

COMMUNITY BOARD #7 PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 18, 2015
UNION PLAZA CARE CENTER
33-23 UNION STREET
FLUSHING, NEW YORK

PRESENT

Chuck Apelian
John Byas
Tyler Cassell
James Cervino
Chin-Hsiang Chiang
Kim Cody
Nicholas Corrado
Arlene Fleishman
Rose Forkan
Vincent Gianelli
Pablo Hernandez
Jeff Huang
Kevin Kang

Phil Konigsberg
Peter Kwiath
Esther Lee
Frank Macchio
Barbara McHugh
Selma Moses
Devon O'Connor
Kim Ohanian
Millicent O'Meally
Terence Park
Vana Partridge
Kris Ram
Andrew Rocco

Belal Salim
Warren Schreiber
Kevin Shields
Matthew Silverstein
Joshua Sussman
Peter Sutich
Joseph Sweeney
Alison Tan
John Tsavalos
Peter Tu
Arnold Wagner
Harpreet Wahan
Clarissa Wong

ABSENT

Timothy Chuang
Joseph Femenia
Fred Fu

Eugene Kelty
Rev. R. McEachern
Marc Schiffman

Carlos Talisaysay
Linna Yu
Jie Zhu

COMMUNITY BOARD #7 STAFF

Marilyn Bitterman, District Manager
Marilyn McAndrews, Community Assistant
Mary Zuliani, Community Assistant

GUESTS

Eric Kim, Congresswoman Meng's office
James Ward, Senator Avella's office

GUESTS, continued

Meagan Chen, Assemblyman Braunstein's office
Young Kim, Assemblyman Kim's office
Elaine Tan, NYC Comptroller's office
Adam Chen, Public Advocate James' office
Chae No, Councilman Koo's office

First Vice-Chair Chuck Apelian, on behalf of our Chair Kelty, called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence in remembrance of our military forces protecting us at home and abroad, and also our emergency responders in harms way who keep us safe every day here at home. Keep them all in your hearts and prayers. He described our board as the largest In Queens geographically and in population. He introduced Community Board #7's Executive Board and District Manager Marilyn Bitterman's staff. District Manager Bitterman was not able to be present with us this evening.

The roll call attendance was taken with **(39) Present (2) Absent (7) Excused.**

First Vice-Chair Apelian welcomed our new member, **Mr. Harpreet Wahan**, to the Board and we all look forward to working with him. Vice Chair Apelian then read the announcements of the evening, which you can view at the end of the meeting or at our office tomorrow. His most important reminder was our upcoming holiday, Memorial Day, honoring our fallen heroes, past and present who made the ultimate sacrifice. There are three parades in our community: College Point Corporate Park Memorial Parade on Sunday at 2 pm, the Whitestone Memorial Parade on Monday at 12 pm, and the Little Neck/Douglaston Memorial Park on Monday at noon. Try to make one of them!

Our Vice Chair was happy to advise that our Chair Eugene Kelty had a very successful surgery performed about four weeks ago for the removal of a cancerous tumor on the neck of the pancreas, but an infection at the site caused some problems, but now he is doing very well. On a related note, last week Marilyn's husband Jack also had successful surgery at the same hospital for removal of a cancerous tumor on the lobe of his lung, and he is already home and doing very well.

Last week, an amazing **Mother's Day celebration** was held by **Peter Tu** of the Flushing Chinese Business Association honoring (52) third generation grandmothers, their daughters, and grandchildren. It was the sixth annual event in recognition of mothers, with citations given to each of them. It was well attended by all elected officials with everyone having a great time. Peter did a great job!

The Education Committee will hold an important committee meeting on May 26, 2015 and we've asked the Executive Board members to be present also. There are important issues to be discussed including Common Core and Standardized testing, the achievement of basic skills, the appropriate class work and style of teaching, etc. We need some common sense English to figure out why Public Schools are failing to give our children the basic foundation needed and to introduce some policy changes to correct the problems that make more sense, instead of listening to the media's repetitious phrases on what's wrong. It may require several meetings to come up with a presentation that can look objectively at the problem and get rid of all the new and untested ideas and get to what needs to be done. We owe it to the kids and their future.

