

Brooklyn Community Board 4
Public Hearing and Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 21, 2025 6pm

Hope Gardens Older Adult Center
195 Linden Street
Zoom

Chairperson: Robert Camacho
District Manager: Celestina Leon

Meeting Start: 6:05pm

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

Public Hearing:

- 1) **Addison Calle, Community Coordinator, and Gabriella Corrales, Civic Engagement Coordinator, El Puente** – providing an overview of The People’s Money initiative and voting process.

- Civic Engagement Coordinators presented a ballot for community members
- 10 projects available, with only 5 to be funded
- Encouraged community members to vote and fill out surveys

Board Member/Public Questions & Comments:

Zach Hendrickson asked for clarification on how to fill out the ballot. The presenters confirmed to mark each box with an ‘x’ as indicated on the ballot.

- 2) **Alberto Roldan, Assistant Director of Government & Community Relations, and Anthony Drummond, Assistant Director of Government & Community Relations, NYC Transit** – providing an informational presentation on the MTA OMNY Card.

The MTA presented on the transition to the Omni card for reduced fare programs, emphasizing the need for accurate completion and the ability to transfer balances.

Key Points:

- Transition from MetroCard to OMNY card
- Eligibility:
 - * Seniors 65 and older
 - * People with disabilities
 - * Medicare recipients
- Application methods:
 - * In-person at service centers
 - * Mail
 - * Online application

- New features:
* Tap-to-pay system * Ability to earn free rides * Online account management * Card replacement options

Board Member/Public Questions & Comments:

1. A senior asked if they would continue to receive the same discounts as before. The presenter confirmed that the reduced fare benefit is embedded in the new OMNY card and has not changed.
2. A board member asked about losing a card and transferring balance. The presenter explained that if a card is lost:
 - The card can be replaced on the same day
 - The balance remains in the account
 - The balance can be transferred to the new card
3. Another question was about combining Access-A-Ride with a reduced fare. The presenter confirmed that:
 - People 65+ can have both Access-A-Ride and reduced fare cards
 - They would receive two separate cards
 - Access-A-Ride provides four free rides for the user and a personal care attendant
4. A participant asked about transfers between buses, and the presenter confirmed that transfers remain automatic, just like with the old MetroCard.
5. Someone inquired about refilling the card, and the presenter clarified that:
 - You can refill any amount, not just \$17
 - The \$17 option represents a weekly unlimited pass
 - The system won't strand riders if they have insufficient funds

These questions helped clarify the practical details of using the new OMNY card for reduced-fare passengers.

3) Sandra Sneed, MBA, FACHE, CEO, NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull – introducing herself as the new CEO and providing a brief update on the hospital.

Sandra Sneed, the new CEO of Woodhull Hospital, highlighted improvements in maternal health, bariatrics, and behavioral health services, and discussed ongoing renovations and funding needs.

Hospital Highlights:

- Maternal Child Health Program improvements
- Behavioral Health Services
- Certified Primary Stroke Center
- Community Outreach Initiatives:
 - * "Woodhull Gives Back" program
 - * Backpack donations
 - * "Dress for Success" program for high school students
- Mental Health Focus
- Commitment to improving facility and services

Board Member/Public Questions & Comments:

1. A community member shared a personal story about their mother's experience and thanked Jessica (the Community Affairs Director) for her exceptional help in navigating healthcare services.
2. Robert Camacho raised concerns about the hospital's mental health facilities:
 - He noted that while one side of the behavioral health unit looks beautiful, the other side needs renovation
 - He emphasized the need for funding to improve the entire facility
 - Highlighted the importance of supporting mental health services
3. Sandra Snead responded to these concerns by:
 - Acknowledging the funding challenges
 - Discussing the high cost of basic improvements (e.g., \$455,000 just to clean windows)
 - Emphasizing the hospital's commitment to quality care despite physical limitations
 - Sharing her personal experience with mental health challenges in her own family
4. The discussion centered on:
 - The hospital's mental health programs
 - Challenges in funding and facility maintenance
 - The importance of de-stigmatizing mental health services
 - The hospital's efforts to provide compassionate care

The questions and discussion reflected the community's deep interest in the hospital's services, particularly mental health care, and their desire to see continued improvement and support for local healthcare facilities.

