

Brooklyn Community Board 4
Public Hearing and Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 19, 2023 6pm

Zoom

Chairperson: Robert Camacho
District Manager: Celestina Leon

Meeting Start: 6:10pm

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

Public Hearing:

- 1) Ramon Rodriguez, President/CEO, Wyckoff Heights Medical Center** - providing an informational update on the hospital's operations and services.

Mr. Rodriguez introduced himself and shared that he's been at the hospital for 10 years. There were rumors it would close when he first arrived. The hospital doesn't have the ability to raise capital. They have to depend on the government. He's worked to make it better and would like to share 3 things.

- 1) 10 Free Classes for CPR

They have a certificate of need to bring PCI to the hospital. In the last two years the program has grown. They are now able to catheterize and put in a stent. They are in the 95th percentile of quality and safety and have performed 200 procedures—almost the same amount the year before.

He shared an anecdote about a security guard that went to the laundromat and never came back. He had a massive heart attack at 52 years old. He recommended the community and board be a fulcrum. It is important to help someone immediately. Everyone should know.

The hospital will offer free classes for CPR. He asked the Board leadership for help finding 10 people to come to the classes with their ambulance service. Anyone can help someone by pushing on the chest on a rhythmic basis. Time is muscle.

The hospital will also provide 5 defibrillators for the Community Board to put in places they will be useful. They would like to challenge colleagues in other places to build a process to make the city a better place from the ground up. It is an opportunity to recover better—at least not to die.

2) NY Safety Net Coalition

Mr. Rodriguez noted informational handouts with a QR code were provided. He added almost 60% of patients have medicaid insurance, which is defined, focused, represented by city, state, and federal dollars. One-fifth of what commercial insurance gets for the same procedure. Those hospitals are paid 5x more. Wyckoff is working hard and happy to see progress. Safety net hospitals are subsidized by the State of New York. They don't negotiate with the larger insurance companies—it's take it or leave it.

They are advocating to deal with inequity. It took 8 years to get cardiac catheterization. He hopes everyone will join the safety net coalition.

3) Wyckoff operations

Mr. Rodriguez referenced the national staffing shortage. Safety net hospitals are paying for traveling nurses, who get paid a higher rate. The hospital spent <\$1M in the last year.

The last time he attended a meeting—a while ago, he talked about bariatric surgery (nationally accredited). Over 275 surgeries have been performed. They brought in the DaVinci robots last summer. They provide general, urological, and GYN surgeries. The hospital also has an extraordinary new breast cancer surgeon.

It is imperative we come together. 4.5M people are served by the safety net coalition. They mostly have medicaid/medicare. Over half of the people within 2 miles of the hospital have access to care.

They have embarked upon a project that will be a reality a year from now. An international company is building a biplane. Similar cardiac catheterization. You get a 3D view of someone's brain, go into large vessels, and break up a clot. Time is brain.

In Bushwick, #1 is heart attacks and coronary diseases. #2 is stroke. Today it is kind of affordable and accessible. Everyone should have the ability to provide care in 30 to 45 minutes. The elderly are ignored. Should be a time/position to have autonomy. I believe we can be a movement that collectively changes that process. Thank you.

Mr. Rodriguez summarized his remarks before concluding.

- 1) CPR training for community members and defibrillators
- 2) Safety Net Coalition
- 3) Hospital Update

Q&A/Discussion:

Rev. Elvena Davis shared her personal experience. In 2015, her father got sick at home. No one at home except her could do CPR. The only reason her father made it is because of the CPR training. She encouraged everyone to take the training even if it's just for family. Every minute counted. She's happy they will give 10 slots for training to the community.

Felix Ceballos identified himself as a CB4 member. He thanked Mr. Rodriguez for coming and hopes he will continue to do so.

