



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, September 9, 2020 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, Maria DeInnocentiis, Allen Eisenstein, Florence Fisher, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Joshua Glikman, Marc A. Haken, Michael Hannibal, Tami Hirsch, Steven Konigsberg, Mitch Lisker, Mary Maggio, Jennifer Martin, David Mordukhaev, Dilip Nath, Alan Ong, Tamara Oshero, Hersh Parekh, Simon Pelman, Mohammad Rahman, Jesse Rosenbaum, Seymour Schwartz, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin and Albert Willingham.

Board Members Absent:

Kenneth Cohen II, Solomon Davydov, Carolann Foley, Robert Harris, Paul S. Lazauskas, Elke Maerz, Frank Magri, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Frances Peterson, Wendy Phaff, Charlton Rhee, Douglas Sherman and Jacob Weinberg.

Others Present:

Susie Tanenbaum representing Acting Borough President Sharon Lee, Honorable Council Member Barry Grodenchik, Davinder Singh representing Councilman Barry Grodenchik, Honorable Assembly Member David Weprin, Anthony Lemma representing Assemblyman David Weprin, Honorable State Senator John Liu, Ashley Lin representing State Senator John Liu, Daniel Blech representing Assemblyman Daniel Rosenthal, Mohammad Rahman representing Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, Marie Adam-Ovide, CB8 District Manager and Izabela Szczepanska, CB8 Staff Member.

Call to Order:

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

Salute to the Flag

Chairperson Martha Taylor led the salute to the flag.

Elected Officials' Announcements:

Honorable State Senator John Liu – John Liu welcomed everyone back from an unforgettable summer. He stated that there is a lot of work to do from the committee reports and zoning issues. He has enjoyed hearing from civic presidents as well as activists over the summertime. Civic Associations have been active and keeping an eye out on the city. His office continues to partner with CB8. He stated that the most urgent issue is the re-opening of schools next Wednesday and in person learning the following Monday. We are just trying to get things back to normal as much as it can be in the absence of a vaccine, while still getting our economic footing once again in NYS. From all the businesses that have been suffering. We rightfully let agencies have a breather. We have agencies that are coming back, and we need them back on the game. He is looking forward to working with everyone. If anyone has any questions or concerns, please call him at his office.

Honorable Assemblyman David Weprin – Assembly Member Weprin stated that everyone has been working around the clock during the pandemic. He informed everyone that they were supposed to start a lien sale on

September 4th which would include homeowners for unpaid property taxes and water charges. Senator Comrie introduced a bill to the Senate and he introduced a companion bill to the Assembly which would delay the lien sale for a year after the pandemic ends. They had a press conference with Senator Comrie, Senator Liu, and the Attorney General who urged the governor to get involved. The Mayor was not relenting on moving it even a week. The governor intervened and issued an executive order this week delaying it for 30 days. There is a City Council meeting on a resolution from CM Adams supporting Senator Comrie's and his bill in the legislature. He will be testifying tomorrow morning. He is hoping to find a long-term solution on these lien sales and a better vetting. He pointed out that this was a greater devastation than we had after 9/11. This year we lost many more lives and the devastation to the economy along with the loss of jobs was greater. He believes that this is the time for the Federal Government to make up for some of those years when NY put in all that money. The Senate [US] has not been cooperative as far as helping City and State budgets. He also had a press conference yesterday to allow restaurants to open. The governor announced that as of September 30th there will be a 25% capacity allowed indoors in restaurants and starting November 1st 50% with precautions.

Honorable Councilmember Grodenchik – CM Grodenchik informed us that him and his colleagues have been working closely with CB8 on a variety of issues. He has seen an unprecedented amount of City distributed meals a day [three quarters of a million]. The need is quite desperate. Food, masks and sanitizers are also being distributed to those who never asked for anything in the past. He announced that an addition to P.S. 26 was approved. The school is greatly overcrowded, and it is not accessible. He expects that it will be a 70-million-dollar investment in the community and is very excited about that. He informed everyone that the location will most likely be behind the current school. The entire school will be made accessible to all the children from P.S. 26 and P.S. 224. He looks forward to meeting with everyone in person soon. To all of those celebrating he wished them a happy and healthy new year Rosh Hashanah. May it be a good year for all of God children.