Vice-Chair Apelian gave a quick update on some recent Land Use applications: i.e., RKO Keith's, S&L/Cofire, Sixth Avenue-Waterpoint. The Borough President recently approved the RKO Keith's application. S&L/Cofire was a particularly important event because the Board would not approve the application since the contamination problem was never resolved. Keith Dumanski of EDC has been scrambling since

they dropped the ball on this application. They now have discovered the contamination under Cofire may have traveled through the groundwater as far as the Flushing River. Our Queens Borough President, a lawyer and a Land Use Chair in the past, understands the importance of these situations and will work with the EDC, City Planning, and the Council. With 6th Road, Waterpoint, the original plan was approved for 52 houses. The site, however, was contaminated and was to be remediated first. During a recent request for a special permit, it was found the site still in need of remediation. Now the applicant has submitted a renewed plan for 200 houses. A rally in opposition was held to hold the applicant to the original 52 homes. The latest revision does cast a shadow on the owner's integrity. Thanks to Committee Chair Sweeney and his committee members' constant scrutiny and investigation of the facts, they uncovered that the site was finally remediated, but was filled with even worse contaminants. The Board again brought the environmental issue to the front. Our comment from day one was and still is, clean the site, and then build 52 houses and that's it. One good thing has come out of all this. Community boards were never part of the EDC notification process about a Brownfield process. Legislation was introduced by Assemblyman Ed Braunstein and passed last year that community boards must also be notified.

Vice Chair Apelian announced there is a request by the Police Department to reinstate a Tow Pound in College Point where a printing plant was originally approved for the location.. What started out as a temporary Tow Pound has now become a full ULURP application. In 2008, the Deputy Mayor asked if we wanted to get rid of the old Tow Pound and use the property for the new Police Academy. We said yes because it would rid the area of trucks in and out of the Tow Pound, and it would reduce the constant traffic and damage to the roadbeds. A new Police Academy would be an asset to the area. However, because they couldn't find another spot for the tow pound, it is now coming back to College Point, and none of us are happy about it. We will be having a meeting May 20, 2015 to discuss it.

Vice Chair Apelian reported that he, **Warren Schreiber** and **Phil Konigsberg** appeared at City council's Inter-Governmental Affairs Committee regarding term limits for community board members. The experts that were pro-term limits are paid officials. The unpaid volunteers, who love their community and give of their time freely to protect it, are against it. The officials weakest argument is term limits would weed out the disinterested, the no shows, etc. Our response is reappointment every two years already handles that, and you don't have to wait 10 years to do it. Third Vice Chair Schreiber feels their initiatives aren't flying, so they need to shift blame onto the community boards. Councilman Drumm is the sponsor of the bill and his phone number is 917-699-3883, if you wish to voice your opinion.

Agenda 4A – At the last minute Speaker **Debbie Carney** from City Planning asked to speak tonight on the Zoning Quality Affordable Text Amendment to promote affordable housing and quality buildings. Still in the drafting stages, they would like the community boards for their input. Their feeling is the current zoning is outdated and constrains new housing creation and the quality and affordability of housing. Presently the ZQA's plan proposes height changes in districts R6B, R7A and R8B of 5 feet or less, inclusion of affordable senior housing, better quality buildings and the reduction of unnecessary parking. Community boards will be able to view their own profiles on the web site shortly. Meetings will take place in late May and June for all to attend.

Q. Will you notify all the community boards when the web site is open?

A. Yes, we are committed to complete transparency.

Q. Isn't your proposal more of a Medical rather than a zoning proposal?

A. It's a model for the development of continuing care for people as they move up in age and their needs change.

Q. It's allowed now. Why regulate it?

A. The current DOT regulations are a bit vague on how you deal with this. The new text will make it more specific and easier to understand.

Q. You're not talking about regulating where it can be different than where it is now, just defining it?

A. Defining and modernizing it.

Q. The use is defined already, so why do so?

A. Not in the zoning regulations, however. There is something called domiciliary care facility in the zoning resolution, and I've yet to get a definition on it.

Vice-Chair Apelian answered that's basically assisted care.

Third Vice Chair Schreiber commented in depth that zoning, while not intentional, is forcing people out of their homes and warehousing them in the senior centers to use their services, while at the same time reducing parking facilities for them and their family, friends, etc. Why not allow to them to age in place?

A. That is the model, i.e., seniors should have the option for many models.

Vice-Chair Apelian said zoning is not forcing seniors to leave their homes to go to a center. You can age in place, if you want.

Vice Chair Schreiber answered "Yes, but you're not being offered support services to do so."