Stephanie Anderson thanked Mr. Rodriguez for attending the meeting and referenced him mentioning the hospital uses robotics for surgery. Are they actual robots or cameras? Mr. Rodriguez responded that the machines have impressive software. The doctor feels like they're inside the body. They manipulate extra arms through tiny tubes. The DaVinci robots have been used in other places for many years. The hospital now has two of them and over 500 procedures have been performed in six months. They have been able to recruit physicians by having them, as well.

Barbara Smith shared her personal experience of receiving treatment on 4 floors of Wyckoff hospital even though she used to not walk on the same side of the street. It's amazing what they have there. The hospital treated her *excellently*. The nurse and doctors are so caring. She thanked Mr. Rodriguez for uplifting them. Mr. Rodriguez shared a personal anecdote and that this is the greatest job he's ever had.

Rev. James Steward thanked Mr. Rodriguez, and identified himself as the pastor of a church in Bushwick as well as a director of a department at a Long Island hospital. He asked about the status of spiritual care at Wyckoff. Mr. Rodriguez responded that it is not an area that is as active as it could be. Rev. Steward noted his involvement in healthcare chaplaincy for 20 years and emphasized the importance. He would like to make a connection. Mr. Rodriguez noted it is an area they can improve and he is the access point. He encouraged Rev. Steward to come to the 3rd floor of the hospital or call and ask for him.

Felix Ceballos commented on Mr. Rodriguez referencing his mother being a patient at the hospital. He appreciates him opening the door and treating the community like family.

Pastor B Ross thanked Mr. Rodriguez. She is a longtime Bushwick resident and appreciated his update.

Deborah Hicks noted serious problems with drugs and mental health in the community. She has a neighbor that receives an ambulance visit more than several times a week. She asked if it would be possible to assign someone to work with them instead of wasting city resources. Mr. Rodriguez answered that Wyckoff doesn't have the resources, specifically a behavioral inpatient center, although Woodhull has substantial out- and in-patient services.

Joshua Brown thanked Mr. Rodriguez for the presentation and asked if it would be possible to raise funds to do a community-wide CPR training. Mr. Rodriguez noted it was just the beginning of the collaboration and they are happy to work with the community.

Raul Rubio shared that he facilitates mental health first aid training for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and would like to offer the training to Wyckoff hospital staff. Mr. Rodriguez encouraged him to follow up to coordinate the training.

Regular Meeting:

1) First Roll Call

Board members in attendance: Isa Abney, Stephanie Anderson, Jo-Ena Bennett, Joshua Brown, Rawle Brown, Robert Camacho, Melissa Carrera-Solano, Felix Ceballos, Elvena Davis, James Fitzgerald, Freddy Fowler, Joanna Fuentes, Anne Guiney, Tanesha Honeygan, Barbara Jackson, Cassandra Leveille, Imini Mitchell, Zulma Novoa, Acire Polight, Raul Rubio, Eliseo Ruiz, Milagros Sandoval, Barbara Smith, Dustin Sonneborn, Annette Spellin, James Steward, Benjamin Tocker, Tashawna Wade, Carlotta Williams

Excused: Luisa Jose-Olea, Vernedeane Shell, Maria Soler, Jerry Valentin

Absent: Grace Aytes, Andrew Choi, Hadiyah Harrison, Nicolas Kaplan, Mary McClellan, Desmonde Monroe, Kyle O'Rourke

30 board members present, which constitutes a quorum. Thank you, everyone.

2) Acceptance of the Agenda

Melissa Carrera-Solano made a motion to accept the agenda. It was seconded by Elvena Davis. All were in favor, so moved.

3) Acceptance of the Previous Meeting Minutes

The district manager kindly asked for the previous for the board to table the previous meeting minutes given the district office is still short-staffed. Raul Rubio made a motion to table the previous meeting minutes. It was seconded by Joshua Brown. All were in favor, so moved.

4) CB4 Election of Executive Officers for 2023-2024

Dustin Sonneborn called for nominations from the floor three times for each position. He also assisted board members that needed help submitting the form during that part of the election process.