Regular Meeting:

1) First Roll Call:

Present: Stephanie Anderson, Jo-Ena Bennett, Robert Camacho, Felix Ceballos, Christopher Graham, Freddy Fowler, Alan Gamboa, Jason Gers, Christopher Graham, Anne Guiney, Elaine Hamilton, Zachary Hendrickson, Barbara Jackson, Virgie Jones, Giovannies Justiniano, Nancy Keith, Cindy Lebron, Kristine Malden, Cirilo Nunez, Yarinson Ortiz Gomez, Shray Richardson, Pablo Rivera, Eliseo Ruiz, Josue Salazar, Milagros Sandoval, Annette Spellman, James Steward, Christian C. Tate, Ben Tocker, Linda Whitfield

Present via a remote waiver: Elvena Davis, Deborah Hicks, Tanesha Honeygan, Zulma Novoa

Excused: Isa Abney (Zoom – no waiver), Andrew Choi (late notice), Luisa Jose, Alex Moreno (late notice), Romicka Nichols-Barnes, Laura Ranzato (Zoom – no waiver), Raul Rubio, Savannah Thais, Jerry Valentin

Absent: Tiany Belliard, Tevin Campbell, Joanna Fuentes-Singh, Courtney Henley, Tara Jones-Thomas, Freddie Mattison, Bee Spiderman, Juan Serra

30 members were present, which constitutes a quorum.

2) Acceptance of the Agenda

Felix Ceballos made a motion to accept the agenda. It was seconded by Barbara Jackson. All were in favor, motion carried.

3) Acceptance of the Previous Meeting Minutes

Celeste shared that she did not have assistance with the previous meeting minutes and needed more time to complete them. She asked for a motion to table. Mr. Camacho made a motion to table the previous meeting minutes. It was seconded by Jo-Ena Bennett. All were in favor, motion carried.

4) Chairperson's Report

Recent Activities:

- Meetings with various community organizations
- Testimony at NYC Commission on local democracy

Discussions about:

- * Hope Garden housing
- * Broadway improvements
- * Local church and daycare center challenges
- * Radiation cleanup at a local site

Elected Officials and Representatives:

Fran Sanhueza, Rep. Council Member Sandy Nurse
56 Pennsylvania Avenue, 718-642-8664

Kimberly Vega, Rep. Council Member Jennifer Gutierrez
244 Union Avenue, 718-963-3141

Lacey Tauber, Rep. Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso
209 Joralemon Street, 718-802-3894

Maria Valdez, Rep. State Senator Julia Salazar
212 Evergreen Avenue, 718-573-1726

Deborah Villanueva, Rep. Assemblymember Maritza Davila
673 Hart Street, 718-443-1205

Agency Representatives, Community-Based Organizations, and Businesses:

None

83rd Precinct Report - Deputy Inspector David Poggioli

During the precinct report by Deputy Inspector David Poggioli from the A3 precinct, key points included:

1. Staffing Updates:
 - Seven additional police officers assigned to the 83rd precinct
 - New officers deployed to various areas in Bushwick, including foot posts and parks
2. Community Engagement Highlights:
 - Naming of the Barbara Smith Memorial muster room
 - Emphasis on having effective, vigilant, and safe police officers
3. Key Community Concerns Discussed:
 - E-bike rider policies and enforcement
 - Reckless riding and community complaints
 - Potential criminal summons for E-bike riders
4. Specific Questions Raised:
 - Clarification of new policies regarding E-bike enforcement
 - Inquiries about crime hot spots in Bushwick
 - Concerns about off-leash dogs in parks
 - Discussions about park safety and officer deployment
5. Officer Deployment Strategies:
 - Collaboration with Parks Department
 - Focus on addressing community-specific safety issues
 - Responsive approach to local concerns

The report emphasized community policing, addressing specific neighborhood safety concerns, and maintaining open communication between the precinct and community board members.

5) District Manager's Report - Ms. Celeste Leon

Ms. Leon noted she would forgo her report due to the meeting running late. She added that she would address the closure of Bushwick United Methodist Church under new business.

6) Committee Reports (digital and/or hard copies are available upon request)

[Arts/Culture/Technology](#) – Zachary Hendrickson

[Environmental Protection/Transportation/Sanitation + Parks and Recreation](#) – Christian C. Tate and Ben Tocker

[Permits and Licenses](#) – Vacant (Celeste assisted at Mr. Camacho's request)

[Shape-Up Bushwick Planning](#) – Rev. James Steward II

- Event planned for June 5
- Honoring six individuals

[Youth and Education](#) – Virgie Jones

7) Recommendations

Executive Board

Recommendation to support a 9.9% merit increase for the district manager, Celeste Leon.

