



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 Meeting held on Wednesday, December 13, at the Hillcrest Jewish Center at 183-02 Union Turnpike, Queens, NY 11366.

Attendance

Board Members Present

Dilafroz Ahmed, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Maria DeInnocentiis, Allen Eisenstein, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Wendy Gennaro, Mohammed “Delwar” Islam, Neeta Jain, Steven Konigsberg, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Rabbi Yaniv Meirov, Dilip Nath, Alan Ong, Tammy Oshero, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Tobias Paris, Seymour Schwartz, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Douglas Sherman, Mohammed Tohin, Amy Tse, Rabbi Mayer Waxman, Harbachan Singh, Michael Hannibal, Charlton Rhee, Martha Taylor and Jacob Weinberg.

Board Members Absent

Ahsan Habib, Kenneth Cohen II, Heather Bennett-Idels, Susan D. Cleary, Solomon Davydov, Mary Maggio, Jennifer Martin, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Hersh Parekh, Jenna Citron Schwab, David Mordukhaev, Simon Pelman, Deepti Sharma and Jesse Rosenbaum.

Others Present

Kevin M. Morris representing Mayor Eric Adams, Shubhra Datta representing Borough President Donovan Richards, Adam Suionov representing James Gennaro, Rokeya Akhter representing District Attorney Melinda Katz, Ari Inniss representing Senator Leroy Comrie, Lois Marbach representing Councilwoman Linda Lee, Councilwoman Linda Lee, Scott Sieber representing State Senator John Liu, Marco Cruz representing Assembly Member Samuel Berger, Lya Rothmann representing Senator Toby Stavisky, Evelyn Li representing Congresswoman Grace Meng, Sam Verstandig representing Assembly Member David Weprin, Chante Lee and Matt Waskiewicz representing Department of City Planning, Norris Johns representing NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, P.O. Gorman, Captain Tsang, P.O. McCarthy representing NYPD, Elaine Young representing West Cunningham Park Civic Association, D.M. Marie Adam-Ovide and [CB8 Staff Soleil Griffin, and Nettie Norris].

Call to Order

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

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Public Participation

Elaine Young – representing West Cunningham Park Civic Association

Her Civic Association is very much opposed to the Mayor’s City of Yes for Economic Opportunity proposal. There are approximately 1,200 households in her community and there is nothing in that proposal that will benefit the community. If anything, it will decimate it.

Elected Officials' Announcements

Rokeya Akhter - representing District Attorney Melinda Katz

Ms. Akhter announced that District Attorney Melinda Katz wanted to remind everyone to watch out for scams (especially with packages) during this holiday season. She wished everyone a happy and safe holiday season.

Norris Johns representing- NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams

They are hosting a couple of information sessions: Stop, Question and Frisk on December 14th and a House of Worship Safety Forum on December 18th. He also reminded us to tune into Channel 12 on the third Monday of each month from 7:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Ari Innis - representing Senator Leroy Comrie

The senator sends his holiday greetings. We will be hosting the following events:

Toy Drive-You can drop off toys at 113-43 Farmers Boulevard until December 15th. The toy giveaway will be held at the Jouvay Lounge at 147-02 Liberty Avenue on December 17th from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Mobile Office Hours

- December 11th - 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Queens Public Library at Rosedale
- December 20th – 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Queens Public Library at Cambria Heights
- January 10th - 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Queens Public Library at Briarwood
- January 24th - 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Queens Public Library at Kew Gardens Hills
- February 7th - 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Queens Public Library at St. Albans
- February 14th - 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Queens Public Library at Forest Hill

Please feel free to call our office at (718) 765-6359 for more information.

Kevin Morris – representing Mayor Eric Adams

The mayor recently launched a new initiative to help keep fires down and the city safer. They are in the process of setting up charging stations all around the city. This will allow the bike owners to safely charge their bikes and not have them stored inside of an apartment, private house or basement.

