

COMMUNITY BOARD #7 PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2013
UNION PLAZA CARE CENTER
33-23 UNION STREET
FLUSHING, NEW YORK

PRESENT

Chuck Apelian
John Byas
Dilip Chauhan
Tyler Cassell
Chin-Hsiang Chiang
Kim Cody
Nicholas Corrado
Joseph Femenia
Arlene Fleishman
Fred Fu

Pablo Hernandez
Jeff Huang
Kevin Kang
Eugene Kelty
Frank Keppel
Donald Kirchhofer
Philip Konigsberg
Barbara McHugh
Selma Moses
Kim Ohanian

Millicent O'Meally
Vana Partridge
Kris Ram
Kevin Shields
Marc Schiffman
Warren Schreiber
Lynda Spielman
Joshua Sussman
Peter Sutich
John Tsavalos
Paul Vallone

ABSENT

Arthur Barragan
James Cervino
Timothy Chuang
Rose Forkan
Peter Kwiath
Esther Lee

Myungsuk Lee
Frank Macchio
Rev. R. McEachern
Nicholas Miglino
Terence Park
Jean Ren

Andrew Rocco
Joseph Sweeney
Carlos Talisaysay
Peter Tu
Arnold Wagner
Linna Yu

COMMUNITY BOARD #7 STAFF

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

GUESTS

Don Capalbi, Congresswoman Grace Meng's office
Angela DenDekker, Congressman Jos. Crowley's office
Ivan Acosta, Senator Tony Avella's office
Assemblyman Ron Kim
Munir Avery, Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz's office

Matt Silverstein, NYS Democratic Committee
Jeong-Ah Choi, Queens Borough Pres. Office
Susan Tanenbaum, Queens Borough Pres. Off.
Anne Pal, Bowne House
Julie Nymann, NYC Parks

GUESTS (continued)

Colin No, Assemblyman Edward Braunstein's office
Councilman Peter Koo

Jim Mituzas, NYC Parks
Councilman Daniel Dromm

Chairperson Eugene Kelty called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence for our armed forces here and abroad and to those who gave their lives to keep us free. He then introduced the executive board and staff and outlined the procedure for the evening. For those board members who were not present at the last Public Hearing, he announced that Valerie Kennedy reluctantly has resigned from the board. She and her husband have moved to Manhattan, but she will keep in touch. Also, our condolences to Board Member, Phil Konigsberg, on the passing of his Mom recently at 94 years of age and our staff member Mac who just lost her sister after a long illness. Board Member, Nick Miglino, whose bucket list included riding a horse, fell off the horse while vacationing in the Rocky Mountains, even though I urged him to just grow old with age, but he's doing fine and will use a walker for a while. Congratulations to Nicholas Corrado who is now Deputy Chief of NYC Fire Department at Bryant High School.

The roll call attendance was taken with 31 members present, 11 members absent and 7 members excused. Also, the motion to approve the September 23, 2013 minutes was made and unanimously approved.

Chairperson Kelty made several public service announcements which will be kept on file at the board office. He then introduced Councilman Peter Koo who asked to say a few words, mainly about his new Chief of Staff, Jonathan Chung, who worked in Peter Vallone's office the past 8 years and for Peter Vallone, Jr. himself the last 3 of those years. His City Hall experience in handling community affairs will be an asset to Councilman Koo. Mr. Chung is happy to be engaged and gave us a few updates. He announced they are taking applications for the Home Energy Assistance Program which is a federally funded heat program for moderate to low income families who need help. Last year they assisted over 400 applicants, but there are thousands more who qualify, and asked for help in getting the word out. Also, it's important that homeowners register with the State for the Star Basic Exemption Program to get some tax relief. Their office is open 5 days a week and will gladly help homeowners file for it. Lastly, they are working on legislation to challenge the common core and how the state measures success based on test scores, which has been detrimental thus far. We want kids to find purpose in school and be passionate about what they're learning. That's the best kind of environment to create. We need feedback from the community, the schools, teachers and parents regarding common core to help us challenge it. You can reach Mr. Chung at 718/ 939 – 0195.

ITEM #5 – Taxi & Limousine Commission Presentation – Mr. Greg Gorden spoke about the new "green" taxicabs. The service started the end of August 2013 and allows the vehicle owners and drivers who purchased the permit to legally pickup street hails in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens (excluding the airports), Staten Island and northern Manhattan, **north** of West 110 Street and East 96th Street. These Boro taxicabs can also do prearranged calls as in the past and must not be affiliated to a car service base that has a street hail endorsement. Boro Taxis cannot provide prearranged service or street hails **below** West 110th Street and East 96th Street. The only caveat to that would be if it's a wheelchair accessible Boro taxi that can pick up in the exclusionary zone and accessorized. All Boro taxicabs must be painted apple green, have the required credit card meter, a taxi meter, a GPS unit, a roof plate, and inspected twice a year by the TLC. Twenty percent of these Boro taxis will be wheelchair accessible.

