

Brooklyn Community Board 4
Public Hearing and Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 16, 2021, 6pm

Webex

Chairperson: Robert Camacho
District Manager: Celestina Leon

Meeting Start: 6:06pm

Public Hearing

- 1) **Damaris Falero, Community Engagement, David Nussbaum, Deputy Director of Community Engagement, and Shawn Jones, Chief of the Plumbing Unit, NYC Department of Buildings** – presenting on Local Law 152, which takes effect in Bushwick starting January 2022.

Purpose and Background:

- Local Law 152 was enacted to improve gas safety in buildings after deadly gas explosions in East Harlem (2014) and Lower Manhattan (2015).
- The law requires periodic inspections of gas piping systems to prevent similar tragedies.

Who Must Comply:

- Buildings with gas piping systems, except for one- and two-family homes classified as occupancy group R3, must comply.
- The law applies to both residential and commercial buildings with gas piping.
- Exemptions: One- and two-family homes (R3 occupancy) are exempt.

Inspection Cycles and Deadlines:

- Inspections are scheduled in cycles by community board.
- For example, Community Board 4's cycle starts January 1, 2022.
- Inspections must be performed within the assigned cycle window.

Inspection Process:

- Inspections must be conducted by a licensed master plumber or their certified representative.
- The inspection covers common areas (hallways, gas meter rooms, point of entry) but not individual tenant spaces.
- The plumber uses a portable gas leak detector and performs a visual inspection for illegal connections or unsafe conditions.

- After the inspection, the plumber provides a GPS1 inspection report to the owner.

Documentation and Compliance:

- Owners must upload the inspection certification (GPS2) to the Department of Buildings portal within 60 days of the inspection.
- Owners can do this themselves or authorize the plumber to do it (may incur an extra fee).
- Owners should provide an email address to receive confirmation of submission.

Penalties and Corrections:

- Failure to comply can result in a \$10,000 fine.
- If violations are found, minor corrections can be made immediately; major corrections may require a permit and must be completed within 120 days (with a possible 60-day extension).
- The law does not allow extensions beyond 180 days.

Special Cases:

- Buildings with no gas piping must have a registered design professional certify this.
- National Grid inspections are separate and do not exempt owners from Local Law 152 requirements.

How to Verify a Plumber:

- Owners should verify the plumber's credentials via the Department of Buildings website or the Better Business Bureau.

Outreach and Assistance:

- The Department of Buildings is conducting mailings, phone calls, and community outreach to inform affected owners.
- There is no financial assistance program for inspection costs, but the DOB will not place liens on properties for non-compliance.

Q&A/Discussion

- Clarified exemptions for one- and two-family homes.
- Explained how the law applies to condos and multi-family buildings.
- Addressed concerns about inspection costs and recommended getting multiple quotes.
- Provided resources for determining building classification and compliance status.

Exemptions for One- and Two-Family Homes

Question: Ms. Davis asked if the law applies to one- or two-family homes.

Response: Shawn Jones (DOB) clarified that one- and two-family homes classified as occupancy group R3 are exempt from Local Law 152.

National Grid Inspections vs. Local Law 152

Question: Ms. Davis and Mr. Camacho asked about receiving inspection notices from National Grid and whether those inspections fulfill Local Law 152 requirements.

Response: Shawn Jones explained that National Grid inspections are separate, mandated by the Public Service Commission, and do not exempt owners from Local Law 152. Only the occupancy classification determines exemption.

Financial Assistance and Penalties

Question: An attendee asked if the city would place liens on senior homeowners who can't afford the inspection, and if there is financial assistance.

Response: David Nussbaum (DOB) stated there is no financial assistance program for hiring a plumber, but the DOB will not place liens on properties. All property owners are subject to fines for non-compliance.

Application to Condo Buildings

Question: An attendee asked how the law applies to condo buildings—are individual units or the building as a whole responsible?

Response: Shawn Jones clarified that the inspection is for the building as a whole, focusing on common areas, not individual units.

Building Classification and Compliance

Question: Andy and Carlotta asked how to determine a building's classification and whether their building is on the list for required inspections.

Response: David Nussbaum explained that owners can check their building's classification on the DOB website or HPD's site. If unsure, they can contact DOB for assistance.

