

COMMUNITY BOARD 11 QUEENS

MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD 11 REGULAR MEETING

DATE: January 5, 2009

PLACE: MS 158
(MARIE CURIE)
46-35 OCEANIA STREET
BAYSIDE

ATTENDANCE:

Steven Newman, Chair	Present	George Karahalidis	Present
Edith Basom	Absent	Gordon Keit	Present
Daniel Berrios	Absent	Eileen Kenny	Absent
Lana Bind	Present	Incha Kim	Present
Rose Bruno	Absent	Franklyn Lloyd	Absent
Robert Caloras	Present	Susan Macinick	Present
Ocelia Claro	Present	Janet McEneaney	Absent
James Colasante	Present	Melvyn Meer	Present
Joan Corn	Absent	Eileen Miller	Present
Paul DiBenedetto	Absent	David Millet	Absent
Edward Doster	Present	Victor Mimoni	Present
Henry Euler	Present	Dennis Novick	Present
Mario Ferazzoli	Absent	Allan Palzer	Present
JoAnn Ferrari	Absent	Stephen Pivawer	Absent
Jack Fried	Present	James Rodgers	Absent
Joan Garippa	Present	John Rosse	Absent
Roy Giusetti	Present	Andrew Rothman	Present
Bernard Haber	Present	Christina Scherer	Present
Christine Haider	Present	Gary Sekdorian	Present
Zion Halili	Present	Frank Skala	Present
Joseph Hellmann	Present	Mamie Smith	Present
Jerry Iannece	Present	Joseph Sollano	Present
Laura James	Present	Robert Speranza	Absent
Mohan Jethwani	Absent	Ryan Walsh	Absent
		Alex Yagudaev	Present

ALSO PRESENT:

Susan Seinfeld	District Manager, Community Board 11
Linda Vallerugo	Assistant District Manager, Community Board 11
Mark Scott	Representing Queens Borough President Helen Marshall
Felix Martinez, Jr.	Representing Queens District Attorney Richard Brown
Bryan Rivera	Representing Assemblyman Mark Weprin
Gene McSweeney	Representing Assemblywoman Ann Margaret Carrozza
Bruce Eiber	Representing Councilman David Weprin
Steve Behar	Representing Councilman Tony Avella
Edgar Bajana	Dept. of City Planning
Mike Agnello	Dept. of Parks and Recreation
Mark Edwards	Dept. of Parks and Recreation
D.I. Scott Hanover	111 th Precinct
P.O. William Conway	111 th Precinct
P.O. Park Dance	NYPD Queens North

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM by Steven Newman, Chair

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Stephanie Perger spoke on behalf of the American Cancer Society's Race for Life and reported that there will be a meeting on Thursday, January 8th, at 7:30 PM, at the Community Jewish Center in Bay Terrace. Ms. Perger stated that they are in need of volunteers and all are welcome to attend the meeting.
2. Andrea Solomon had a complaint about magnetic surveillance equipment in the CVS store located on Northern Blvd. in Bayside.

PRESENTATION

Nigel Manuel, Queens Office Manager, of the U.S. Census Bureau, gave a presentation on the 2010 Census and explained that there are a wide variety of jobs available. At this time, he needs to find people to conduct the census in Queens. By the end of March, the Bureau will have 1,000 people going door to door throughout the borough with small hand held computers to verify addresses and the number of housing units in each building. This information is critical for accurate census mailings. The qualifications necessary for employment are that you be a U.S. citizen, over 18 years of age, have a valid social security number and pass a written test. The test consists of 28 multiple choice questions which essentially test clerical, reading and numerical skills. If you are interested in taking the test and being a part of the Queens census team, call (646) 233-2406. For more information and a sample of the written test, you can visit their website at www.census.gov/2010census. A question and answer period followed.

Steve Newman noted that it is important that everyone be counted in the census not only for statistical reasons but for the financing of NYC because the allocation of numerous Federal grants is based on population.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The minutes of December 1, 2008 were accepted as written.

You can bring your Christmas tree to various designated City parks for mulching on Saturday, January 10th and Sunday, January 11th between 10 AM and 2 PM. The park nearest our district is Cunningham Park, parking lot #2. Flyers are available.

COMMUNITY BOARD MEMBER DISCUSSION

Frank Skala announced that our annual holiday party will be held on Sunday, January 18th, at Bourbon Street at 2 PM. In the past, he mailed out letters to the Board members but he asked that this year the office send out an e-mail to all the members.

