



The City of New York
Borough of Queens



Chairperson, Martha Taylor

Community Board 8

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

Minutes of Community Board 8 Board Meeting held on Wednesday, February 13, 2019 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, Maria DeInnocentiis, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Marc A. Haken, Michael Hannibal, Robert Harris, Fakrul “Delwar” Islam, Steven Konigsberg, Paul S. Lazauskas, Bright Dae-Jung Limm, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Mary Maggio, Jennifer Martin, Dilip Nath, Tamara Osherov, Frances Peterson, Charlton Rhee, Jesse Rosenbaum, Douglas Sherman, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor and Jacob Weinberg.

Board Members Absent:

Dr. Allen J. Bennett, Edward Chung, Susan D. Cleary, Kenneth Cohen II, Monica Corbett, Allen Eisenstein, Florence Fisher, Carolann Foley, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, Joshua Glikman, Tami Hirsch, Frank Magri, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Simon Pelman, Seymour Schwartz, Mohammed Tohin, Rachele Van Arsdale, Stanley Weinblatt and Albert Willingham.

Others Present:

Facia Class representing Congresswoman Grace Meng, Aneta Golaszewski representing NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, Susie Tanenbaum representing Borough President Melinda Katz, Henry Yam representing Council Member Rory Lancman, Pierre Millien representing State Senator Leroy Comrie, Dylan Cepeda representing Assembly Member David Weprin, Daniel Blech representing Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal, Marilla Li representing Assembly Member Nily Rozic, Marie Adam-Ovide, CB8 District Manager and Jatna Reyes, CB8 Staff Member.

Call to Order:

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

Public Participation:

Phillip Robinson – Mr. Robinson spoke about Renewable Energy. Renewable energy is energy generated from natural resources such as sunlight, wind, rain, geothermal heat. By having solar energy you can benefit from reducing the cost of electric bills, improve your property value and reduce carbon emissions. He also spoke about the federal solar tax credit law that allows a taxpayer to claim a credit for 30 percent of qualified expenditures for a solar system that serves a dwelling unit, owned and used as a residence by the taxpayer.

Will Spisak – Mr. Spisak of Chhaya CDC spoke about the Amazon deal. Since the announcement of the Amazon deal, their clients and members have expressed concerns about what this will mean for rents, property taxes and transportation. They were opposed to Amazon in New York City. They believe the deal was bad for housing, small business and would be devastating for Queens.

Bright Limm – Mr. Limm reiterated what Mr. Spisak stated about the Amazon deal. They wanted the Community Board to do two things. First, get more informed about the effects of Amazon coming to NYC for workers’ wages, immigrant safety, and the local economy. He suggested that members read the report by Center for Popular Democracy called “Bad Deal”. It can be found on the following website: www.populardemocracy.org. Second, he asked that the Community Board write a resolution in opposition to the proposed deal.

Richard Legarda – Mr. Legarda, Holliswood resident requested that his proposal for 191st Street be approved. This would allow emergency vehicles to easily access Foothill Avenue and Clover Hill Road. He stated that he provided the Board with a copy of an email from the Police Department and a Real Estate agency stating that they are also in favor of this change.

Tiffany Eason – Ms. Eason, founder of “It’s For You” non-profit organization, announced an event for Saturday, February 23rd. The event is a clothes and closet drive to be held at Seed Capital Café located at 114-53 Farmers Boulevard. Drop-off times will be from 9:00 a.m. to Noon. Distribution of items will be from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information you can contact her at: 347-232-2385.

Mina Malik – Ms. Malik has been a prosecutor for over 20 years. She started her career as a criminal investigator for people who couldn’t afford an attorney in Washington D.C. After law school she decided to serve in Queens and joined the Queens District Attorney’s office as a prosecutor. She concentrated on special victim cases on matters ranging from restorative justice and diversion programs to juvenile justice and domestic violence. She also worked with Kemp Thompson, the late Brooklyn District Attorney. She established a Special Review Unit in Brooklyn as well.