Presently there are 764 green cabs in service already with 41 based in Queens. Over the next three years they plan to sell 18,000 permits. If you go on the TLC web site under “find a ride”, you will be provided with an address and phone number to call your borough to prearrange a trip.

Q. Can the prearranged regular car service I use today also get a Boro taxi permit?

A. Yes, and the difference will be one is metered and documented and the other has a set rate. The choice will be yours. Also, if you ask for a prearranged Boro taxi, it’s entered into the meter as a flat rate and is documented. As with any Boro taxi, if you leave something behind or wish to make a complaint or commendation, you can call and give the permit number and reason for the call.

Q. Will the permit number on top still have 4 digits?

A. It will be slightly different with two letters followed by 3 digits.

Q. Are the driver qualifications for a green cab driver different or the same as the yellow cab driver?

A. Currently, FHV (for hire vehicle) licenses possessed prior to July 2013 are grandfathered in. Thereafter, everyone else will have to attend taxi school and pass an English proficiency to get a hack license.

Q. How do medallion cabbies feel about the Boro taxi?

A. They are not very happy; however, we have extremely good data on where yellow cabs operate, i.e. pickup and drop off locations of every single trip that occurs in the City, with 97% of them below West 110th Street and East 96th Street and the airports where Boro taxis cannot operate. Also we have new technology called GO Fencing. If a driver picks up someone up in any of the exclusionary zones, their meter will not engage. The whole purpose of this program is to make transportation more easier for the public and the City.

ITEM #6 – Review of Nextdoor NYC, Free Private Social Network – No Show!

ITEM #7 – A.K.A. RIDER Co-Naming of 171st Street Between 33rd & 35th Avenue to be known as “MANFORD FAMILY PFLAG WAY” in recognition of the LGBT rights movement.

Committee Chair **Joseph Femenia** gave a brief description of the discussion to recognize the history of the Manford family’s involvement in the Gay and Lesbian community for over three decades. Their involvement eventually led to the formation of the national organization, PFLAG (Parents, Families, Friends of Lesbians & Gays). He then introduced Councilman **Daniel Drumm**, an openly gay legislator, who represents Elmhurst and Jackson Heights. He spent a good part of his early life on Crocheron Avenue and 157th Street and 162nd where he got to know Jean Manford. In 1972 a reporter called to let her know her son Morty was beaten and pushed down a flight of stairs. This after her other son, Charlie, committed suicide, possibly because he couldn’t deal with the fact that he was also gay. Enraged she sent a letter to Dorothy Schiff, the editor of the New York Post at that time. Her letter was published and started her on her fight against the stigma of being gay. Her home became a refuge for all young gays and lesbians who were shunned by their families and society as a whole. Unfortunately, even today there are over 7000 LBGT youth on the streets every night in NYC with probably 3,500 of them with nowhere to go. She decided to march in the Gay Pride Parade in 1972 and was the first mother to outwardly acknowledge her son with love and gave importance and acceptance to all gays and lesbians. It was the first step towards the movement worldwide, with PFLAG chapters today all over the world. Councilman Drumm asked for your support for the gay youth and their families. Committee Chair Joseph Femenia then introduced New York State District Leader, Matthew Silverstein (the 26th Assembly District) who spoke on behalf of the A.K.A. Rider naming 171st between 33rd and 35th Avenue “Manford Family Pflag Way”. Mr. Silverstein, although gay, had the support of his family which made a

great difference in his growing up. For those who were shunned with no support from family and community, Mrs. Manford was there for them, at great sacrifice to her and her husband over the years, and made a great impact on our community.

Community Chair Femenia completed his report stating the guideline criteria for this application is covered by criteria # 4, i.e., "Deceased community leaders who contributed to the betterment of their neighborhoods during their lifetime". The committee meeting vote was unanimously in favor.

Speaker **James Trikas**, although sympathetic to the cause, is thoroughly against the street naming request and feels it should be for those who died in battle for our country. He feels it will only cause future problems as it oversteps boundaries. The civic associations should be bringing it to the Board's attention, after getting their respective community's approval. He feels it's wrong to put it as a street name and could be memorialized with a plaque somewhere else.

The motion on the floor is to approve A.K.A. Rider for 171st Street between 33rd Avenue & 35th Avenue to be known as "Manford Family PFLAG Way" and seconded by Warren Schreiber and Selma Moses.