Mr. Haken asked Council Member Grodenchik if they will take away the farm playground to extend P.S. 26. Council Member Grodenchik responded that they are going to take about 20,000 sq. ft. He also stated that the Redwood Playground has reopened in Cunningham Park. He informed everyone that next on the agenda will be the Upper Playground. They also funded the 210th Street Playground. There will be an announcement within the next few days about the first phase of the Vanderbilt Motor Park Parkway which stretches from CB13 thru CB11 into CB8. That's another 5-million-dollar investment in our community. If anyone has any questions call his office tomorrow.

Chairperson Martha Taylor congratulated Mohammad Rahman on his new job working for District Attorney Melinda Katz. She knows he will do a wonderful job.

Mohammad Rahman – He is now working with the community partnerships bureau for Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz. He has missed Community Board 8. He knows the community and its concerns. It is only his second day but, will share his email in case anyone has any concerns to reach out to him.

Approval of Minutes:

Marc A. Haken made a motion to approve the minutes of June 10, 2020, seconded by Susan Cleary.

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

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Chairperson's Report – Martha Taylor:

Chairperson Martha Taylor congratulated Board Member Wendy Phaff and Jim Gennaro on their marriage this past weekend.

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Chairperson Martha Taylor announced that there will be a special election. She called on Seymour Schwartz, the Chair of the Community Board 8 Nominating Committee to fill the vacant seat for 3rd Vice-Chair. Chairperson Martha Taylor nominates Mary Maggio, seconded by Marc A. Haken.

Seymour Schwartz asked if there are any further nominations. Seymour Schwartz in the absence of additional nominations, Seymour Schwartz asked Carolyn Brown the secretary to cast one vote for Mary Maggio as 3rd Vice-Chair.

Tammy Osherov – I just wanted to know who left the board or why is there a vacancy.

Martha Taylor – Stanley Weinblatt.

Seymour Schwartz asked if there is anyone opposed. Seeing none, Mary Maggio was announced as 3rd Vice-Chair.

District Manager’s Report, September 2020

Sanitation

As stated at the last DSC in June, due to budget cuts, they had to suspend organics and e-waste collections. Our district has a dedicated basket truck; however, it is for fewer days. They service the baskets three times a week and two more times during garbage collection for a total of five days. Sanitation could use more pick-ups to maintain our area.

When asked which one of the commercial strips needs the additional pick up the most based on the conditions, our superintendent stated that area of Hillside Avenue from Midland Parkway to Parsons needs it most. They have issues with drop-offs. When the homeless individuals are kicked off the subways at night, they exit Midland Parkway and they litter. *[Tessa Ladnow from Common Ground Homeless Outreach will engage these prospective clients and offer them shelter.]*

He also asked that business owners clean the tree pits in front of their businesses, especially along Union Turnpike. Maybe the merchant association can help. We asked if he thought sending notice to the business owners might help. He will forward a Sanitation flyer that we can share. The center medians have been sprayed and the weeds should be dead by now. Unfortunately, the agency no longer has the participants from the job training program nor those from the alternate sentencing program that usually assist them with the clean-up. They are not sure how these issues will be addressed.

We also discussed the issue of the hoarding house at 141-48 70th Road. The Community Board did reach out to Adult Protective Services months ago and they are not giving us any details due to privacy. In the interim the issue is getting progressively worse. A multi-agency discussion ensued. We learned that this property was issued violations that were not cured according to the Department of Buildings. The Department of Health has not been very helpful. The agency must get a court order to have a clean-up and bill the owner. We will follow-up

Department of Health – Did not attend.

Buildings – Law offices can operate as a home occupancy provided that only up to 25% of the FAR is used for the business; there is only one additional employee and the attorney that resides there. There must be a filing with the Department of Buildings to ensure that all criteria are met.

