



*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/Public Hearing held on Wednesday, January 11, 2023.

Attendance:

Board Members Present:

Robert Block, Edward Chung, Susan Cleary, Maria DeInnocentiis, Kevin Forrestal, Howard Fried, Bhittihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher, Wendy Gennaro, Ashan Habib, Marc Haken, Michael Hannibal, Steven Konigsberg, Islam “Delwar” Mohammed, Neeta Jain, Paul Lazauskas, Mitch Lisker, Mary Maggio, Yaniv Meirov, Dilip Nath, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Tammy Osherov, Hersh Parekh, Simon Pelman, Mohammad Rahman, Jesse Rosenbaum, Deepti Sharma, Douglas Sherman, Dr. Penny Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Amy Tse, and Jacob Weinberg.

Board Members Absent:

Dilafroz Ahmed, Heather Bennett-Idels, Kenneth Cohen II, Solomon Davydov, Allen Eisenstein, John Gebhard, Tami Hirsch, Elke Maerz, Jennifer Martin, David Mordukhaev, Alan Ong, Frances Peterson, Charlton Rhee, Seymour Schwartz, Harbachan Singh, Tamika Williams-Moore, and Emanuel Yllescas.

Others Present:

Evelyn Li representing Congresswoman Grace Meng, Max Weprin representing Borough President Donovan Richards, Michael Mallon, Chief of Staff, Borough President’s Office, Luna Fu representing Council Member Linda Lee, Honorable Council Member James Gennaro, Meredith Wittmann representing Council Member James Gennaro, Jon Gallo representing Honorable State Senator John Liu, Norris Johns representing Honorable State Senator Leroy Comrie, Lya Rothmann representing Honorable State Senator Toby A.Stavisky, Marco Cruz representing Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal, Ananya Rajaraman representing Assembly Member, 107th Precinct Deputy Inspector Kevin Chan, P.O. Timothy Gorman, 107th Precinct Community Affairs, Captain Lubin, 107th Precinct, Paul Graziano, Urban Planner, Suzanne Windland of SNAP, Celine Dorisca of SNAP, CB8 District Manager Marie Adam-Ovide and Sandra Aikens-Williams, CB8 Staff Member.

Call to Order:

Chairperson Martha Taylor called this Board meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

Public Participation:

James Gallagher, Jr. – President of Friends of Fresh Meadows Library
Announced several meetings and events occurring in the community.

- At last month’s (CB8) meeting he announced the library will reopen in February. It will open on Tuesday, January 24, 2023.
- P.S. 26 finished upgrading their boiler.
- 107th Precinct will have their council meeting on Tuesday, January 24th in-person at the precinct and virtual.

Elected Officials' Announcements:

Rokeya Akhter representing District Attorney Melinda Katz: Happy New Year. January is Human Trafficking Awareness month. January 25, 2023, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., they will host a webinar focusing on combatting youth exploitation and trafficking.

Anthony Lemma representing Assemblymember David Weprin: David is now the chair of the Insurance Committee. Their office has plenty of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). They are offering supplies free of charge to the community.

Honorable City Councilmember James Gennaro:

- He conveyed sympathy for the passing of past Board Member Dr. Allen Bennett.
- He introduced a new staff person, Mary Whitman.
- He is hopeful that from her statement in the State of the State Address, Governor Hochul will take action on improvements to criminal justice and affordable housing systems.
- Medicare Advantage Plan is being considered for New York City government retirees (a plan with lessor benefits than the current plan). The city would offer an improved plan option at the monthly cost of \$191.00. Advantage Plan would be paid for by the federal government for the next five years. The court informed the mayor's attorneys that the city administrative code does not allow for the mayor to make this adjustment. The only way to do this is for the City Council to rewrite the administrative code. Currently, the city pays 600 million dollars for retirees and 700 million dollars for current employees.
- He is in favor of common-sense criminal reform.

Chairperson Martha Taylor stated in her opinion, the city would have a lot more money in the city treasury if we did not have 8 to 1 matching funds.

Norris Johns representing State Senator Leroy Comrie: Happy New Year. Their office is hosting a free e-waste recycling event on January 21, 2023.

Evelyn Luna representing City Councilmember Linda Lee: Happy New Year. Every first Wednesday of the month their office will have a lawyer to aid members of the community, free of charge. The Chief of Staff is working on scheduling a meeting with the mayor for Councilwoman Lee. She plans to propose recommendations regarding criminal justice reform.

Evelyn Li representing Congresswoman Grace Meng: In the beginning of February, their office will offer two dates to host passport services as a temporary satellite office. They will be able to service first-time passport applicants. Happy New Year.

