone, especially senior citizens to stay engaged. You can now apply for an electronic library card online. They have virtual programs, like Zumba for the whole family and story time for children etc. They have also extended the due date for their materials. They will to charge them a late fee. They can hold on to the materials until this health emergency ends. Please do not leave materials in front of the library.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

They submitted their stats for the month of March. The top complaints for March were leaks, sewer back-up, clogged catch basins and dirty water. Their Intergovernmental Affairs Staff is also working remotely.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

There are 400+ meal hubs where residents can pick up three meals a day. They are serving over 300,000 shelf stable meals a day to children and adults. They can receive three meals a day per person.

They are still distributing I-Pads so the students can learn remotely. Parents must can sign-up for each child by calling 718 – 935 5700 Option 5. As for High School applications there is no appeal process this year. They will have a waiting list.

NYC COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Their offices are closed, and they are teleworking. Any complaint should be directed to 311. The operator will put the resident in contact with a representative from the agency. Sadly, hey have seen an increase in the number of incidents against Asian Americans during the pandemic.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

As of March 16th, there has been an emergency rule against price gouging. It is illegal to increase prices to more than 10%. They are also encouraging people to contact 311 to file these complaints. They also reminded everyone of the NYC Sick Leave Law.

FIRE

The stats for March were not available yet. He anticipates that they will be very high, especially for medical emergencies. They received less calls for car accidents and gas leaks. They received 7,000 calls that were not emergencies and urges to call them only in cases of emergencies.

CON EDISON

They informed us that they are not disconnecting anyone’s utility service due to non-payment. They encourage the residents to contact them and make payment arrangements. Con Ed will not call resident and ask them to make payment over the telephone. These are scams. All payments over the telephone should be initiated by the customer. The customer should call the number listed on their bill for payment.

DHS/HRA

There was a teleconference held yesterday at 5:00 p.m. At that time, there were 107 confirmed cases in the shelter system. Among them: 29 were hospitalized, 54 were in isolation units, and 15 were self-isolated. They are doing their best to follow the CDC guidelines with the personal protection equipment (PPEs). They have had 9,000 engagements with the street homeless. They had many with symptoms who have been tested only 12 were sent to the hospital. There was an issue with homeless children being unable to join their peers in the virtual classrooms. The Department of Education was issuing tablets to students. Those tablets did not have Wi-Fi. New tablets with Wi-Fi were provided to the children in homeless shelter.

HRA has seen an increase in the number of applications for public assistance and food stamps. They are waiving recertification. They are waiving certain interviews. The constituent affairs Infoline is open and staffed. For elected officials and Community Boards, they can contact Erin Drinkwater. An email with the contact information will follow.

DM Adam-Ovide wished a Happy Birthday to all Board Members celebrating their birthdays this month.

Borough President’s Representative – Susie Tanenbaum

- Ms. Tanenbaum informed us of the loss of her beloved cousin due to the COVID-19. Her cousin was a Briarwood resident for over 50 years.
- On behalf of the Borough President’s Office, she hopes that anyone who has been personally affected by this plague is getting better and keeping safe.
- She informed us that yesterday afternoon Borough President Lee held a Virtual Interfaith Vigil. The purpose of the vigil was to mourn those who have been lost due to the COVID-19 virus, thank and recognize healthcare workers, essential workers and hear messages of hope from diverse faith leaders and elected officials. The vigil is posted on the Borough President’s website [www.queensbp.org/interfaithvigil] for those who missed it and are willing to see it. They had over 500 attendees.
- Borough President Lee has coordinated a partnership with Fresh Direct, the Queens Night Market and local small businesses to prepare and serve fresh packaged meals to healthcare workers and essential workers around the borough. This initiative is called: Fuel the Frontlines. They have accessed funding to continue this program for a few

weeks. The Borough President has also been delivering Personal protective Equipment (PPE) personally to essential workers.

