



Chairperson, Martha Taylor

The City of New York
Borough of Queens

Community Board 8

197-15 Hillside Avenue
Hollis, NY 11423-2126
Telephone: (718) 264-7895
Fax: (718) 264-7910
Qn08@cb.nyc.gov
www.nyc.gov/queenscb8



District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

Minutes of Community Board 8 Board Meeting held on Wednesday, January 20, 2021 via [Zoom Webinar](#).

Attendance:

Board Members Present:

Dilafroz Ahmed, Jagir Singh Bains, Heather Bennett-Idels, Carolyn Brown, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Susan D. Cleary, Kenneth Cohen II, Solomon Davydov, Maria DeInnocentiis, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., Wendy Gennaro, Marc A. Haken, Michael Hannibal, Tami Hirsch, Steven Konigsberg, Paul S. Lazauskas, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Mary Maggio, Jennifer Martin, David Mordukhaev, Dilip Nath, Alan Ong, Hersh Parekh, Simon Pelman, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Jesse Rosenbaum, Seymour Schwartz, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Jacob Weinberg and Albert Willingham.

Board Members Absent:

Allen Eisenstein, Florence Fisher, Carolann Foley, John Gebhard, Joshua Glikman, Frank Magri, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Tamara Osherov, Charlton Rhee, Douglas Sherman, and Mohammed Tohin.

Others Present:

Susie Tanenbaum representing Borough President Donovan Richards, Max Weprin representing Borough President Donovan Richards, Susan Seinfeld representing Honorable Council Member Barry Grodenchik, Henry Yam representing District 24, Ashley Lin representing Honorable State Senator John Liu, Anthony Lemma representing Honorable Assembly Member David Weprin, Honorable Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal, Muhammad Rahman representing Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, Anthony Iuliano from the Department of Buildings, Marie Adam-Ovide, CB8 District Manager and Izabela Szczepanska, CB8 Staff Member.

Call to Order:

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

Elected Officials' Announcements:

Susan Seinfeld representing Councilman Barry Grodenchik - The Councilman has arranged with the Department of Finance for several property tax information seminars throughout the month of February via zoom. The seminars have been successful, many constituents have attended. To attend the seminar, you need to register in advance. Flyers with more information were sent to CB8. Elected Officials wrote to the Mayor and the Governor telling them about the need for more vaccine sites in NE Queens. The City did run out of vaccines. If anybody that had appointments, they are being rescheduled for next week. There will be more vaccines on Tuesday, and anyone effected will be notified.

Honorable Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal - He thanked all the Board Members who joined them yesterday in Briarwood. They handed out PPE and shared information on ranked choice voting. They will be holding the same event next Monday, at 3:30 p.m. at Kissena Farms with Honorable Congresswoman Grace Meng. They are trying to inform voters about the ranked choice voting system. They just started the new legislative session; the Governor gave his financial briefing state of the budget. This year we are facing the 8-billion-dollar hole. That is from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 and April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 is expected to be \$15B dollars. The entire New York State budget is \$170B dollars. We are looking at a \$22 dollar

deficit mostly related to the downturn from COVID. The Biden Administration and the Senate. Have said they would do plan on helping states because New York State is not alone. In this session he has been appointed to becoming the Chair of the task force on Food Farm and Nutrition dealing a lot with food insecurity. He is excited to work on which has been a growing issue here locally. We have had local pantry open this past year, but they had been so swamped with demand that we are really trying to fight to make sure that we get them more resources this year.

Anthony Lemma representing Honorable Assembly Member David Weprin– Mr. Lemma announced that their office is working remotely. They are available by phone Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by email. Assembly Member Weprin has also wrote to the Governor about having more vaccine sites in NE Queens. Their office is expecting to get 4,000 masks delivered this week courtesy of Borough President Richards. They have been receiving a lot of calls regarding DOE’s attitude towards gifted and talented programs, middle school admissions and the test for the specialized high schools. Assembly Member Weprin has said that he is for the gifted and talented programs. He believes that instead of them being cancelled, they should be expanded. The middle school admissions are a system that has worked very well for the longest time and should continue. More opportunities should be given to these students to prepare for the tests. You have some of the greatest schools in NYC. The Assemblyman would like to see more specialized high schools in our area and in Queens.

Ashley Lin representing Honorable State Senator John Liu: She informed everyone that their office is open and fully functional. If you need assistance, please email, or call their office at: 718-765-6675.

