

Brooklyn Community Board 4
Public Hearing and Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 18, 2024, 6pm

Hope Gardens Older Adult Center
195 Linden Street
Zoom

Chairperson: Robert Camacho
District Manager: Celestina León

Meeting Start: 6:18pm

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

Public Hearing:

- 1) **Public Comment (2 minutes per person or group)** – the public is invited to speak on neighborhood concerns and other matters affecting Bushwick. The Board Chairperson and District Manager will facilitate this item.

Lacey Tauber (Brooklyn Borough President's Office)

Presented a proclamation honoring Celestina Leon for her service and contributions to Brooklyn, especially through the Bushwick Community Plan and the Future of Community Boards Working Group.

Felix Ceballos (CB4 Member)

Congratulated and praised Celeste, the district manager, for her resourcefulness and dedication as a district manager, and reflected on her positive impact in the community.

Mr. Camacho (Board Chair)

- Raised concerns about the impact of property sales and development on neighbors, including foundation damage and displacement.
- Emphasized the need for elected officials to supervise development and protect long-term residents.
- Discussed the negative effects of new development, including increased density, foundation damage, and the displacement of existing residents.
- Urged the community to educate themselves and be vigilant about construction and property sales.

Felix Ceballos (CB4 Member)

Commented on the influx of new businesses and construction in the community, emphasizing the need to maintain the residential character of Bushwick and defend residents' rights.

Stephanie Anderson (CB4 Member)

- Shared concerns from neighbors about a local hotel potentially being converted into a homeless shelter without community notification.
- Asked what could be done and whether the community board should have been informed.

Celeste Leon (District Manager)

- Responded to Stephanie Anderson, explaining that the board had reached out to the Department of Social Services, which denied the shelter was in their pipeline.
- Suggested the situation might involve supportive housing and recommended contacting the local council member for more information.

Stephanie Anderson, follow-up

Mentioned efforts to contact the Department of Buildings and the possibility of starting a petition.

Celeste Leon, follow-up

Suggested reaching out to Council Member Sandy Nurse for a faster response.

Xinrui (Independent Budget Office)

Introduced herself as the new Community Engagement Specialist, explained the IBO's role in providing data-driven insights into NYC's budget, and invited suggestions for report topics from the public.

Louisa Lebwhol (Brooklyn Public Library, DeKalb Branch)

Announced upcoming adult programs at the library, including English classes, diabetes self-management, tax help, and financial counseling.

Kimberly Vega (Council Member Jennifer Gutierrez's Office)

Announced the council member's maternity leave, office operations, housing clinics, coat drive, and upcoming safety town hall meeting.

Lacey Tauber (Brooklyn Borough President's Office, again)

Shared information about community board applications and distributed flyers for the application process.

Annette Spellman (CB4 Member)

Announced a mental health and crime symposium hosted by the Manhattan DA's office and NYPD civilian job openings.

Elvena Davis (CB4 Member)

Announced the Barbara Smith/83rd Precinct Community Council toy giveaway event.

Nalisha Samlall (on Zoom, RiseBoro)

Announced a toy drive event on December 21 at Maria Hernandez Park, with food, toys, and gifts.

Johnathan (Congresswoman Velasquez's Office)

Provided updates on federal funding, a congressional career fair, and recent legislative actions.

Zach Hendrickson (CB4 Member)

Announced a potential Amazon warehouse workers' strike and encouraged community support for the workers.

Luz Martinez (NYC Poison Control Center)

Announced upcoming poison prevention webinars, including one on safe storage of products at home, and offered to share flyers.

Nyrie Smith (CAMBA Brooklyn)

Announced an outreach campaign to reduce alcohol access to minors in Bushwick and invited volunteers for community scans.

Regular Meeting:

1) First Roll Call

Present: Isa Abney, Stephanie Anderson, Jo-Ena Bennett, Makeba S. Brown-Alleyne, Robert Camacho, Felix A. Ceballos, Elvena Davis, Kerina Dodd, Cecilia Fabian, Freddy Fowler, Jason Gers, Christopher Graham, Anne Guiney, Zachary Hendrickson, Barbara Jackson, Virgie Jones, Tara Jones-Thomas, Luisa Jose, Kristine Malden, Romicka Nichols-Barnes, Eliseo Ruiz, Milagros Sandoval, Annette Spellman, James Steward II, Ben Tocker

Present with a remote waiver: Andrew Choi, Deborah Hicks, Tanesha Honeygan, Zulma Novoa, Jerry Valentin

Excused: Freddie Mattison, Alex Móreno, Christian C. Tate, Linda Whitfield

Absent: Melissa Carrera-Solano, Joanna Fuentes-Singh, Kyeshia Johnson, Raul Rubio

Resigned: Jacqueline Becerra

2) **Acceptance of the Agenda**

Motion by Zachary Hendrickson, seconded by Felix Ceballos. All were in favor, so moved.

