



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, June 14, 2023, at the Hillcrest Jewish Center at 183-02 Union Turnpike, Queens, NY 11366.

Attendance:

Board Members Present:

Dilafroz Ahmed, Michael Athy, Heather Bennett-Idels, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Susan D. Cleary, Solomon Davydov, Maria DeInnocentiis, Allen Eisenstein, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, ” Bhitihara Martha-Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., Wendy Gennaro, Ashan Habib, Michael Hannibal, Neeta Jain, Steven Konigsberg, Mohammed “Delwar” Islam, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Mary Maggio, Jennifer Martin, Yaniv Meirov, David Mordukhaev, Dilip Nath, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Alan Ong, Tammy Oshero, Hersh Parekh, Tobias Paris, Simon Pelman, Mohammad Rahman, Charlton Rhee, Jesse Rosenbaum, Jenna Citron Schwab, Seymour Schwartz, Deepti Sharma, Douglas Sherman, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Amy Tse, James Gallagher, Jacob Weinberg and Rabbi Mayer Waxman.

Board Members Absent:

Kenneth Cohen II, John Gebhard, and Frances Peterson

Others Present:

Pascale Bernard, Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at NYS Office of Cannabis Management, Shubhra Datta representing Borough President Donovan Richards, Scott Solomon of New York City Planning, Hassan King of NYPD, Michelle Zheng of Department of Labor, Lya Rothmann representing Senator Toby Stavisky, Kelly Sexton representing James Gennaro, Council Member James Gennaro, Shana Gladden and Cathleen Williams representing District Attorney Melinda Katz, Norris Johns representing Senator Leroy Comrie, Kelly Sexton representing Councilman James Gennaro, Lois Marbach, representing Councilwoman Linda Lee, Sam Verstanding, representing Assembly Member David I. Weprin, Soojin Choi representing State Senator John Liu, Ananya Rajaraman representing Assembly Member Nily Rozic, D.M. Marie Adam-Ovide [CB8 Staff Soleil Griffin, Nettie Norris, and Sandra Aikens-Williams].

Call to Order:

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

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Guest Speaker: Pascale Bernard Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at NYS Office of Cannabis Management.

- The Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) was signed into law March 31, 2021. This is a new office which was created in December of 2021. Wherever smoking of cigarettes and vaping are legal to smoke, cannabis can be smoked. A person aged 21 or over may buy and possess up to 3 ounces of cannabis flowers up to 24 ounces of cannabis oil. Cannabis can be consumed in a private

home or a safe licensed consumption site. Cannabis smoking is not allowed in city owned housing because it is partially federally funded. If smoking and vaping of tobacco products are not allowed either is cannabis. It created the Office of Cannabis Management and the 5-member Cannabis Control Board, the 20-member Cannabis Advisory Board. The focus is now shifted from Public Safety to Public Health. Public health is divided into public safety, social justice, and economic development.

- The conviction records of those with past marijuana convictions had their records expunged. MRTA allows for prioritizing licensing to 50% of those seeking adult use licensing social economic and equity applicants. 4% of the excised tax from the taxes generated 25% will be returned to the county of Queens and 75% will return to the City of New York. There is a plan called 40-40-20. Forty percent will be directed to public education 40% into community grant reinvestment (in communities affected by the prohibition of marijuana) and the remaining 20% to drug treatment and corresponding education. Grants will be awarded to community-based programs as determined by the Advisory Board. OCM recognizes nine types of MRTA licenses for opportunities.
- Community Boards will monitor dispensary and on-site consumption lounges.
- There are four tiers: supply, retail, medical and laboratory. An individual may not have financial interests in more than one tier (this is including stocks). For processing they have issued 40 licenses with others in review. For cultivation they have issued 279 licenses, and more are in review. For processor 40 licenses are issued and more are in process. For conditional dispensaries they have issued 215 licenses, and more are in process. As of this date they have not issued permanent on-site consumption licenses.
- A Community Board's findings are a part of the record filed with the Cannabis Patrol Board they then use the information to grant or deny an application. The applicant will be provided 30 days to complete the community board process. MRTA licensing regulations are in the package passed by the Cannabis Control Board on May 11, 2023. There was a 60-day comment period, starting June 14, 2023. The regulations are again sent to the public for an additional 45-days of comments. Conditional Licenses are in three types to target enforcement authority over the wide range licensed cannabis business types.
- OCM has a working relationship with the New York City Police and Sheriff Departments. OCM has new enforcement powers, they are now allowed to obtain court ordered inspection of sites, seize illegal product, and attach civil penalties. They can revoke, cancel, or suspend cannabis licenses.
- To question or file a complaint about a cannabis business email at complaints@ocm.ny.gov or cannibus.ny.gov/report-an-incident. Be prepared with name of business, time of incident, location, if safe to do so, pictures and you contact information.
- Retail businesses are to be 200 feet from a house of worship and 500 feet from a school. Advertising materials may not appeal to nor target persons under 21 years of age, for example, the use of cartoon characters. She requested that during this public comment period that community boards submit in writing a list of any issues or corrective action needed in this area. Staff must be over the age of 21, complete training and keep accurate records.