The Recording Secretary, Felix Ceballos, cast a vote for the following uncontested positions:

- Chairperson: Robert Camacho
- 1st Vice Chairperson: Joshua Brown
- 2nd Vice Chairperson: Raul Rubio
- Financial Secretary: Eliseo Ruiz
- Correspondence Secretary: Elvena Davis
- Parliamentarian: Jo-Ena Bennett

The Correspondence Secretary, Elvena Davis, cast a vote for Felix Ceballos, who was uncontested for the recording secretary position.

Imini Mitchell accepted the nomination for Treasurer and briefly shared why she was interested in the position.

The board voted virtually via a Google Form. The results:

- 52.9% voted for Jerry Valentin (incumbent)
- 47.1% voted for Imini Mitchell

Everyone was congratulated and thanked for the participation. Mr. Camacho thanked the board for reelecting him as Board Chairperson.

5) Chairperson's Report

Mr. Camacho provided an overview of meetings and events he attended in the past month. See the [Executive Board Report](#).

The district manager provided an overview of the Board Member Attendance Review from the [District Office report](#) on behalf of Mr. Camacho.

Elected Officials and Representatives:

Hercules Reid, Mayor's Community Affairs Unit
hreid@cityhall.nyc.gov

Pablo Rivera, Assemblymember Erik Dilan
 366 Cornelia Street, (718) 386-4576

Fran Sanhueza, Council Member Sandy Nurse
 56 Pennsylvania Avenue, (718) 642-8664

Jonathan Betancourt, Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez
 266 Broadway, (718) 599-3658

Lacey Tauber, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso
 209 Joralemon Street, (718) 802-3700

Maria Valdez, State Senator Julia Salazar
212 Evergreen Avenue, (718) 573-1726

Evette Lopez, Assemblymember Maritza Davila
249 Wilson Avenue, (718) 443-1205

Juan Mayancela, Council Member Jennifer Gutierrez
244 Union Avenue, (718) 963-3141

Jonathan Pomboza, District Attorney Eric Gonzalez
350 Jay Street, (718) 250-2340

City Agencies and Community-Based organizations:
Sinthia Pena Ortiz, Director, Bushwick Community Partnership
313 Wyckoff Avenue, (718) 497-6090 ext. 766, bushwickcpi@gmail.com

Rob Solano, Executive Director, Churches United for Fair Housing
7 Marcus Garvey Boulevard, (718) 360-2906

The district manager noted that she was informed that neither the Deputy Inspector, Alexandra Sarubbi, or the Executive Officer from the 83 Precinct were able to attend the meeting. Officer Lopez from the Community Affairs Unit was in attendance.

6) District Manager's Report

See the District Office Update from the [District Office Report](#).

The district manager also briefly spoke about the recent RAD Hope Gardens meeting as referenced by Mr. Camacho.

7) Committee Reports*

*Digital and/or hard copies are available upon request

[Civic/Public Safety Religious](#) - Annette Spellén

[Economic Development + Permits and Licenses](#) - Melissa Carrera-Solano

There was a lively discussion around the application for Xanadu at 262 Starr Street. Board members expressed their concerns and allowed the public to provide comments, as well. Assemblywoman Maritza Davila was also acknowledged and shared her concerns about the establishment.

The establishment owner, Varun, was allowed to introduce himself, speak briefly about the business plan, and respond to some of the concerns.

[Environmental Protection/Transportation/Sanitation + Parks and Recreation](#) - Barbara Jackson

A representative from Troutman Open Streets was allowed to speak for several minutes. The open street will last from 4/22 to 10/31. He encouraged folks to come by, get involved, and see how they are taking care of the block.