- Today, the Borough President hosted a Virtual Job Recruiting Event. They had over 500 participants. Those willing to see the event can visit: www.queensbp.org/recruitmentfair.
- On April 30, 2020 at 6:00 p.m., the Queens Parent Advisory Board will be meeting remotely. You can access in livestream by visiting: www.queensbp.org/education.
- The Queens Complete Count Committee (QCCC) held its monthly meeting on April 7th. They had over 80 participants. She thanked Board Members, Kevin Forrestal and Michael Hannibal who serve on the QCCC for reporting to the CB the way they are transferring all their in-person outreach to virtual platforms.
- Community Board appointments will now begin on May 31, 2020. It has been moved from April 1st to this date. In other words, anyone who is currently serving, whose term was ending, you will now serve an additional 60 days and anyone who gets re-appointed will serve through March 31, 2022.
- She wished all those observing Ramadan a blessed holiday. She hopes that anyone who observed Easter, Passover and Baisakhi had peaceful holidays as well. Today is the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. She wished everyone a Happy Earth Day.

3rd Vice-Chair Michael Hannibal called on Mary Maggio, the Chair of the Community Board 8 Nominating Committee to begin the Nominations for Officers.

Mary Maggio – Ms. Maggio presented the Executive Board slate of nominations for officers of the board. In accordance with the By-Laws of CB8, the meeting in April is a nomination meeting. The procedure is that in April we nominate candidates for the various officers that are available. Then at the May meeting, there is a vote. In accordance with the By-Laws, I now open the floor to nominations.

Chairperson – Martha Taylor

Nominated by Harbachan Sing, seconded by Jacob Weinberg.

1st Vice Chair – Michael Hannibal

Nominated by Steven Konigsberg, seconded by Jesse Rosenbaum.

2nd Vice Chair – Seymour Schwartz

Nominated by Stanley Weinblatt, seconded by Paul Lazauskas.

3rd Vice Chair – Stanley Weinblatt

Nominated by Marc A. Haken, seconded by Steven Konigsberg.

Treasurer – Harbachan Singh

Nominated by Marc A. Haken, seconded by Jagir Singh Bains.

Secretary – Carolyn Baker-Brown

Nominated by Michael Hannibal, seconded by Marc A. Haken.

Mary Maggio closed nominations for all categories. Next month will be the vote for these candidates.

During the nominations, Board Member Marc A. Haken expressed condolences to Board Member Fakrul “Islam” Delwar who lost his father-in-law due to the COVID-19 virus.

DM Adam-Ovide – DM Adam-Ovide mentioned that Seymour Schwartz was also going to mention condolences for Board Member Fakrul “Islam” Delwar. Since he was unable to participate, he also was going to mention that Board Member Marc Haken donated lunch to the Police Officers of the 107th Precinct. He is also planning on doing so for

the officers of the Queens Borough South next week. This is being done out of gratitude for all our police officers who are on the front line and keeping everyone safe.

Scott Solomon – City Planning

- The agency is working remotely. They are running business as usual except for items that are subject to ULURP. They are still reviewing applications. They are reviewing documents for CEQR and Environmental Review. The ULURP clock has been frozen for now. There are no ULURP applications currently for CB8. In other Boards, if they have a ULURP application and you are on day 50, you’ll remain on day 50 until the frozen period resumes. They continue to review applications but not certify or make any determinations at this time. They are following the Executive Order from March 16, 2020. For any questions or concerns on zoning, he can be reached at: ssolomon@planning.nyc.gov.

Committee Reports:

Health Minute with Dr. Penny Stern, Health Committee Chair:

- Dr. Stern spoke about home safety during the COVID-19 for children. Now that children are home, parents are facing challenges like home schooling, less access to childcare.
- There are gaps between supervisions and a lot more stress. In terms of physical safety, taking precautions in small children, especially those between the age of 3 or more who are at risk of falling, choking hazards and burning.
- Important things about keeping kids safe while working from home include:
 - Keep them in your line of vision at all times
 - Keep children from climbing on furniture to prevent falls, specially near windows.
 - Medicine should always be locked away.
 - Keep laundry detergents out of sight, especially tide pods.
 - Try your best to start your day as you normally would (i.e. same waking up schedule, eating breakfast, etc.).
 - There are a lot of online activities to keep children engaged. The best way to keep your children calm, is to for you to be calmed as well.
- Many people are concerned about visiting hospitals at this time. Should you require medical attention for your child, call your pediatrician immediately, they will advise you as to what you need to do and if a visit to the emergency room is needed. here are gaps between supervisions and a lot more stress. In terms of physical safety, taking precautions in small children, especially those between the age of 3 or more who are at risk of falling, choking hazards and burning.

Adjournment

Marc A. Haken made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 8:56 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jatnna Reyes, CB8 staff
April 27, 2020*