Pascale Bernard asked for questions from the board members.

Michael Hannibal: Thank you for coming, we have been waiting for months. Everyone is confused with the pop-up illegal small shops around and bigger store fronts with newspapers, is OCM going to use their enforcement authority on these illegal establishments?

Answer [Pascale Bernard]: Prior to the passing of the state 2023-2024 budget OCM did not have authority nor jurisdiction to act against illegal point of sales stores. We can now work with the police and sheriff's departments. These illicit operators are endangering public safety. Their product has been found to contain lead and mold. Additionally, these operators are avoiding paying taxes. This means that the local sales tax revenue portion is not collected.

Martha Taylor: If a cannabis business opens without going through the community board, what happens?

Answer [Pascale Bernard]: We have not had that question; I don't have an answer at this moment. I will say that at every turn we are educating applicants on what steps are required. Applicants are made aware that they must submit a 30-day notice to the community board.

Martha Taylor: So, you don't have an answer?

Answer [Pascale Bernard]: We are drilling it into their heads at every training session that they need to go through the community boards.

Michael Hannibal: Is there a red flag point alerting OCM that the applicant did not go through the community board? Will OCM disallow an application from moving forward if the community board has not been contacted?

Answer [Pascale Bernard]: If someone has opened without contacting you, contact us. We have even advertised an example of a completed application form and through the process they are told that they must come to the community board.

Marie Adam-Ovide: Since many of the steps you are taking are modeled after the New York State Liquor Authority's licensing process, must an applicant show due diligence in notifying the community board? I hope that the Office of Cannabis Management will require applicants to show certified return receipts to prove they have attempted to contact the community board.

Answer [Pascale Bernard]: The requirement is the same, they must show a certified return receipt, it cannot be an email. [Ms. Bernard showed a blank form.] The first version of the form was not user friendly for the community boards. We changed the form.

Chairperson Martha Taylor acknowledged that this is a lot to consume, and that Ms. Bernard will be sending written materials for board members to read the details. Ms. Bernard promised to send written materials to D.M. Adam-Ovide. She offered to return at a later date to answer further questions. Chairperson Martha Taylor thanked Ms. Bernard for the presentation.

Guest Speaker:

The Honorable City Councilman James Gennaro

- He will be meeting with other legislators this week to speak about Medicare Advantage. When the mayor enacted a two-tier system for, where the top care system has a monthly charge of \$191.00. With a super majority this policy can be overturned. He is not going to support the City Council taking up the matter. The proper place is with the courts. They should get an injunction to stop it from taking effect on September 1, 2023. Once the court has rendered a verdict that is the time for the Council to act. At the end of this legal process there will be more clarity regarding the Council's strength.
- Sandy's Law will not pass.
- Local Law 97 is now the law of New York City. He proposes tax credits for compliance with Local Law 97; however, the City Council does not have the authority to pass this. He will be working with the city's Chief of Climate Officer. There are incentives for good faith efforts to comply with Local Law 97. Cooperatives and Condominium owners will be financially hurt while making these adjustments.

