

Brooklyn Community Board 4
Public Hearing and Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 15, 2023 6pm

Hope Gardens Multi-Service Senior Center
195 Linden Street
Zoom

Chairperson: Robert Camacho
District Manager: Celestina León

Meeting Start: 6:04pm

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

Public Hearing:

1) Juan Mayancela, Community Organizer for Council Member Jennifer Gutierrez -
presenting with an overview on Participatory Budgeting

Juan Mayancela from Council Member Jennifer Gutierrez's office introduced himself. He came to present on Participatory Budgeting (PB) for Districts 34 and 37.

- **What is Participatory Budgeting?** PB is a democratic process where community members directly decide how to spend part of the public budget, usually \$1 million set aside by the council member.
- **How does PB work?** It is a community-based decision-making process with the following steps:
 - (1) The community submits ideas for projects.
 - (2) The community chooses which ideas to put on the ballot.
 - (3) The community votes on the ideas on the ballot to decide which projects to fund.At every step, the community members have a say.
- Who can submit an idea? Anybody in the community can submit an idea, including children as young as 11 years old up to seniors.
- **What can be funded?** Capital projects that cost at least \$50,000 can be funded. Examples are playground renovations, wheelchair ramps for public housing, street repavement, improvements to schools, etc.
- **What is the deadline to submit ideas?** The official deadline has passed, but the council members' offices are collecting additional ideas through the end of November. This is a last call for ideas.

- **What has been funded in the past?** In District 34, past projects have included school laptops, AV upgrades, community gardens, and more. In District 37, they have funded school bathroom renovations, street trees, and security cameras.
- **What are the next steps?** In December, they will prepare the ballot by reviewing submitted ideas and narrowing them down. In March/April, they will have the vote week where the community votes on the final ideas. The money will then be allocated in the next fiscal year for the winning projects.

Volunteers are needed to help narrow down ideas and create the ballot as "participatory budget delegates." The presentation concluded with a call to action for community members to submit project ideas and volunteer as budget delegates. Please reach out to the council members' offices if interested.

Regular Meeting:

1) First Roll Call

Board Members in attendance: Stephanie Anderson, Jo-Ena Bennett, Robert Camacho, Felix Ceballos, Christian C. Tate, Elvena Davis, Cecilia Fabian, Christopher Graham, Anne Guiney, Barbara Jackson, Kyeshia Johnson, Luisa Jose, Nicolas Kaplan, Edward Kopp, Kristine Malden, Katelin Penner, Eliseo Ruiz, Milagros Sandoval, Maria Soler, Dustin Sonneborn, Annette Spellin, Ben Tocker

Board Members in attendance via a remote waiver: Isa Abney, Zulma Novoa, Barbara Smith, Jerry Valentin

Excused: Melissa Carrera-Solano, Andrew Choi, Zachary Hendrickson, Desmonde Monroe, Vernedeane Shell, James Steward, Jessica Tiburcio,

Absent: Joshua Brown, Makeba Brown-Alleyne, Rawle Brown (remote – no waiver), Jasmin De Santiago Diaz, Freddy Fowler, Joanna Fuentes, Tanesha Honeygan, Virgie Jones, Tara Jones-Thomas, Raman Mama, Mary McClellan, Levi Orenstein-Wolf, Acire Polight (remote – no waiver), Raul Rubio, Tashawna Wade

22 board members were present in-person, which does not constitute a quorum. Mr. Camacho noted that he would share his report as informational since there was not a quorum to proceed with the regular agenda/vote.

2) Chairperson's Report

Mr. Camacho provided an overview of meetings and events he attended in the past month. See the [Executive Board Report](#). Here are more updates from Mr. Camacho's report:

- **Attendance Issues:** Letters will be sent to board members who have missed multiple meetings recently. Mr. Camacho stressed the importance of board members fulfilling their responsibility to attend meetings regularly. He pointed out that this month's initial lack of quorum demonstrated the negative impact on the board when members are frequently absent. See the [District Office Report](#).
- **Executive Board Meetings:** The executive board recommended changing meetings from monthly to quarterly or as needed. This will be voted on by the full board.
- **Support for Community Boards:** The Borough President may be moving away from supporting community boards based on a letter sent to the Mayor. This would increase administrative burdens on the boards. The Chairperson has concerns about this change.
- **Broadway Junction/J Train Rehab:** On October 27th, the Chairperson did a walk-through of the project area with elected officials and the MTA. They explained the phases of work being done, which will cause some parking and street closures. There is a number to call if any issues arise during construction.
- **Homeowner Resource Fair:** Mr. Camacho thanked board members and staff for their outreach and participation in the recent fair. However, some agencies like HPD were not sufficiently supportive during the planning process.