The gyms are not open. They must file for their HVAC system with the Department of Buildings before they open. Issues with social distancing are not addressed by DOB. These complaints must be directed the Department of Health.

The agency is concerned about possible lay-off and how they will continue to meet the same demand with less staff. Fortunately, there is a 30 -day pause before any action is taken. The agency has received complaints about noise from amplifiers installed with restaurants outside that have outdoor seating. These complaints should go to DEP.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) – The agency agreed that it is their responsibility; however, they are not peace officers and cannot go there alone. If there are any issues with a location, they must arrange for a joint inspection with the NYPD. The agency also has a program that offers free mediation - Mend NYC. They assist residents and businesses mediate to find a solution with issues of noise in the community.

The 2020 Conservation Grant deadline is this month on the 15th. The application is available online.

Aging – Senior Centers are still closed. Seniors can call Aging Connect for assistance at (212)244-6469.

Department of Transportation

*Starting October 1st all one-hour meters will be converted to two-hour meters. There are several zones with different rates. The whole of the Community Board 8’s district is in ~~Zone 2~~ [Zone 3]. The first hourly rate will

remain the same [~~\$1.50/hour~~] [\$1.25/hour] and the second hourly rate will increase [~~\$2.50/hour~~] [\$2.00/hr]. It will cost a total of \$4 [\$3.25] to park for two hours.

Parks

Due to the pandemic, permits for large events were not issued for the parks. Our parks continued to be used increase used. Unfortunately, they had less staff and issues with regular attendance. They may open permit for youth sports in the fall.

We mentioned that the Friends of Cunningham Park wanted to have a drive-in movie and the permit was not issues. This would be a great event for our community that misses the movies at the park, and it allows for social distancing. Maybe we can apply again when they start permitting the park's use again.

Housing Preservation and Development – Did not attend.

Police – Did not attend.

Emergency Management - The deadline to complete the Census is on September 30th. This is most needed to secure federal dollars. Emergency Management is funded through a federal grant. The agency encourages residents to sign-up for Notify NYC to receive emergency alerts.

NYC Commission on Human Rights - There was a total of 167 anti-Asian incidents from year to date. Last year there were only 22 incidents.

Mayor's Community Affairs Office (CAU) – The grab and go meals are still being served at 200 schools. This is done from 3 – 5 p.m., as not to interfere with the children and school activities. The schools are open remotely on September 16 and in person on September 21st. Queens still has the highest number of COVID-19 cases – 69, 400.

Queens Public Library – Unfortunately only the Kew Gardens Hills Library is open for both pick-up and drop-off. Hopefully, other locations will be available within the district for pick-up with the next round of openings scheduled for this month. They have virtual programs available that one must pre-register for: ESL and Civic Service 101.

The libraries still offer access to Wi-Fi. People are using them at a rate of only 10% less than the same time last year.

Elected Representatives - Most of the elected officials' offices are still working remotely. A few of them have now opened and are seeing constituents by appointment only. Please call before you go. Calls are returned within a day. They have masks, sanitizers, food, and back to school supplies distribution.

Happy Birthday to Board Members Wendy Phaff and Dr. Penny Stern who will celebrate their birthdays this month!

Marie Adam-Ovide



Chairperson Taylor announced that Heather Bennett-Idels has a question.

Heather Bennett-Idels – The grab and go lunch. We have it at P.S. 164. How is that going to work? Breakfast and lunch will be picked up from 3-5 p.m.?

Marie Adam-Ovide – That is the time that they have given us. They cannot interfere with the schools. They do not want people going into the schools while the children are there for their safety.

Martha Taylor – People are going to pick up breakfast after 3 p.m.?

Heather Bennett-Idels – Kids who are not going to school are not getting food until then. At our public school we don't enter the school. It is at the doorway. No one goes into the schools.

Marie Adam-Ovide – That was the reason given to us by the Mayor's office. I will follow up with them and I will send you the information.