Vice Chair Apelian summed up stating there is a lot of opposition from Queens on this. While on the Community Board for the past 27 years, he can attest every project the Board approved had parking. He and his wife are both seniors, and like many seniors they both still drive. Also the terms of affordability are defined in such a loose sense, he can't see people not affording a car. It doesn't have to be a luxury car. You can drive a 10 year old car to get around. Parking, however, is paramount in Queens and to eliminate it is beyond ridiculous. We've had this with Macedonia Church recently as well as HPD's dealings with us and "transparency" on Muni Lot 3. There was zero transparency, no involvement by the board, and the project has been thrust upon us under the guise of our "so-called involvement". All of what's proposed will be in City-wide text, not just local. We just spent 10 years contextually down zoning every neighborhood in Northeast Queens Board #7. Each individual project was a long term study with total blending and fitting it together like pieces of a puzzle. Now they want to change it all in one year without studies or checking for a cohesive flow area by area, and without having a city-wide environmental impact. They're telling us more buildings are going to be built, the infrastructure will not change, less parking will be needed and not to worry, "it's all going to fine". In essence their proposal will increase mass without our knowing where and, worse, take away our needed parking. We've already given our message to John Young of City Planning, and do not plan to hold any committee meetings on it. We'll be available when it's time to approve. If anyone wants to discuss it further, we'll give you John Young's telephone number.

AGENDA #5 – P.S. 20, Bowne Playground, 140-30 Barclay Avenue – Joanne Amagrande from Parks thanked the Board for the opportunity to present the Bowne Playground presentation. In conjunction with the architectural firm of Hargreaves Associates, Ms. Amagrande gave the floor to Architect, **Misty March**. The 1.28 acre playground is on Union Street between Barclay and Sanford Avenue immediately adjacent to P.S. 20, and the Parks Dept. goals are to 1) upgrade and enhance the existing facilities. 2) create new site amenities 3) increase play opportunities for children including water play 3) create a community space with flexible use 4) enhance and add to the environmental amenities of the site 5)

work together with NYC DEP to solve green infrastructure and 6) improve the safety and security of the park. Miss March proceeded to elaborate on the Bowne Playground renovation with an excellent slide show. The plan is for two northern entrances, one on Union and the other on Barclay, that opens up to an adult area with game tables and fitness equipment, then continues south to the basketball and multi-use courts. Two southern entrances, both on Sanford Avenue, open up to a performance and gathering area with 8 foot World's Fair slat benches. Just beyond the gathering area is the handball court and school garden. To the left of the southern entrance is the comfort station, and the beginning of the children's playground for ages two to five and five to twelve, which includes swings for both as well as a large water spray area. Improvements will be made to all the amenities. The entire playground will consist of asphalt walks, concrete unit pavers, granite pavers and safety surfaces, depending on the area. The perimeter fences will be 4 ft. high, the basketball and multi-use courts will be 8' to 12' high to contain the use of balls, and within the inner areas will be low planting fences. The existing fences around the school garden and handball courts will remain. With the exception of one tree, all the trees in the park are in good condition, including the old oak and weeping beech tree. New plantings will be added to separate each of the areas. New DOT light fixtures and trash cans will be used throughout the park.

Q. How do you choose the play equipment?

A. We try to select a number of elements to diversify physical movement and different levels of activity.

Q. What is your time line to completion?

A. What you are viewing now is only the schematics. Actual design will take us until the end of the year, at which time it will go out for bidding, with final responses expect by Spring/Summer. Add additional year for construction!

Q. When will the park open and close?

A. Park hours 9 am to 9 pm.

Q. Will there be lighting in the park?

A. It is proposed to have lighting.

Q. Is there any open space for senior citizens?

A. Yes, there is an open space to the north, and another to the south

Q. If there anything preventing children from using the adult equipment?

A. There is nothing separating them, but there are pedometers.

Q. Are you paving over the old, or ripping the old and installing new?

A. Ripping out the old.

Board member, Tyler Cassell remarked you are not going to keep out young boys with a 4 ft. fence.

A. There is also a 1 ½ ft. height wall along the edge which eventually changes to a 7 ft. depth of planting.

Q. Will there be a variety of trees planted?

A. Parks Dept. is very particular about plantings and has a review process in selections. There will be variety in their selections.

Q. Will there be rules posted throughout the park?

A. Yes, no dogs will be allowed. Adults are allowed in the adult areas only. They will not be allowed in the children's area unless they are accompanied by a child they are responsible for. The park will be staffed until 6 pm every evening Sunday through Saturday. After hours it will be double locked.

Q. On the outside perimeter of the park, facing Union Street and Sanford Avenue, there are benches. Will they be replaced?

