

Brooklyn Community Board 4
Public Hearing and Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 21, 2022, 6pm

Zoom

Chairperson: Robert Camacho
District Manager: Celestina León

Meeting Start: 6:05pm

Celeste called the meeting to order and announced the first public hearing item.

Public Hearing:

1) Public Comment (2 minutes per person or group)

Tina Han (Hot Bread Kitchen) – Spoke about Hot Bread Kitchen’s programs for economic opportunity for immigrant women and women of color, including job training and entrepreneurship programs.

Response: Speaker(s) thanked Tina for her presentation and wished her happy holidays.

Jo-Ena Bennett – Asked for clarification about the difference between public comments and announcements.

Response: Celeste clarified that public comment is for any information or concerns to be shared at that time, and announcements can also be made during this period if desired. Later, Celeste further clarified that public comment does not replace announcements but is intended for concerns about neighborhood issues.

Deborah Hicks – Raised the issue of graffiti on Bushwick Avenue and asked about a PSA for homeowners affected by graffiti.

Response: Celeste and Mr. Camacho provided information about existing programs to address graffiti, including contacting the community affairs unit, city programs, and local not-for-profits. They also mentioned the involvement of the Economic Development Corporation and the 83rd Precinct.

Stephanie Anderson – Asked about zoning laws regarding a party venue operating in a residential area and the process for addressing such issues.

Response: Celeste explained that if a party venue is operating in a residential area, it is illegal and should be reported to the Department of Buildings and the 83rd Precinct. If it

is commercial and licensed, it is a different matter. Celeste offered to follow up if details are provided.

Jo-Ena Bennett and others – Discussed a specific party rental location on Bushwick Avenue and ongoing community concerns.

Response: Celeste and others acknowledged ongoing discussions about the location and agreed to follow up.

Acire Polight – Asked about the impact of J/Z/M train repairs on weekend transit and possible bus service.

Response: Celeste suggested reaching out to the MTA for more information and to request a presentation.

James Steward – Shared concerns about graffiti and vandalism at his church and asked for help with cleanup.

Response: Celeste advised Mr. Steward to contact the community affairs unit at the precinct or the board's office for follow-up.

Linda – Asked about the proliferation of smoke shops and regulation of legal/illegal products.

Response: Celeste explained the city's actions, the roles of the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection and the Cannabis Control Board and encouraged reporting of specific locations to the board's office.

Mary McClellan – Raised concerns about flooding in a NYC Housing Complex at Wilson and Gates, and the city's response to infrastructure issues.

Response: Mr. Camacho described previous actions taken, such as cleaning storm drains, and ongoing efforts to address the issue, including surveys and infrastructure improvements.

Joshua Brown – Warned about a scam involving fake Con Edison text messages targeting seniors.

Response: Speaker(s) thanked Josh for the warning and acknowledged the importance of the information.

Jo-Ena Bennett – Asked about updates from Senator Salazar's town hall and communication with the community board.

Response: Celeste provided the new date and location for the town hall and explained how the board would be notified.

Lily Lopez (Night Connects) – Introduced Night Connects, a program connecting people with disabilities to resources and services.

Response: Speaker(s) thanked Lily for sharing information about the program.

Barbara Smith – Thanked those who helped with the Thanksgiving turkey giveaway and announced a post-Christmas toy giveaway.

Response: Speaker(s) thanked Barbara for her efforts and contributions to the community.

Regular Meeting:

1) First Roll Call

Board members in attendance: Isa Abney, Stephanie Anderson, Jo-Ena Bennett, Joshua Brown, Rawle Brown, Robert Camacho, Felix Ceballos, Andrew Choi, Elvena Davis, James Fitzgerald, Christopher Graham, Anne Guiney, Jose R. Guzman, Tanesha Honeygan, Barbara Jackson, Cheryl Jones, Luisa Jose-Olea, Kweighbaye Kotee, Cassandra Leveille, Mary McClellan, Imini Mitchell, Acire Polight, Gladys Puglla, Raul Rubio, Eliseo Ruiz, Milagros Sandoval, Barbara Smith, Maria Soler, Annette Spellin, James Steward II, Benjamin Tocker, Tashawna Wade

Excused: Grace Aytes, Cheryl Jones, Nicolas Kaplan, Vernedeaner Shell, Carlotta Williams

Absent: Freddy Fowler, Joanna Fuentes-Singh Hadiyah Harrison, Virgie Jones, Desmonde Monroe, Samy Nemir, Zulma Novoa, Kyle O'Rourke, Dustin Sonneborn, Leo Tineo, Jerry Valentin

33 board members were present, which constitutes a quorum.

