



# BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #1

3024 THIRD AVENUE

BRONX, NEW YORK 10455

(718) 585-7117 • Fax (718) 292-0558 • E-mail: brxcb1@optonline.net

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**RUBEN DIAZ, JR.**  
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**BETTY BRYANT-BROWN**  
CHAIRPERSON

**CEDRIC L. LOFTIN**  
DISTRICT MANAGER

## FULL BOARD MEETING

May 27, 2021

MINUTES

The Chairperson Ms. Betty Bryant-Brown opened the meeting with a prayer.

**Ms. Ana Cuevas Operations Coordinator for CREO College Prep** said that we're a new middle school in the Mott Haven area. We have seats available for 5<sup>th</sup> graders, so we are 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. We offer 5<sup>th</sup> graders to enroll, we offer transportation, uniforms, and chrome books. We offer health and wellness, yoga, meditation, computer science our students are taught how to code. So, if everyone could kindly spread the word, we're on 149<sup>th</sup> Street and Courtlandt Avenue.

### Questions and Answers

Roll was called.

**Motion made to** approve the agenda as presented. Motion duly seconded. Motion called and passed.

### NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

**Mr. Cedric L. Loftin District Manager** said that this item is going to be folded into the Economic Development report, because it was an item that came through their committee related to this issue by the Department of City Planning.

**Mr. Justin Lamorella, Senior Borough Planner** said that I'm going to be presenting a proposed Zoning Text Amendment which is an update to the rules of what can and cannot be done in the city. This proposal does have citywide implications and because of that it was referred to every Community Board in the city on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, and we are inviting recommendations on this proposal.

## FULL BOARD MEETING

May 27, 2021

Pg. 2

So, this proposal which is called the Citywide Hotels Special Permit will create a new special permit for any new hotel development across the city. The goal is to create a consistent approach for hotel development to ensure that new hotels do not negatively affect their surrounding areas.

For some background by 2019 which was before the Pandemic hit New York City experienced record growth in the tourism industry and its hotel pipeline for the 10<sup>th</sup> year in a row. In the past 5 years New York City saw a 40 percent increase in hotel inventory, but despite this increase in hotel room supply, demand also continued to rise keeping the annual occupancy rate at around 87 percent which was among the highest for urban markets in the United States.

Over the years rapid growth of new hotels across different areas of the city led the City Planning Commission to adopt a variety of special permits resulting in an inconsistent approach for regulating hotels. For instance, you might remember that back in 2018 a special permit was adopted for M1 which are light manufacturing zone districts to address conflicts between hotels and the operation of industrial businesses. So, while it's important that hotels can continue to locate throughout the city to support a vibrant tourism economy the case and pattern of development driven by a record high visitation has created conflicts with adjacent uses and overwhelmed some communities. Today most hotels are allowed as-of-right in your district except in those M1 Zones light manufacturing areas which already have the special permit. So, what this proposal does is require that all new hotels file for a special permit with the City Planning Commission and go through the full ULURP process, to obtain approval. So, this is an additional level of review and oversight for hotels. The Community Board will have an opportunity to weigh-in on the ULURP process. So, it's important to note that the proposed special permit does not preclude hotel development nor does it deem all future hotels inappropriate. But it does require that the City Planning Commission assess the appropriateness of each development based on future use and the development of the surrounding area. The new special permit will be applicable in all areas where hotels are permitted today such as high density commercial areas or mixed use areas, it will also apply to those areas that already have the special permit such as the M1 areas from the 2018 Text Amendment. So, this map shows your community district and it shows where the special permit would apply so in the gray areas the special permit for hotels already exists in the M1 light manufacturing special permit. In those areas already today someone wanting to build a new hotel would have to apply for the special permit, go through the ULURP process, go in front of the Board etc. The pink areas are the new part that this proposal would affect, in those areas today someone could build a hotel as-of-right they could just go to the Department of Buildings get their permit and build a hotel. With this proposal anyone seeking to build a hotel would have to go through this new process and in the white areas, hotels are not allowed to be built as-of-right today.

So, this Text Amendment was referred out to all 59 Community Boards for 60 days on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and after 60 days referral period which includes the Community Boards, the Borough President the proposal would go back to the City Planning Commission. Just to conclude this Text Amendment proposes that new hotels will have to file for a special permit, go through the full ULURP process and will need to meet the findings of the special permit and be subject to site approval.

## **FULL BOARD MEETING**

May 27, 2021

Pg. 3

**Ms. Arline Parks Chairperson Economic Development-Land Use & Housing Committee** said that we had a good meeting related to this matter. There was a lot of discussion and concern by my Committee meeting members who were very concerned about hotels in any form coming into the district and then repurposing the hotels for some other project we've seen in the past like shelters, supportive housing and it was a really rigorous discussion. So we decided what we would do is to grant a letter of support for this Text Amendment with the understanding that the project has to come before the Community Board for consideration and that the city would restrict use of granting the permit strictly for the use of a hotel and not to something else that would be onerous for the community. Then understanding that this was part of a ULURP process and to give the Board Members the opportunity to submit formal statements.