Elected Officials and Representatives:

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

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

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

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

Evette Lopez, Assemblymember Maritza Davila
249 Wilson Ave, (718) 443-1275

Pablo Rivera, Assemblymember Erik Dilan
366 Cornelia St, (347) 739-4818

Jonathan Pomboza, Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez
350 Jay St, (347) 986-6146

City Agencies and Community-Based organizations:

Cynthia P. Ortiz, Program Director, Bushwick Community Partnership at Coalition for Hispanic Family Services

Modesto Flako Jimenez, Artistic Director, Oye Group

Noel Allain, Co-Founder / Artistic Director, Bushwick Starr Theater
917-620-8546, noel@thebushwickstarr.org

Denise Watkins, Coordinator, Flushing Avenue Family Residence
347-785-5909

Jessica Mackey-Jean, Vice President, CEC 32
917-826-2464

Alicia Torres, Program Director, RiseBoro Community Partnership
646-794-0078

83rd Precinct Report

Ezequias Gomez, Community Affairs Liaison, 83rd Precinct

Officer Gomez provided an overview of recent crime statistics and trends. Key points from the presentation:

- For the 7 major felony crimes, the precinct has experienced a decrease in all except robberies. There have been 59 robberies in the last 28 days compared to 25 last year. Many robberies involve scooters/e-bikes in the nightlife area near Maria Hernandez Park.
- The 83rd Precinct Community Council is hosting a fundraiser on December 1st from 7-11PM at Latinos Unidos. Funds raised will go towards the Council's toy drive and giveaway on December 16th.
- The precinct's annual turkey giveaway will take place on November 19th at 1PM, first come first served.
- BBR North will also have a turkey giveaway on November 19th at 2PM. Pre-registration is required by calling 917-865-9652 or 917-592-6342.
- The precinct has a new Commanding Officer, Captain Gioryls Alvarez. This is the first time the 83rd Precinct has had two females in the top leadership roles.

3) Acceptance of the Agenda

When quorum was achieved, Elvena Davis made a motion to accept the agenda. It was seconded by Jo-Ena Bennett. All were in favor, so moved.

4) 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. Robert Camacho made a motion to table the previous meeting's minutes. It was seconded by Katelin Penner.

5) District Manager's Report

District Manager Celeste Leon provided updates on the numerous meetings and events she attended during the past month, with the following key highlights. See the full [District Manager's Report](#).

Updates:

- Rent for the community board office was finally paid, resolving issues with delayed lease renewal paperwork.
- New part-time hire Adelina is completing required city training. The small staff team appreciates the board's patience.
- By November 23rd, a response is due for the Equal Employment Practices audit. Required actions involve training, email language, and supplemental training compliance.
- On December 6th, there will be a Bushwick Nonprofit Roundtable introductory meeting. Emails were sent to community partners, and all are welcome.
- The board received one Fellow this year from the Fund for the City of New York to work on an arts/culture archive project.
- Board member applications are open and youth engagement circles are working to encourage student participation.

Events:

- The December "holiday potluck" is returning this year on an abridged schedule. Board members can sign up to bring food.
- The Community Council shared updates on the Broadway Junction/J train rehab community impacts. Members are encouraged to attend.
- On October 27th, the District Manager attended a walk-through of the J train construction area to understand the work being done.
- Meetings attended included cannabis regulation training, discussions on improving board engagement, and borough service cabinet. Concerns remain regarding support for boards from the Borough President's office.

6) Committee Reports

*Digital and/or hard copies are available upon request

[Arts/Culture/Technology](#) – Dustin Sonneborn

[Permits and Licenses](#) – Tashawna Wade (Interim Committee Chairperson)

7) Recommendations

Permits and Licenses

Recommendation to blanket vote and approve the committee's recommendation on SLA applications with all usual stipulations and the following hours Sunday to Thursday until 12am, Friday and Saturday until 2am.

Motion: Edward Kopp

Second: Felix Ceballos

Opposed: Stephanie Anderson, Barbara Smith

Abstention: Jo-Ena Bennett, Elvena Davis, Raul Rubio, Zulma Novoa

Motion carried.

The district manager asked all board members to sign-in to ensure they are counted as present. She also thanked them for being there.

The committee's recommendation did not carry as two were in favor and two abstained. Therefore, the recommendation for approval with specified hours was referred to the full board.

Recommendation to blanket vote and approve the committee's recommendation on OCM applications within the specified hours.

Motion: Edward Kopp

Second: Isa Abney

Opposed: Christian Celeste Tate, Stephanie Anderson, Millie Sandoval, Jo-Ena Bennett, Joanna Fuentes, Kyeshia Johnson, Elvena Davis, Barbara Jackson, Annette Spellin, Eliseo Ruiz, Makeba S. Brown-Alleyne, Nicolas Kaplan, Acire Polight, Barbara Smith, Zulma Novoa, Jerry Valentin

Abstention: Raul Rubio

Motion does not carry.

Robert Camacho – point of clarification – with the hours it would be only ten hours, correct, Mr. Kopp? We're going to change these hours.

Kimberly – point of information – the hours are from 10am to 8pm. District Manager – it was a mix up.