Adam Suinov - representing Council Member James Gennaro

Council Member James Gennaro sends his holiday greetings. Mr. Suinov welcomed the new Commander, Captain Mo Tsang – 107th Precinct. The Councilman is in favor of the Resolution that will be put forth tonight to Combat Antisemitism and Violent Civic Disobedience written by Simon Pelman.

Marco Cruz - representing Assembly Member Sam Berger

Happy Holidays to all on behalf of Assembly Member Sam Berger.

Sam Verstandig – representing Assembly Member David Weprin

Our office, along with Senator Joe Addabbo will be hosting a toy drive through December 20th from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Please bring all toy donations to:

Assembly Member David Weprin – 185-06 Union Turnpike, Queens, NY 11366 - (718) 454-3027.

Senator Joe Addabbo – 8416 Jamaica Avenue, Queens, NY 11421- (718) 738-1111.

Scott Siebert - representing Senator John Liu

Senator Liu introduced two bills last month.

- The first would end \$321M in yearly property tax exemptions for Columbia and NYU and redirect use of that revenue to help fund perpetually underfunded CUNY schools (like Queens College).
- The second bill is inspired by the legacy of Congress Member George Santos and would require more transparent candidate disclosures for candidates running for elected office. It would require candidates to attest, under penalty of perjury, to basic facts about who they claim to be, such as residency, recent employment history, education and military service.

Our office is hosting a “Jollyfest Parade & Toy Giveaway on Sunday, December 17, 2023, on Main Street and Franklin Avenue. Children can line up at 11:00 a.m. for the parade & toy giveaway registration. Please call the office for more information – (718) 765-6675.

Council Member Linda Lee

Council Member Linda Lee thanked everyone for their support during her campaign. She explained that she is working on quite a few initiatives.

- The Mayflower Hotel - She's working on coming up with a plan to handle the problems.
- The Creedmoor Lot is approximately 100K acres. It is state land, not city. It is currently being used to house the asylum seekers.

Chairperson Martha Taylor asked Council Member Lee - Is the housing proposal for Creedmoor affordable housing?

Council Member Lee – Yes.

Chairperson Martha Taylor – Could that possibly be mixed in with the “City of Yes”?

Council Member Lee – No. I think you are looking at two different things.

Chairperson Martha Taylor – Ok. Thank you.

She is a NO on the “City of Yes” for Economic Opportunity proposal as it is now. It is a work in progress and her office will be diligently working on getting clarity on the issues in question. Just to name a few:

- It targets low density areas.
- It targets churches and houses of worship that are low in membership and/or closing to use the parking spaces for buildings/housing developments.
- Infrastructure cost not included.
- Taking away from parking restrictions.
- Economic portion to be voted on but when?
- Zoning portion to be voted on next year.
- Plan may get passed and passed as is with no changes.

Council Member Linda Lee advised that she would stay after the meeting to take questions and elaborate more.

Shubhra Datta – representing Borough President Donovan Richards

Queens Borough President Donovan Richards is hosting a Public Safety Town Hall with United Sikhs. The event will be held on Sunday, December 17th at 3:00 p.m. – It will be held at: 95-30 118th St. South Richmond Hill, NY. All are welcome. Please RSVP at queensbp.org/rsvp.

Guest speakers include representatives from NYPD Patrol Borough Queens North and Queens South, the Queens District Attorney’s Office and the Mayor’s Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes. This meeting will serve as a safe space for residents to share their concerns and experiences.

He will also be hosting a Kwanzaa celebration on December 27th at 6:00 p.m. at Queens Borough Hall. Please go online or call to RSVP.

Evelyn Li, representing Congresswoman Grace Meng

Congresswoman Grace Meng would like to thank everyone for their support during this year. She wishes everyone happy holidays.

Chairperson Martha Taylor called for a motion to approve the minutes.

Approval of Minutes: Amy Tse made a motion to approve the minutes of Wednesday, November 15, 2023, seconded by Michael Hannibal. The motion passed unanimously with no abstention.