Our recommendation to the Full Board is to grant a letter of support for this Text Amendment with the restriction of not allowing hotels to be able to reconvert their use from a hotel to anything else but to exclusively remain being a hotel in the district. So that's my recommendation the Full Board.

### **Questions and Answers**

**Motion made** to approve the Text Amendments and grant a letter of support with the conditions that there be the restriction of no conversion of the hotel for any type of alternative use, that if the hotel is sold that the new owner has to adhere to the same conditions as the previous owner. Motion duly seconded. Motion called and passed.

**The representative from the Honorable Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.** said thank you all for your diligence and participation during these very difficult months of the Pandemic, I hope your families are healthy as we move forward out of this Pandemic. Just a couple of quick items first letters of reappointment to the Board will be out very soon probably by Tuesday of next week and new appointments will be made towards the latter part of June. The Borough President's latest report which was his newsletter I have submitted to the Board as well as emailed to all those on the email list. The last one I sent out was just a synopsis regarding the Bronx Weeks events that were held mostly virtually this year and in addition our website is continuously updated in regard to new COVID issues, vaccination sites, COVID testing sites, regulations from the various state agencies regarding the mask use etc., so please feel free to follow up on our website for information. Finally, what many of you have heard of from the early part of last week the former Deputy Borough President Aurelia Greene passed away and she was honored at the Rotunda where many people were able to come as well as at her church where there were a number of evenings of remembrances on her behalf. So for all those who did participate we'd like to thank you and the family has been very gracious in thanking all of the members of Boards in the Bronx community who have come out to pay their respects to the former Deputy Borough President.

## FULL BOARD MEETING

May 27, 2021

Pg. 4

**Honorable State Senator Luis Sepulveda** said that first of all I want to thank all of you for the great work that you do and looking forward to continuing my work with this wonderful group of people, thank you for what you do for my community.

So, let me tell you in Albany what's going on first I passed a bill that establishes the right of individuals that are incarcerated visitation. What many people don't know in New York is that visitation is up to the person that runs the facility and these people don't have to give visitation rights. So we wanted to make sure that there is a law that permits visitation so that it's policy because I can find a thousand children who have a family member that's incarcerated and these kids when they don't have contact with the incarcerated parent they tend to suffer more from mental illness and from other physical illness. Even though the premise is to establish visitation I did this bill because of the 105 thousand children and I want to work for to make sure that they don't suffer, and they have a right to visit their parent. They give you video visitation but that's not a substitute for person to person, it also reduces recidivism by 13 to 25 percent that could potentially save us hundreds of millions of dollars. So, it's a bill I was very proud to pass and I continue to work to make the system fair for people of color who have family members that are incarcerated. Also, I amended the definition of a victim of a sexual offense to include victims of revenge porn, as many of you know many people engage in revenge porn especially men and its terrible thing for any person to have to deal with so now if you engage in a revenge form you can be charged with committing a sexual offense. Regarding the bike racks, the bike lanes in the multiple Community Board meetings that I have attended residents have complained about bike racks here on Southern Blvd. and overnight an entire 5 to 6 block radius lost parking spots people are very upset about that, so, I'm passing a bill that will require more notification from DOT and to have a working relationship with the Boards so that they can determine and help predict where we can put these lanes and bike racks so we don't lose potentially 100 parking spaces overnight. I am an avid cyclist I ride bike as often as God permits me but I understand that we also have to take into consideration the needs of the community, so that's something we're going to have to keep working on.

Some announcements that I think are critical the first time since 2006 the New York State Home and Community Renewal has opened up the Section 8 waitlist and residents have until Friday tomorrow only to apply so if you have information about how you can be eligible you can call my staff we're going to put something on the Chat to give you information. The Eviction Moratorium extended until the end of August and the Foreclosure Moratorium for those that own property 10 or less units will also be protected from foreclosure proceedings because we will not allow the Supreme Court to hear any cases either from a federally chartered or state chartered bank therefore small landlords are protected from losing their premises. The COVID 19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program will begin accepting applications at the end of this month and if you qualify and again on the Chat or you can call my office for more information you will get arrears going back 12 months beginning March of 2020 when the Pandemic really hit us hard, and three months perceptively, your immigration status is irrelevant so this could be helpful obviously for tenants to pay their arrears because they can stay in their apartment and also helpful to the landlord who needs the rent in order to pay their mortgage and expenses. So, I think that this is a very fair compromise that we've reached and we're trying to help everyone as much as possible. Positivity rate in the Bronx is now less than .74 percent, that's very, very good news however we're still behind in terms of people that have been vaccinated. When vaccinations were made