Inspection Costs and Choosing a Plumber

Question: Barbara Jackson and others asked about the wide range of inspection costs and how to choose a plumber.

Response: Shawn Jones and David Nussbaum recommended getting at least three quotes from licensed plumbers. DOB cannot regulate prices or recommend specific plumbers.

Why the Law Applies to Three-Family Buildings and Up

Question: Barbara Smith asked why the law starts with three-family buildings instead of four or more.

Response: Shawn Jones explained this was a City Council decision. DOB only enforces the law as written and cannot change the requirements.

Notification and Outreach

Question: Jo-Ena Bennett asked how DOB will ensure all affected homeowners are notified, especially those not online.

Response: David Nussbaum and Damaris Valero said DOB sends mailings, makes phone calls, and conducts community outreach. They also plan to distribute leaflets and work with local organizations.

Timing of Inspections

Question: A board member asked when inspections can be performed relative to the compliance cycle.

Response: Shawn Jones clarified that inspections must be performed within the assigned cycle window (e.g., January 1 to December 31 for a given year).

Additional Questions

Other topics addressed:

- How to verify a plumber's credentials (DOB website or BBB).
- What happens if a building has no gas piping (requires certification by a design professional).
- Record-keeping requirements (owners must keep inspection records for 10 years).

Regular Meeting Agenda

1) First Roll Call

Board Members in attendance: Rev. Grace Aytes, Jo-Ena Bennett, Joshua Brown, Rawle Brown, Robert Camacho, Gardea Caphart, Melissa Carrera, Elvena Davis, Freddy Fowler, Anne Guiney, Jose R. Guzman, Hadiyah Harrison, Jared Hicks, Tanesha Honeygan, Barbara Jackson (sound issues), Kristen Jock, Virgie Jones, Luisa Jose, Andy Marte, Mary McClellan, Imini Mitchell, Desmonde Monroe, Samy Nemir Olivares, Zulma Novoa, Gladys Puglla, Eliseo Ruiz, Barbara Smith, Dustin Sonneborn, Annette Spellin, Leo Tineo, Jerry Valentin, Carlotta Williams, Frank Zimmerman

Excused: Martha Brown, Andrew Choi, Daniella Davi, Egaudy Gomez, Raul Rubio, Odolph Wright

Absent: Marcus Alston, Louisa Chan, Carlos Feliciano, James Fitzgerald, Christopher Graham, Rev. Migdalia Gutierrez, Cheryl Jones, Kyle O'Rourke, Acire Polight, Vernedeaner Shell

36 Present constitutes quorum.

2) Acceptance Of The Agenda

Robert Camacho made a motion to accept the agenda. It was seconded by Elvena Davis. All in favor, so moved.

3) Acceptance Of Previous Meeting Minutes

Barbara Jackson made a motion to accept the previous meeting minutes. Jose R. Guzman seconded the motion. All in favor, so moved.

4) **Chairperson's Report— Mr. Robert Camacho**

Apology and Board Member Applications:

Camacho began by apologizing for any confusion or frustration regarding board member applications and removals. He emphasized the importance of filling out applications to remain on the board and clarified that appointments are at the discretion of the City Council and Borough President.

City Charter Clarification:

He read from the city charter to explain the terms and reappointment process for community board members, including the 60-day window for the Borough President to submit appointments and the rules for removal due to absenteeism.

Committee Participation:

Camacho reminded members to communicate their committee preferences and to participate actively, noting that those who do not respond will be assigned to committees as needed.

Recent and Upcoming Meetings/Events:

He provided a rundown of recent and upcoming meetings, including education, housing and land use, executive board, and community events like food distributions and the Puerto Rican Day Parade. He thanked board members and community partners for their involvement in these activities.

Community Involvement and Safety:

Camacho shared a personal story about assisting police with a situation involving an emotionally disturbed neighbor, highlighting the importance of community engagement and collaboration with law enforcement for safety.

Advocacy and Policy Updates:

He mentioned the City Council's vote on a racial impact study for new developments, expressing hope that this would help protect long-term residents from displacement and ensure equitable development.