2) Acceptance of the Agenda

Barbara Jackson made a motion to accept the agenda. It was seconded by Raul Rubio. All were in favor, so moved.

3) Acceptance of the Previous Meeting Minutes

Jose R. Guzman made a motion to accept the previous meeting minutes. It was seconded by Melissa Carrera. All were in favor, so moved.

4) Chairperson's Report

Mr. Camacho opened with holiday greetings and shared that he had been serving on jury duty for the past month.

He reported on several community events and meetings, including:

- Addressing security concerns at a senior building (85 Palmetto).
- Thanksgiving dinners and turkey giveaways at Knickerbocker Plaza and Hope Gardens, with thanks to local officials and volunteers.
- Attending a district luncheon at PS 45 and other committee meetings related to housing, land use, economic development, and nightlife.

He acknowledged Sharon Flood's retirement after over 20 years of service to the community and expressed gratitude for her contributions.

Mr. Camacho discussed issues related to COVID-19 testing, noting confusion about costs and insurance, and clarified that free testing is available at Woodhull Hospital.

He paid tribute to a community member, Ms. Bunton, a long-time resident and educator who recently passed away, emphasizing the importance of supporting seniors and preserving community history.

Q&A/Discussion

Annette Spellen commented on the passing of Miss Bunton, providing additional details about her life and expressing condolences.

Response: Mr. Camacho and Celeste thanked Annette for her remarks and acknowledged the loss.

Mary McClellan asked if COVID-19 testing at Woodhull Hospital is still free and expressed the need for this information to be widely shared.

Response: An unnamed Woodhull representative or advisory board member confirmed that testing at Woodhull is still free and agreed to help broadcast this information.

Jo-Ena Bennett asked about free immunizations and whether insurance is required, and if there are any places offering free immunizations.

Response: Celeste explained that the Department of Health recommends going through a primary health provider or a healthcare navigator if one does not have a provider and offered to request more information from the Department of Health.

Mr. Camacho added that he called 311 and was able to get a shot on Knickerbocker without insurance and described the process for walk-in immunizations.

Jo-Ena Bennett also asked Mr. Camacho if there were any new updates from the nightlife committee meeting that would pertain to Bushwick.

Response: Mr. Camacho deferred to Celeste to provide updates during her report, stating he did not want to take her role.

Fran (in the chat) requested that any documentation or flyers about Woodhull's free testing be shared with the council member's office.

Response: Celeste acknowledged the request and agreed to share the information.

The report concluded with a call to care for long-term residents and a reminder of the community's resilience and history.

Elected Officials Representatives in attendance:

Brooklyn Borough President's Office

Representative: Lacey Tauber

(Contact info was to be dropped in the chat)

Council Member Jennifer Gutierrez's Office

Representative: Juan Mayancela

(Contact info was to be dropped in the chat)

District Attorney Eric Gonzalez's Office

Representative: Jonathan Pomboza

Action Center Phone: 718-250-2340

Office Address: 350 Jay Street

Council Member Sandy Nurse's Office

Representative: Fran Sanhueza

Phone: 646-793-1119

Senator Salazar's Office

Representative: Carlos Calzadilla

Phone: 718-573-1726

Office Address: 212 Evergreen Avenue

Agency/Other Reps in attendance:

The Bushwick Starr

Representative: Cassandra Brown (Education Director)

Contact Number: 646-363-5274

83rd Precinct Commanding Officer Report:

There was no formal report from the 83rd Precinct Commanding Officer at this meeting. The board announced that the commanding officer was unable to attend due to the precinct's holiday party but sent greetings to everyone and expressed hope to join the meeting in the new year.

5) District Manager's Report

Board Member Applications: The deadline to apply for board membership is February 14. Assistance is available for those needing help with the application process.

Community Needs Data: The office is reviewing data collected between September and October, with reports expected for committee review early next year.

Staffing:

- Sharon's retirement was noted, and the office will be short-staffed until further notice.
- A job vacancy notice will be posted soon.

Meetings and Advocacy:

- The District Manager and Chairperson attended several meetings, including those with council members and historic preservation advocates.
- A meeting with the Landmarks Preservation Commission was highlighted, where Bushwick preservation priorities were discussed.

311 Community Walks: The office has started "311 community walks" to proactively assess and address neighborhood issues, such as abandoned vehicles and sanitation concerns, in collaboration with local officials and agencies.

Community Events: Participation in holiday events, such as the joint Holiday Tree Lighting and paranda, and recognition of board members' achievements (e.g., Desmonde Monroe's MWBE certificate).

