

Brooklyn Community Board 7 Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2020

Meeting hosted over Zoom

6:00pm-7:40pm

Minutes submitted by Secretary Cindy VandenBosch

I. Opening of the meeting

Vice Chair Julio Peña opened the meeting. Julio presided over the meeting in Chairperson Cesar Zuñiga's absence due to the Hanukkah holiday.

II. Adoption of the agenda for the meeting

Pat Ruiz motioned to adopt the agenda. Samuel Sierra seconded. The agenda was adopted unanimously with no objections.

III. Adoption of the minutes of the Board Meeting of November 18, 2020

Pat Ruiz motioned to accept. Nicholas Azadian seconded. The minutes from the November board meeting were adopted unanimously with no objections.

IV. Public Comment regarding items on the agenda

- A. John Santore - Thanked board for working together this year despite the difficult and unprecedented challenges. In terms of priorities and planning for 2021, Santore hopes that we can have conversations that are helping people to understand the range of options before them so they don't get artificially pinned in between constraints that certain actors present, be they developers or anyone who wants something from the community. What would help is getting more information and data into the public domain to support those conversations. Examples include:
1. Brooklyn Army Terminal (BAT) - According to the information John Santore has, BAT has not added any meaningful jobs in that employment numbers have stayed flat for a decade. According to the numbers that John Santore received from NYCEDC, the average number from 2011-2018 was 3,446 and the total jobs at BAT now are listed at 4,600, but only if you include the more than 1,000 P/T seasonal jobs at UncommonGoods. That is not meant to be a criticism of any of those jobs. Once you have those numbers, provided these are the correct approximations, it might be true then that BAT hasn't added jobs in a decade. That's an example where more information promotes dialogue.
 2. Workforce1Center - According to numbers John has, in its first 51 months, Workforce1 placed 47 Sunset Park residents in local Sunset Park jobs, an average of less than one a month. That isn't a criticism, but that information raises questions about structural challenges that exist to local job placement.

3. Sunset Park Task Force - Expand conversation about who makes decisions about the waterfront in the community. Sunset Park Task Force is a critical task force and it needs to be reevaluated because it's the major point of interaction between EDC and local planning and EDC goes to them first. I think we should be talking about whether the task force should continue. There's so many major issues. We should have a task force on South Brooklyn Marine Terminal.
- B. Samuel Sierra - Expressed opposition to putting a docking station over by the hospital, an item on the agenda for the Transportation Committee. Sierra feels that it is a bad and dangerous idea, and that it is literally putting the pedestrian population in danger by adding another layer of transportation that they have to maneuver around. In addition, Sierra discussed how it was problematic to place a Citibike station in a location where users would end up right in the bus lane and across 2nd Avenue near the emergency room bay of the hospital. Sierra expressed that it is a terrible thing to have bicycles there on that corner with the traffic being the way that it is, and that it would put more pedestrians at risk in this location on 2nd Avenue. Sierra noted that there are other spots or sites they can find with wider sidewalks and noted that the nearest bicycle lane is on 4th Avenue.
 - C. Gladys Bruno - Bruno is also not in agreement to put the Citibike station there due to ambulance traffic, car services, and access-a-ride, two bus stops, and the traffic of people with canes, wheelchairs, elderly people and mothers with carriages that go through there and it's next to that site is the park, which is steps away from the hospital. Bruno also disagrees with putting the Citibike location there.
 - D. Sara Ostolaza, Manager of Community & City Affairs from NYU Langone Brooklyn - The hospital does have concerns that have been voiced to DOT regarding the corner where the bike stations are slated to be located. It is concerning as we have emergency traffic coming in and out of the emergency room, the ambulance bay, and the B11 horizontally and vertically. NYU Langone asks for the support. It's a matter of safety. They have voiced their concerns through leadership to DOT and wanted to reiterate that point.

V. Committee Reports:

Vice Chair Julio Peña noted that there were no items with votes required for any of the committee reports and referred board members to committee reports in their board packets. Asked committee chairs to yield their time. Hearing no objections, the meeting moved to elected officials and representatives. Peña noted that the Citibike location discussed in public comment will be addressed in New Business.

VI. Elected Officials & Representatives

Representatives from the following elected officials and agencies delivered reports: Congresswoman Clarke, Congresswoman Velazquez, the Brooklyn Borough Director of the

Mayor's Office, Councilmember Lander, the NYC Comptroller, Senator Myrie, District Attorney Gonzalez, and the Department of Buildings.