Gratitude and Encouragement:

Camacho expressed gratitude to board members, staff, and community partners for their hard work and dedication, especially during challenging times. He encouraged continued involvement and communication to keep the board effective and responsive to community needs.

Celeste: Provided a point of clarification for all board members, stating that a form would be sent out before the end of the month for members to select their committees, with a deadline at the beginning of the next month. She also mentioned that new board members would be contacted for individual orientations.

Mr. Camacho: Added that if members do not submit their committee preferences in time, they will be assigned to committees as needed and offered to assist with orientations.

Introduction Of Elected Officials (Representatives)

Haris Khan (Community Liaison for NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer)

Phone: 929-512-1946

Email: hkhan@comptroller.nyc.gov

Jonathan Pomboza (Office of District Attorney Eric Gonzalez)

Phone: 718-250-2817

Email was stated to be in the chat but not provided verbally.

Marcus Harris (Office of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams)

Phone: 917-324-2680

Andres Aguirre (Office of Assemblywoman Maritza Davila)

Phone: 718-443-1205

Office open Monday, Wednesday, Friday by appointment.

Ramon Pebenito (Office of State Senator Julia Salazar)

Phone: 718-573-1726

Office Address: 212 Evergreen, right off Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

Office open Monday to Friday, 9:30am–6pm.)

Julio Salazar (Office of Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez)

Phone: 718-664-5149

Office Address: 266 Broadway, Suite 201, Brooklyn, NY

Introduction Of Agency/Other Representatives

Corina Lozada (Communities Resist)

Phone: 646-974-8773

Email: to be put in the chat; not explicitly stated.

Bruno (Communities Resist)

Main Office Line: 646-974-8761

Ariella (North Brooklyn Coalition)

Phone: 718-302-4073

Email to be dropped in the chat; not explicitly stated.

Anton Nimblett (Volunteers of America Bushwick Family Residence)

No direct contact info provided.

Noel Allain (The Bushwick Starr Theater)

Email: noel@thebushwickstar.org (star with two Rs)

Phone: 917-620-8546

Jason Quinones (The Bushwick Starr Theater)

Email: jason@thebushwick.org

Phone: 465-207-8073

83rd Precinct Commanding Officer's Report — Captain Abraham Sanabria

Introduction and Parade Update:

- Captain Claxton introduced himself as the new (two months in) executive officer, sitting in for Captain Sanabria.
- He reported that the recent Puerto Rican Day Parade was very successful and incident-free.

Crime Statistics and Trends:

- Burglaries are down in the precinct over the last 28 days.
- There has been a rise in grand larceny auto, primarily due to motorcycle thefts.
- Captain Claxton encouraged community members to take extra precautions to safeguard their motorcycles.

Recent Incidents and Police Response:

- Captain Claxton provided an update on a recent shooting at Knickerbocker and Hancock, stating that three people were shot and all suspects had been apprehended.
- He confirmed that the incident was gang-related and that there was a related retaliatory incident under investigation.

Q&A/Discussion

Update on Recent Shooting at Knickerbocker and Hancock

Question: Celeste asked for an update on the shooting at Knickerbocker and Hancock where four were shot.

Response: Captain Claxton clarified that three people were shot, and all suspects involved in the shooting had been apprehended as of that day.

Gunshots or Firecrackers?

Celeste, relaying a chat question: Asked whether the loud noises people have been hearing are gunshots or firecrackers.

Response: Captain Claxton explained that this time of year there is an influx of fireworks, but the police respond to every call to ensure public safety and investigate whether it is gunfire or fireworks.

Was the Shooting Gang-Related?

Question: Deborah) Asked if the shooting on Knickerbocker and Hancock was gang-related or a dispute between individuals.

Response: Captain Claxton confirmed that, based on intelligence, the incident was gang related. He also mentioned a related retaliatory incident under investigation.

Gratitude for Police Presence and Assistance

Comment: Barbara Smith thanked the police for their presence around the park and at community events, noting it contributed to safety.

Response: Captain Claxton expressed appreciation for the gratitude and said he would personally commend Sergeant Ramos for his actions in a recent community incident.

Police Assistance with Vaccinations

Comment: Mary McClellan thanked the precinct for helping her and others get to vaccination sites, calling it a lifesaver.