Chairperson’s Report

Chairperson Martha Taylor reminded everyone that the list of future meeting dates was included in the packets that were emailed to all. The Executive Committee voted to send a letter of support to rename the Amphitheatre at Cunningham Park in honor of former CB8 Member Sylvia Weprin.

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Chairperson Martha Taylor acknowledged that today is Steve Konigsberg’s birthday. She wished everyone Happy Holidays!

District Manager’s Report

Fire Department

The agency wanted to remind everyone to be very careful when lighting candles. Do not leave them unattended. If you use a real Christmas tree, make sure to keep it watered. The Bureau of Fire Prevention has been going to e-bike stores to inspect. Fire death has increased from fires caused by lithium batteries. The fire house on Hillside Avenue is down from 5 to 4 engines.

Police Department

Rape, murders. and burglaries have decreased in the last 28 days. Regrettably, felony assaults are up by 1% (High School related). We have an increase in Grand Larceny Auto and crime at Pomonok Housing has increased. The NYPD has added resources to Pomonok.

Department of Transportation

All-Way-Stop signs have been approved for two locations: 1) 85th Avenue and Chapin Parkway and 2) 141st Street and 77th Crescent. They should be installed within 90 days. The pavement marking will follow in the spring.

As you may be aware, the agency approved additional lights at Foothill Avenue between Francis Lewis Blvd. and the dead end. We were informed last month that it may take several years to have them installed. Considering the car break-ins we had at that location, CB8 had been advocating having the work completed sooner. As a result, the agency plans to add double-headed lights at the current lampposts to improve the lighting, while waiting for the new lampposts.

Department of Design and Construction (DDC)

DDC Project I.D: SEQ200558 - In Jamaica Estates, they did saw cutting on Dalny Road between Wexford Terrace and Hillside Avenue. The contractor was unable to complete the saw cutting work and will return to the job site in 2024.

Department of Buildings (DOB)

Beginning January 1, 2024, owners of buildings with parapets fronting the public’s right-of-way, regardless of height are required to have an annual observation of the building’s parapet performed. There is an exception for detached one-family and two-family dwellings. Buildings with a fence or other barriers preventing access to the exterior wall.

The agency also sent out 51,000 postcards to property owners of 1-4 family dwellings with outstanding violations. Although the fines may have been paid or they have made the corrections, they must file a Certificate of Correction with the agency. It must be approved before the violation can be removed from their records.

DM Adam-Ovide – Commented on her understanding of filing a Certificate of Correction with the agency. However, her concern is that many seniors at home cannot go online to register and file the form. We had a resident come by our office today for assistance. We cannot do that for them; so, we scanned the documents and sent them to a relative to assist with the filing. Something needs to be done about that.

Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit (CAU)

The mayor has a new initiative to crack down on the illegal sales of cannabis. Letters went out to property owners informing them that they may be held liable for the illegal sales of cannabis by their tenants.

Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)

Due to budget cuts, the Department of Parks and Recreation is no longer getting new staff from the Parks Opportunity Program. It is an innovative transitional employment program for SNAP and cash assistance recipients.

They have a new initiative “Let’s Green NYC”. It is a volunteering campaign. They are trying to get more community members to volunteer and assist with park maintenance. So far, DPR has the assistance of the Eagle Scouts who have been volunteering at the parks.

NYC Commission on Human Rights

On November 22, 2023, height and weight were added to the protected classes. Employers are not allowed to discriminate based on the weight and/or height of individuals. Employers are directed to reasonably accommodate those of this class by providing the right tools (i.e., special chair, adjustable desk height, step stools, etc.). They do not require that employers do major renovations.



Happy Birthday to: Allen Eisenstein, Jesse Rosenbaum, Steve Konigsberg, Sey Schwartz, Bhitihara Fulton, Tammy Osherov, Deepti Sharma, Charlton Rhee, Simon Pelman, Mohammed ”Delwar” Islam.

Guest Speakers:

Commanding Officer Mo Tsang, 107th Precinct

C.O. Tsang was introduced as the new Commanding Officer of the 107th Precinct. He greeted the community and was welcomed by all.