- A. Congresswoman Clarke's office shared contact information.
- B. Congresswoman Velazquez - A written report in Spanish and English has been submitted to the board since Melissa del Valle Ortiz could not be present to make a live report. Items in the emailed report include:
 - 1. A letter from the Congresswoman to the warden of the Metropolitan Detention Center regarding concerns about the recent exponential increase in COVID-19 cases and the lack of communication from MDC; wants to know what the specific steps are that they are taking to address the outbreak.
 - 2. The written report is in Spanish and English and also includes updates regarding the resolution of 311 complaints at 53 26th Avenue, a \$25 Lyft credit to perform essential errands through the Department of Veteran Services, a mental health workshop that will be hosted by Yeshiva University on December 17th, and IRS updates regarding a rebate credit and preparations for completing tax returns, as well as CARES Act updates.
- C. Edward Cerna - Brooklyn Borough Director for the Mayor's Office
 - 1. Snowstorm - In anticipation of 8-12 inches of snow and sustained winds up to 40-50 mph the evening of the meeting, Cerna indicated the potential for downed trees and power outages. Forward complaints to the board to address any life-threatening situations and generally respond to the storm.
 - 2. Vaccines - 1st administered a few days ago. Offered first to healthcare workers. The vaccine will also be made available to nursing home residents and staff. There is a plan for the distribution of the vaccine. Visit the DOHMH website where you can see the plans to guide that distribution. Priority is to distribute the vaccine in a fair and equitable way and that communities most devastated will be supported.
 - 3. Due to the snowstorm, H&H COVID testing sites closed at 2pm and will reopen on 12/17 at 12pm. Schools will be online on 12/17. Food distribution sites are also not operating on 12/17.
 - 4. Pandemic is affecting everyone in many different ways. There's a shortage of blood supply. Typically there would be large-scale blood drive. We are around the 5,000 mark. We need 20,000 more New Yorkers to give blood. There will be a mobile vehicle on January 7th between 10am-4pm.
- D. Nasra Gariballa of Councilmember Brad Lander's office
 - 1. Any resources related to tree or snowfall, reach out to the community board, the Brooklyn Borough President's Office, or Lander's office.

2. Kindergarten applications are open. Children who were born in 2016 start in 2021. If you need help filling them out or communicating with DOE, please reach out to our office so they can walk you through that process.
- E. Comptroller's Office, Brooklyn Borough Liaison Taeka Haraguchi - Office just released the annual Making the Grade report that issues letter grades to city agencies based on their levels of success of spending with MWBEs based on Local Law 1 of 2017. The Comptroller's Office also produced a report and called for direct support to help people experiencing homelessness into shelters.
 - F. Freda Zurita, Community Liaison from Senator Myrie's office - Small business roundtable last week in collaboration with IMPACT Brooklyn, Brooklyn Chamber and SBS and purpose was to disseminate resources to help businesses within District 20. Shared a relief fund opportunity for restaurant workers called Relief Opportunities for All Restaurants, which is available in English and Spanish, open to all five boroughs.
 - G. John Watkins on behalf of District Attorney Gonzalez - There have been multiple gang takedowns in 2020. Real estate fraud has also been an issue that they've been prosecuting. Working diligently on domestic violence and sexual assault. Reached out with food distributions with nearly every community in the borough, hosted by the department alone, and with other organizations and departments. Justice 2020 program, which was started a few years ago, has started out well, especially in forging better relationships with the community to make things more transparent and will continue to be built upon that. Announced a toy drive on 12/21 between 12-2pm with the drop-off site at 350 Jay Street.
 - H. Kenneth Lazar, Department of Buildings
 1. The DOB is sharing recommendations to cut red tape and support small business owners. The business signage task force report provides a clear pathway to install compliant signs. DOB is urging the City Council to extend the moratorium on business sign enforcement and will work with them to implement the recommendations. A task force of the DOB and Dept. of City Planning released a report providing recommendations to streamline city regulatory practices and help small business owners install compliant storefront signage in response to the increase in the number of complaints from the public.
 2. Board member Nicholas Azadian asked about the issues regarding the lack of coordination across city agencies and the impact this has on people who are trying to open new retail establishments or keep existing ones in operation. Azadian noted issues for new retail establishments, including when the Fire Department's review of fire alarm applications is cut off from DOB and the fact that if you try to open a new establishment, you have to go through three different agencies. Lazar responded that SBS has a specific group that is put together to help streamline the process and invited him to discuss the issue offline.