Martha Taylor asked Maryann Giamarco to speak. Maryann Giammarco had technical difficulties. Her speaker was not working.

Department of Buildings – Anthony Iuliano: The Department of Buildings is working at a normal work pace. Most of the industries can file for jobs online even though they have limited office hours to the public and licensed professionals. People are filing for jobs. There are many abandoned buildings or buildings that are empty. They are asking the CB’s to report any properties that are abandoned or open and unguarded. This is a quality of life issue and they will address it. The 107th Precinct has reached out to DOB regarding a property on Midland Parkway. The property has two occupants that are squatters. The property owner knows that the two individuals are occupying the property, but they are not filing any trespassing complaints because they are maintaining the site. Since people are working remotely, they are not moving their cars. They are starting to park their vehicles on their properties. They are also doing work inside their homes that may require permits. If those conditions exist, please let their office know. Many restaurants are allowed outdoor dining. That is going to be permanent all year round. Some restaurants are doing building extensions abutting the building onto the sidewalk. This is something they cannot do. They are enforcing that and will send out inspectors. They will normally work in conjunction with DOT for those types of issues. The workload in 2019 was over 1,800 requests and in calendar year 2020 the workload is 1,685. They anticipate that number will increase close to 1,800.

Martha Taylor thanked Anthony Iuliano for the information.

Mohammad Rahman representing District Attorney Melinda Katz– Criminal courts remain open, for essential court operations, arraignments, and emergency applications. There has been a phishing scam that has been going on. Their office is aware, and it is a DMV scam text. If you get any type of text messages from the DMV, please disregard them. He will leave his contact information in the chat box if anyone has any other questions or concerns.

Darryl White – NYS Office of the Attorney General – Introduced himself as the Community Liaison for the Brooklyn/Queens regional office of the Attorney General. They are trying to make inroads into Queens, but it is difficult since they do not have an office set up. They were looking to do office hours and pop into senior centers or libraries but that is not the case during the pandemic. He would like to speak to Chairperson Taylor or DM

Adam-Ovide about doing a pop-up type of office. They would have office hours from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. They would have a code for zoom and would be able to talk about some of the issues that are going on in the CB8's area such as identity theft, scamming elderly, tenant harassment issues and housing issues.

Martha Taylor thanked Darryl White and asked he contact the Community Board 8 office to work something out.

Henry Yam representing former District 24 – He announced that this will be his last CB8 board meeting and will be leaving the office. He stated it has been an honor to be with this CB and work through issues together and be a part of this community.

Martha Taylor thanked Henry Yam and asked he keep in touch with the Community Board.

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 December 20, 2021, seconded by Paul Lazauskas.

Count in favor: **37** Opposed: **0** Abstained: **0**

Guest Speakers:

Janggo Mahmud – NYC Voting Rights (*screenshared the presentation*) – Ms. Mahmud gave a presentation on Ranked Choice Voting. These are some of the main highlights of her presentation:

- Ranked choice voting allows people to vote for multiple candidates, in order preference (1st choice, 2nd choice, 3rd choice, 4th choice, and 5th choice).
- The candidate with the majority of first choice votes wins. If no candidate gets a majority of first choice votes, then a new counting process begins. The candidate who has the least number of votes loses and the candidates voters' ballots are redistributed to their second choice.
- A sample ballot was shown and explained.
- A person does not have to use all five rankings. Their vote will still count if they only rank one or a couple candidates.
- They do have different languages available. If anyone has any other questions or concerns they can visit: www.rankthevoteny.org, email: info@rankthevoteny.org, call 212-691-6421.

During the presentation a few questions were asked here, is a recap of those questions:

Martha Taylor – We have a question from someone. He wants to know what happens when there is a tie?

Janggo Mahmud – Yes, there will always be a front runner who will win over 50%. These elimination rounds will continue until there is two candidates left.

Marie Adam-Ovide – If there is a tie, is it is done by a coin toss. It is in the New York State laws.