[Housing and Land Use](#) - Anne Guiney

[Shape-Up Bushwick Planning](#) - Elvena Davis

8) Recommendations

Civic/Public Safety/Religious & Health/Human Service/Senior Citizens/Veterans
Committee Recommendation: To provide a letter of support for the Street Co-naming Request submitted by Rev. Lula Mae Phillips, Daughter of Mildred Phillips.

Motion: Joshua Brown

Second: Eliseo Ruiz

All in favor, so moved.

Executive Board

Recommendation: To approve a 3% merit increase for Board staff, Kimberly Maldonado, and 7% merit increase for the district manager, Celestina Leon.

Motion: James Steward

Second: Melissa Carrera-Solano

All in favor, so moved.

Economic Development + Permits and Licenses

Recommendation for a blanket vote in reference to Key Bar (143 Troutman Street), Pitanga (207 Starr Street), and Loliya Memberr LLC (269 Stanhope Street).

Motion: Ben Tocker

Second: Robert Camacho

All in favor, so moved.

Committee Recommendation for the above establishments: approval with the stipulations and hours as outlined (see committee report).

Motion: Joshua Brown

Second: Tashawna Wade

Abstentions: Elvena Davis, Raul Rubio, Jo-Ena Bennett, Zulma Novoa, Annette Spellin, Carlotta Williams, Barbara Smith, Felix Ceballos, Stephanie Anderson, Milagros Sandoval, Joanna Fuentes

Motion carried.

Amended Recommendation for SELVA LLC (1329 Willoughby Avenue, Suite 121): approval with the amended hours of Monday to Saturday from 8am to 2am and Sunday from 8 am to 12am along with the stipulations in place.

Motion: Joshua Brown

Second: Barbara Smith

Abstentions: Ben Tocker, Elvena Davis, Barbara Smith, Carlotta Williams

Motion carried.

Amended Recommendation for Xanadu (262 Starr Street): approval with the amended hours of Sunday to Thursday 10am to 12am and Friday and Saturday from 10am to 2am along with the stipulations in place.

Motion: Eliseo Ruiz

Second: Felix Ceballos

Abstentions: Elvena Davis, Raul Rubio, Melissa Carrera-Solano, Barbara Smith, Zulma Novoa, Carlotta Williams, Jo-Ena Bennett, Tanesha Honeygan, Acire Polight

Motion carried.

9) Old Business

None

10) New Business

The district manager shared that Moonrise located at 1329 Willoughby Avenue is being investigated by the State Liquor Authority. The board's office was contacted for more information, which she provided.

11) Announcements

Barbara Smith, CB4 Board Member and 83 Precinct Community Council President

The 83 Precinct summer camp program will charge a fee. Start putting your money together now. The program will take place in Bushwick High School.

Fran Sanhueza, Office of Council Member Sandy Nurse

Announced the upcoming Irving Square Park town hall meeting on Wednesday, May 10th 6pm at PS 151 (763 Knickerbocker Avenue). She encouraged everyone to register in advance. She also provided a participatory budget update. The final projects will be shared soon.

Jonathan Pomboza, District Attorney Eric Gonzalez

Announced two upcoming events:

- Friday, April 21 9:30am to 3:30pm Prescription Drug Take Back at the Hope Gardens Multi-Service Senior Center (195 Linden Street)
- Friday, April 29 10am to 1pm Gun Buyback at All Saints Roman Catholic Church (115 Throop Avenue)

Lacey Tauber, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso's Office

- Appointment notifications are going out to new community board members imminently. The new members will be inaugurated on May 4, and will be attending the May meeting!
- On March 31, Borough President Reynoso announced the appointment of Reverend Kimberly Council as Deputy Borough President. In her new role, Rev. Council will serve as an external surrogate for the Borough President, while also leading faith-based work and other special projects for the administration. Prior to her new role, Rev. Council served as Assistant Pastor of Greater Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in Crown Heights, Brooklyn since 2021 under Senior Pastor Rev. Dr. Randy L. Ware. She joined the office officially on Monday the 17th, so say hi when you see her out in the community!
- Our office is undertaking a data-driven comprehensive planning effort for the borough rooted in improving public health outcomes for Brooklynites. We want to hear your thoughts on the draft plan so far. Please complete this survey to give us your feedback, and/or join the Housing & Land Use Committee meeting on 4/25 for a more in-depth presentation.