- A. No, they will be removed, and replaced with tree plantings within cobble pavement.
- Q. Any plans with the comfort station and water fountains?
- A. Yes, the comfort station will be looked at for renovation. There will be three drinking fountains, one associated with the comfort station, one located near the multi-purpose court, and one will be at the game tables.
- Q. How are you going to control teenagers at the adult areas coming in on roller blades or skates?
- A. The different surfaces in the park will not be conducive to roller blades or skates, and we don't want to really stop them from using the adult equipment.
- Q. What is the accessibility level of the equipment?
- A. There are all different levels of accessibility. For the disabled there is ground level accessibility by transfer from a wheelchair to each of the equipment components.
- Q. How many basketball courts will there be? What about softball?
- A. There are three full basketball courts. The area is too small for baseball or softball!
- Q. Are the chairs and tables movable?
- A. No.
- Q. In very hot weather, stainless steel slides get dangerously hot and can burn a child's skin. Can the slides be made of a material which doesn't heat up?
- A. Slides are the most used equipment in a park. We use stainless steel because of its longevity. Material other than stainless steel does not last. We do our best to locate the slides to the east or north.
- Q. Currently there is very limited lighting. Can you tell us where you will put it.
- A. Currently there is lighting along Union Street and low level lighting along the edge of P. S. 20. We intend to add lighting between the trees as well as around the game table.
- Q. What about lighting up the garden?
- A. We will make sure we look at that also, and look into the overall safety of the park.
- One board member hoped we could enforce the closure of the gates in the evening since there are a lot of homeless people in the area.
- A. We are not locking up parks any more.
- As promised, Vice Chair Apelian reverted the discussion back to the 4 foot fence that Board member Tyler Cassel brought up earlier stating that lowering the fence won't keep out teenagers after dark. Tyler asked if lowering the fence worked in other parks? Joanne Amagrande answered that in the '60's and '70's parks were surrounded by 16 ft. fences. What they are trying to do now is make the parks more inviting, more open, accessible and past a gated look. With enough openings and lower fences they'll be less need to climb over.

Parks Committee Chair Kim Ohanian made the motion to approve the current design with the recommendation that there is additional lighting on site, and that the slide be installed on the north side and not in direct afternoon sunlight.

Vote taken was unanimous (37) For (0) Against (2) Left the before vote (0) Abstained

Agenda #6 – Library Resolution - Committee Budget Chair Kim Ohanian – The board members were sent the Library Resolution by mail in advance of tonight's meeting. Committee Chair Ohanian read the resolutions aloud, which in essence requests the restoration of \$65 million for the City's three library

systems, provide six day service and increase the weekday operating hours, hire additional staff to provide more programs and services, and to continue capital funding to maintain these institutions.

The motion is now on the floor to approve the resolution, seconded by Millicent O’Meally.

Discussion followed:

Q. When does this resolution have to go to the Mayor, since each resolution needs to be thought out a little bit more?

Committee Chair Ohanian said we have until the adoption of the budget which is June 30, 2015.

A. I don’t think this needs a rewrite. If you felt strongly about it, we should have received your feedback prior to tonight’s meeting

Q. The memo said to be prepared to discuss it.

A. True, but not to revamp it entirely. It’s a resolution, and the concept is there. If you have a problem with it, you can ask to table it or vote No, but it doesn’t deserve a friendly motion.

With no further discussion, the board went ahead with the voting.

The vote taken was unanimous (37) For (0) Against (0) Abstention (2) left before vote

Agenda #7 - Willets Point Redevelopment - Committee Chair Chuck Apelian advised there wasn’t much to report on the last meeting held a month ago. They’re in the last process of putting the properties together with almost all under contract or about to be. The pending lawsuit went to the Appellate Division after the meeting with the Court challenging whether or not there is alienation of parkland, and if they can build the mall.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Speaker, Don Capalbi of the Queensborough Hill Civic Association spoke of the DOT’s Select Bus Service Plan to install bus-only lanes of Main Street with no parking available. He found very few people are aware of what is planned. As a suburban based community it has mainly vehicle traffic instead of pedestrian. Their community is already sharing its residential parking with 5000 employees of NY Hospital, Queens. SBS will leave the merchants without customer parking and will decimate their businesses. We are for better transit, but the needs of the community should be considered also. They’ll be talking to the DOT, the Public Advocate, Scott Stringer and small businesses.

First Vice Chair Apelian said Community Board #7 did reach out to Polly Trottenberg, NYC DOT Commissioner as well as the Queens DOT Commissioner.

Before closing the hearing, First Vice Chair Apelian reminded everyone of the three Memorial Day parades being held in Queens as well as the wonderful train exhibit at Queens Botanical Garden.

The meeting ended at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Zuliani