Melvyn Meer asked for a follow-up regarding his comments last month on street sweeping. Susan Seinfeld explained that we have had a change of personnel in our garage at the Dept. of Sanitation and they will sweep when sweepers are available, especially at the key locations. However, if we call them with a specific location, they will try to accommodate our request.

Dennis Novick expressed concerns that in the committee report it states that City Planning would “begin” the Auburndale rezoning, which will also include rezoning for the area of Hollis Hills/Oakland Gardens, in February 2009. It was his understanding that all the work on Hollis Hills was completed more than two years ago and they were just awaiting final certification.

Jerry Iannece agreed with Dennis Novick’s comments and stated that City Planning had completed all the work on the Hollis Hills community a few years ago and it is unconscionable that this area still has not yet been rezoned. The Hollis Hills community represents a relatively simple rezoning, whereas the Auburndale area is much more complicated. John Young has promised that once the current North Flushing/South Auburndale rezoning is completed within the next few months, City Planning will come before us again with Auburndale and Hollis Hills, which will probably involve another joint meeting with CB7.

Edgar Bajana, of City Planning, who is actively involved with the rezoning, confirmed that by the late spring or early summer, City Planning should begin the ULURP process for Auburndale and Hollis Hills.

COMMITTEE REPORT

1. Laura James, Education Committee Co-Chair, announced that we have two speakers this evening to discuss the issue of School Governance, Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott and Robert Caloras, President of the District 26 Education Council. Deputy Mayor Walcott spoke in favor of Mayoral control and the benefit of a unified system within NYC for the treatment of schools. Schools are not treated differently from one district to another but rather provide an equal application to all schools and revolve the power from the City directly to the schools. As a result, there has been an improvement in the graduation rate, the drop-out rate has declined and overall math scores have improved. Before the fiscal crisis, an additional \$350 million dollars was

directed to the schools as a result of the reallocation of dollars and 63,000 new classroom seats created throughout the five boroughs. The community has a direct access to the Mayor's office and control has benefited the entire system by providing quality education for all the children of NYC. He also stated under the Five Year Capital plan we will be looking at the neighborhoods within the districts to address overcrowding and the building of new schools.

Rob Caloras, reported we are now in a centralized system under the Mayor's control. He pointed out that not one Community Education Council throughout the City is in favor of the current School Governance system. Changes need to be made under the current control so that the word "public" remains in public education. The parents feel completely isolated under this system, their recommendations are ignored and changes are made in education policy without community input. The current system needs checks and balances and accountability. He disagreed with Deputy Mayor Walcott's statements, the graduation rate is being disputed by the State Education Commission by a difference of 10%, and the test score numbers are not what they seem to be. When children's test scores were judged against the national average, children are not doing any better than before Mayoral control. High Schools are overcrowded in District 26, but the School Construction Authority is looking to build a new elementary school in our district. Rob Caloras stated that this will not address the overcrowding problem in our community and is another example of how there is not meaningful community involvement under the current system. Deputy Mayor Walcott acknowledged that he would personally look into the High School overcrowding issue.

A lengthy discussion and question answer period followed. Laura James, gave the Education Committee report stating that everyone was given information last month on the Public Advocate's report on School Governance and the recommendations made by the Education Committee for a vote this evening. To simplify the matter, Laura James handed out a comparison chart indicating the changes and recommendations of the Committee. Gordon Keit suggested that we take time to digest the information heard this evening and table a vote for this evening. Motion (09-01) was made to table the Education Committee resolution until the next meeting. Roll call vote was taken resulting in 15 in favor (Claro, Colasante, Fried, Giusiotti, Hellmann, Keit, Miller, Mimoni, Newman, Novick, Rothman, Sekdorian, Skala, Smith, Yagudaev), 16 opposed (Bind, Caloras, Doster, Euler, Garippa, Haider, Halili, Iannece, James, Karahalis, Kim, Macinick, Meer, Palzer, Scherer, Sollano) and 1 abstention (Haber). The motion did not carry.

Melvyn Meer made several points noting that the recommendations of the Education Committee are needed in order to have some meaningful checks and balances to the current system. There is a need to restore the Community School Boards and strengthen the office of the District Superintendent and that there has been no progress by the students in District 26 schools under Mayoral control.