Daniel Blech – Mr. Blech announced that on February 19th, Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal will host a Mobile Office event at the Briarwood Library [85-12 Main Street] from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Services offered will include: constituent concerns and questions, application assistance (STAR, SCRIE, SCHE, etc.), program eligibility and notary public.

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 January 9, 2019, seconded by Mary Maggio.

Count in favor 29 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0

Chairperson Martha Taylor modified the agenda and gave her report before introducing the Guest Speaker for the night.

Chairperson’s Report – Martha Taylor:

- The Community Board received ten (10) invitations from the Trustees of the Educational and Cultural Trust Fund of the Electrical Industry to its Seventy-First Annual Scholarship Award Breakfast. It will be held on Saturday, April 13th at 9:00 a.m. If anyone is interested in attending, they can see Marie after the meeting.
- Best wishes to Board Members, Stanley Weinblatt who is in the hospital and Dr. Allen Bennett who is still recuperating. Best wishes to Board Member Maria DeInnocentiis whose mother is in the hospital.
- She asked the members of the T-Building Committee to stay after the meeting to have a discussion.

Chairperson Martha Taylor introduced Guest Speaker Kathleen Cassino, Manager of Community Relations & Events at the U.S. Tennis Association (USTA) Billie Jean King National Tennis Center (NTC).

Guest Speaker:

Kathleen Cassino – Ms. Cassino gave a presentation on the USTA NTC Year End Recap for 2018. She explained that she will be back in the next coming months with more information on the upcoming events during the U.S. Open. These were some of the main highlights of her PowerPoint Presentation:

- They have a Newsletter that goes out 3 times a year about the Tennis Center’s all year round events.
- She spoke about the Alternative Classroom Environment for Students (ACES/PACES) program for 6-10 year old children. This program gives children the opportunity to visit the NTC and learn tennis. This program was also implemented for Board Members and few CB8 members participated last year. The next event will be held on April 26, 2019.
- Louis Armstrong Stadium construction is finally completed.
- The Ballperson Tryouts will be held in June. Date TBD.
- A slide with the dates of all meetings held throughout the year were presented.
- There will be a Job Fair in July at the Tennis Center. Date TBD. They expect to fill 7,000 jobs.
- USTA also hosts Queens Senior Day in conjunction with Queens Day.
- USTA offers thousands of complimentary concert tickets for Arthur Ashe Kids Day to local Queens-based organizations to distribute, free of charge, to their community members.
- For the fourth year in a row, ACEing Autism returned to the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center during the qualifying rounds of the U.S. Open. ACEing Autism clinics are also available at the NTC year round.
- Kew Gardens Library came up with this new initiative “Kew Gardens Job Fair” to help those seeking job opportunities. It was held last year and it had a great turn out.
- More information is available on their website: www.usta.com

Ms. Cassino opened the floor for questions from the Board Members.

Marc A. Haken – He stated that he is the Youth and Education Committee Chair of the Board. In reference to USTA’s facilities made available for graduations of schools, he asked if they were free a charge.

Answer: *[Ms. Cassino]* – There is not a fee for the rental. The only thing is, that it is in an outdoor court. We can talk about this after the meeting if you’ll like.

MAH - So, if it’s only on an outdoor court, how many schools took advantage of that?

Answer: *[Ms. Cassino]* – Since I have been at USTA, nobody.

MAH - There are over 30 schools in Community Board 8. What outreach have you make to each one of these schools that only one responded?

Answer: *[Ms. Cassino]* – I can get you the list for the PACES program and provide it to you.

Chairperson Martha Taylor thanked Ms. Cassino for her presentation.

District Manager’s Report, February 2019

HRA – The HRA has been encouraging applicants to file for benefits online for efficiency. Last year, 85% of SNAP applications were done online. About 40% of the Fair Hearings were also done online. There were 1.2 million residents who used their NYC I.D. The agency is now looking to have the cash assistance applications done online as well.