Response: Captain Claxton thanked her for the acknowledgment and emphasized the precinct's commitment to public safety, including COVID-19 assistance.

Community-Police Relations and Morale

Comment: Mr. Camacho spoke about the importance of positive community-police relations and supporting officers who do good work.

Response: Captain Claxton agreed, noting that community gratitude boosts officer morale and that he would recognize officers for their efforts.

Additional Comments

Comment: Gladys thanked officers for their presence in the park and on corners and joked about always picking up after her dog.

Response: Camacho and others responded with humor and appreciation.

5) District Manager's Report— Ms. Celeste León

Office Operations and Staffing:

Celeste reported that June is a busy month as it marks the end of the city's fiscal year and the last community board meeting before the summer recess. The board office is preparing for a transition back to in-person work, processing block party applications, and managing with a short staff. She acknowledged and thanked Sharon for her hard work and board members who have stepped up to help.

Health and Wellness:

She encouraged everyone to get vaccinated, support local businesses, and check in on neighbors, especially as the city continues to recover from the pandemic. She also noted that June is Pride Month and National Men's Health Awareness Month.

Community Engagement and Meetings:

Celeste summarized recent meetings and events, including:

- A call with City Planning about the district needs form and efforts to expand board and community engagement.
- Walkthroughs with NYCHA and HPD regarding the Linden Grove development, emphasizing that affordable and senior housing remain top priorities for Bushwick.
- A check-in with El Puente and the Bushwick Star about sustaining arts and culture conversations, with plans to start a working group.
- The sanitation working group's one-year anniversary, focusing on improving garbage collection and sanitation in the district.
- The borough service cabinet meeting, which included presentations on health, National Grid inspections, and hurricane evacuation zones.
- A call with Hester Street about the future of community boards and challenges faced by boards citywide.

Digital Archiving Project:

Celeste announced the start of a digital archive project for all community board documents, aiming to make records more accessible and searchable, especially for housing and land use matters.

Ongoing Support:

She reminded everyone that while most committee meetings will pause for the summer, the board office remains open year-round to assist with community concerns.

Gratitude:

Celeste expressed appreciation for the support and dedication of staff and board members, especially during challenging times.

6) Committee Reports**Youth And Education – Virgie Jones****Committee Meeting and Collaboration:**

The committee met on Monday, May 24. The chair thanked members for their participation and highlighted ongoing collaboration with CEC 32 (Community Education Council District 32).

Return to In-Person Learning:

It was announced that remote learning would end, and all students are expected to return to in-person classes for the 2021–2022 school year starting in September.

Student Assessments:

Martha (a committee member) presented information from the CEC public meeting about the i-Ready diagnostic assessment, which is administered to students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The assessment helps teachers identify students' strengths and needs, allowing for targeted instruction. It is given three times a year and provides valuable data for teachers.

Community Awards and Recognition:

The committee discussed the Agony of New York Human Service Awards, with a deadline for nominations on May 30. The chair encouraged schools to submit nominations for students to receive certificates.

Educational Programs and Events:

- The Association for Black Educators in New York (ABENY) is holding a celebration on Saturday, June 19, in place of their usual annual scholarship luncheon.
- The New York State Board of Regents and Chancellor Dr. Young have adopted a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion framework, which will be incorporated into curriculum design.

Student Opportunities:

- Samy shared that Brooklyn Houses would host a Juneteenth event with performances and an essay contest for youth, as well as a children's book fair at Brooklyn King Houses, where children can receive free books.
- Students 17 and older can earn up to \$300 by working during the June 22 election.
- There was mention of a field day event and a free vaccination event for students.

Community Acknowledgments:

The chair and other speakers expressed gratitude to committee members, volunteers, and community partners for their dedication and support, especially in organizing food distributions and supporting students and families.

Housing and Land Use - Anne Guiney**Committee Meeting and Hotel Text Amendment:**

The committee met on May 25 and received a presentation from the Department of City Planning about a proposed text amendment requiring special permits for new hotels

citywide. The committee supported this amendment, which would require hotel developers to go through the public review process (ULURP), allowing for community input. The amendment aims to protect manufacturing districts and preserve jobs by making it harder to convert these areas to hotel use.