Jonathan Betancourt, Office of Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez

Good evening chairman Camacho and CB4, I am here on behalf of Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez. The CW sends her greetings from D.C.

On Behalf of the CW, I want to share some recent highlights:

Today the CW joined Senator Gillibrand and CW Grace Meng in applauding the approval of New York's SNAP Fraud reimbursement plan. As we all know, many SNAP recipients have had their benefits stolen by scammers. So, The CW along with Senator Gillibrand and CW Meng jumped into action to address this issue. Now with the approval of this reimbursement plan, New York can now process household claims of stolen benefits and reimburse households using Federal Funds through the Department of Agriculture.

Lastly, since Mr. Rodriguez from Wyckoff gave a great presentation tonight, I just want to remind everyone that the CW secured \$2M for Wyckoff Heights Medical Center for facilities and equipment to increase access to colorectal cancer screenings.

*I also congratulated all the board members and Mr. Camacho for their reelection.

Juan Mayancela, Office of Council Member Jennifer Gutierrez

Announced they are hosting a series of community cleanups along with other events, including one with NYC Cares on 4/25.

D34 received the most votes at 6,500 for participatory budgeting.

Assemblywoman Maritza Davila, 53rd District

Shared that she is currently in Albany trying to come to an agreement for a \$42B State budget. The negotiations include safety net hospitals, housing, such as 421a oversight.

The State is late in passing the budget. They are holding back to get what their districts' need. Hopefully they will have a plan next week.

She represents 130,000 people and responds to their issues in the community. Her office is currently addressing drug issues in Bushwick in partnership with La Nueva Esperanza. They plan to set up containers to collect hypodermic needles.

Danielle Chambers, Calgary and St. Cyprians Church

Congratulated Mr. Camacho on his reelection as Board Chairperson. Announced their annual health fair on Saturday, June 3rd – Save the Date.

Rob Solano, Churches United for Fair Housing (CUFFH)

Mentioned 1376 Dekalb Avenue, a new building, requiring income of \$156,000. Those are the 421a buildings that they are trying to stop.

12) Second Roll Call

*Due to a technical issue with the meeting sound the district manager was unable to finish the roll call as the members participating on Zoom were unable to hear her. The meeting was already over schedule and switching to a different microphone did not resolve the matter. The board member in-person opted to move forward to close the meeting given the circumstances.

Board Members in attendance: Carlotta Williams, Tashawna Wade, Benjamin Tocker, James Steward, Annette Spellen, Dustin Sonneborn, Milagros Sandoval, Eliseo Ruiz, Raul Rubio, Acire Polight, Zulma Novoa, Imini Mitchell, Cassandra Leveille, Virgie Jones, Barbara Jackson, Tanesha Honeygan, Anne Guiney, Elvena Davis, Melissa Carrera-Solano, Robert Camacho, Joshua Brown

***Board members previously on Zoom:** Christopher Graham, Joanna Fuentes, Freddy Fowler, James Fitzgerald, Felix Ceballos, Rawle Brown, Jo-Ena Bennett, Stephanie Anderson, Isa Abney

Excused: Jerry Valentin, Maria Soler, Barbara Smith, Vernedeaner Shell, Luisa Jose,

Absent: Kyle O'Rourke, Desmonde Monroe, Mary McClellan, Kweighbaye Kotee, Nicolas Kaplan, Hadiyah Harrison, Andrew Choi, Grace Aytes

13) Adjournment

Elvena Davis made a motion to adjourn. Raul Rubio seconded the motion. All present in-person were in favor, so moved.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:41pm