Heather Bennett-Idels – That is a big problem. Kids are not going to get food.

Martha Taylor – Right, until 3 p.m. Marie will look into this.

Heather Bennett-Idels – I have another question. There was spraying that occurred for mosquitoes on September 3rd. I got a lot of questions and complaints from community members. The mosquito situation is horrific, and they can't go outside. It does not seem like anything has changed since the spraying. Did September 3rd happen? Did that spraying happen?

Marie Adam-Ovide – The Department doesn't spray for nuisance mosquitoes. The Department of Health policy is to spray where they find that they might have disease (Nile virus). So, I understand that the residents feel like that would help them but that is not the purpose of the spraying.

Martha Taylor – If they have questions, they can call the Community Board office.

Chairperson Martha Taylor asked DM Adam-Ovide about the Wyndham Hotel Letter (Ae screenshared letter that was drafted on the Wyndham Hotel was shown).

Martha Taylor – The letter was drafted to the Mayor because we heard someone called in on T.V. and asked the Mayor about the Hotel; he had no idea what she was talking about. There is no problem with the hotel, there is a problem with the Mayor. This letter is saying how could you not know about such a thing. How could you ask Elizabeth Glazer to respond to a letter that was sent by Elected Officials and me if you knew nothing about it? We are not at the point of saying anything about the hotel. As far as I can tell it is being well run. We already placed people in more permanent facilities.

Maria DeInnocentiis – I must take exception to the last sentence: "CB8 wants you to commit to suspending the use of this hotel as shelter before the end of your term in office." I think that is an excessively long time to give him to make a change. I take offense to that. I don't think we should give him that much time. They said that it would be just until the end of the summer.

Susan Cleary – I will agree with you on that Maria.

Martha Taylor – Maria are you suggesting that we delete that one sentence?

Maria DeInnocentiis – I am just suggesting that we not put a period of time attached to it.

Martha Taylor – Okay, can everyone agree that that's a good thing to do.

Tammy Osherov – I agree.

John Gebhard made a motion to approve sending the drafted letter to the Mayor's Office regarding the Wyndham Hotel, seconded by Sey Schwartz.

Discussion:

Marc A. Haken – What is the group who is running the program there?

Martha Taylor – Exodus.

Marc A. Haken – I could swear that I heard on the news that they are running out of money.

Martha Taylor – Correct. I saw that too and we need money from the Federal Government.

Marc A. Haken – It may close all on its own.

Martha Taylor – It may but what if it doesn't Marc?

Marc A. Haken – I just wanted to bring that point up.

Kevin Forestall – I would suggest adding the word expeditious after "the shelter". For the time that doesn't say the end. That there is some urgency to do it.

Martha Taylor – They said they were going to close it when the pandemic is over.

Kevin Forestal – They also said they would close it in October and its closed the hotel in into opposition in Manhattan very quickly without ceremony. It is a problem. It is not necessarily as big of a problem as it is in mid-town Manhattan.

Martha Taylor – It has not been a problem. We can't just throw these people out into the street when there is no problem.

Kevin Forestal – I did not suggest that. They did that in Manhattan but what I said is to do it as fast as possible or expeditiously.

Dilip Nath – I know there has not been a problem, but the truth of the fact is in about a week our children are going back to school. Kids go into that area and hangout. I am really concerned that by not bringing enough pressure on this we are just waiting for an incident to happen. I don't think we can take on that chance. The Mayor has put people there without consulting or informing the community and does not plan to take them back. He needs a plan to take these people from there. He cannot use the hotel as a shelter forever. Otherwise he will continue to do that.

Martha Taylor – What we are doing here is having a motion to send this letter. We are not talking about children going back to school right now. That's a separate issue. Right now, we are talking about this letter.

Hersh Parekh – I think the letter should be sent. I think the fact that we are hearing from different people in the administration that you either notify the community or don't is a problem. They are conflicting responses from the same administration.. I do agree to send the letter about providing the community through the community board advanced notice. Regarding suspending the use of the hotel so I understand this was done as an emergency declaration of 2014. Now 6 years later do we know when the declaration is set to expire or is it indefinite. What is the process for that to happen?