Affordable and Senior Housing Projects:

The committee discussed the Linden Grove development, a proposed senior housing project through HPD and HDC. The project would provide affordable housing for seniors, with rents capped at 50% of the area median income (AMI), making it more accessible to Bushwick residents. The committee emphasized the need for truly affordable and supportive housing as a top community priority.

Racial Impact Study Legislation:

Anne Guiney reported that the City Council had passed a new requirement for racial impact studies on large development projects. This legislation will require developers to analyze and disclose the potential displacement and demographic impacts of rezonings and major projects. The committee sees this as a valuable tool for understanding and mitigating the effects of development on existing communities.

Past Rezoning and Community Impact:

The report referenced previous rezonings, such as the Rheingold and Broadway Triangle projects, and noted that the new racial impact study requirement would have provided important information during those processes.

Community Engagement and Acknowledgments:

The committee thanked coalition partners, such as Communities Resist, for their advocacy and support in pushing for the racial impact study legislation. Anne also apologized for being behind on meeting notes and promised to provide them soon.

Economic Development + Permits and Licenses - Desmond Monroe and Melissa Carrera

Economic Development Plan:

Desmond Monroe reported that the committee is working with Pratt to develop a comprehensive economic development plan for Bushwick. The plan will address key areas such as business growth, education, support for minority- and women-owned businesses (MWBE), affordable housing, and more. The goal is to provide a clear vision for economic growth and to hold elected officials accountable to community priorities. A full, detailed plan is expected to be presented in September.

Committee Merger:

Melissa Carrera noted that the Economic Development and Permits and Licenses committees have merged, allowing for more coordinated and effective work on business and licensing issues in the community.

Liquor License Applications:

The committee reviewed three New York State liquor license applications:

- 1) La Cantine (60 St Nicholas Avenue): Seeking a beer and wine license for a French café with community outreach and reasonable hours.

Intended Operating Hours:

- Monday through Sunday: 9am to 11pm

Stipulations:

- No music on the premises.
- The establishment is mindful of neighbors and noise complaints.
- No additional stipulations regarding liquor sales beyond the stated hours.

- 2) Farm to the People (1100 Flushing Avenue): Seeking a full liquor license for a grocery store with a bar/tavern component, offering fresh farm goods and a unique food and drink experience.

Intended Operating Hours:

- Monday through Thursday: 6am to 6pm (grocery only; no alcohol service)
- Friday through Sunday: 6am to 12am (bar/tavern component after 6pm)

Stipulations:

- Alcohol service begins after 6pm.
- No alcohol sales after 12am on Sundays.
- The bar/tavern operates only after 6pm; before that, it is strictly a grocery store.

- 3) Monkey King (1329 Willoughby Avenue): Seeking a full liquor license for a family-owned contemporary Asian restaurant, with plans for a social enterprise program for culinary students.

Intended Operating Hours:

- Sunday through Thursday: 11am to 12am
- Friday and Saturday: 11am to 1am

Stipulations:

- No alcohol sales after 12am on Sundays.
- The establishment is in compliance with all local regulations.

Committee Recommendations:

The committee recommended blanket approval for all three establishments, citing non-controversial applications and reasonable operating hours.

House of Yes – Letter of Support:

The committee received a request from House of Yes (2 Wyckoff Avenue) for an updated letter of support to reflect changes in their method of operation, including security, DJs, live music, and dancing. The committee supported this request, and the board approved the updated letter.

Community Engagement:

The report included discussion of community concerns, such as the presence of children in establishments serving alcohol, and the importance of supporting local businesses as they recover from the pandemic.

7) Recommendations**Blanket Vote on All Establishments (Liquor Licenses):**

The Permits and Licenses and Economic Development committee recommended a blanket approval for three establishments seeking liquor licenses:

- La Cantine (60 St Nicholas Avenue) – Beer and wine license for a French café.
- Farm to the People (1100 Flushing Avenue) – Full liquor license for a grocery store with a bar/tavern component.
- Monkey King (1329 Willoughby Avenue) – Full liquor license for a family-owned contemporary Asian restaurant.

Motion – Robert Camacho

Second – Desmonde Monroe

Opposed: Barbara Smith

Motion carried.