DFTA - We were informed that ICE agents appeared at a senior center recently to question the director and other staff. Commissioner Donna Corrado drafted a letter to be sent to all senior centers. The director and staff cannot stop ICE agents from going inside; however, they are not obligated to give any information regarding the participants. They are asked to call the agency's law department who will speak to the ICE agents.

DOB – Community Board 8 had a total of 2124 complaints for 2018 (including those filed directly through 311). Most of the complaints were for illegal conversions, followed by work without permits and work contrary to plans. The number of complaints for CB8 are average for Queens. For the complaints filed with the Community Board 66% of them resulted in violations. CB8 submitted the highest number of requests for audits to DOB in Queens last year by far.

There is a two-year moratorium on commercial signs. Any violations issued after December 28, 2017 will not have a DOB penalty. Business/property owners who received ECB penalties will be required to pay only 50% of the fine. Those who already paid the fine in full may apply for a refund for the over payment [50%]. Unfortunately, there are no plans from the Department of City Planning to update the commercial signage regulations.

When we asked, “*How will the City alert the business owners about the Moratorium?*” we were informed that it will be done by the Office of Small Business Services through a five-borough campaign.

FDNY – The statistics for the month of January for CB8 are as follows:

- 36 Structural fires (5 less than last year)
- 18 Non-structural fires (34 less than last year)
- No Suspicious fire (2 less than last year)
- 279 Non-medical emergencies (136 less than last year)

The total number of incidents was 630 (141 less than last year).

Please be mindful of children playing with fire and adults using space heaters for heating their homes.

HPD - The agency finally attended the District Service Cabinet after a hiatus of a year. The property at 76-47 173rd Street has been vacant for many years. It has been left open and unguarded. It received DOB violations. There was a court order given recently to have the property sealed. HPD is in the process of having the property sealed.

DEP – We have a new Queens's Coordinator for DEP. His name is Tommy Lin and he has experience working for other City agencies.

Parks – The comfort station at Captain Tilly Park will be renovated and made ADA compliant. They are also trying to have the door moved from the back to the front for safety purposes.

The agency is having issues with the students from neighboring schools who walk on the frozen pond afterschool. It is very dangerous to do so. The ice may break and students can fall in and drown. They have reached out to the 107th Precinct to monitor the area between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Contractors are currently working on the trail project at two locations:

- 73rd Avenue/210th Street and Clearview Expressway

- Francis Lewis Boulevard/Union Turnpike and the GCP

DDC – Update on QED1047. Some work is being done at night from 7:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. along 81st Avenue from 164th Street to 165th Street. This is to accommodate some of the businesses that require water use during the day.

NYS DOT – NYS Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration will have two public hearings later this month to provide information about the project for the Van Wyck Expressway capacity and access improvements to JFK Airport. The first one is scheduled for February 27th at 5:30 p.m. at the Robert Ross Johnson Family Life Center, and the other will be on February 28th at 4:00 p.m. at the Jamaica Performing Arts Center. Flyers are available on the table with more details.