3) **Acceptance of the Previous Meeting Minutes**

Motion by Zachary Hendrickson, seconded by Raul Rubio. All were in favor, so moved.

[November 2024 Minutes](#)

4) **Chairperson's Report**

Tribute and Reflection:

The Chairperson begins with a moment of silence for Barbara Smith, a long-time board member, and reflects on her dedication and legacy in the community.

Community Board Responsibilities:

- Emphasizes the board's duty to address the welfare of the district and support all community members, regardless of personal interests or backgrounds.
- Urges board members to work together, avoid divisiveness, and focus on serving the community as a whole.

Advocacy and Challenges:

- Discusses ongoing challenges such as parking, construction impacts, and citywide policies that affect Bushwick residents.
- Highlights the need to advocate for vulnerable populations, especially seniors and those affected by development and city policies.

Recent Events and Initiatives:

- Recaps recent community events, including a turkey giveaway for Thanksgiving, a rally at 441 Wilson, and meetings with city agencies about safety and development.
- Mentions the importance of proper city processes, such as ensuring community input on park projects and holding city officials accountable for their decisions.

Board Operations and Membership:

- Stresses the importance of educating and supporting new board members and encouraging young people to join and get involved.
- Notes the need for more applicants and the value of diverse perspectives on the board.

Committee and Community Updates:

Provides updates on committee meetings, community events, and collaborations with local organizations and city agencies.

Closing:

- Thanks board members, community partners, and city officials for their service and support.
- Reiterates the importance of unity, service, and collective action for the betterment of Bushwick.

The Chairperson's report focused on honoring community service, reinforcing the board's mission, addressing local challenges, advocating for residents, and fostering unity and participation within the board and the broader community.

Elected Official, Organization, and Agency Representatives:

Council Member Jennifer Gutierrez's Office

Representative: Kimberly Vega

Phone: 718-963-3141

Volunteers of America, Bushwick Family Residence

Representative: Anton Nimblett

Address: 1675 Broadway

Office of Senator Julia Salazar

Representative: Maria Valdez

Phone: 718-573-1726

83 Precinct Commanding Officer's Report - Captain David Poggioli**Tribute to Barbara Smith:**

Captain Poggioli begins by honoring the late Barbara Smith, a long-time community board member, and acknowledges her dedication to the community.

Community Engagement:

- The precinct is committed to community policing and being an active, positive presence in Bushwick.
- Recent efforts include the Thanksgiving turkey giveaway, where precinct members and community partners distributed over 500 turkeys to local families.

Upcoming Events:

- The annual sleigh ride/toy distribution will take place on Sunday, starting at 10am, with four stops throughout Bushwick.
- The event will distribute thousands of toys to children in the community, with participation from precinct officers and community partners.

Crime Statistics:

- There has been a 41% decline in crime over the past month and a 13% decline year-to-date.

- This translates to 261 fewer crime victims in Bushwick compared to the same time last year.
- Captain Poggioli credits these improvements to the collective efforts of the community and the precinct.

Closing:

- Captain Poggioli thanks the community for their partnership and invites questions, but none are asked.
- He wishes everyone happy holidays and a happy new year.

5) District Manager's Report

Website Updates:

- New "Events" page under the news section, featuring recent and future board events, flyers, and information.
- "Planning and Projects" section under resources/community menu, including work by planning fellows and other board projects, with ongoing updates for transparency.

Planning Fellow Project:

- This year's planning fellow, Zeb Reisman, is working on a 311 project to examine the history, purpose, and challenges of 311, and how community boards can help improve the service request and response process.
- Agencies such as the Department of Health, Department of Buildings, and Department of Finance have already responded to outreach.

Board Operations and Staffing:

- Celeste thanks board members for their service and time, as well as agency and elected official representatives.
- Discussion of a proposed "community board central staff" to provide more consistent support for boards, as current support from city agencies varies by administration.
- Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso is championing this effort, and there is hope for support from other borough presidents and impact in the upcoming charter revision process.

Community Engagement and Collaboration:

- Ongoing conversations with City Tech about CUNY offshore wind, with more information to come for the Environmental Protection Committee.
- Collaboration with the Brooklyn Borough President's office to encourage more community board applications, as membership is currently at 38 after several resignations and removals for attendance.

- Reconnection with Gabo Halili (Bushwick Community Plan) for potential future collaborations.

Workshops and Training:

Tentative plans for a second Brooklyn Urban Plan workshop with the Urban Land Institute, open to all board members, focusing on housing proposals.