Approval of Recommendations for Establishments (Liquor Licenses)

The recommendation was for approval as presented, with the stipulated operating hours.

Motion – Gardea Caphart

Second – Melissa Carrera

Abstained: Raul Rubio, Andy Marte, Barbara Smith, Barbara Jackson, Jo-Ena Bennett, Annette Spellman, Zulma Novoa

Motion carried:

Updated Letter of Support for House of Yes:

The committee recommended updating the letter of support for House of Yes (2 Wyckoff Avenue) to reflect changes in their method of operation, including security, DJs, live music, and dancing.

Motion – Barbara Smith

Second – Anne Guiney

Abstained: Andy Marte

Motion carried.

8) **Old Business**

None

9) **New Business**

Barbara Smith:

- Emphasized the importance of voting early in the upcoming June 22 election.
- Provided practical advice for voters, such as making sure to completely fill in all circles on the ballot to ensure it is accepted by the voting machine.
- Warned that if any circle is not filled in, the ballot will be rejected, and the voter will have to redo it.
- Noted that the ballot is double-sided and includes many choices, especially with ranked-choice voting (up to 23 circles if all five choices are used).

Other Board Members/Attendees:

- Echoed the importance of voting and encouraged everyone to participate in early voting.
- Reminded attendees about the logistics of the election, such as the dates for early voting and the need to fill in all required sections of the ballot.

10) **Announcements (1.5 Minutes)**

Elected Officials and Representatives:

- Ramon (State Senator Julia Salazar's office): No updates at this time.
- Marcus Harris (Brooklyn Borough President's office): Directed attendees to brooklynusa.org for information and extended holiday greetings.
- Julio Salazar (Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez's office): Mentioned ongoing negotiations in DC regarding an infrastructure bill, which could bring jobs and funding for local projects.
- Haris (NYC Comptroller's office): Shared a link to a COVID-19 recovery resource website, available in multiple languages, and encouraged its use.

Board Members and Community Reminders:

- Samy: Reminded everyone about the June 22 election, provided early voting site information, and explained ranked-choice voting.
- Andy: Thanked the board for his appointment and raised a concern about a dangerous sinkhole at Melrose and Knickerbocker, encouraging members to report such issues.

Community Organizations:

- Bruno (Communities Resist): Announced upcoming ERAP (Emergency Rental Assistance Program) tabling and workshops in Bushwick.
- Ariella (North Brooklyn Coalition): Shared that support groups for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault have relaunched, all virtual.
- Anton (Volunteers of America): Announced the Summer Arts Festival on August 21 in Maria Hernandez Park, featuring activities for kids and back-to-school events.
- Barbara Smith: Announced that National Night Out will be held as a block party on August 3, inviting organizations to participate.
- Selena: Shared information about the FCC's Emergency Broadband Assistance Program for those struggling to pay for internet service.

General Reminders and Well Wishes:

- Multiple speakers wished everyone a safe and happy summer.
- The chair reminded attendees that the board office remains open year-round for assistance, even during the summer recess.

11) Second Roll Call

Board Members in attendance: Frank Zimmerman, Carlotta Williams, Jerry Valentin, Annette Spellman, Dustin Sonneborn, Barbara Smith, Raul Rubio, Gladys Puglla, Zulma Novoa, Desmonde Monroe, Imini Mitchell, Mary McClellan, Andy Marte, Luisa Jose, Kristen Jock, Tanesha Honeygan, Jared Hicks, Hadiyah Harrison, Anne Guiney, Freddy Fowler, Elvena Davis, Daniella Davi, Felix Ceballos, Melissa Carrera, Gardea Caphart, Robert Camacho, Rawle Brown, Jo-Ena Bennett,

Excused: Odolph Wright, Barbara Jackson, Jose R. Guzman, Egaudy Gomez, Andrew Choi, Martha Brown, Rev. Grace Aytes

Absent: Vernedeaneer Shell, Acire Polight, Kyle O'Rourke, Cheryl Jones, Rev. Migdalia Gutierrez, Christopher Graham, James Fitzgerald, Carlos Feliciano, Louisa Chan, Marcus Alston

12) Adjournment

Motion – Elvena Davis

Second – Raul Rubio

All in favor, so moved.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:36pm