John Gallo representing State Senator John Lui: Happy New Year. They will host New York City Department of Finance property tax exemption assistance Thursday January 26, 2023, at the Hillcrest Jewish Center and again on February 22, 2023 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Lya Rothmann representing State Senator Toby Stavisky: Happy New Year. She reminded everyone that if you have issues for Senator Stavisky, please contact the office at 718-765-6675.

James Mangeluzo representing New York City Comptroller Brad Lander: There has been just under 10,000 citywide heat complaints since 2017. Recently this office has begun a monthly newsletter highlighting information about federal, state and city assistance for people struggling economically due to the pandemic. It is on their website. They have published the end of the year financial report. The city tax collection is \$900 million dollars over projection. This district's properties are taxed two to three times more than the richest parts of the city. He would like to hear from the community about alternative plans for a fairer and balanced property tax schedule.

Chairperson Martha Taylor requested that from now on elected officials' representatives call prior to the meeting to be placed on a list to speak at the board meetings. Also, to keep their message down to two minutes.

Salute to the Flag

Chairperson Martha Taylor led the salute to the flag.

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Guest Speakers:

Suzanne Windland was representing Services Now for Adult Persons, Inc. They are a senior center located in Queens Village; however, they have services that are spread beyond this location. The program has door-to-door pick up bus service, case management services, meals on wheels, lunch, bingo, fitness classes, trips to Broadway shows, etc. She manages Friendly Visiting, a volunteer program. Volunteers visit homebound older adult persons. They make calls and/or visit one hour per week. A program participant must be at least 60 years old. She thanked the DM [in advance] for assisting SNAP in the completion of an RFP and will be contacting the office for a letter of support.

Celine Dorisca was representing Services Now for Adult Persons, Inc., she manages the social adult day program, Open Door. This program is tailored to caregivers [a caregiver can be a family member, friend, neighbor, etc.]. The program offers counseling, educational programs/workshops and group counseling. They have a special adult day care program for persons exhibiting early to moderate stage of Alzheimer’s disease (they don’t have to have the diagnosis, just have the symptom of memory loss). The program services its participants Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. They offer arts and crafts, brain games, and sensory activities. Each program participant is assigned a one-on-one aide who begins from the transport to the program, stays with the participant throughout the day of programming and finally escorts the participant home.

Dr. Penny Stern – Who can come to the program?

Answer: [Suzanne Windland] – You must be at least 60 years old.

Dr. Penny Stern – Can you be in good health?

Answer: [Suzanne Windland] – Yes. Their services range from taking their weight, to Zumba classes.

Paul Graziano, City Planner

Governor Hochul proposed zoning plans:

1. All cities across the state will have development targets in a three-year cycle and if the local authority falls short the state will develop a fast-track program eliminating community boards’ involvement. The state would be able to approve the building of multi-family housing in single and two family zones. Currently, this is against home rule and local control land lease.
2. They want to do TOD (Transit Oriented Developments) last year they proposed a half mile radius increase. That change would have only effected property surrounding the MTA and Long Island Railroad, outside of the city. This year’s proposal expands to include Metropolitan commuter railroad and subway stations in New York City and every area within a half mile. This would include all properties south of the Grand Central Parkway, Jamaica Estates, all of Kew Gardens and Richmond Hills and half of Northeast Queens.
3. All illegal property conversions would get blanketed amnesty.
4. If a homeowner chooses to have a A.D.U. (Accessory Dwelling Units – for example, building a house behind your house or converting a basement to an apartment) - the property will be tax exempt.

He presented the board a chart analyzing the one hundred and eleven recommendations developed by the mayor’s BLAST committee. A committee formed to review the building standards, whose membership is in merger numbers with respect to civic leaders.

- The plan includes the elimination of environmental impact studies and approvals for new construction under two hundred units.
- Streamlining or eliminating traffic studies.
- They want to eliminate codes, that when questionable, at present, trigger an oversight review from state and city officials.