Public Participation:

James Gallagher

Thanked State Assemblywoman Nily Rozic and State Senator John Liu for their service to the Fresh Meadows community.

Jennifer Martin

She is representing Schwartz Brothers, Saini Chapel and Parkside Funeral Homes are opening their doors in the evenings to the community for various evenings of free entertainment. The list is on their website.

Saaif Alam: (Queens General Assembly Delegate of the Queens Civic Affairs Committee) – There is a Dominican Parade in Jackson Heights on June 18, 2023. This month is LGBT Pride month. On June 25, 2023, there will be a city-wide parade.

Rita Ash: Mayflower Hotel residents are causing problems within the neighborhood. She listed the problems.

Martha Taylor stated that in the attendance is a representative from the mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and the person heard the problems.

Hersh Parekh: Announced that the efforts to close schools [in NYS] for Diwali Day is close to completion. He thanked Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar, Assemblyman David Weprin, State Senator Joseph Addabbo and the members of CB8, who all actively supported this bill.

Elected Official's Representatives

Ananya Rajaraman representing Assemblywoman Nily Rozic – Assemblywoman Rozic along with Senator John Lui, Assemblywoman Grace Meng and City Councilmember Linda Lee sent a letter to the Mayor's Office requesting termination of the contract with Housing Works for the Mayflower Hotel. Nily Rozic strongly opposes any plan to designate this facility as permanent transitional housing. She is in support of the great work produced by Concerned Residents for a Safe Community regarding this issue.

Martha Taylor stated that this community is fortunate to have our elected officials.

Lya Rothmann – representing Senator Toby Stavisky's office - On July 10, 2023, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. their office is partnering with the New York City Office of Finance to provide seniors and persons with disabilities with assistance with applying for rent increase exemption. This will be held at the Hollis Public Library. Contact their office for more information, 718/445-0004.

Chairperson Martha Taylor announced that if a public participant is late, he/she will not be allowed to speak.

Lois Marbach representing City Councilperson Linda Lee –

- June 18, 2023, at the Queens Farms Museum they will be hosting a Food Fest.
- Tuesday June 20, 2023, at P. S.,221 from 7 p.m. to 8:30p.m. she is hosting a townhall meeting on Local Law 97. She is supporting a bill to extend compliance to seven years.
- Sunday July 16, 2023, they are sponsoring a Rain Barrel Giveaway.at the Queens Farms Museum
- Her office is hosting an E-waste event at the Playground on Winchester Blvd. on Sunday, June 25, 2023.
- On July 9, 2023, at Cunningham Park, they are sponsoring a paper shredding event from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- She is supporting city retirees against Medicare Advantage Plan.

Soo Chen Joi representing State Senator John Lui's office – He is very concerned about the Mayflower Hotel. He is opposed to the city designating it permanent transitional housing. His office is hosting a paper shredding event on August 27, 2023, at Kissena Park from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sam Verstanding representing State Assemblyman David Weprin – His office has partnered with New York Presbyterian Hospital to conduct free Narco training at Hillcrest Jewish Center on July 11, 2023, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. They are hosting a Rain Barrel Giveaway event on July 8, 2023, at Cunningham Park.

Salute to the Flag.

Chairperson Martha Taylor asked Kevin Forrestal to conduct the elections for Executive Board members.

Bhitihara Fulton was nominated as Secretary.

Bhitihara Fulton was asked to cast on vote for:

- **Martha Taylor – Chairperson**
- **Michael Hannibal – First Vice Chair**
- **Seymour Schwartz – Second Vice Chair**
- **Mary Maggio – Third Vice Chair**

- **Harbachan Singh - Treasurer**

All nominees were unanimously confirmed.

Approval of Minutes: Harbachan Singh made a motion to approve the minutes of May 10, 2023, seconded by Deepti Sharma. The motion passed unanimously.

Deputy Inspector Kevin Chen:

- There has been an increase in the number of car thefts, especially cars manufactured by Honda.
- There is an increase in motorcycle thefts.

Chairperson, Martha Taylor's Report

Chairperson Marth Taylor introduced the new Community Assistant, Soleil Griffin. Alan Ong has accepted the Chairmanship of the Youth, Library and Education Committee.