Former Deputy Inspector Kevin Chan, 107th Precinct

He stopped by to say his farewell. He stated it was his honor to have worked in CB8 and served the community for many years. He promised we’d be in good hands with Commanding Officer Mo Tsang.

Chairperson Martha Taylor and members welcomed and congratulated outgoing and incoming officers.

Public Hearing: N240010ZRY & N240011ZRY

Steve Konigsberg, Zoning Committee Chair - He invited the Department of City Planning (DCP) representatives: Community Planner Chante Lee and Head of Planning Matt Waskiewicz, to give the presentation on the City of Yes for Economic Development Proposal.

Chante Lee, DCP - Community Planner & Matt Waskiewicz, DCP Head of Planning – City of Yes

Ms. Lee opened with a brief synopsis, showing a presentation of the City of Yes for Economic Opportunity proposal. Here are the four main components of the overview.

- Goal 1 - Make it easier for businesses to find space and grow.
- Goal 2 - Boost growing industries.
- Goal 3 - Enable more business-friendly streetscapes.
- Goal 4 - Create new opportunities for businesses to open.

Question: Dr. Penny Stern – We have so many issues with double, triple parking. How can someone vote for no parking spaces?

Answer: City of Yes – Proposal #10 – Big Box retail is going away and experimental businesses are coming.

Question: Elke Maerz – What does make up space mean -pop up shops?

Answer: City of Yes – Make up space is where people make things like jewelry, small commercial kitchens.

Question: Wendy Gennaro – You had mentioned that 17 & 18 would have to go in front of the board for review. Does that mean those are the only ones we have say so in and the others are just do what you want to do?

Answer: City of Yes – No – 15, 16 and 17 they will all go in for review before council member sign-off. (Proposals #1-14 – Supply tools to better understand zoning)

Question: Amy Tse – we need clarity on small and clean. What does this mean? What does Urban Proposal #7 mean?

Answer: City of Yes - Clarity on small – up to 5K, 10K sq ft. Bakeries are limited to space so a lot of these businesses don't have the space to make and sell. Clarity on clean. The clean portion is where a business can't have air quality problems, no hazardous materials near it. If a business is going to locate, they have to vent higher than any other business.

Question: Bhitihara Fulton – Slide #15 Continued collaboration with subject, experts? Do you have a list of them and what their qualifications are?

Answer: City of Yes – Go on our website and see letters of support from experts in urban planning.

DM Adam-Ovide referred to the minutes of the zoning committee meeting held on November 29th. Under Proposal #17. It would allow a waiver process whereby only developments with a significant size increase would require public review via CPC Special Permit.

Answer: City of Yes – The experts do go through the process.

Question: Can you clarify what urban agriculture is?

Answer: City of Yes – Urban Agriculture refers to people who grow plants. Today you are allowed to grow plants outside in a Green House. You are not allowed to grow plants indoors. Look at the way the city looks at labs regarding zoning – the potential of what college labs will experiment on.

Question: Bhitihara Fulton – Slide #15 cont'd – Timeline – you mentioned 59 Community Boards and 5 Borough Boards - Continued coordination with partner agencies and continued collaboration with subject experts. Do you have a list of all the experts and their qualifications?

Answer: City of Yes – As I said before, the short list is on our website: nyc.gov/yeseconomicopportunity – if you scroll down, you will see a list of letters of support that we've received from experts. These experts range from all five Chambers of Commerce, dozens of improvement businesses across the city and more.

Question: Howard Fried – Slide #16 – You have bodegas, CBD stores opening up on every corner with bright lights on all night. What kind of restrictions, licenses, steps you'll take to improve our quality of life – it's not a good thing.

Answer: City of Yes – We have been working really hard to have legal shops opening up.

Question: Howard Fried - Sorry to interrupt. Can you explain legal versus non legal? Who gets a license and who does not. And how is the community to know what is licensed and what is not. This is going up on every street and being popped out of these stores. This is a residential neighborhood like many, many other neighborhoods. You have taxpayers, homeowners and small children and this is not a good thing. It's actually a very bad thing. I don't know what's going on in Baltimore, but this is the kind of thing we don't need.