Martha Taylor – I don't know. We can find out. Does anyone know?

Hersh Parekh – I agree with the chair that we should not be throwing folks out from a hotel shelter that is not the cause of problems.

Maria DeInnocentiis – As Dilip said, it can cause potential problems.

Hersh Parekh – We are not here to talk about hypothetical. If we were to get specific complaints, we could address that.

Maria DeInnocentiis – No, we had asked Exodus about sex offenders in that hotel. We never got a good answer from them if they are still there or anything and that's the problem. It isn't the fact that they are in the community. It isn't the fact that they are in the hotel. It's the fact that we can't get answers to our questions.

Marie Adam-Ovide – In the letter we received from Ms. Glazer the only thing she mentioned was that it is determined by the state who can and cannot stay there if the person is a sex offender. That is based on NYS law.

Marc Haken – As the chair of the Youth and Education Committee I don't believe there is a school within blocks and blocks of this site.

Chairperson Martha Taylor asked for a hand vote.

Count in favor: 37

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Board Members against: None.

Borough President's Representative – Susie Tanenbaum

- Ms. Tanenbaum hoped every had a good summer. Borough President Lee and her office have been kept busy over the last several months.
- Borough President Lee has been hosting virtual job recruitment fairs every few weeks. An average of 400 people has been attending. Close to 1,300 people have contacted workforce agencies and companies. The next one is scheduled Wednesday, September 16, 2020. From 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. You do need to RSVP to access the zoom link. You can go to the Borough President's website queensbp.org if interested.
- Last Thursday Borough President Lee memorated a very moving memorial tribute for former Queens Borough President Claire Shulman. Claire Shulman was a formidable leader who served as Borough President for 16 years. During that tribute Borough President Lee announced that arrangements are being made to give a second name to 120-55 Queens Boulevard. It will also be known as 1 Claire Shulman Way in her memory.
- It has been a very busy summer for the U.S. Census Bureau and all the trusted community partners in our borough. They have been in various neighborhoods helping Queens' residents to compete the Census. For the past 1 ½ years there has been a friendly competition between the five boroughs. Queens has consistently ranked number 4. With all the census outreach that everyone has been doing. As of last week, Queens is tied with Manhattan for 2nd place. Our response rate is now 59.9%. There are certain neighborhoods that remain at risk of being undercounted many of them are in southeast Queens. We have more work to do and we are going to continue to push the Census until the end of the count.
- If anyone in this zoom meeting has not yet completed their census and is having difficulty. Type a message in the chatlog or please let the board office know and they will be happy to help.
- She wished everyone a September and to those who are observing Rosh Hashanah a Shana Tovah.

Chairperson Marta Taylor thanked Susie Tanenbaum and asked Hersh if he had a question. Hersh responded that he already asked the question earlier.

Committee Reports:

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

- Dr. Stern is a preventive medicine specialist. Prevention is her passion and is dedicated in preventing disease and promoting health. Dr. Stern spoke about the importance of vaccinations and how they contributed to extending the lives of millions of people over the last few hundred years.
- Dr. Stern informed everyone that a flu shot is essential every year. The flu is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death. About 24,000 deaths contributed to flu in the 2019-2020 season. There were at least 39 million cases and as many as 56 million in the U.S. alone. Just in comparison there have been 6.33 million cases of Covid-19 but of course there have been 189,000 deaths.
- Dr. Stern discussed the importance of the flu shot. No one wants to be in a position of getting the flu with Covid-19. You should speak to your health provider and see which flu shot is best for you.
- All those above the age of 6 months should be vaccinated. The CDC is recommending getting vaccinated before the end of October. The researchers are now involved with phase three trials and they are going to be watching participants all thru the fall to see how people react and if they stay healthy. So, the range of when vaccines may be available range from 2020 to nearly mid-2021.
- The flu vaccine last year was found 45% effective, but that level of effectiveness won't be adequate for a virus infectious as covid 19. In June the FDA announced that any covid vaccine would have to prevent a disease or reduce its severity at least 50% in people order for it to be approved. Keep in mind that the worlds health organization has more than 150 countries engaged in covid research and at least 10 possible vaccines now in phase 3 alone.
- Dr. Stern spoke about the importance of wearing a mask and practicing social distancing. To me wearing a mask is a clear sign that you care about others as well as yourself.
- John Hopkins Bloomberg's School of Health said "Vaccines don't save lives. Vaccinations save lives."