- Currently, agencies are not permitted to conduct traffic studies during holiday seasons, the winter and the summer, as it does not reflect regular traffic flow. They would like to remove this restriction.
- Expand the mechanism for E designations. This is a designation given to areas that had stored or dumped substance(s) with environmental impact concerns. Currently, developers come to the community boards to get pre-certification prior to starting the project. This change is to simplify projects for fast tracking.
- The fire department is responsible for certifying ingress, egress, air flow circulation, fire safety suppression system and HVAC systems, that keep buildings habitable. The committee recommended these tests transfer to the Department of Buildings.
- They want to develop a remote building inspections system. D.O.B. would give property owners cameras, so that the inspector can remain in the office and view the property from the owner supplied pictures.
- Eliminate urban planners by automating their decision-making process.
- Streamlining the process to build affordable housing on city owned property. This would bypass the URLUP process.
- Removing landmark's approval from the zoning process.
- Expunge open and outdated building code violations.
- Removing neighboring preconstruction surveys.
- Owners of one, two, and three family homes would be able to do some work on the building's structure without the use of licensed professionals, such as, electricians and plumbers.
- Expand authority of licensed professionals, such as, electricians and plumbers, to have the authority to certify aspects of the project that they are not formally trained and licensed.
- Identify work tasks that will no longer need a professional.
- Allow the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to self-permit.
- Reduce, the number of codes for waterfront construction.
- Allow commercial batteries on roof tops.
- Create building codes for older existing buildings.

Marc A. Haken: Is this the city or the state?

Answer: *[Paul Graziano]* – The first part I talked about was from the governor. The later part is the mayor's "Get Stuff Built" program.

Marc A. Haken: Do these things have to be approved by the City Council?

Answer: *[Paul Graziano]* – Yes, some of it.

Martha Taylor: These proposals or adopted amendments, can we change certain parts we don't like?

Answer: *[Paul Graziano]* – The answer is yes. I have a feeling they're trying to fast track adoption of some of these items. I think there's fifteen or sixteen things that the City Council has to sign off on and those are the big ones for the most part. There are others that can be done by a city agency.

Martha Taylor: Does it need City Council approval or is it a done deal at this point?

Answer: *[Paul Graziano]* – Correct, these are recommendations by this committee, predominately made-up of representatives of the real estate industry. However, it is moving forward fast.

Martha Taylor: Does anybody want to express an idea or formulate a motion about all of this?

Marc Haken: I suggest we form a Buildings Committee.

Martha Taylor: I suggest that our Buildings Committee meet as soon as possible and discuss what you would like to do about these proposed changes.

Marc Haken: I would like to formulate a motion to oppose these items. To be done after the committee meets.

Martha Taylor: Paul, how much time do we have?

Answer: *[Paul Graziano]* – I do not know; I would check with your [City] Council person. I suggest that you get on it quickly. I believe that multiple City Council persons and Community Boards will have to participate.

Martha Taylor: Deepti, am I correct, you are our Buildings Committee Chairperson?

Deepti Sharma: Yes

Martha Taylor: Will you organize a meeting to explore these issues?

Deepti Sharma: Yes

James Gallagher: Fresh Meadows complex is a Special Preservation District. Will it be eliminated from these proposals?

Answer: *[Paul Graziano]* – I did not see it. This is a general list; it is not targeting specific areas.

Ed Cheung: Will this effect just city owned properties?

Answer: *[Paul Graziano]* – All properties.

Amy Tse: During the election season the governor and mayor ensured that construction sites would have unionized workers. Are they both determined to turn abandoned commercial properties into temporary housing?

Answer: *[Paul Graziano]* – Not temporary housing, but permanent housing. The governor included it in her housing policy, and it is in tandem with the mayor’s policy.

Susan Cleary: How come we can’t vote no to The City of Yes? Are these issues in The City of Yes?

Answer: *[Paul Graziano]* – This program is Get Stuff Built. The City of Yes is a series of zoning and ULURP changes. You must vote on them; they have not come up yet and they may not come up for another year. They must be voted on by the community board. Once they are finalized, they must have a public hearing.

Approval of Minutes:

Marc A. Haken made a motion to approve the minutes of January 19, 2022, seconded by Dr. Penny Stern.

Count in favor: **33** Opposed: **0** Abstained: **0**

Chairperson Report

The passing of the much beloved former Board Member Dr. Allen Bennett was announced. A moment of silence was observed.

- Marc Haken requested the chairperson announce that the Borough President’s African American History Committee in conjunction with the Queens Public Library, in Jamaica, is holding a Martin Luther King, Jr. event on Saturday January 28, 2023, at Noon.
- Last month, three people asked to have a hearing about the P.S. 26 upgrades. We are planning to have an informational hearing chaired by Marc Haken, Chairperson of the Youth, Education and Libraries Committee. You will be notified when we have a confirmed date. Condolences to Frances Peterson on the passing of her brother.
- There will be a memorial service for the former CB8 Board Member, mother of Assembly Member David Weprin and City Council Member Mark Weprin at this location on Thursday January 19th at 7 p.m.
- Jamaica Estates membership has an annual mail-in fundraiser. This year 20 checks have been stolen. The envelopes were stolen, and someone is washed checks.

