



The City of New York
Borough of Queens



Chairperson, Martha Taylor

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

Minutes
Youth, Education and Library Committee – October 24, 2019
Held at Community Board 8, Queens, 197-15 Hillside Avenue

Attendance:

Committee Members Present:

Marc A. Haken, **Chair**, Robert Block, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton and James Gallagher, Jr.

Non-Board Members Committee Members:

Alan Ong.

Others in Attendance:

Jeff Kohn, Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB) Liaison – Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), Susan Xie, Manager of the Fresh Meadows Library and Jatnna Reyes, CB8 Staff.

Chairperson Marc Haken called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He asked everyone present to introduce himself/herself.

Chairperson Haken asked Mr. Kohn to begin the presentation to the committee.

Jeff Kohn, NAB Liaison, DYCD – Mr. Kohn started by introducing what the DYCD does and its mission statement. The DYCD invests in a network of community-based organizations and programs to alleviate the effects of poverty and to provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish.

These are some of the main highlights of the presentation:

- DYCD strives to improve the quality of life of New Yorkers by collaborating with local organizations and investing in the talents and assets of our communities to help them develop, grow and thrive.
- Back in the Johnson Administration, a war on poverty was declared and a Community Services Block Grants initiative was created.
- The State is the one that administers these grants and the City receives \$35.5M towards programs to the specific grant.
- The unit that he works for is the Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB). This specific unit gets \$15.5M to fund the program. They have a Community Action Board (CAB) at the City level that helps distribute funding as well.

- There are 41 neighborhood development areas (NDA) in New York City. There have been a few of them that have been contracted. They have created two new NDAs for Queens.
- They use census data every couple of years to update on poverty level. In order to create an NDA, they must deem a neighborhood tabulation area. For example: QN38 and QN35 with a red dotted line (*2019 NDA Map for Queens 8 was presented*). This is created by the Department of City Planning (DCP).
- These two areas [QN38/QN35] meet the guideline for a minimum of 20% poverty level or higher. This is the reason why they created a NDA.
- There is \$167+ thousands of dollars set aside that will go to community-based organizations after they are done with the needs assessment process.
- The needs assessment process consists of a survey. It asks about demographics, services in a community and what you think is needed. The survey is designed for people who go to school, work and live in the community (16 years and older).
- In the survey, they have about five or six needs that are specifically designed for Queens NDA 8. They have been conducting these surveys since July and will finish on October 31st.
- They are trying to develop a Board. He had Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB) membership applications available in case someone was interested in joining. He represents many other NDA areas in Brooklyn, LIC and other area in Queens.
- They are having a Public Hearing on Federal Funding for community social services for low-income individuals and families in the neighborhood. It will be on Wednesday, October 30th at 6:00 p.m. at the Pomonok Community Center located at 67-09 Kissena Boulevard. You can attend and testify as to what are the most urgent needs in your neighborhood and what kind of programs would address those needs. He encourages everyone to attend.
- After the Public Hearing is done, the agency is going to tabulate all data collected on what the highest needs are to be considered. Then, it will be presented to each NAB and they can choose how the funds will be split.

During the presentation, several concerns were raised by the Board Members. The following is a recap of the questions and the responses received:

Marc A. Haken – What is the poverty criterium?

Answer: [*Jeff Kohn*] – It is 20%. Within the individual neighborhood tabulation area, 20% tabulated up that lives in there, 20% or higher is what they deemed to be eligible for funding in a NDA (i.e. Pomonok, Electchester, Hillcrest, Hillcrest Estates).

Pomonok is a Public Housing Project. One will imagine that it would be included.

Answer: [*Jeff Kohn*] – Correct.

Electchester is a union cooperative. I can't believe that it falls within what might be considered a poverty area or an area entitled for funds, but you are telling us that it is.

Answer: [*Jeff Kohn*] – Well, basically in total we take what these subsets are, and we tabulate it. For example: there may be no poverty issues with Hillcrest or Hillcrest Estates, but it may deem that the poverty level in Pomonok has gone up significantly to the point that there is no longer an off-set from the other areas. Pomonok's level has gone up to a point where in total in neighborhood tabulation areas, Map QN38 it is so high now that the whole area has 20% or higher. I can't tell you the specific number, but I believe is about 21.8%.

Bhitihara Martha-Fulton – Don't you think that there are more people living in the area than you are aware of? Given that every house in my area which is a few blocks away, even though they are not supposed to has a basement apartment with another family in there who couldn't afford to live in a regular apartment. I think the poverty level is a little higher.

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – It is possible because we do updates from the census data. Every three years they send information for people to fill out. Same thing with Queens 35, you have Briarwood and Jamaica Hills and in those areas it is very possible that poverty is continuing to increase. In a few neighborhoods, we can see the trend of gentrification. Ridgewood, Woodside, Sunnyside, Jackson Heights had a NDA and no longer have it.