Community Board 8 is sending a letter to the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation in support of the plans to revitalize Goose Pond Park.

The Friends of Cunningham Park has lost its president and needs more volunteers.

Community Board 8 is holding a Health Fair in Cunningham Park on Friday June 30, 2023, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Civilian Complaint Review Board is having their annual Public Meeting on Wednesday, July 12, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. in the Robert Ross Johnson Family Life Center (located at 172-17 Linden Blvd.)

District Manager's Report, June 2023

Mayor's Community Affairs Unit

Representative Kevin Morris stated that there will be a migrant shelter at JFK at one of the buildings that was previously abandoned in the next few weeks. He reminded us that another public safety town hall is coming up. A date and location are forthcoming.

Department of Parks and Recreation

The Philharmonic Orchestra will be at Cunningham Park on June 15th. See flyer on the table from the Friends of Cunningham Park for summer events at the park.

Department of Transportation

The DOT resurfacing list was submitted to us (see attached). It includes the long-awaited resurfacing of 188th Street between Union Turnpike and 73rd Avenue.

NYPD

Stolen cars are still on the rise. There is also a rise in motorcycle theft. Trucks are going around scooping up motorcycles.

If you have any locations with graffiti, the 107th Precinct has paint. Please share these locations with us as we are compiling a list to send to the 107th Community Affairs.

The NYPD has an "All-In" initiative. This means that all bureaus are tasked with flooding all areas with uniformed officers in the street. They will be more visible. This should deter assaults and robberies which have increased.

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Our representative Chae No left his position as of today to take a new position at the MTA. He was a very good resource; he will be missed. No one has been assigned to replace him yet.

NYC Commission on Human Rights

It is no longer required to be there in person to file complaints with the NYC Commission on Human Rights (CCHR). Complaints can be filed by calling their office at (212) 416-0197. They can also schedule a video conference for you with an attorney.

The agency is partnering with the Queens Borough President Office for a Breaking Bread event on June 22nd at Borough Hall. RSVP is required. A flyer is forthcoming.

Aging NYC

We were informed that the agency launched a new program for older adults for workforce development. Anyone who is 55+ years old who is unemployed or underemployed can participate. It is called Silver Corps according to our Aging NYC representative. She stated that they are required to work at City agency or not-for-profit agencies as part of their training.

To learn more about participating in the Silver Corps program, older New Yorkers can call Aging Connect at 212-AGING-NYC (212-244-6469) or email silvercorps@aging.nyc.gov.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

There were 535 complaints received for CB8. The top five complaints were:

- 249 for air/smoke. (*These complaints came from one individual.*)
- 106 for car alarms
- 32 sewer complaints
- 23 for leaking or malfunctioning hydrants
- 17 for catch basins.

Breaking Ground (Homeless Outreach)

Hasani Worme of Breaking Ground stated that he received moderate requests for homeless outreach in CB8. He also stated that he anticipated an increase in activity, as the weather is warmer, at Major Marks Park located on the CB12 side of Hillside Avenue and 175th Street. The issue of the homeless person at the Jamaica Estates' Gatehouse was raised. As previously stated, he can only offer services. The resident has the right to refuse service.

Fire Department

It was reiterated that community groups must go online to request fire safety services and/or by-stander CPR. The smoke house is only available to schools and camps.



Happy Birthday to Board Members Alan Ong, John Gebhard, Elke Maerz and Mohammed Tohin

Shubhra Datta representing Borough President Donovan Richards – Announced a few events.

Martha Taylor, Chairperson announced Scott Solomon.

Scott Solomon of NYC Department of Planning – He can be reached at ssolomon@planning.nyc.gov or 718-520-2082. He is here to support the Zoning Committee [of CB8] we have been discussing zoning for carbon neutrality, which is a non-ULURP text amendment. The city would prefer that all 59 Community Boards agree with the plan.

Scott Solomon made a presentation regarding zoning for carbon neutralization a non-ULURP text amendment. The city would like all fifty-nine-community board to support this plan. He referred to the green sheet in the board member’s packet. The handout details 17 proposed policies, sorted into 4 main goals, decarbonizing our energy, buildings, transportation, and water, compost, and recycling.