Answer: City of Yes – It's a very big issue. The city is working with the state.

Observation: Kevin Forrestal – The process should be neighborhood by neighborhood, identify certain common principles and apply it to that neighborhood instead of applying it as a one shoe fits all.

Answer: City of Yes – Proposal #5 – look at unintended proposal. We look at this all day.

Question: Michael Hannibal: You spoke about expanding businesses all along Hillside Avenue. I can imagine merchants there saying they need more stores. Who's to say when one store closes, another one won't pop up. Please help me understand why we would want more stores?

Answer: City of Yes – That may be true near your house but across the city there are 17K empty store fronts. We have millions of empty office spaces. The city is staring down a budget crisis right now because of it.

Steve Konigsberg, Zoning Committee Chair

Thanked the representatives from the City of Yes for a great zoning committee meeting and public hearing tonight. He asked for a motion to approve *N24001ZRY / N240011ZRY – City of Yes for Economic Opportunity Zoning text amendment.*

Kevin Forrestal made a motion to approve, seconded by Harbachan Singh.

Dilip Nath – We don't need a city like Baltimore. Why do we need more stores? This is just to bring down the middle class – Vote this down tonight.

Maria Delnnoctiis – We had a lot of questions from the City of Yes Zoning meeting on November 29th.

- Building a big store in Pomonok housing
- Houses that are on corners on the commercial strip. They are R2A and are not commercial. They can all be converted.
- Allowing property to be used for small businesses.
- Think about these really large homes in Jamaica Estates and Holliswood. It would be an issue with parking, scooters and delivery people.
- This is not what we want.
- There is no parking here for amusements, nightlife, bars, kids drinking and noise coming from the Soccer Stadium and St. John.
- There are people who need this but not in all areas.
- The housing proposal would change the zoning. We moved to Queens to raise our children with space and backyards. This would destroy our neighborhood.

Neeta Jain: You have to really honk to get through traffic due to the double/triple parking on Horace Harding Expressway. Parking is already out of control. We moved to Queens to afford our children a better life. Think about our next generation.

Community Board 8 members unanimously voted NO on this proposal.

0 Yes 32 No 0 Abstention

Members for: none

Members against: Dilafroz Ahmed, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Maria DeInnocentiis, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, Martha-Bhitihara Fulton, James Gallagher, Jr., John Gebhard, Wendy Gennaro, Michael Hannibal, Mohammed “Delwar” Islam, Neeta Jain, Steven Konigsberg, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Dilip Nath, Alan Ong, Tammy Oshero, Tobias Paris, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Jenna Citron Schwab, Seymour Schwartz, Douglas Sherman, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Amy Tse, Rabbi Mayer Waxman and Jacob Weinberg.

Abstention: none

Committee Reports:

Tobias Paris, CB8 Member, read a resolution - Commitment to Combat Antisemitism and Violent Civic Disobedience. This resolution was presented following the student riot that occurred at Hillcrest High School in response to a teacher’s pro-Israel stance. The members voted overwhelmingly to support it. Mitch Lisker made a motion to support it and was seconded by Neeta Jain.

30 Yes 0 No 1 Abstention

Members for: Dilafroz Ahmed, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Maria DeInnocentiis, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, Martha-Bhitihara, Fulton, James Gallagher, Jr., John Gebhard, Wendy Gennaro, Michael Hannibal, Neeta Jain, Steven Konigsberg, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Dilip Nath, Alan Ong, Tammy Oshero, Tobias Paris, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Jenna Citron Schwab, Seymour Schwartz, Douglas Sherman, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Amy Tse, Rabbi Mayer Waxman and Jacob Weinberg.

Members against: none

Abstention: Mohammed “Delwar” Islam

Health Minute with Dr. Stern

Dr. Penny Stern chose to surrender her time due to time constraints.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by,
Nettie V. Norris, CB8 Staff
January 4, 2024*