



Community Board 7

Borough of Queens

Bay Terrace, College Point, Beechhurst, Flushing,
Malba, Queensborough Hill, Whitestone and Willets Point

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COMMUNITY BOARD #7 PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2013
UNION PLAZA CARE CENTER
33-23 UNION STREET
FLUSHING, NY

PRESENT:

Charles Apelian
John Byas
Dilip Chauhan
Tyler Cassell
James Cervino
Chin-Hsiang Chiang
Nicholas Corrado
Joseph Femenia
Arlene Fleishman
Rose Forkan
Pablo Hernandez

Eugene T. Kelty, Jr.,
Valerie Kennedy
Frank Keppel
Phil Konigsberg
Peter Kwiath
Esther Lee
Frank Macchio
Rev. R. McEachern
Barbara McHugh
Kim Ohanian
Terence Park

Kris Ram
Andrew Rocco
Kevin ShieldsT
Warren Schreiber
Lynda Spielman
Peter Sutich
Joseph Sweeney
John Tsavalos
Paul Vallone
Arnold Wagner
Linna Yu

ABSENT:

Arthur Barragan
Timothy Chuang
Fred Fu
Jeff Huang
Kevin Kang

Donald Kirchhofer
Myungsuk Lee
Nicholas Miglino
Selma Moses
Millicent O'Meally

Jean Ren
Marc Schiffman
Joshua Sussman
Carlos Talisaysay
Peter Tu

GUESTS:

Michael Stinson, Congressman Israel's office
Don Capalbi, Congresswoman Meng's office
Dawa Jung, State Senator Avella's office
Steven Masillo, Assemblyman Braunstein's office
Eunice Ko, Public Advocate De Blasio's office
Yuh-Line Niou, Assemblyman Kim's office

Since Chairperson Eugene Kelty would be arriving late, the meeting was called to order by First Vice-Chairperson Charles Apelian at 7:07 p.m. He asked everyone to stand for the pledge of allegiance and to remain standing for one minute in honor of our Military around the world and in memory of those who perished for our country. He introduced the executive board and staff on the dais.

First Vice Chair Apelian did the roll call attendance with (33) board members present including (1) late arrival, (5) excused and (10) absent. A reminder that we are guests at the Union Plaza Care Center and that we leave the room clean. A complaint was made by the custodial staff to Charlton Rhee so we don't want to lose the use of the facility again. He followed with the public announcements and indicated they would be available to anyone after the meeting and the next day at the board office. The January 14, 2013 minutes will be approved at our March 11th board meeting.

AGENDA #5 – Queens Botannical Garden Update

Susan Lacerte happily announced the administration building is now a green building. No oil or gas is being used, but under Claire Shulman, Speaker Vallone and current President Marshall, they now have solar panels that convert the sun's light to energy for the building, geo thermal heating and cooling, composting toilets and a green roof with an auditorium underneath. They've initiated a green job's training program the past year training people for green cleaning and housekeeping, green waste maintenance and green landscaping design and maintenance. The result thus far is 65% job placement. She left us with the winter 2013 calendar of events and graciously invited all to visit often.

Q. What are the employment positions that have been attained?

A. Some positions are with transportation related companies, tri-state bio people, cleaning companies, etc. We even invite people from these companies to teach. The average hourly rate is \$14.00 per hour. The cleaning companies have the most opportunities.

AGENDA #6 – 5 Point Crescent, Malba – BSA Calendar #305-12-A – Application for approval to permit proposed two-story extension of the existing single family two-story home which will be partially in the mapped but unbuilt portion of Point Crescent (mapped as 7th Avenue) when constructed pursuant to General City Law Section 35.

Committee Chair Frank Macchio introduced the representative from Eric Palatnik's office, **Ali Najmi**, to speak for the applicant. Mr. Najmi explained that although many, many years ago the City of New York completed the mapping of all the streets, not every street was actually built. The homeowner is looking for approval to build a two-story extension to his home, but a small portion of the homeowner's as-of-right property actually is in the mapped area of the street that was never built. To build in the bed of a mapped street, you must apply for a GCL#35 waiver with the BSA and make sure the City has no plans to build a roadway and that it does not interfere with any sewer or water lines. (Committee Chair Macchio added the back of the property ends at the bay, so to build a street to end at the water's edge isn't going to happen). As soon as letters from the DOT, DEP and Fire Department are received, they will be sent to Community Board #7.

Q. The attached plans show it as a one story residence and not a two story. Is that correct?

A. The plan is incorrect. It's a single two-story home presently with a proposal for a two-story extension.

Q. Is this property of historical value?

A. No!

Committee Chair Macchio gave the report of his January 9, 2013 meeting at which time he had asked Eric Palatnik for the letters required of the BSA from the DOT and DEP to illustrate there is no plan to build a street and that there is no sewer or water lines in that unmapped portion of the street. Mr. Palatnik was not in possession of these letters as yet. A motion to approve the permit contingent upon receipt of the DOT and DEP letters was made by Chuck Apelian and seconded by Tyler Cassell. The vote taken was unanimously in favor of the motion.