Paul Graziano, Urban Planner - Mr. Graziano presented speaker Corey Johnson's proposal to completely turn land use on its end and it is in the name of comprehensive planning. Speaker Corey Johnson has initiated a process to upend planning and zoning in NYC with zero outreach or notification to neighborhoods or CB's. The proposal will remove, not enhance, input from neighborhoods, CB's, and elected officials. These are some of the main highlights from the presentation:

- Appendix A – Showed the demographic per blocks. Different colors represented different ethnicities such as white to blue is white, green is Hispanic, pink to purple is Asian American, orange to brown is African American. Listed the 34 rezoning when they were done.
- He does not believe any data was collected and only assumptions were made.
- Appendix B – Showed single family zoning. Most cities have high percentages of their land area designated for single-family zonings. Maps were shown of single-family zonings in different states (pink represented single family homes). All Queens community boards were shown with the percentage of residential land.
- The CB's, neighborhoods, and elected officials are all going to lose power in the land use process.
- If this proposal goes through, they will create a new Director of the Office of Long-Term Planning. That director supersedes City Planning. City Planning will no longer be in the mix. That director will create scenarios for each CB, each CB will get three variations of what they can propose for a ten-year plan of development.

Discussion:

Martha Taylor – Will you answer that question Peter Kaufman had please.

Chat Question - Property values?

Paul Graziano –I cannot tell you. I am not an accessor. What I can tell you is that it is going to change the quality of life. When people buy single family homes they want to live in a single-family neighborhood. There are certain expectations that come with that. If you open this to multifamily development, you change the dynamics of those communities. We are an overwhelmingly homeowner portion of the city; 31% of the city are stakeholders and 69% are renters. It will radically change the property values. That is just my opinion.

Martha Taylor – What about Steve Konigsberg's question, is there a timetable?

Paul Graziano – From everything I heard this will get pushed to June. The word on the street is that since he dropped out of the mayor's race, he is trying to make this his legacy. He would like to influence the next council. He is putting up a limits test of this report and bill to incoming potential candidates. There are already 13 co-signers of this bill. There are 14 and they need 26 to pass it.

Martha Taylor – Only one sponsor is from Queens. Both are from high density areas.

Paul Graziano – Costa Constantinides is the only one. He is in a different category with a different alliance of council members in the council.

Chat Question - Will they require us to change our homes to two-family homes?

Paul Graziano - No, if they eliminate single family zoning and your area gets re-zoned to multi-family. Someone can purchase a home next to you and build whatever is allowed under the new zoning. They are not going to require people to change their zoning.

Chat Question - How does Johnson's plan with increased population account for the overcrowded Queens schools? Where will children go to school?

Paul Graziano - We have a long history in the City, building first and asking questions later. Infrastructure is supposed to be included in this planning process. It is all great until we have a budget crisis and the first thing that disappears is money for infrastructure. That is not going to be remedied. If there was something in the rules that said you cannot increase the zoning unless the infrastructure is in place that would be a different story. We know in many cases this infrastructure would never be built. This was all brought to the attention of CB8 one week ago. This all came out one month ago. This came out on December 17th.

Martha Taylor – Yes, we saw him last week.

Chat Question - Why was it not discussed at a Zoning Committee?

Paul Graziano - You would have to talk to your board about that. I am not sure.

Steve Konigsberg – Martha is there a response to that?

Martha Taylor– It was probably a mistake on my part. Except that we knew we were having this meeting tonight. The Zoning Committee can discuss it and should discuss it.

Steven Konigsberg – Are we not taking any action on this presentation tonight?

Martha Taylor – That is up to the Board. Do you want to take any action on it, or do you want to have a Zoning Committee meeting first?

Steve Konigsberg – The purpose of the item on the agenda was for what?

Martha Taylor – As a matter of discussion and explanation of it.

Paul Graziano – What I am asking the CB's to do if they believe that it is an existential threat is to write a resolution in opposition to this. CB13 has already done a draft.

Martha Taylor– Okay, but we would have to have a zoning committee meeting first before we could do that. It is not happening tomorrow. We have time to do that.

Paul Graziano – I think this is going to be pushed before June. I think it is extremely important that people are aware of this now and action is taken soon. Making sure the civics, homeowners and the people in the community know what is going on. Was the CB notified about this report?

Martha Taylor– No.

Steven Konigsberg - If Scott is here tonight. If he has any comment about it.

Paul Graziano – Scott may be here, but this did not come from Scott or the Department of City Planning (DCP). This came directly from the speaker.

Steven Konigsberg - I understand. Does this qualify as a ULURP?

Paul Graziano – In a typical land use process it usually comes from DCP under the ULURP process. This seems to have gone around the entire regular process going directly through the speaker. A similar proposal was brought forth during the charter revisions in 2019. This same idea was turned down by 75% of the vote. It seems to me like this is an end run around the public, CB's, and the entire process.