Ongoing Communication: The District Manager encouraged board members to read the full report and reach out with any questions.

6) Committee Reports

Housing and Land Use – Anne Guiney

The committee met on November 29. The main agenda item was a presentation by Mr. Silvio Sanchez, project coordinator for a proposed residential development at 743–747 Evergreen Avenue (a manufacturing site seeking a zoning change for residential use).

- The presenter was unprepared and unable to answer basic questions about the project, including details on affordability, city programs, and financials. The committee found this troubling and could not support the project based on the lack of information.
- The site had previously come before the committee with a different developer, but that project fell apart.

The committee also heard from Mr. Paul Kersner (CB5/Ridgewood) about historic preservation efforts in Ridgewood, offering to be a resource for Bushwick as local preservation efforts gain momentum.

Updates were provided on the Rheingold rezoning and the status of public space at the site, with ongoing efforts to get more information from city planning or the property manager.

The committee discussed improving their process for handling unprepared presenters and encouraged members to review the detailed meeting notes.

The report concluded with a reminder that the committee is open to further discussion on these topics and that the meeting notes are available for those interested.

Read the full report

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

The committee met on December 13 and discussed several key topics:

Community Engagement: Received a presentation from RiseBoro on the Small Business Services Neighborhood 360 program, which aims to support commercial districts in Bushwick through economic development initiatives and community engagement. Volunteers are encouraged to participate.

Liquor License Applications: Reviewed and made recommendations on several applications for beer, wine, and liquor licenses for local establishments, including:

1. Topsy Bean LLC Café (beer and wine license)

Hours:

- Monday–Wednesday: 7am–12am
- Thursday–Saturday: 7am–2:30am
- Sunday: 7am–12am

Stipulations:

- No amplified music outside
- No alcohol sales past 12am on Sundays
- All outdoor spaces must be closed by 10pm
- Not participating in the open restaurants

2. El Burro Mexican Grill Corp (beer and wine license)

Hours:

- Monday–Thursday: 10am–11pm
- Friday–Saturday: 10am–2am
- Sunday: 10am–12am

Stipulations:

- No alcohol sales past 12am on Sundays
- No amplified music
- No outdoor space
- Encouraged to post job opportunities on the Bushwick jobs board

3. Antojitos Marineros (full liquor license)

Hours:

- Monday–Saturday: 7am–2am
- Sunday: 7am–12am
- Outdoor spaces: Monday–Sunday, 7am–10pm

Stipulations:

- No alcohol sales past 12am on Sundays
- Outdoor spaces closed by 10pm
- No amplified music outside
- Encouraged to post job opportunities on the Bushwick jobs board

4. 613 Bushwick Avenue LLC (full liquor license, large multi-level venue with food trucks and rooftop)

Hours (as amended by the board):

- Monday–Wednesday: 4pm–2am
- Thursday–Saturday: 4pm–2am (originally 4am, amended to 2am)
- Sunday: 4pm–12am
- Outdoor space: Monday–Sunday, 4pm–10pm

Stipulations:

- No amplified music outside
- Outdoor spaces closed by 10pm
- Soundproofing required
- Alcohol service only on floor levels, not rooftop
- List of food truck operators and rooftop restaurant plans to be provided

5. 957 Myrtle Broadway LLC/Market Hotel (full liquor license, change of ownership)

Hours (as amended by the board):

- Monday–Wednesday: 6pm–2am
- Thursday–Saturday: 6pm–2am (originally 4am, amended to 2am)
- Sunday: 6pm–12am

Stipulations:

- Entry/exit via Myrtle Avenue entrance only (not Broadway side, due to proximity to a place of worship)
- 200-foot rule to be observed
- Clarification on certificate of occupancy required
- All standard stipulations (no amplified music outside, outdoor spaces closed by 10pm, etc.)

6. Singularity Cupboard LLC (temporary retail permit)

Hours:

- Monday–Sunday: 2pm–12am

Stipulations:

- Temporary retail permit
- No objections from the 83rd Precinct
- All standard stipulations as per committee

Committee Procedures: Emphasized the importance of hearing directly from business owners or managers (not just attorneys), community notification requirements, and the need for establishments to conduct outreach to neighbors.

Community Concerns: Addressed ongoing issues with noise, late-night operations, and the proliferation of bars and clubs in residential areas. Discussed the need for more uniform stipulations and enforcement, and the impact on quality of life for residents.

Enforcement and Stipulations: Outlined the process for handling complaints, fines, and potential license revocation for businesses that violate stipulations (e.g., noise, hours of operation).

Future Plans: The committee plans to develop a more uniform rubric for evaluating applications and to hold an informational session for the community on how the committee operates and enforces stipulations.