A motion by Pablo Hernandez was placed on the floor to approve the permit of a proposed two-story extension, which is partially in the bed of an unmapped street, contingent upon the receipt of the DOT, DEP and NYFD letters.

Q. Do you know the reason why the letters have not been forthcoming?

A. Our request was sent in writing and we've received verbal approval, but not in written form as yet.

Chairperson Keltly voiced his opinion stating he would prefer tabling the motion until all the letters have been received, citing past experiences of promises not fulfilled. He made the motion to table the approval until receipt of the letters seconded by Phil Konigsberg.

The vote taken to table the motion to approve was (24) For (7) Against and (0) Abstained

The following guests asked to speak a few words to our members:-

Eunice Ko, newly appointed representative in our area from Public Advocate Bill de Blasio's office offered her assistance to help our community with any problems that may come up. She left her business card and looks forward to hearing from us.

Yuh-Line Niou, Chief of Staff for Assemblyman Ron Kim, introduced Mr. Kim's District Trends Report to provide our community monthly with information about their services and more importantly the issues he will fight for at the state level.

Q. What will his legislative priorities be, particularly on education.

A. He is on the Educational Committee and works closely with Senator Stavisky, but the five things he will try to move legislation on now will be children's families, corporations and their commissions, governmental operations, housing and social services. He has already submitted bills to have the Lunar New Year as a school holiday in the area dominated by Asians, and also for the needs of seniors in his district.

REGULAR MEETING

Committee Chair **Lynda Spielman** spoke on the Preliminary Budget for FY 2014 and the fair share planning process to help plan effectively and fairly. She mentioned relocation of the new Mitchell Linden Library to a larger facility at 31-32 Union Street and the Tourist Information Center for Bowne House approved by Parks Department. Both items were supported by the committee.

A motion to approve the Preliminary Budget for FY2014 was made and second by John Tsavalos.

The vote to approve was taken with (28) For (0) No (0) abstained with (3) members who left before the vote.

Chairperson Kelty took a moment to share his recent attendance at the annual 31st Year Flushing Chinese Business Association where community service awards were given to Congressmen Gary Ackerman and Joseph Crowley, District Mgr. Marilyn Bitterman and Kelley Glennon of 109th Precinct Community Affairs.

Dawa Jung, Chief of Staff for State Senator Tony, read Senator Avella's statement opposing the USTA's Expansion at Flushing Meadows Corona Park of 0.68 acres in addition to the 42 acres they already possess and especially the USTA's position that they are not required to replace the lost parkland. Although they purport their facility will be for public use, it will neither be affordable nor accessible to the regular park users. He will continue to fight against any further commercial development of Flushing Meadows Corona Park. A copy of his statement will be submitted before the board's February 13th committee meeting.

Michael Stinson, liaison for Congressman Steve Israel, announced the Congressman will be hosting office hours in the Queens part of his district once a month starting on March 5th between the hours of 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Senator Avella's office, and his Queens number is 718/875-1675.

Tyler Cassell, Community Board Member #7, spoke strongly against the City elimination of the parking privilege for our Chairperson. The Community Board Chair, unlike the District Manager, is a non-paid position elected by the Board each year. They are volunteers who take time from their jobs to attend board and civic related meetings several times a month on city business. Using city provided permits they were allowed 3 hours free at meters until now. If anything, they should be given an expense account by the city to pay for gas, tolls, and wear and tear on their cars. However, this is not about money. This edict comes from a Mayor who sees the community boards and borough presidents as major blocking stones in his control of the kingdom and the city land use process giving the developers carte blanche.

The next 17 speakers are in opposition of the USTA's Expansion Project as follows:- **Jackie Sung** considers it a boondoggle and we will be left with the consequences. **John Kelly** an advocate for years against commercial exploitation of our parks for the developers gain. Our local parks are also part of a water diversion system created decades ago to alleviate flooding in the area. Development would destroy this balance. **Elizabeth Lee** expressed her anger over the proposed building of a third stadium and mall in Flushing Meadow Park, a total of 50 acres taken from the people of Queens. Like others she moved to Queens for its family setting, open park spaces for family participation in recreational activities, playgrounds, baseball, BBQs...not for another stadium and shopping mall. There is enough congestion, pollution and overbuilding. **Ben Haber** stated the USTA decision to leave Forest Hills was an opportunity to take a huge portion of parkland worth hundreds of millions of dollars free of charge. It was an economic steal of taxpayer property. This additional extortion would increase the size of its structures and the destruction of hundreds of trees. The city's gross economic product from national sports is only 7/10ths of 1%,