Inter-Borough Collaboration:

Participation in the third annual district manager gathering, hosted in the Bronx for the first time.

Grant Opportunities:

Information about Citizens NYC grants for community projects (up to \$5,000), with two grant cycles per year, aimed at supporting grassroots volunteer efforts.

Closing:

Celeste wishes everyone safe and happy holidays and thanks the board for their continued work and engagement.

The district manager's report highlighted new resources for transparency, ongoing planning and community engagement projects, efforts to strengthen board staffing and operations, inter-agency and inter-borough collaborations, and new grant opportunities for community initiatives. Celeste Leon emphasized the importance of board member participation and keeping the community informed and involved.

6) Committee Reports

*Digital and/or hard copies are available upon request

Economic Development + Housing and Land Use – Kristine Malden and Anne Guiney

Housing and Land Use Committee (Anne Guiney):

The committee met on November 26, with a primary focus on updating the responsible development policy. Topics discussed included parking, relationships with local organizations, guidelines for new developments, community benefits, and site design.

The committee decided not to rush the update, emphasizing the importance of getting it right.

The committee is developing resources for homeowners and tenants affected by major construction, including information on rights, steps to take, and potential legal pre-agreements with developers.

Jo-Ena Bennett raised concerns about aggressive solicitation of homeowners by developers and asked about the status of a “cease and desist” zone for Bushwick. Anne and Celeste responded that Bushwick is likely included in the expanded zone, and the committee will elevate this as an agenda item for further discussion.

Economic Development Committee (Kristine Malden):

The committee is in the early stages of planning a new business inventory along major Bushwick corridors (e.g., Wyckoff, Broadway), updating a previous inventory from 2017-2018.

The goal is to get an updated sense of which businesses are operating in the neighborhood and to establish relationships with local businesses.

The committee will seek volunteers and partnerships with other community organizations for this project.

Environmental Protection/Transportation/Sanitation + Parks and Recreation – Ben Tocker

The committee met on December 12. No formal recommendations were made this month.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) presented on a free service line replacement program, targeting specific geographic areas, for water pipes that may contain lead (especially those installed before the 1960s). Homeowners can check their service line status at nyc.gov/dep/lead. If lead is found, DEP will replace the line for free. Renters must have their landlord sign off.

The city treats water with orthophosphate to prevent lead leaching, but full replacement is safest.

The committee is exploring the impact of citywide transportation policies, such as “daylighting” (removing parking near intersections for safety), which may reduce available parking for residents.

To address parking concerns, the committee is considering advocating for a residential parking permit program, similar to those in other cities, to prioritize local residents for parking. This would require state legislation and city DOT implementation.

The committee is also advocating for the return of the MTA fare-free B60 bus program, which recently ended after a 10-month pilot.

Community members asked about the logistics of service line replacement and parking permits, including eligibility and implementation challenges.

The committee encourages community input and feedback, especially from those with strong opinions or examples from other cities.

7) **Recommendations**

Motion: To reaffirm the board's support for preservation efforts along Bushwick Avenue by the Bushwick Historic Preservation Association.

Motion: Anne Guiney

Seconded by: Jo-Ena Bennett

All in favor, so moved.

8) **Old Business**

None

9) **New Business**

None

10) **Announcements**

Most announcements were made during the Public Comment item (see above).

Felix Ceballos (CB4 Member): Reflected on the legacy of Barbara Smith and the importance of balancing business and residential interests in the community.

Annette Spellen (CB4 Member): Announced the renaming of the 83rd Precinct Council toy fundraiser in honor of Barbara Smith.

11) **Second Roll Call**

Present: Ben Tocker, James Steward II, Annette Spellen, Milagros Sandoval, Eliseo Ruiz, Raul Rubio, Romicka Nichols-Barnes, Kristine Malden, Luisa Jose, Tara Jones-Thomas, Virgie Jones, Barbara Jackson, Zachary Hendrickson, Anne Guiney, Christopher Graham, Jason Gers, Freddy Fowler, Cecilia Fabian, Kerina Dodd, Elvena Davis, Felix A. Ceballos, Robert Camacho, Makeba S. Brown-Alleyne, Jo-Ena Bennett, Stephanie Anderson, Isa Abney

Present with a remote waiver: Jerry Valentin, Zulma Novoa, Tanesha Honeygan, Deborah Hicks, Andrew Choi

Excused: Linda Whitfield, Christian C. Tate, Alex Móreno, Freddie Mattison

Absent: Kyeshia Johnson, Joanna Fuentes-Singh, Melissa Carrera-Solano

12) Adjournment

Elvena Davis made a motion to adjourn. Freddy Fowler seconded the motion. All in favor, so moved.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:58pm