Martha Taylor– We have 83 people attending this meeting. Now that we have heard all of this from Paul, I would ask that the Zoning Committee meet and discuss it further. Look at all the information that Paul has given us and if you want to read the 54-page report you can do that as well. Then come back to us for some more discussion about where we might want to go with this.

Steven Konigsberg - I think that would be a great idea Martha, thank you. I want to thank Paul Graziano he did a fantastic presentation. I would advise you to come back once again at our soon to be scheduled zoning committee meeting for this issue. I would invite someone from the speaker's office to come in and give us a counter point of view as well as elected officials to weigh in on this. I would also like to hear from Scott and from anyone from his department. We need a consensus; I understand we only heard one part of this story tonight. Based upon what we have heard whether people would sound more in favor or if it is something they want to hear more about this program.

Paul Graziano – Is it possible to get a strong vote tonight on that?

Steven Konigsberg -That is what I am saying, a consensus, not a binding vote. A consensus if they are pleased or not on what they heard tonight.

Jesse Rosenbaum – A point of information if possible. Paul a tremendous amount of time and effort went into preparing this presentation. In an official capacity was that done as an individual for an agency? What is your background? What is your involvement in this?

Paul Graziano –The agency is me. I am not here representing anybody. I am here representing myself. I am here as someone who rezoned half your neighborhoods in your community basically pro-bono and most of NE and SE Queens and other large chunks of Queens for virtually almost nothing over a 10-year period. This is about me being concerned and being an advocate for protecting our neighborhoods. As someone who has started the entire process of getting our neighborhoods potentially rezoned over 20 years ago and seeing that come into fruition this threatens all of it. It threatens everything.

Martha Taylor– Steve how would you suggest we do this consensus?

Steven Konigsberg – Since we cannot set up a poll. I suppose the simplest way is those people who are in favor of hearing more information about the issues raised by Paul tonight at a zoning committee signify that they are interested or such that you would like to hear more about the proposals.

Marc A. Haken – I am a little confused Steve.

Steven Konigsberg – Martha this is your meeting, I cannot just answer people.

Marc A. Haken – Martha I am a little confused. Steve made a proposal of getting the consensus. A consensus to me means a roll call vote.

Martha Taylor– Okay, let’s do that.

Steven Konigsberg – Are you in favor of Planning Together then say yes. That will mean that people are not interested in further exploring the issues that Paul raised tonight. If you are against the Speaker’s Planning Together proposal that means that you will vote no and that means that we will have further zoning committee investigation of the proposal.

A roll call vote.

Count in favor 0 Opposed: 34 Abstained: 0

Seymour Schwartz – Martha, may I suggest that the zoning committee meeting meet before the next board meeting?

Martha Taylor – I would certainly suggest that. Yes, zoning committee meet before the next board meeting. Thank you, Paul you did a great job.

Paul Graziano – I already forwarded this to Martha a very summary of the actual bill. I can forward you the entire bill so you can read it. It is not that long, not that you want to read it, but you might want to read my summary.

Martha Taylor – Marie can you send Paul’s summary if you haven’t already done so.

Marie Adam-Ovide – I will.

Paul Graziano – Thank you so much everybody I will see you soon.

Chairperson’s Report – Martha Taylor:

- All CB’s are being audited. The first audit is about meeting notices and the other is to ensure that they comply with the NYC Equal Employment Opportunity Policy. We have already submitted all required documents.
- The Community Boards’ Fiscal Year 2021 Budget was \$252,423 which is lower than the previous year due to the fiscal crisis. The Boards were asked to trim an additional \$3,628 recently. We were able to do so since there is a hiring freeze and we have not been able to replace our part-timer Marleah DesRuisseaux who left in 2020. We objected to the proposed \$8,153 cut from the \$257,507 baseline budget to the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget. We intend to hire a replacement when things go back to normal and we have in person meeting and events so we can maintain quality service to our residents.
- We learned that Board Member Frank Magri has been sick the last few months, and we wish him a speedy recovery.

Discussion:

Marc A. Haken – Since we have lost someone in the office, and we cannot hire someone new. Is it possible if certain Board Members who have the time, volunteer and assist the office?

Martha Taylor – I do not know. I would need to discuss that with Marie. Thank you for suggesting it. Marie and I will discuss it.