Laura James outlined individually each of the recommendations and modifications made by the Education Committee on the Public Advocate's school report. She pointed out that the Committee used this report, which they believed to be fundamentally sound, and made some modifications to the report. Some discussion followed by the Board members on the number of

appointments for the Panel on Educational Policy.

Steve Newman spoke in favor of Mayoral control. He noted that in the past only 3% to 4% of those eligible to vote actually voted in the school board elections and there have been various scandals in the past surrounding the school boards. In our district, the school board was controlled for a decade by a combination of the UFT and private schools and that money was diverted to private schools. The decentralized model did not work. Good management of anything requires some control, and we elect a Mayor for the purpose. Mayoral control should be given significantly more time.

Franks Skala confirmed Steve Newman's comments regarding the intention of our school board to divert funds from public schools, but no funds ever were diverted to catholic and parochial schools.

Victor Mimoni suggested that school board elections be held every four years at the time of the Mayoral election, when there is a greater number of the general population voting.

Motion (09-02) was made to accept the Education Committee resolution on School Governance with recommendations to the Public Advocate's report. Roll call vote was taken resulting in 21 in favor (Caloras, Claro, Doster, Euler, Fried, Garippa, Giusetti, Haber, Haider, Halili, Iannece, James, Karahalidis, Kim, Macinick, Meer, Miller, Palzer, Scherer, Sekdorian, Sollano, 9 opposed (Bind, Colasante, Hellmann, Keit, Newman, Novick, Rothman, Skala, Smith) and 1 abstention (Mimoni).

Laura James also reported on the topic of Fair Share Student Funding in the schools. She explained that every student is funded based on their grade level, additional funding is provided based on gross average academic performance and each principal is responsible for allocating the funding. Under these rules, District 26 is "overfunded" and the Queens schools will lose funding. We will be allowed to stay at the current funding levels for a short time. Teachers that are more seasoned obviously cost more money. Since we have many seasoned teachers, a principal has a dilemma when hiring teachers who are at a salary level that is higher than the average teacher salary. Basically, District 26 is being squeezed in both directions because we have more seasoned and expensive teachers and we will also have our funding reduced under the new formula.

2. Christine Haider, East Flushing/North Bayside Zoning Chair, read the report giving the details on the joint meeting held with CB7 on the North Flushing Rezoning, which includes a small section of Auburndale. In CB11, 50 blocks will be rezoned generally from Utopia Pkwy to the CVE, 26 Ave. to the area by Bayside H.S. and PS 159, and on the western side of the district to Station Road. The amendment changes R2 zones to R2A and changes some R4-1 to R3x and R-5 areas to R4-1 and R4. The meeting also reviewed Citywide zoning text amendment to preserve the area of Broadway/Flushing and a Contextual Zoning change in Whitestone. The Committee voted in favor of accepting the zoning change and the Citywide zoning text amendment. Christine Haider stated that there will be a joint public hearing on January 29th at Holy Cross H.S. All Zoning Committee members are required to attend. However, all CB11 Board members are

welcome to attend. CB11 will vote on the zoning amendments at our February 2nd regular Board meeting.

Jerry Iannece made a motion to approve the zoning amendment at this time subject to certification. Discussion followed over clarification of R1-2A and waiting to vote until final certification. The motion was withdrawn.

3. Joseph Sollano, Douglaston Zoning Chair, gave a committee report on the development plans for the Seville Diner property located at 231-10 Northern Blvd. He explained that the Committee met with the new owners of the property. There is no application at this time, but they wanted to discuss their plans with us to expand the property. Specifically, they would like to add a second story for a restaurant/catering facility. Joseph Sollano stated that there is some concern because this falls within an R1-2 zone, and all of the uses along this strip of Northern Blvd. precede the 1961 zoning regulations under legal non-conforming uses. He noted that to expand this non-conformance to a two-story building may lead to other locations expanding to two-stories as well. Some believe that the City should acquire this property as parkland and any extension would make it that much harder for the City to acquire.

Discussion followed and a suggestion was made that this property might be a good location for the Douglaston/Little Neck library. Other comments were made that no expansions should be granted.

Joseph Hellmann spoke with regard to the variance to extend a second floor onto the Seville Diner, stating that there is a history of advocacy over the years by a number of community organizations that these properties in commercial use should be acquired as addition to the Parkland. If the City does not stop granting these variances, the cost of condemnation would be even greater.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 PM.