Read the full report

District Office – Mr. Robert Camacho

The district office committee reviewed **board member attendance**, noting members who have improved, resigned, or have attendance issues due to health or other reasons.

- **Improved:** Members who have maintained satisfactory attendance.
- **Resigned:** Some members, such as Andrew Shadow, resigned after informing the office that meeting notices went to their spam folder.
- **Health-Related Absences:** Members like Leo Tineo and Mary McClellan had absences due to health issues, which were acknowledged and discussed.
- **Moved Out of District:** Cheryl Jones indicated she moved out of state but still works in the borough.

The committee made recommendations regarding attendance, including the removal of members who had excessive unexcused or excused absences, as per the board's bylaws.

The process for removal:

- Members with three unexcused absences or six excused absences receive a certified letter and an email.
- Only those who respond to the notice are considered for retention; others are recommended for removal.

Lease Agreement: The office received a new 10-year lease agreement. There was initial concern about business hours (8am–6pm), but property management confirmed that after-hours use for meetings will continue as before.

Meeting Calendar: The PBA calendar was discussed with encouragement for board members to review it and request hard copies if needed.

Committee Shared Drives: All committees have access to shared drives containing notices, meeting materials, and reports. Assistance is available for those needing help with the drive or requesting hard copies.

Office Hours: The district office remains open Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm. Members are encouraged to report any complaints or issues.

Staff Time and Attendance: An update was given on accrued leave for staff, particularly for Celeste, who was injured over the summer. The board is working to ensure leave can be rolled over without penalty.

Future of Community Boards Working Group: The district manager participates in a citywide group of district managers to discuss shared challenges and advocate for better resources for community boards.

Board Bylaws: A reminder that board members need permission from the board or chairperson to speak to the press on behalf of the board. The district manager coordinates all press/media inquiries with the chairperson.

7) Recommendations

Parks and Recreation Committee – Winter Soccer League Permit Hours

- Gladys raised concerns about lighting in the park and the need to limit hours due to darkness and tampering with light poles.
- Mr. Camacho responded, agreeing to follow up on the lighting issue and confirming the hours would be limited to daylight.

Motion: **Approve permit hours for the winter soccer league at Bushwick High School** (Saturday/Sunday 8am–6pm, Monday–Friday 4pm–6pm).

Motion made by: Gladys Puglla

Seconded by: Elvena Davis

District Office Committee – Board Member Removals for Attendance

- Mr. Camacho shared the following members were recommended for removal due to attendance: Jose R. Guzman, Cheryl Jones, Samy Nemir, Gladys Puglla, and Samy Nemir
- Acire asked for clarification on whether members were contacted and if they responded.
- Celeste clarified the process: certified letters and emails were sent, and those who responded were mentioned in the district office report.

Motion: **Remove listed board members for non-responsiveness or excessive absences.**

Motion made by: James Steward

Seconded by: Annette Spellen

Abstained: Andrew Choi, Raul Rubio, Acire Polight, Anne Guiney, Kweighbaye Kotee, Cassandra Leveille

Economic Development and Permits and Licenses Committee – Blanket Vote & Recommendation for Non-Controversial Establishments

Motion: **Blanket vote on four non-controversial liquor license applications (Topsy Bean, El Burro, Antojitos Marineros, Singularity Cupboard).**

Motion made by: Cassandra Leveille

Seconded by: Isa Abney

All in favor, so moved.

For the recommendation:

Motion to approve: Ben Tocker

Seconded by: Maria Soler

Abstained: Elvena Davis, Raul Rubio, Robert Camacho, Jo-Ena Bennett, Barbara Smith, Acire Polight

Opposed: Dustin Sonneborn

Motion carried.

613 Bushwick Avenue LLC (Liquor License, Amended Hours, corner of Jefferson Street)

- Annette Spellen and others asked for clarification on the location and stipulations.
- Melissa clarified the stipulations, including outdoor space closure, soundproofing, and food truck operations.
- Anne raised the issue of fairness and consistency in applying rules across applicants.

Motion: **Amend Thursday–Saturday closing hours from 4am to 2am.**

Motion made by: Cassandra Leveille

Seconded by: Mr. Camacho

Abstained: Melissa Carrera Solano, Elvena Davis, Raul Rubio, Anne Guiney, Ben Tocker

Motion carried.