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



Marie Adam-Ovide

Borough President’s Representative – Susan Tanenbaum

- Ms. Tanenbaum stated that this morning Borough President Katz delivered her annual keynote address at the Queens Chamber of Commerce breakfast. A number of Community Board 8 members were in attendance. The Chairperson and the District Manager were also in attendance. Borough President Katz spoke about economic growth which is occurring across the Borough. Her vision is to promote economic growth that benefits all communities. Residents who are eligible should enter apprenticeship programs so they become full pledge members of the unions. She thought this would be interesting for the Community Board since there is a high level of union membership on the Board. In other words, Borough President Katz is saying that, economic growth should begin with strengthening our unions.
- The Borough Board Budget Hearing has been scheduled for Wednesday, February 20th. This is an opportunity for community based organizations to request funding from the Borough President and the City Council Members. If anyone is interested in delivering testimony and are unable to attend, written testimony can be submitted online: www.queensbp.org. Click on Budget and follow the instructions.
- On Tuesday, February 26th at 6:00 p.m., Borough President Katz is having her annual Black History Month Celebration event. It will take place at the Helen Marshall Cultural Center. They will award student scholars and recognize outstanding community members.
- On Wednesday, February 27th at 6:00 p.m., Borough President Katz will host her annual Lunar New Year celebration and photo contest. It will also be held at the Helen Marshall Cultural Center.
- Last night, Borough President Katz launched her Queens Complete Count Committee. This committee will focus on messaging to different communities to urge people to fill out the census form to get an accurate count. They will be having various programs/events throughout the year. CB8 Board Members Kevin Forrestal and Michael Hannibal are part of this committee. Borough President Katz wants committee members to report to their organizations.

Chairperson Taylor asked Mr. Forrestal to give a brief summary of this.

Kevin Forrestal – Mr. Forrestal stated that there were three (3) presenters at the event. One was the Regional Director from the New York Census Bureau who went through the census process. They need help from organizations with job fairs. They are in the process of hiring at \$25/hr. The second presenter was from a private organization who spoke about security issues with computers. By June, they are hoping to have tools available that would identify what is, and what is not safe. The third presenter was the Technical Director of the Queens Library who is doing a lot of outreach and will have their facilities available to people at the time of the Census. They are also working on having various translators in different languages.

- Ms. Tanenbaum stated that Queens is the most diverse county in the U.S. When it comes to the Census, it does pose challenges such as language, immigration status etc. This is why the help of everyone is needed, to get the word out and make sure everyone is counted.
- Ms. Tanenbaum distributed the diversity calendar for 2019. It has the listing of about 150 Holiday celebrations/observances from different communities for our borough.

Committee Reports:

DEP/DSNY Committee – Kevin Forrestal, Committee Chair

- DSNY enforcement of illegal postings on utility poles – Mr. Forrestal stated that a meeting was held on January 23rd to discuss the lack of enforcement of illegal postings on utility poles throughout the District. They spoke about the process of enforcement. Once they file the complaint through the 311 system, it gets routed to the agency for inspection. Upon inspection, the responsible party of the illegal posting receives a warning letter giving them ten (10) days to correct the condition. If the postings aren't removed during that period, a summons is issued based on the number of posters that are out there. Most postings in our area are being addressed through Council Member Barry Grodenchik's office Wildcats organization.
- He will write a letter to the Mayor's Office and the Commissioner of the Department of Sanitation regarding the over salting of streets during the November 2018 snow storm. *The minutes of the meeting were attached to the Board Member packet for reference.*
- Letter regarding stray voltage damaging water service lines on 188th Street – Mr. Forrestal stated that we had some situations, for more than a year, on 188th Street, with a large number of homeowners who had water leaks. The rules are that the homeowner gets notified [by DEP], within 72 hours the homeowner must to hire a contractor and get it fixed at their own expense. The clusters of some of these leaks raised concerns with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). They investigated the issue and after a fair amount of time, they came to a conclusion that the problem with the corrosion of the water pipes was caused by Verizon. It appears that when Verizon disconnected the old copper wires and put in FIOS, the company didn't turn off the electrical current, this caused the pipes to burst. Since then, there are about thirty (30) houses that still have leaks. Homeowners have been advised [by others] not to report the leaks because they will be held responsible for the repairs.
- A letter has been drafted [included in the Board Member packets] for the suspension of the rules so that DEP would fix the pipes that have broken down. The homeowners that have suffered from this have paid thousands of dollars. Some modifications have to be made to the letter as they have received some new information from the agency about an exception.

Mr. Forrestal opened the floor for discussion.

Discussion:

Marc A. Haken – Just so that everyone understands, this is not the pipes that are on someone's lawn, these are the pipes that go to the water main into the street.