Discussion followed:- Board member **Warren Schreiber** strongly feels it is a matter of Civil Rights and appropriate to honor this family for their courage in bringing community awareness to this terrible situation and will vote yes. Board Member Nicholas Corrado, in traveling the Whitestone/College Point area, finds most A.K.A.'s honor our armed services that died in the line of duty. Although he applauds the love of this mother and her advocacy for the gay community, he does not feel it's at the same level as the military, police or firefighter who gives his life for a stranger. He brought up the newspaper article where Mrs. Manford had called City firefighters "hoodlums" which he thought was unconscionable. Chairperson Kelty added it was because her son was assaulted by someone from the Fire Department, to which Mr. Corrado answered "there are two sides to every story". Board member Lynda Spielman said back in 2006 street naming was a joke. At that time, in order to reduce the frivolous AKA requests, the Board set up specific guidelines to be met for approval. This AKA *does* meet one of the guidelines. In order to clear up any confusion, Committee Chair Femenia read the Street Name Change Guidelines. *1) Members of American armed forces who died while in service. 2) City, State or Federal employees killed during rescue operations. 3) Civilians who died while attempting to rescue someone in distress. 4) Deceased community leaders who contributed to the betterment of their neighborhoods during their lifetime. 5) Event Recognition: A street sign posted at the site of an important historic event. 6) Except for the "event recognition" signs shall only memorialize deceased persons.* Board member Selma Moses voted on these guidelines in 2006 and feels this family deserves the honor and reminded us that the original street name will not change ever. Board member Arlene Fleishman added this mother started something over 40 years ago to protect those of different orientation in our society and encourages everyone to vote yes. Board members Tyler Cassell and Phil Konigsberg both originally voted on the guidelines and feel this recognition is deserving of the Manford family and urged everyone to vote for it. Mr. Konigsberg also thanked Councilman Drumm, who is not from our district, for taking it upon himself to have it brought to our Board's attention. Chairperson Kelty added that Councilman Drumm, as well as any Councilman, Assemblyman or elected officials from other districts, is more than welcome to our Board. We welcome comments and ideas from everyone.

The vote taken was (30) Approved (1) Denied (0) Abstained

ITEM 9 – Bowne House – Visitor’s Center Construction – Committee Chair Kim Ohanian had a Parks committee meeting on October 10, 2013 with a power-point presentation by Kate O’Malley. In her place tonight is Julie Nyman, Deputy Director of Architect to speak about the new design. Bowne House was built by John Bowne in 1661 and is one of the oldest wooden structures in New York City, once used by Quakers as a House of Worship until 1662 when Mr. Bowne was arrested, imprisoned and fined by order of Peter Stuyvesant, Director General of the New Netherlands, which permitted only the Dutch Reformed Church to worship in their colony. He was deported to the Netherlands to stand trial, but because he was promised freedom of religion in the new country, he was freed in what was the first and earliest legal test for religious freedom.

The two years restoration of Bowne’s visitor’s center and gallery will include the interior and exterior of the center. Some trees will be removed to make room for the buildings, with some trees being replanted. There will be some landscaping around the visitor’s center, bluestone paths, some fences removed, some cleaned and some repaired, all in the style remaining. There will be accessible restrooms and storage areas. The roofs will be in aluminum and the façade material will be of fiber cement board to look like wood. The windows will be situated for the most light and the main entry will be sliding barn doors. As part of the process, the digging of the archeological investigations of the site uncovered cobblestones paths, some of which will be reused and some buried again for further study. Committee Chair **Kim Ohanian** gave her report and added there will be neutral colors, reds and browns, used in the one and a half stories, ADA accessible, the size is 1250 sq. feet, 450 sq. feet smaller than their original design, the Historical Society currently does not charge access but donations are accepted. Currently 98% of the operating fund comes from private donors.

The motion was made to approve the restoration as presented and was seconded by John Byas..

Discussion followed:

Q. Is there electric heating?

A. Yes!

Q. Are there spotlights lit at night?

A. No! It’s well fenced in.

Q. Where is the actual entrance?

A. Bowne Street

Q. If it’s 1 ½ stories, how many floors are there?

A. One.

The vote taken was (30) Approved (0) Denied (0) Abstained

ITEM #8 – Willets Point Redevelopment Update – Committee Chairperson Chuck Apelian announced the City Council approved the Willets Point Redevelopment Plan and we held the first quarterly meeting with Joint Venture held on October 17, 2013. Many issues came up such as , traffic improvements, the ramp, housing, local jobs, local business support, M/WBE and local contracts, Flushing Meadow Park, and the Brownfield application. Affordable housing will occur now, not in Willets Point, but negotiated through the Council that 235 units will be provided in Corona, Jackson Heights, Elmhurst and Flushing. Thirty-five percent of the units to be built in Willets Point will be affordable, 872 units of the 2500 units. They claim nineteen thousand jobs at prevailing wages will be created for this project, including over 7000 permanent jobs. The contractors and building service workers will work with the union to provide job readiness programs and apprenticeship positions for the local neighborhoods and recruitment of