Deputy Inspector Kevin Chan

Check stealing has been a growing national issue for several years. He suggested we use a pigmented pen to write checks. Whenever possible try to hand deliver the check. The thieves are fishing through mailboxes using string with a sticky substance at the end. Please report this crime. There were two burglaries in the Fresh Meadows area.

Dr Penny Stern: It has happened to me through Citibank at 188th Street. I was told by the bank staff to go to the [107th] Precinct. I just wanted to confirm that going to the precinct is the right place.

Answer: *[Deputy Inspector Kevin Chan]* – Yes, go to the precinct to report the crime.

Martha Taylor: Because the postal service is federal, we have the congresswoman researching this matter.

Robert Block: Is there a type of pen that will decrease the chance of this happening?

Answer: *[Deputy Inspector Kevin Chan]* – No, pigmented ink pen will only help by making it difficult for criminals to erase and write the check to themselves.

District Manager's Report:

Mayor's Community Affairs Unit (CAU)

The Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, the Office of Public Engagement and the Community Engagement Unit are being consolidated.

Commission on Human Rights (NYCCHR)

In Fiscal Year 2022 the NYC Commission on Human Rights conducted 2183 testing. The agency uses testers to see if they encounter discrimination. The commission obtained \$7,044,914 in compensatory damages and civil penalties to complaints (\$6,166,414 for compensatory damages and \$878,500 in civil penalties). They had 11,924 inquires, and 169 pre-complaint interventions.

Some of the notable enforcement actions are:

- Five Guys had to pay \$49,000 in damages and penalties in a pregnancy discrimination case.
- Aon Risk Services had to pay \$80,000 to resolve a Fair Chance Act Violation
- Delta Airlines agreed to update policies in Pregnancy, Lactation, Disability, and Religious Accommodation Policies.

Police Department (NYPD)

Crime went up. The 107th Precinct is getting more officers at the precinct. The Ecuadorian Election will take place on January 5th at Queens College. They expect an increase in traffic in this area.

Department of Sanitation

The organics collection has been suspended and they anticipate that it will return in the spring. There will be no collection on Monday, January 16th in observance of the Martin Luther King Holiday.

Fire Department (FDNY)

They continue to push their fire safety messaging. They are now focused on lithium battery safety. The agency is willing to go to your fairs and town hall meetings. They can bring a table with information and/or offer CPR trainings.

Department of Buildings (DOB)

Stone balustrades are heavy and can be very dangerous if installed improperly. The agency wants homeowners to be aware of the requirements when installing stone balustrades. When installed as a fence, they do not require a permit if they are 6 feet high or less. They must follow the building codes that require anchorage/ties (such as wire threading) at the stone baluster connections.

Department of Transportation (DOT)

The construction embargo is no longer in effect. Work can now resume (i.e., on Main Street, Union Turnpike, Hillside Avenue, etc.). The agency reported an 8.8% decrease in pedestrian death for 2022. They installed a record of 1,400 safety improvements including All-Way-Stop signs, cross walks, daylighting, raised crosswalks across the five boroughs. They installed turn calming treatments at 200 intersections. They also launched the 24/7 speed camera operations last year.

Department of City Planning (DCP)

There isn't any active ULURP application for Community Board 8 at this time. The three Text Amendments under the City of Yes will be reviewed this year starting with the Text Amendment for Carbon Neutrality, followed by Text Amendment for Economic Opportunity, and the one for Housing Opportunity.

Queens Borough Public Library (QBPL)

The Queens libraries are offering a virtual and in-person program, Kick-Off to Kindergarten (K2K), that helps with. Early literacy skills. You can contact the QBPL by sending an email to K2K@queenspubliclibrary.org for more information. The ESOL classes will be starting soon. The deadline to apply is January 14th. The libraries are offering free take home COVID test kits in partnership with Test and Trace. There is limit of two test kits per person.

The Fresh Meadows Library located at 193-20 Horace Harding Expressway, Fresh Meadows, NY 11365 is scheduled to reopen at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 24, 2023. The hours of service will be:

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. They are also open on Tuesdays from 1p.m. to 6 p.m., Thursdays from noon to 8 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5p.m.

Happy Birthday to: *Mohammad Rahman, Kenneth Cohen II, Maria DeInnocentiis & Martha Taylor.*



Borough President’s Donovan Richards Representative – Max Weprin

- He is moving on to work at the City Council’s office.
- Haitian Independence Day event at Borough Hall on Thursday January 26th from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- Community Board Membership Applications are now available on our website.

Due to the lateness of the hour Dr. Penny Stern’s Medical Minute was postponed.

Adjournment

Mary Maggio made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 9:01 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Aikens-Williams, CB8 staff
January 20, 2023*