## **FULL BOARD MEETING**

May 27, 2021

Pg. 5

available my office worked feverishly to get people vaccinated we got over two thousand people vaccinated. But know what we're seeing is that people are reluctant to go to the providers of vaccinations so what we're doing is changing our strategy we're going to areas that are high foot traffic areas, schools, buildings anywhere we get a large number of people, pop-up sites to make it easier for people to get vaccinated. Today at 4 o'clock we did a diaper distribution program with Catholic Charities and Home Base we gave out so many diapers it's such an expense for families, you know the cost of diapers that we were very happy to give out hundreds and hundreds of diapers to communities in need. I want to remind everyone 12-17 year old's can now get the Pfizer vaccine all state and city run vaccination sites are accepting walk-ins for anyone 16 or older so the reality is you have no reason not to at this point. I'm thrilled to announce that finally my office will reopen on June 1<sup>st</sup> we're going to continue to help people with SNAP, cash assistance, unemployment, evictions, and any other thing that the community needs assistance with. So, come by June 1<sup>st</sup> we have an extremely busy Constituent Service office we see anywhere between 35 to 55 people per day and that's because my great staff does great work servicing this community, so I'll take any questions. Thank you everyone for the wonderful work you do for this community, I truly appreciate it and again great work.

### **Questions and Answers**

**The representative for Honorable State Senator Jose M. Serrano** said that we're still helping people with the unemployment claims. If you have any problem and feeling that you're being harassed by your landlord or problems with any benefits you can always feel free to call us at 212-828-5829, I wrote it in the Chat as well.

**The representative for Honorable for Assemblywomen Chantel Jackson** said that this past Saturday we had a very successful community event we were able to do a food distribution and give out a lot of different resources and information from the vendors that showed up, so it was very good. As far as upcoming events we're holding another distribution this Friday and Saturday the first one is on Tinton Avenue and the second one is going to be at Bronx Works be on the lookout for flyers from our office. As always contact our office for anything.

**The representative for Honorable Councilman Rafael Salamanca** said that our office is open by appointments only also you can walk-in and I put our information in the Chat if you have any questions. The only announcement I have is that every Thursday we're still conducting self-swab COVID testing from 9:30 to 4:00 PM. We started doing food distribution throughout the whole district today we were at the Bronx Classical Center there was a lot of people there that were able to get fresh produce. Next week we're going to be having movie night for the kids anyone who is interested just follow us on social media.

### **Question and Answers**

**The representative for Honorable Councilwoman Diana Ayala** said that just want to report that over the past month coordinated and organized a belated Mother's Day Event on 139<sup>th</sup> Street, between 3<sup>rd</sup> and Morris Avenue it was a really nice event we participated along with the Patterson Houses as well

## FULL BOARD MEETING

May 27, 2021

Pg. 6

as the Mott Haven Houses so we had a really nice time that Saturday afternoon. In addition to that last week we participated in the anti-violence fair at Patterson Houses. Also, we organized and coordinated pop-up vaccines throughout the district one being at 146<sup>th</sup> Street, one at the Mott Haven Reformed Church and one here at the St. Ann's Church just off our office on 138<sup>th</sup> Street. In addition to that we will be organizing a food distribution event in the next 2 to 3 weeks over by the Mott Haven section. We are likewise organizing movie nights throughout our parks for the kids and their families throughout the district. I just want to also announce today that the Council passed intro 146 which will raise the city's rent voucher to federal levels updating the 5 year cap so that anyone continues to qualify will not lose access to the voucher and help more New Yorkers to move from the shelter into actual permanent housing. On the Chat I sent over a link regarding an article in relation to a specific bill that the Councilmember is sponsoring relating to the body shops and not body shops auto body shops what the construction industry calls auto body shops actually the union industry indicates body shops where developers are bringing in individuals who have either just been released or who have no skills and paying them way below the prevailing wage for the construction work that they're doing this particular piece of legislation protects against that so the individuals seeking employment will not be able to be taken advantage of and the developers that come into areas like ours will be providing those guaranteed prevailing wage and also the opportunity for these individuals to actually become part of these trade unions

**The representative from the Honorable Bronx District Attorney** said that briefly we have 2 upcoming events on June 4<sup>th</sup> that's a Friday starting at 4:00 PM we will be having our gun violence awareness march and following will be the resource fair. So that will start at 4:00 PM at Slattry Park on 183<sup>rd</sup> Street and Valentine Avenue that's where the march will start, and it will end on 194<sup>th</sup> Street at Valentine Avenue and that's where the resource fair will be, we. Also, on June 26<sup>th</sup> that's on Saturday we will be having our gun by back event at a church 860 Forest Avenue and we thank Ms. Goodwin for helping us find that location. Our office still has the concept program eligible for the young kids and Adults with such workshops as gang awareness, and bullying.

**Motion made** to approve the Elected Officials Reports as presented. Motion duly seconded. Motion called and passed.

**Mr. Hakiem Yahmadi Chairman of the Municipal Services Committee** provided a brief report on the New York City Department of Transportation 4-year proposed Bridge Replacement Project of East 138<sup>th</sup> Street over the Major Deegan Expressway.

**Motion made** to approve Committee Report as presented. Motion duly seconded. Motion called and passed.

**FULL BOARD MEETING**

May 27, 2021

Pg. 7

OLD BUSINESS

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

**Mr. Cedric L. Loftin** announced to the Board members that he was retiring effective as of Friday, May 28, 2021.

**Motion made** to adjourn. Motion duly seconded. Motion called and passed.

**MEETING ADJOURNED.**