local union members. Eighteen thousand square feet of retail space will be set aside for local business, including a business incubator for Willets West. Local business support will include \$165,000 for outreach and \$500,000 over a 10 year period in support of the Roosevelt Avenue commercial business corridor, west of the Flushing River, who may want to expand into the mall. Regarding the M/WBE and local contracts, the goal of 25% of construction contract values will go to both the M/WBEs and Queens based companies. Also, the Queens Development Group will contribute almost \$1 million to strengthen the ability of M/WBEs to compete for Willets Point contracts. The ramp fund is now in the Capital Budget for 2019 and the City has allocated \$66 million with \$6 million for design. Recall in our hearings we did not have confirmation that there would be money to build these ramps, which is essential to the success of the development, but it's there now. Transportation improvements will include the expansion of the Long Island Railroad service to the Willets Point station. The plan includes the roof top of the mall to have a hydroponic farm (green roof). A new FMCP alliance was formed between the City and the developer. The ongoing contributions will total \$8 million from the City and \$7.5 million from Joint Ventures over a period of 25 years. The Brownfield application was filed in committee and the comment period ended, all without any notice to us. However, because of the recent contaminated Whitestone waterfront property incident, the Legislature passed a law over the summer that all community boards affected by a Brownfield application must be notified. The application arrived now and we will reopen discussion on it. We still do not have a clear answer on the Phase I and Phase II timetable. We do know the City does not have full ownership title of all 23 acres for Phase I, and cannot transfer the property to the developer until that happens. Lynda Spielman, Committee Chair on the Budget can discuss the Willets Point roads in need of repair to be included in Phase II for the remaining businesses who need and deserve the service.

ITEM #10 – Vote on the Preliminary Budget Submissions FY 2015 - Committee Chair Lynda Spielman reviewed the Capital & Expense budget items. Major changes to the top 10 Capital items include new (Line 8) reconstruction of Ulmer Street between Whitestone Expressway Service Road and 25th Avenue and new (Line 5) Capital reconstruction for Phase II of Willets Point to include total infrastructure work, roads and sewers. The Expense budget remains pretty much the same.

The motion on the floor is to accept the Capital & Expense Budgets FY 2015 for final submission and seconded by Marc Schiffman.

The vote taken was (26) Approved (0) Denied (0) Abstained

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Board Member **Tyler Cassell** reviewed the new parking meter restrictions on Northern Blvd. Going East No Standing restrictions were lifted from Bowne Street to Utopia Pkwy. Metered parking was from 1 to 2 hours from either 9 to 8 am, 9 to 4 pm, 9 to 7 pm and one area 9 am to 10 pm. Check the signs. Going West on Northern Blvd. you will find No Standing restrictions from 7 to 9 am with the exception of Union Street to Prince Street with no posting of restrictions. Metered parking for 1 or 2 hours was from 9 to 7 pm or 9 am to 10 pm. Again check the signs.

Speaker Irene **Prestigiacomio** of Willets Point United, having been ignored by the City for years, again pleaded with the Board to help her and other businesses to have the roads and sewers at Willets Point repaired and resurfaced. Unfortunately, we can only advise the agencies of the outstanding needs of

the community and cannot enforce enactment by the City. Her frustration was taken out against the board, unfortunately.

Speaker **Ann Pal** was not present to speak and **James Trikas** refused to speak and withdrew .

Speaker **Arthur Arcabascio**, candidate for Queens Borough President introduced himself and thanked everyone and, if elected, would work very close to the community boards, and reminded everyone to vote their conscience,

Board member **Kevin Shield** spoke of the rumors about a possible High School being built at Whitestone Jewels and the SCA actually taking core samples at the site. If it's not true, why take samples? Chairman **Kelty** said the SCA does not own the property as yet. It's still in the hands of the bank and the asking price is \$23 million and that's all that is known thus far.

Speaker **Robert LoScalzo**, a documentary video producer, has been following the Willets Point story since 2007. He was at the October 17th meeting, the first of many quarterly meetings, and not once during their entire presentation was the Brownfield application mentioned as having already been submitted back in August. The lynchpin of the Willets Point Redevelopment is the remediation of the property, the means to the end. They clearly omitted numerous contaminated properties from the map and application that are owned by the City and was not even mentioned tonight. We all deserve an explanation why!

The meeting ended at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Zuliani