not enough to warrant it. It does not put more police or fire fighters on the streets or better classrooms and teachers. **James Yolles**, of New Yorkers for Parks, a champion for parks and open spaces for New Yorkers, finds the USTA has not been an avid steward of the park in the past and although the annual rent will increase after expansion, it goes entirely to the city's general fund and not to the park. We need USTA to commit to a long term investment in partnership with the park and not just a one-time funding capital project to sweeten the pot during public review. This means an ongoing annual contribution to the park's maintenance and a redefined relationship with park users and surrounding community to make the complex really for public use. First Vice-Pres. **Henry Euler**, and his civic group, Auburndale Improvement Association, support the Save Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Coalition's opposition. They believe the parkland is sacrosanct and belongs to the people's use of the parks and not to private entities. **Joseph Ardizzone** of Willets Point United voiced his disapproval of the USTA expansion, the MLS stadium and Sterling Rehab mall and asked Community Board #7 to oppose all three. **Beverly McDermott** voiced her opposition and views the City Govt. and Parks Dept. as deliberately giving parcels of green parkland to developers, leaving the residents of Queens, especially those who cannot afford stadium prices, less open spaces to enjoy recreational activities with their families. She said the late Pat Dolan would never allow this. She hopes the Community Board doesn't let them down. **Joe Amoroso** from Kissena Park Civic Association commented that it's clear the union is for the soccer and tennis stadiums because it will provide temporary jobs and some permanent service jobs, and the Mayor's justification in improvement of the City's fiscal strength, but at what cost. Placement of these facilities are deep within the park which will cause a heavy stream of traffic through the park and surrounding area of Queens. **Susan Lippman**, a member of Occupy Queens, a social worker and environmentalist spoke about working to save the parks from any privatization, especially since the plan is to destroy 400 trees. **Walter Ditman**, a public school teacher who brings his students to the Park every year for a senior trip, cannot understand the City giving away our public parkland to developers for their personal gain, and asked what laws are being violated. He feels it must be prevented. **Alfredo Centola** added his voice by reading a letter from a man who grew up using this park, the site of two World Fairs. Young people have played every sport there with their families, and because our elected officials have failed to take care of it, a portion is now under threat. The USTA made \$275 million profit last year and gave the City \$2.5 million. Their excuse to more land is to compete with countries like Dubai for bigger purses, but won't dip into their profit monies. They want, however, the taxpayers and residents of Queens to give it up. **Paul Graziano**, one of the founding members of Save Flushing Meadows Corona Park Conservancy reminded everyone the USTA was allowed to double its parkland holdings in 1990's and at that time said they would not seek anymore incursions into the park. Now their reasoning for these 3 projects is the need to generate more money to ensure the U.S. Open would not lose big name players to places like Dubai. He asks the Community Board and its members to take the position of the community over the position of those who would use our public parkland and assets for private gain. **Henry Bunch**, originally from Columbia and a resident of Corona spoke about the children who use the park to play soccer after school and on weekends. What people are not aware of is that the children are told to leave the area when in use by the USTA, not to mention the added traffic in the area. This is not fair because the park belongs to the public. **Phil Konigsberg** added his voice in opposition to the land grab by the USTA along with the Bayside Community Alliance and the Fairness Coalition of Queens, and urged everyone to step in and put a stop to it. He then spoke up against the parking permit being pulled from Chairman Kelty of Board #7 who must now,

as a volunteer, incur parking expenses when attending to Board business. **Ed Westley** of Community Board #3 spoke about the startling 438 page draft environmental impact study co-authored by the Parks Dept. and the USTA, and most likely paid for by the USTA. With 10,000 people daily and 100,000 during the 2 week period, they do admit there just **might** be a transportation problem. They **might** build something in the future, but they're not saying what. Also, they say there is a **possibility** they would do some park improvements, yet they come to our community boards with nothing committed to help our parks in our community. He reminded us that the vacation for some of the kids in our community is Flushing Meadows Corona Park. **Sunny Hahn**, a Flushing resident and Republican believes in freedom for the individual as well as private enterprise. However, there has to be a set criteria for developers so as not to infringe on the rights of others. The USTA Expansion, in this case, is completely immoral.

Andy Rocco, a member of Community Board #7 and President of the College Point Civic & Tax Association, spoke about the closing in June 2013 of St. Fidelis School and advocates reopening St. Fidelis as a public middle school. He has the backing of Senator Avella and Councilman Halloran. on this issue. The population has increased dramatically in College Point and warrants the need of a public school.

With no further business on the agenda, the meeting closed at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully,

Mary Zuliani
Community Service Aide