Robert Camacho – motion does not carry – and when they go to OCM and get the hours they want until 4am. I guess you want more cannabis.

Anne Guiney – just a question – if we vote this down, does this mess up our opportunity to work with them and have the hours we want? We learned this the hard way with bars. Just want clarification.

District manager – suggestion – concerns about saturation in that particular area. If that's a position the committee is taking. That's a point that should be made instead of no points being made. It can still be a recommendation for no, although you can say way.

Robert Camacho – why would you abstain or say no – if they committee was giving them less hours? I'm a little confused.

Edward Kopp – this is how it's going to work for the board. Our power is to say yes or no to a location. That is it. That's all we look at. What we need to do is see if it's actually a good fit. We can also look at the area – are the churches, schools, parks? We can make sure it's away from children and family activities. Every licensee is guaranteed 70 hours of operation a week. What we have influence over is saying we don't want 24-hour stores, 4am stores, or 2am stores. We can say 12am. We don't want to see you open after then. Every morning I see on Myrte Avenue the Bushwick breakfast of champions is cannabis and caffeine. They might want to open at 8am. We have to work with these entrepreneurs and have them work with the community; not just making money.

Jo-Ena Bennett – appreciates the clarification – her objection is that the location is next to Maria Hernandez Park.

Edward Kopp specifically asked about this during a recent OCM meeting. Who is going to check the distance between businesses and schools, churches?

Mr. Camacho – this should have been debated at the committee. This is only for recommendations. Yes, or no? Does someone want to make another recommendation or leave it as is?

District Manager – last chance to make another recommendation.

Edward Kopp – recommendation to reconsider. Seconded by Cecilia Fabian.

Abstention: Raul Rubio

Motion carried.

Recommendation for a new vote based on the same committee recommendation.

Motion: Edward Kopp

Second: Felix Ceballos

Opposed: Kyeshia Johnson, Kristine Malden, Stephanie Anderson

Abstention: Christian Celeste Tate, Elvena Davis, Raul Rubio

Motion carried.

Mr. Camacho – just wanted to see if it's possible to not have it by Maria Hernandez.

District Manager – the park is more than a block away, as is the school.

Kristine – just noting – that's the area that's been saturated with nightlife. There are also two schools that aren't within 200 ft.

Executive Board

Recommendation to change the Executive Board meetings to quarterly or as needed.

Motion: Katelin Penner

Second: Elvena Davis

All in favor, so moved.

Recommendation - Letter to HPD in reference to the homeowner resource fair.

Several agencies were not there. HPD did not communicate in advance. All flyer corrections were made in-house. They did not provide a Spanish translation. The intentionality of improving the relationship did not come to pass. The Executive Board felt that it was important to make sure the commissioner was aware of this and that we can find a way to better collaborate in the future.

Motion: Anne Guiney

Second: Acire Polight

All in favor, so moved.

8) Old Business

None

9) New Business

None

10) Announcements

Council Member Sandy Nurse's office announced a turkey giveaway event on November 19th, first come first served.

Make the Road NY is hosting a toy drive with a goal of 2500 toys for immigrant families. Donations can be dropped off at their office.

Vocal NY is hosting a fundraiser on November 29th called "Sing for Shelter" to support their work for homeless queer youth.

St. Barbara's Church is hosting a tree lighting ceremony on November 27th at 5PM.

Woodhull Hospital is looking for volunteers to wrap gifts for pediatric patients. Email monica.mathew@nychhc.org for details.

RYASAP is hosting a community conversation on December 5th about public safety and policing.

11) Second Roll Call

Board Members in attendance: Tashawna Wade, Ben Tocker, Dustin Sonneborn, Maria Soler, Milagros Sandoval, Eliseo Ruiz, Raul Rubio, Acire Polight, Katelin Penner, Kristine Malden, Edward Kopp, Nicolas Kaplan, Luisa Jose, Kyeshia Johnson, Barbara Jackson, Tanesha Honeygan, Anne Guiney, Christopher Graham, Joanna Fuentes, Cecilia Fabian, Elvena Davis, Christian C. Tate, Felix Ceballos, Robert Camacho, Rawle Brown, Makeba S. Brown-Alleyne, Jo-Ena Bennett, Stephanie Anderson

Board Members in attendance via a remote waiver: Jerry Valentin, Barbara Smith, Zulma Novoa, Isa Abney

Excused: Jessica Tiburcio, James Steward (remote – no waiver), Annette Spellin, Vernedeaner Shell, Desmonde Monroe, Zachary Hendrickson, Andrew Choi, Melissa Carrera-Solano,

Absent: Levi Orenstein-Wolf, Mary McClellan, Raman Mama, Tara Jones-Thomas, Virgie Jones, Freddy Fowler, Jasmin De Santiago Diaz, Joshua Brown

12) Adjournment

Jo-Ena Bennett made a motion to adjourn. Elvena Davis seconded the motion. All in favor, so moved.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:25pm