Marc A. Haken – Who has been conducting these surveys?

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – We have two Board Members that are conducting surveys. One is the resident association president of Pomonok and a Board Member in Jamaica Hill. The NDA from maximum participation gets a Board itself. District 8 gets a Board who has Board Members who are conducting these surveys. The Board consists of 6 appointees from the City agency and 6 appointees who are selected from various Elected Officials in the area. They have not tabulated yet which districts will get the appointment in the State Legislature. I can tell you that Council Member Lancman gets two appointees, the Borough President gets one appointee, Congresswoman Grace Meng gets one appointee. Pomonok is within Assembly Member Rosenthal who will also get an appointee. The rest of the NDA is jerrymantered by three State Senate Districts. I am not sure who will get that final appointee. I will keep us posted.

In order to be on that, must you be a resident of that targeted area?

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – Yes, you must reside within the solid red-dotted blue line [referring to the NDA Map]. Anybody who lives within the NDA and is 16 or older is eligible to be on the Board unless they work for DYCD or work for an Elected Official who is appointed in the area, then they can't.

Bhitihara Martha-Fulton – I think I can do it because I reside within the area.

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – Yes, you can. We welcome you to join.

Can you give us an example of what the needs are?

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – On the survey itself, the highest needs are safety and crime prevention, it also has legal services, English as a Second Language (ESL) etc. I will email Marie a list of needs for it to be forwarded to the committee tomorrow.

Marc A. Haken – Please do.

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – I will do that. For example: ESL is the second highest and legal services. Since we are not talking about a huge amount of money compared to other bids you can probably split it evenly.

Is there a Request for Proposal (RFP) for it?

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – Yes. After we tabulate, we put in RFPs. For example, if there is one contract for legal services, we put the RFP out and say four people applied for that and write a grant for it. We take that proposal, we have the members of the NAB, they select three with an alternate and read those four proposals and rate it along with people from the agencies. The highest scores out of those four proposals will get the contract. Once the contract is awarded, they need to now go to the NAB itself and explain to them how they are going to administer these services.

Why is the RFP not limited solely to Non-profit organizations (NGO) that have serviced the area in the past?

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – For example, Queens Community House is an agency that I met with that has taken on their own task on actually handing out to people who has used their service. There is somebody who is aware of the NDA program. They get NDA funding.

I am thinking of the Child Center of New York who services us.

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – Out of all organizations, organizations like that know about the RFP process, they know where to look, how to write a grant. Those organizations would probably write a proposal depending on what their highest needs are. So, once we know what that is, that's how we can tabulate

the program. They'll respond to the RFP. The board members would rate the highest one and then the contract will be awarded. Then they will come and meet the Board itself.

Jeff Kohn – Our NAB meetings are open to the public. Anyone can attend.

Marc A. Haken – *[To Mr. Gallagher]* **I didn't realize that the beacon in M.S. 216 is no longer administered by the Samuel Field Y.**

Answer: *[James Gallagher Jr.]* – Correct. It has merged Samuel Field Y and Central Queens Y. It is called Queens Common Point.

The Samuel Field Y took over the other Y where Steve Goodman was the Director?

Answer: *[James Gallagher Jr.]* – Correct. It is under a different name. Two ladies who run the program, they are excellent. One wanted to come tonight and meet you and Jeff but couldn't make it.

Maybe she can sign up for public speaking for our next meeting next week.

Answer: *[James Gallagher Jr.]* – I would let her know.

Marc A. Haken – *[To Mr. Kohn]* **Does the Queens Hospital Center fall within the catch area?**

Answer: *[Jeff Kohn]* – Yes, it does. I also believe St. John's is within that area.

The reason I ask is because there is ongoing construction there now, we got a certain amount of space at the T-Building and I was wondering whether money from this can be used for that.

Answer: *[Jeff Kohn.]* – There is a possibility, but it would have to be a community-based organization that wanted to open up and run a program there.

It just so happens, that there is one. Queens Community Center said that they would be the NGO to deal with it. The person who is building the building is giving us x number of square feet. Now we have to find money to outfit it or Forest Hills has to come up with the money to do it. It would be a multi-purpose use. It may consist of a youth, health, senior component etc.

Answer: *[Jeff Kohn.]* – Then my answer would be no. What it could qualify for is if hypothetically in the future let's say by 2022, whatever the needs are, if they are open and functioning and they have a program and they are looking for supplemental, the we can give funds.

Then we have to look for money to start the program first.

Answer: *[Jeff Kohn.]* – Right. If they are looking to expand the program and that was a high need in the next assessment, they have the highest score in their grant for the proposal then yes, if all the variables come together they can use that money for that specific program.

