



The City of New York

Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

Christine L. Haider Chairperson / **Susan Seinfeld** District Manager

To: All Board Members
From: Environmental Committee
Henry Euler, Co-Chair
Date: March 5, 2016

On Wednesday, March 2, 2016, the Environmental Committee met to discuss various issues. Present were Henry Euler, Committee Co-Chair, Christine Haider, Board Chair, Christina Scherer, Jyothi Sriram, Ocelia Claro, Laura James, Eileen Miller, Community Member Steven Levin and District Manager Susan Seinfeld. Four guests attended, Melanie McGillick, Tim Eaton, a Queens College Professor, David Ramm and Nicole Zehr.

Ms. Melanie McGillick, a representative of the Douglas Manor Environmental Association (DMEA), and the civic group, Douglas Manor Association (DMA), attended in order to make the Community Board members aware of the DMEA's goal to reduce the use of leaf blowers in the Douglas Manor community. Because of the loud noise and potentially unhealthy dust produced by the blowers, the DMEA is proposing to ban the use of leaf blowers between May 15th and September 15th, when leaf collection is not a concern. Other areas across the country have already limited the use of leaf blowers, including locally, Great Neck Estates. Some areas totally ban the devices.

The DMEA has already enlisted the support of two landscapers in the community to not use blowers during the above mentioned time period. Ms. McGillick asked for support and input from the Community Board. The Committee suggested that her group contact other civic groups and the Queens Civic Congress to garner support that can be brought to the attention of elected officials. It was also suggested that the restrictions be placed in any regulations that exist in the Douglas Manor community. Other landscapers should be enlisted to also agree to the restrictions sought. Once the Douglas Manor community is on board and accepting of the restrictions, other communities may want similar restrictions that elected officials may wish to act upon. This is a grass roots movement.

Co-Chair Euler reported that he had contacted Council Member Danny Dromm's legislative office to inquire as to the status of the Member's two bills, Intros. 853 and 59, which would ban the use of diesel powered lawn care devices and reduce the decibel level on gas powered leaf blowers in NYC, respectively. CM Dromm's assistant stated that the bills were still not acted upon and that more co-sponsors were needed. Community Board 11 had passed a resolution supporting these two bills. As part of the resolution, we reached out to our local Council Members asking them to sign on to these bills, however, at this time, the members had not done so.

Next, a discussion of the Alley Creek Long Term Control Plan (ACLTCP) took place. Professor Tim Eaton, a hydrology expert from Queens College, gave the Committee an overview of the plan and the issues associated with it. Nicole Zehr and David Ramm, two community and environmental activists, voiced their concerns over the plan that they communicated to Queens Borough President Melinda Katz, who is seeking public input regarding the plan.

In brief, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) formulated a plan to control the impacts of combined sewer overflow (CSO) and storm water runoff into Alley Creek and Little Neck Bay. Water quality is also threatened by pollution sources from Alley Creek, septic systems in Douglas Manor and direct runoff to Little Neck Bay. Not only is the pollution dangerous to humans, but it impacts on the ecosystems that exist in the creek and the bay.

The DEP plan calls for chlorine disinfection in order to kill harmful bacteria, however, this process would also negatively impact on the ecology of the creek and bay and affect the plants, fish, birds, and other wildlife and organisms. Public input is still being sought regarding the plan.

Professor Eaton, Ms. Zehr and Mr. Ramm advocated for more efforts to capture storm water, including establishing more green infrastructure like bioswales and enhanced tree pits. Also suggested was the planting of more trees and the reduction in the cementing over of yards and driveways. They also felt that chlorination was not the optimum way of approaching the problem and that there were other approaches to improve water quality that should be studied and presented to the public. Ms. Zehr also voiced concern that the plan did not address all sources of pollution into Alley Creek and Little Neck Bay and that there was a need to better inform the public and keep them involved in the decision process.

The Committee felt that Professor Eaton or a surrogate should be invited to address the full community board and the public regarding this plan, which will affect our estuary area for years to come. The Environment Committee also recommended that Community Board 11 write a letter to Borough President Katz echoing the concerns raised about the ACLTCP.

Our next topic involved a discussion of City Council Intro. 446, which would ban the discharge, disposal, sale, or use, within the City of New York, of wastewater or natural gas waste produced from the process of hydraulic fracturing, a.k.a. fracking. Council Member Stephen Levin is the chief sponsor of this bill.

There have been many studies done dealing with fracking and the wastewater it produces. Fracking wastewater contains corrosive salts, carcinogens like benzene and radioactive elements like radium. Only certain water treatment plants can even begin to remove toxins from this wastewater. There are several ways that fracking wastewater is disposed of including being stored in open pits, released after treatment into the soil, and injected into areas below the ground. In certain areas, fracking wastewater is used to de-ice roads and to keep dust down on roads during repair work.

There is concern that fracking wastewater can leach into aquifers and other water sources such as rivers and lakes and affect drinking water quality. Earthquakes have occurred that are linked to the discharge of fracking wastewater.

The Committee felt that there is substantial evidence that fracking wastewater is dangerous and potentially harmful to humans, animals and plant life. The Co-Chair was requested to formulate a resolution supporting the passage of Intro. 446, to be presented at the April Board meeting for review and possible approval.

A short discussion followed regarding Mayor de Blasio's One NYC plan. The over three hundred page report links environmental improvements and efforts to reduce the city's growing income inequality problem. The plan is formed around the four themes of growth, sustainability, resiliency and equity. Each theme is then subdivided into goals to achieve.

The main criticisms of the plan are that there are no implementation components in place, nor are there any estimates as to what the various goals would cost to achieve. One NYC is an ongoing plan in progress. Additional public input will be sought.

The final topic discussed concerned the use of pesticides and herbicides and their impact on health and safety. Co-Chair Euler handed out a packet of articles that described the various chemicals in pesticides and herbicides and their impact on public health and the effect of these substances on bees, monarch butterflies and other organisms. There were also two articles on safer alternatives to these toxics using everyday household items.

As discussed at a previous meeting of the Environment Committee, it was decided to continue to seek a speaker to come to a full Board meeting to discuss the issues involved with the use of pesticides and herbicides.