Motion: James Steward

Second: Anne Guiney

All in favor, motion carried.

Arts/Culture/Technology

Recommendation from the committee to provide the previously consolidated feedback to the NYC Office of Technology and Innovations recent Public Infrastructure Request for Information.

Motion: Robert Camacho

Second: Eliseo Ruiz

Abstained: Tanesha Honeygan

Motion carried.

Permits & Licenses

Recommendation for a blanket vote except for Spa VIP LLC at

Motion: Zachary Hendrickson

Second: Annette Spellén

All in favor, motion carried

Recommendation from the committee to approve the applications with the standard stipulations except for Spa VIP LLC at 120 Evergreen Avenue.

Motion: Christian Celeste Tate

Second: Freddy Fowler

Abstained: Elvena Davis

Motion carried.

Recommendation from the committee to approve Spa VIP LLC at 120 Evergreen Avenue with the standard stipulations.

Motion: Christian Celeste Tate

Second: Ben Tocker

Opposed: Jo-Ena Bennett, Annette Spellin, Barbara Jackson, Robert Camacho, Pablo Rivera, Zulma Novoa, Deborah Hicks, James Steward, Cindy Lebron, Yarinson Ortiz Guzman, Eliseo Ruiz

Abstained: Elvena Davis, Milagros Sandoval, Virgie Jones

14 no votes | 16 yes votes

Motion carried.

8) Old Business

None

9) New Business

Celeste briefly provided an overview of the district office response to the closure of Bushwick United Methodist Church (1139 Bushwick Avenue). She is in the process of connecting the church members and stakeholders to information from the Mayor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Partnerships for additional assistance.

Civic Public Safety and Religious Committee:

- Meeting scheduled for June 12
- Emphasized importance of quorum

10) Announcements (1.5 minutes each)

Recommendation to change the announcements to 1 minute each due to the length of the meeting.

Motion – Felix Ceballos

Second – Christian Celeste Tate

All in favor, motion carried.

Kim Vega, Council Member Gutierrez's Office:

- Free yoga session
- Community cleanup event
- Virtual workshop on smart banking and credit

Cirilo Nunez, Bushwick Sports:

- Ongoing registration for baseball and girls' softball
- Upcoming home run derby event

Lacey Tauber, Brooklyn Borough President's Office:

- Graduation awards nominations open
- Encouraged community involvement

Haitian Centers Council:

- Introduced social services organization
- Announced job opportunities

Zach Hendrickson, New York City DSA (Democratic Socialists of America):

- Upcoming know-your-rights training
- Mayoral debate watch party

Maria Valdez, Senator Julia Salazar's Office:

- Updates on tenant support
- Department of Buildings office hours

Pharmacy Concern:

- Discussion about protecting local pharmacies through proposed legislation

These announcements covered a wide range of community events, educational opportunities, political activities, and local support services.

11) Second Roll Call

Present: Linda Whitfield, Ben Tocker, Christian C. Tate, James Steward, Annette Spellén, Milagros Sandoval, Josue Salazar, Eliseo Ruiz, Pablo Rivera, Shray Richardson, Yarinson Ortiz Gomez, Cirilo Nunez, Kristine Malden, Cindy Lebron, Nancy Keith, Giovannies Justiniano, Virgie Jones, Barbara Jackson, Zachary Hendrickson, Elaine Hamilton, Anne Guiney, Christopher Graham, Jason Gers, Alan Gamboa, Freddy Fowler, Felix Ceballos, Robert Camacho, Jo-Ena Bennett, Stephanie Anderson

Present via a remote waiver: Zulma Novoa, Deborah Hicks, Tanesha Honeygan, Elvena Davis

Excused: Jerry Valentin, Savannah Thais, Laura Ranzato (Zoom – no waiver), Raul Rubio, Romicka Nichols-Barnes, Alex Moreno, Luisa Jose, Andrew Choi, Isa Abney (Zoom – no waiver)

Absent: Bee Spiderman, Juan Serra, Freddie Mattison, Tara Jones-Thomas, Courtney Henley, Joanna Fuentes-Singh, Tevin Campbell, Tiany Belliard

12) Adjournment

Motion: Zachary Hendrickson

Second: Felix Ceballos

All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:37pm