Answer: [Mr. Forrestal] – Yes, we didn't place them but they are saying we are responsible for it.

Robert Harris – You said that the City checked the pipes and the responsible people were Verizon. Why don't we [the homeowners] sue Verizon or perhaps the City does.

Answer: [Mr. Forrestal] – My thought is that the City should take ownership of this on a short term basis until something can be done on a long term basis. We would prefer this over having homeowners, in some cases elderly people, being held responsible for this. I think the City can take whatever questions we are submitting to DEP, to know if the City is planning to take legal action against Verizon to recoup the situation.

Mitch Lisker – How do you prove this, with just a pattern?

Answer: [Mr. Forrestal] – I am not. That is up to DEP. They had identify several areas. That is one of the questions: how do we know? This is the first step that. We have to do something.

Maria DeInnocentiis – Ms. DeInnocentiis thanked Mr. Forrestal and the Board for their efforts in putting this together. There is one homeowner who lives on the east side of 188th Street who has repaired his water line twice. As Kevin said, the water leak is on the streets. They refused to repair it the third time. DEP will not do it and the water has been running, gallons and gallons for over 8 months. She contacted DEP and they refused to fix it. The homeowner's water is not impacted, it is the City's water that is coming out of the street. We had that freezing rain, the sidewalks were frozen with all that water running. She stated that it was a horrible situation that the City refused to accept responsibility. Homeowners have hired an attorney and are ready to start a class action suit. They are asking for anyone who is interesting in joining the suit to do so. DEP should be repairing this and suing on behalf of the homeowners.

Kevin Forrestal – Mr. Forrestal stated that this will be a recourse they would have to follow. He would be surprised if the attorney is doing it pro-bono.

Howard A. Fried – Mr. Fried stated that a second letter will be going out to the Attorney General's Office about consumer advocacy investigation. It brings a bunch of issues about homeowners' rights. This letter will also assist into getting something done.

Answer: [Mr. Forrestal] – Mr. Forrestal stated that what he is seeking tonight here is approval to have the letter that was drafted to be sent and wait for results.

DM Adam-Ovide – DM Adam-Ovide stated that we received the section of the New York State Law on this. DEP informed us that they cannot use their funding to fix anything that benefits a private individual, like the water service line. This might be something that the State legislature would have to change for this particular situation.

Bright Limm – Mr. Limm stated that he remembers that this issue was brought up at one of the Transportation Committee meetings. He wanted to know if this is something that all agencies have agreed on.

Answer: [Mr. Forrestal] – Mr. Forrestal stated that they will pursue this and try to find a solution. He will be following up with us on other issues that will come up. This was also discussed at the Executive Committee meeting.

Marc A. Haken made a motion for the drafted letter to be sent to the Mayor's Office regarding the stray voltage damaging water service lines on 188th Street seconded by Maria DeInnocentiis.

A hand vote was taken.

Count in favor 28 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0

Committee Reports:

Transportation Committee & Area 7 Committee – Howard A. Fried, Area 7 Committee Chair

Holliswood Transportation/Traffic issues – Mr. Fried stated that a meeting was held on January 30th regarding the request to change the traffic direction on 191st Street from Hillside Avenue to Palo Alto Avenue and a speed bump installation on Foothill Avenue from 191st to 193rd Streets. Many residents of the area attended the meeting. There were fourteen (14) speakers. There was a six (6)/six (6) vote. It was suggested that the residents go back and find a better solution or have a better proposal to be presented at the next Transportation Committee Meeting (TCM) being held on March 7, 2019.

Jesse Rosenbaum, Transportation Committee Chair – Mr. Rosenbaum stated that there are several options which will be discussed at the next Holliswood Civic Association meeting on March 4, 2019. They will then give [*the committee*] a proposed solution to this problem. It will be discussed and reviewed at the next TCM.

Adjournment

Mary Maggio made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 8:43 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jatna Reyes, CB8 staff
February 20, 2019*