DSNY/DEP Committee Kevin Forrestal:

- The Committee met last night regarding the street baskets. It was announced that the Sanitation Commissioner Garcia has resigned. There are 750 sanitation employers scheduled to be laid off. She questioned the ability to do a street cleanup in case of a major storm.
- Mr. Forrestal discussed some ideas including adopt a basket. At the meeting other budgets cuts that could be possibly made were discussed. Mr. Forrestal informed everyone that one of the other problems is that people are dumping household garbage into street litter. He spoke about enforcements and volunteer community clean-ups in the future.
- Marie Adam-Ovide suggested Public Service Announcements be done. CB8 would also be able create some banners to put in stores. He recommended to identify street baskets that need more attention like on Union Turnpike and Queens Boulevard and Hillside Ave. Another meeting will be scheduled with several committee members and the Sanitation Department.
- Mr. Forrestal also spoke about rain gardens installation throughout the community. The amount of time that it is taking to get them done is terribly long. The Committee agreed to send a letter to do something to expedite the process going forward. (*Marie screenshared a letter that was drafted to the Department of Design and Construction Commissioner*).

Marc A. Haken made a motion to send the drafted letter, seconded by Kevin Forrestal.

Kevin Forrestal asked if anyone had any questions or concerns. Hearing none a hand vote was taken.

Count in favor: 37

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Board Members against: None.

Heather Bennett-Idels – I have been involved with the green infrastructure with CM Lancman. In our neighborhood we have green infrastructure coming in and no one was notified of it. No one received phone calls, paper notifications, or the option to opt out. No one was given the option of what kind of infrastructure they were choosing. Maybe that can be added in somehow.

Martha Taylor – I think it’s very important if we want to state it in the letter or not. Or do we want to do something else about it.

Marie Adam-Ovide - This letter is going to DDC and the agency that is supposed to do the notification is DEP.

Martha Taylor – Yes, but DDC should know about it.

Kevin Forrestal – I suggest we do it as a separate issue and if necessary, we send a separate letter.

Martha Taylor – I agree, a letter should be sent to them.

Census 2020 - Kevin Forrestal -

Mr. Forrestal informed everyone that the Complete Count Committee has restructured to some extent. There are a lot of pop-up activates around the city by the Borough President. In CB8 there are two things that have been done in some of the harder to count areas. One was enforced by the community house in Pomonok and schools were giving out hand out activities. He pushed for some activities in conjunction with the Muslim Community Centers with the help of a former Board Member Delaware. There have also been some events in Parks and Muslim Centers in conjunction with COVID testing. He thanked Delaware and the Census who provided a lot of translators. He announced that the Judge has ruled and given a restraining order to continue to not close on September 30th. The hearing is next week. There was a decision by the Trump Administration to close the Census a month early. He hopes that will not happen.

Marc Haken asked Kevin if there will be a big push on the Census now that school are opening. Kevin stated that they do not want them entering the schools. There isn’t much time left until September 30th. Susie Tanenbaum stated that the U.S. Census Bureau is partnering with any organizations that are doing back to school events. Susie Tanenbaum also stated that they appreciate Kevin’s leadership through the entire summer. He has attended all the weekly meetings and has been doing the outreach.

Martha Taylor thanked Kevin Forrestal for his hard work.

Adjournment

Marc A. Haken made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 8:50 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Izabela Szczepanska, CB8 staff
September 16, 2020*

**Correction*