Martha Taylor announced that Steven Konigsberg, as Chairperson of the Zoning Committee will present their report.

Zoning Committee – Text Amendment N 230113 ZRY for The City of Yes for Carbon Neutrality:

Steven Konigsberg: Scott Solomon made a presentation on this matter during a joint meeting of the Zoning and Housing/Buildings Committee. The city is moving away from dependence on fossil fuel. A major challenge will be to expand the current electrical grid. As it is currently constructed the grid will be unable to meet this change. The City Planning Commission is in preparation to go through the zoning text amendments is to allow for alteration and modifications that will aid in reducing carbon emissions.

1. Allowing roof top solar, by changing the height and coverage limitations
2. Allow parking lot solar canopies.
3. Allow standalone solar generators.
4. Create a new tool for City Planning Commission to legalize onshore wind power, as an alternative source of energy.
5. Creating clear regulations regarding energy storage.

These alterations will demand removing zoning barriers to erecting, efficient heat and cooling systems in newly constructed buildings.

Steven Konigsberg asked if there were any questions from board members.

Kevin Forrestal: During the presentation they said this is the current zoning regulation and this is what is needed to get to carbon neutrality. They did not state why the original requirements were in place nor what is the impact these changes will create.

Answer [Steve Konigsberg]: Is your question are they removing certain restrictions contained in the zoning text amendment and replacing them with new provisions?

Kevin Forrestal: What is the effect of eliminating the old safety regulations? Why are you asking these changes?

Answer [Scott Solomon]: We [NYC City Planning] reviewed regulations adapted ten to 12 years. We then began to update our regulations. None of these new zoning regulations are mandates. They are only here to assist those interested in lowering carbon emissions. For example, the height of solar panels on flat building roof tops was six to nine feet. With the assistance of FDNY we incorporated their need for the solar panels to be at least 15 feet. Solar panels on pitched roofs need only to be extended by 15 inches above the roof.

Amy Tse: Was the FDNY consulted about public and private charging stations?

Answer [Scott Solomon]: Yes, we tried to consult with every relevant agency.

Mary Maggio: I attended a webinar hosted by Borough President, Donovan Richards regarding the City of Yes. All city agencies were involved in the planning and are now on board with this plan.

Dilip Nath: We are far behind the rest of the world. We should do what we can to reduce our carbon footprint.

Tobias Paris made a motion in support of the Text Amendment, seconded by Dilip Nath.

Vote:

16 Yes 28 No 0 Abstentions

DEP/Sanitation Committee – Kevin Forrestal, Chairperson:

Previous to this meeting, this committee’s minutes were emailed to every board member. A vote was taken to support the carbon neutrality policy.

Chairperson Martha Taylor asked board members to read a letter in their packet. The letter is addressed to Mayor Eric Adams regarding the results of a survey of The Future of Trash, the policy has several negative unintended consequences. The community survey resoundingly rejected the plan. Kevin Forrestal requested a vote to send the letter to Mayor Adams.

Heather Bennett-Idels made the motion to send the letter, seconded by Susan Cleary. A hand vote was taken. The motion unanimously passed.

A copy of the letter will be sent to the Commissioner of Sanitation and the Rat Czar.

Area 6 Committee – Maria DeInnocentiis, Chairperson:

She thanked Martha Taylor for her assistance with the Mayflower Hotel. They wanted to extend the contract with Housing Works to continue providing administrative support, without public hearings. They would extend the contract an additional 3 years, as a temporary facility. An environmental impact study and a fair share evaluation will be conducted. Community Boards will be notified when these reports are completed. Community Board 8 along with elected officials, City Councilmember Linda Lee, State Senator John Lui and Assembly Member Nily Rozic were supportive of the concerns residents voiced during the contract period.

Health Minute with Dr. Stern

Walking is the best method of exercising. It can reduce your stress level and relieve tension. Walking can help to improve your cardiovascular system and memory.

Motion to adjourn meeting was made by Mary Maggio, at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Aikens-Williams CB8 Staff

June 28, 2023 (Revised 9/11/2023)