Motion **to approve the full recommendation (with stipulations, including a list of the contact information for the food truck operators and more information on their Restaurant plan for the rooftop area, and amended hours):**

Motion made by: Mr. Camacho

Seconded by: Gladys Puglla

Abstained: Melissa Carrera Solano, Anne Guiney, Annette Spellen, Jo-Ena Bennett, Raul Rubio, Acire Polight

Opposed: Dustin Sonneborn

Motion carried

1140 Myrtle Avenue/Market Hotel (Liquor License, Amended Hours)

- Jo-Ena Bennett suggested tabling the vote due to many stipulations and lack of clarity.
- Celeste explained the 30-day review period and the risk of losing board input if delayed.
- Anne again emphasized the need for consistent standards.
- Elvena Davis raised concerns about the impact on a neighboring church and past issues with crowding and access.
- Melissa and Celeste clarified the 200-foot rule and entry/exit stipulations to protect the church.
- The board discussed the certificate of occupancy and the need for clarity on the establishment's address and operations.

Motion: **Amend Thursday–Saturday closing hours from 4am to 2am.**

Motion made by: Mr. Camacho

Seconded by: Maria Soler

Opposed: Melissa Carrera Solano, Anne Guiney, Ben Tocker, Rawle Brown, Andrew Choi, Dustin Sonneborn, Acire Polight, Jo-Ena Bennett, Tashawna Wade, Millie Sandoval

Motion carried.

Motion to approve the full recommendation (with stipulations, including the entryway to be via the Myrtle Avenue entrance, a reminder of the 200-foot rule, clarity on the Certificate of Occupancy (currently 957 Broadway), and amended hours):

Motion made by: Mr. Camacho

Seconded by: Gladys Puglla

Opposed: Andrew Choi, Raul Rubio, Jo-Ena Bennett

Abstained: Anne Guiney, Elvena Davis, Annette Spellen, Acire Polight

Motion carried.

Throughout the recommendations section, there was active discussion about:

- The need for uniformity and fairness in applying stipulations and hours.
- The impact of nightlife and liquor licenses on residential quality of life.
- The importance of community outreach and communication with affected neighbors and institutions (e.g., churches).
- The process for handling board member attendance and removals.

8) **Old Business**

None

9) **New Business**

None

10) **Announcements**

Lacey Tauber (Brooklyn Borough President's Office)

Reminded everyone about the Community Board application deadline (February 14), encouraged youth to apply, and shared information about a maternal health campaign and the upcoming State of the Borough address.

Carlos Calzadilla (Senator Salazar's Office)

Announced a recent toy drive for immigrant refugees, an upcoming Public Safety Town Hall (January 26), and shared that this was his last meeting as he is leaving the Senator's office.

Reverend Elvena Davis

Thanked fellow board members for their condolences and support following the loss of her mother.

Juan Mayancela (Council Member Jennifer Gutierrez's Office)

Thanked attendees for participating in the Christmas lighting ceremony, offered help with graffiti issues, announced renovations to Maria Hernandez Park (including dog runs), and promoted an upcoming Town Hall on sanitation, environment, and safety (January 23).

Fran Sanhueza (Council Member Sandy Nurse's Office)

Shared DSNY service alerts for holiday trash collection and reminded constituents to call 311 for heat/hot water issues before contacting the council office.

Jonathan Pomboza (District Attorney Eric Gonzalez's Office)

Reported on a successful gun buyback event (over 200 guns collected), warned about holiday scams, and wished everyone happy holidays.

Other speakers included board members and community members who made brief announcements or expressed holiday wishes.

11) **Second Roll Call**

Board members in attendance: Tashawna Wade, Benjamin Tocker, James Steward II, Annette Spellen, Dustin Sonneborn, Maria Soler, Barbara Smith, Eliseo Ruiz, Raul Rubio, Gladys Puglla, Acire Polight, Cassandra Leveille, Kweighbaye Kotee, Luisa Jose Olea, Barbara Jackson, Hadiyah Harrison, Anne Guiney, Christopher Graham, James Fitzgerald, Elvena Davis, Andrew Choi, Felix Ceballos, Melissa Carrera, Robert Camacho, Rawle Brown, Joshua Brown, Jo-Ena Bennett, Isa Abney

Excused: Carlotta Williams, Vernedeaner Shell, Cheryl Jones, Jose R. Guzman, Grace Aytes

Absent: Jerry Valentin, Leo Tineo, Milagros Sandoval, Kyle O'Rourke, Zulma Novoa, Samy Nemir, Desmonde Monroe, Imini Mitchell, Mary McClellan, Virgie Jones, Tanesha Honeygan, Joanna Fuentes-Singh, Freddy Fowler, Grace Aytes

12) **Adjournment**

Melissa Carrera Solano made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Annette Spellen. All were in favor, so moved.

Meeting adjourned: 8:43pm