District Manager’s Report, January 20, 2021

Sanitation

Due to curbside dining, sanitation is having difficulty cleaning some of the streets with the mechanical brooms. Superintendent Egher urges restaurants to do their part and clean-up that area. There is an issue with residents especially in Kew Gardens Hills not bundling/tying up their cardboard recycling. During inclement weather they are blown onto adjacent properties and onto the street. Additionally, residents may incur fines for doing so.

Department of Transportation

Restaurants can now sell pre-packaged food. The Open Store Front program has been extended until September 21, 2021.

Department of Buildings

Some restaurants have built structures for outdoor dining on the sidewalks due to the pandemic. A few restaurants have built permanent structures and that is not allowed. All structures should be temporary. Please file a complaint if you notice such structures. Additionally, the department has been stretched thin and it may take longer to inspect complaints.

Parks

We had an issue with overnight squatters at Captain Tilly Park and it has been addressed. The Q8 Parks manager attributes it to the diminished headcount. They are also having issues with homeless people at the Briarwood malls on Queens Blvd. between Hillside Avenue and Main Street.

Common Ground

Please call 311 to report sighting of homeless person (s) in the street during Code Blue - this means when the temperature falls below freezing between 4 p.m. and 8 a.m. anyone who is homeless will be sheltered.

Department of Environmental Protection

The Annual Poetry contest is underway. It is for youth from 2nd to 12th grade. Poetry can be submitted until March. For more information, please go to:
www.nyc.gov/dep/educationartandpoetry

Department of Design and Construction

Community Board 8 received complaints about unfinished rain gardens and that the locations were left unsafe in Kew Gardens Hills. DDC representatives stated that some locations need seeding which will be done in the spring. Others are infiltration basins that are waiting for concrete. These areas were not left unsafe by DDC. Their workers placed barricades and other safety barriers; however, residents are taking them away and using them to save parking spaces on the street.

Department of Homeless Services

We finally received the official notice of the proposed Briarwood shelter on January 11th. The letter was emailed to the full Board.

Happy Birthday to: Jagir Singh Bains, Kenneth Cohen II, Maria DeInnocentiis, Frank Magri, Mohammed Rahman, and Martha Taylor.



Marie Adam-Ovide

Borough President’s Representative – Susie Tanenbaum –She announced that she is going to be taking on some additional responsibilities at the Borough Presidents office. After 19 years, she will no longer be serving as constituent liaison to CB8. She thanked everyone for being so supportive of her. She thanked Chairperson Martha Taylor for always including her on the meeting agendas. She also thanked Marie for always being a wonderful District Manager. She stated that it was a pleasure to learn from everyone and collaborate with many of the Board members on projects. She introduced her successor who will be the next Borough President community liaison Max Weprin. She asked that everyone keeps in touch. She reminded everyone that Borough President Richards has many webinars and activities going on including Ranked Choice Voting trainings, PPE distributions and he is also making COVID-19 recovery a priority area of his administration. For more information visit: queensbp.org.

Max Weprin representing Borough President Donovan Richards – Thanked Susie Tannenbaum for the introduction. He stated that he won't be able to fill her shoes, but he will do his best. He thanked everyone for having him. He looks forward to working with everyone and will leave his contact information in the chat.

Chairperson Taylor thanked Max Weprin and looks forward to working with him. She stated that Susie will be truly missed and that it was a great pleasure working with her for this many year.

Committee Reports:

Health Minute with Dr. Penny Stern, Health Committee Chair: Dr. Stern announced that she received both doses of the vaccine and is very grateful to have been able to do that. She spoke about self-care during the pandemic. She provided tips on how to control stress levels. She stated that stress can cause your heart rate to increase, raise blood pressure, raise cordials levels, and have an impact on heart health. She emphasized the importance of exercise. She recommends 150 minutes each week about 30 minutes a day, five days a week. If your mobility is limited there are exercises that still can be done. She stated that nutrition is key, and it is important to have a balanced meal with fruits and vegetables. Salt intake needs to be monitored as it can increase blood pressure. Sleep is also an essential component of self-care. At least seven hours of sleep at night are needed. Lack of sleep hurts your immune system ability to work and during these days you need a well-functioning immune system. Last week a study came out in the society for cardiovascular geography and intervention and it reported that nearly 40% of Americans said they feel unsafe visiting a physician's office during the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 30% they did not have a routine visit since the pandemic started. If you need medical attention, make those appointments if you need them.

Adjournment

Marc A. Haken made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 9:06 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Izabela Szczepanska, CB8 staff
February 3, 2021*