VII. District Manager's Report

- A. Health & Hospitals COVID testing sites were shut down the afternoon of 12/16 due to the snowstorm and will reopen on 12/17 in the afternoon
- B. If you're wondering what is open, go to www.nyc.gov/severeweather
- C. South Brooklyn Marine Terminal - NYCEDC had a meeting with a power company that is applying for permits to win the state's contract for the South Brooklyn Marine terminal through NYSERTA for an off-shore wind farm which would have an on-shore substation, as well as windmill assembly and repair in Sunset Park. It is the type of development that we asked for in our 197-A plan. The devil is in the details, but it seems like the type of development that we've always wanted on our waterfront. If they get the contract, buildout would be within the next 4-5 years. They have negotiated a benefits agreement, citywide and local, that hires and trains in a growing field.
- D. Update on Bush Terminal Park - The lighting project, which was delayed, will pick up in January. They now have a timetable for repairing the sinkhole, and that will start this summer. In addition to that, the District Manager met with representatives from Steiner Studios who will be adding amenities to the playground. Laufer found old documents about what had previously been promised through NYCEDC and has shared those documents with Steiner on the type of amenities the community had previously expected. They're asking for help doing outreach to the community so they can get as much buy-in as possible.
- E. Ribbon-cutting for 59th Street subway - Elevator now works. The street is open.
- F. Board office area - Look across the street at the old precinct. Only two walls left. Completely gutted except for two walls that they are saving for our school.
- G. Need for an additional IT staff member to support community boards - The CB7 office had terrible internet problems last week. It ended up being a Spectrum problem. Until the board staff were able to figure it out, the IT guy from DOITT was on the phone with staff for hours at a time, and he's the only person helping 59 community boards and other city agencies. Laufer has had conversations with District Managers in Brooklyn and other parts of the city and they are appealing to all boards to request that another IT person be funded in the City's budget priorities in the future. It often falls on community board staff to do IT staff. Laufer thanked board members Julio Peña and Cindy VandenBosch for providing IT support as well. Small agencies don't have the resources for actual IT needs.
- H. Liquor licenses - There have been 13 in the last month and they can be reviewed upon request.
- I. Police department stats available for anyone who wants to review them

VIII. Chairperson's Report

- A. Peña shared that the December board meeting is usually a time when we come together and celebrate, and have our holiday get-together. COVID has changed the way we've done a lot of things this year, but he wanted to acknowledge, on behalf of Cesar Zuñiga, the contributions that have been made by three board members who are stepping down from the board for various reasons and one

who will be stepping off for a new job as a state assemblymember. Peña thanked Anita Bulan, Peter Wong, Lynn Massimo, and Marcela Mityanes for their contributions and expressed appreciation.

- B. Peña tabled the rest of the Chairperson's report

IX. Old Business

- A. By-laws tabled until January because they have not been reviewed.
- B. Alexa Aviles asked for clarification regarding the nature of the District Manager's budget request. Was this meant to be a request for more financial support for the community board? District Manager Laufer clarified that he was asking for a city budget line to support an IT Assistant to support community boards.
- C. David Estrada thanked the Brooklyn Director of the Mayor's Office and Captain Castro of the 72nd Precinct for addressing 4th Avenue and 43rd Street issues with public drinking and people who are spending majority of their time outdoors during this cold weather. We have large NYPD lights there that are throwing light on the situation. He hopes that won't be the end of the people who are occupying bus stops and sleeping outdoors.
- D. Kenny Guan asked whether there was a toy drive this year. Laufer indicated that there is not a toy drive this year due to COVID, but encouraged everyone to make financial contributions to organizations who are doing toy drives.

X. New Business

- A. A request was made by NYU Langone of the community board to propose a resolution regarding the proposed Citibike location on 2nd Avenue between 55th and 56th Streets across the street from NYU Langone Hospital and next to the park. Of particular concern to NYU Langone is the proximity of this location to where ambulances enter and exit the emergency department entryway. There was a concern and request to the board to pass a resolution requesting that NYU Langone, Citibike, and DOT work together to find a safer location.
- B. **MOTION:** Pat Ruiz motioned to pass the following resolution: "Community Board 7 calls on the DOT to work with NYU Langone Brooklyn to find an appropriate location for a Citibike location that will satisfy the hospital's satisfaction." Gladys Bruno seconded the motion.
 - 1. **DISCUSSION:** Sam Sierra asked if it states that we don't want it at the location. Jeremy Laufer responded that the hospital was comfortable with the language presented.
 - 2. **MOTION PASSED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT:** If there are no objections to the resolution to support, hearing no objection, the motion passed unanimously.