Marc Haken – *[To Jatnna Reyes]* **Would you be able to relate that to Marie who can then relate that to Sey Schwartz?**

Answer: *[Ms. Reyes]* – I will.

James Gallagher Jr. – **The Public Hearing is the same night as our Board Meeting.**

Answer: *[Jeff Kohn]* – What time is the Community Board meeting?

7:30 p.m.

Answer: *[Jeff Kohn]* – Then my advice is, come early, testify and go. This won't happen again. I set this meeting months ago.

Marc A. Haken – **We never have meetings this late. It's just that the month of October was full of holidays and this last Wednesday was the only one we had available.**

Answer: *[Jeff Kohn]* – My suggestion is that. Come early, testify and go.

***[To James Gallagher Jr.]* I presume you want to go.**

Answer: *[James Gallagher Jr.]* – Yes, I want to get more information. Is this map online? I want to see a clearer version.

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – I can send you a PDF version. I do believe Marie has it otherwise there is no way you guys would have it today.

Marc A. Haken – He asked James Gallagher Jr. if he can go to the Public Hearing with Ms. Fulton and drive back to the Board Meeting.

Susan Xie – Fresh Meadows Library – I just realized that Fresh Meadows is excluded. My library is not on the map.

Answer: [Jeff Khon] – Technically, if you want to get very technical, Fresh Meadows is not included on this NDA.

Alan Ong – P.S. 173Q and M.S. 216 are included right?

Answer: [Jeff Khon] – Yes.

James Gallagher Jr. – P.S. 200 and P.S. 201 are also there.

Jeff Khon – There is a NDA in CB12. It is not so much where people are coming or going from. It's more about helping people on the NDA.

Alan Ong – If they don't come to the Town Hall and speak up their needs then you wouldn't know what their needs are right?

Answer: [Jeff Khon] – That is a part of it. The surveys help us to determine that as well. I don't have surveys with me today. I ran out of the English version.

Susan Xie – Fresh Meadows Library – My question is, only the people who live in the area and are over 16 years old would be able to fill out the survey?

Answer: [Jeff Khon] – Yes, live, go to school or work in the area.

How about the parents of the students who go to M.S. 216?

Answer: [Jeff Khon] – I am assuming most of them live there, so yes.

The school that is there, many people come to my library because it is on the border of Utopia Parkway. In my opinion, what we need is space. A lot of kids come to my library to do homework, most of them sit on the floor because it gets so packed that we don't have space.

Answer: [Marc A. Haken] – That is very interesting because the beacon program in M.S. 216 has homework help.

When they have group projects the library gets packed. Maybe parents don't want their kids to do work with other students at home. I was wondering if maybe we can have a space where students can do homework.

Answer: [Marc A. Haken] – Do you have additional space for tables and chairs?

We don't. They have money, only if we can have an open space for homework.

Answer: [Marc A. Haken] – The amount of money that are needed to expand libraries is huge. In 2012, Borough President Katz gave me \$1M to rehabilitate the Hollis Library. This is 2019, not that much has been done. The funds have increased, now I have \$7M if they start construction. If they don't start in 2021 that amount of money is not going to be enough.

Susan Xie – Fresh Meadows Library – [To Mr. Kohn] I want to know if you can give me surveys to give to the parents to fill out.

Answer: [Marc Haken] – They have to live in the catchment area to fill out the survey.

So, give me information so I can give it to the parents.

Answer: [Jeff Kohn] – If we would have had this conversation back in July I would say yes. Surveys have to be handed in by Thursday, October 31, 2019. We were only limited to 487 surveys per NDA. Then, 300 extra of the English version. We handed out surveys in several places (*i.e. Queens Community*

House, Harold Church on 164th Street, Senior Centers etc.). In the future, we will have more of a diversity in terms of collecting data. We will have more of a capacity and more Board Members.

James Gallagher Jr. – **Would you be doing this every year?**

Answer: *[Jeff Kohn]* – It is a cycle. We have a three-year contract. In 2023, we'll be surveying. I will have surveys at the Public Hearing. Everybody who testifies, their stated needs will be tabulated. Funds that are given are discretionary funds not Capital.

Jeff Kohn – **I had a Public Hearing yesterday at the Flushing Library, where teens testified and expressed what they thought the needs for their community were. If you have kids, they should come and testify at the Public Hearing. It is not just for adults, it is for everybody. It can be from 10 years old and older.**

Bhithara Martha-Fulton – **What did the 10 years old want?**

Answer: *[Jeff Kohn]* – They wanted the community center open with dancing programs.

What do you feel in this area is the highest need?

Answer: *[Jeff Kohn]* – Because I live in the area and work for DYCD, I cannot comment on that.

Mr. Haken asked if there were any other questions for Mr. Kohn, seeing none he thanked everyone for coming.

Adjournment:

This meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jatnna Reyes, Community Board 8 Staff
October 28, 2019*