XI. Public Comment

- A. Roxana Benavides is the Branch manager at SP Library (4201 Fourth Avenue)
 - 1. Library staff have distributed more than 54,000 masks and reached more than 9,000 resources as part of the Test and Trace partnership, including

free testing sites and emergency food relief. This partnership will continue into 2021, hopefully towards outreach regarding a safe vaccine.

2. We have the grab and go service at some branches of the Brooklyn Public Library. Sunset Park Library is not open and not providing library services yet, however their book drop is open and the public is able to return materials during the week from Monday through Friday.
3. The library is also providing financial coaching by appointment. Business and Career Center is partnered with Community Service Society individualized assistance to address your personal financial concerns.
4. Library is also offering several virtual programs, including storytime every Wednesday at 10:30am. Visit the website for details.

B. John Santore raised several issues that he would like the community board to address with the community:

1. Waterfront projects and housing issues
2. South Brooklyn Marine Terminal is in the final stages - \$57M of public money connected to 500 jobs and new wind farms off of Long Island. Wants to see a push for public dialogue about how that will operate moving forward.
3. Made in NY Campus subcommittee for the Waterfront Committee - Massive project \$553M in public and private funds, with \$320M going to Steiner Studios. That project requires ongoing disclosure and discussion, including how studios interact with communities. \$218M is slated for the North Campus and that part of the project hasn't had much attention. Would like to see a subcommittee focused on Made in NY.
4. Five final mile trucking distribution centers are now planned - 4 in Red Hook and 1 in Sunset Park. Cumulatively 3M square feet. No community area in NYC has this many distribution centers coming in at the same time. Others are in large industrial zones. These are going to be blocks away from homes and schools. We have to talk about them, what's going to happen to them. If there's anyway to exert community say over this.
5. Sunset Park Taskforce - Should it continue? Should it be disbanded? Does it have a role? Who should be able to participate? Public disclosure needs to be happening
6. Housing - How can we create affordable housing in the community?

C. A. Asramon from Kingsborough Community College

1. Workforce development for 18-24 year olds who are interested in technical training. DOL has partnered with Kingsborough to offer free tuition and free career counseling. It's 100% remote. As long as the young person has access to a device and the internet, then they should be able to participate in the program and they can get a certificate: health care, business, and trade.

D. Maria Roca

1. Expressed support for everything that John Santore suggested. Time is of the essence before any other decisions are made.

2. Reported that the high-beam light from the NYPD, which was requested in early spring, was installed to address the situation at the NW corner of Sunset Park, 41st Street and 5th Avenue, a situation that has existed now for over a year. Friends of Sunset Park has been in contact with the 72nd Precinct of the NYPD, Councilmember Carlos Menchaca's Office, the Brooklyn Borough Director of the Mayor's Office, and at one point the Dept. of Homeless Services, which they said there was nothing they can do about the people at that corner because they have refused housing. We have entered a new phase of bringing serious attention to the humanitarian situation which has been dire. No one is getting served and you never want to see another person so neglected as we have seen at that corner. There's also the issue of safety and security which was heightened this summer. There were women who were sexually harassed going into and leaving the park. Elderly people were aggressively pan-handled. There was also the challenge of not being able to maintain six feet of separation. By the steps, there's just no way people can pass by with the appropriate space and safety. Friends of Sunset Park continues working with everyone and keeps reaching out and is the point of contact for day-to-day concerns and issues.
- E. Barbara Lee - She lives on 24th Street and 4th Avenue and is concerned about the impact of loitering, theft, and harassment in the neighborhood on local businesses, including a flower shop and the C-Town store. Lee indicated that there are local businesses who have experienced theft. Lee doesn't want to see businesses being affected or closing. The District Manager invited Lee to call him about how to address this situation.

XII. Adjournment

Pat Ruiz motioned to adjourn . Barbara Lee seconded the motion. There were no objections to the motion.

The meeting ended at approximately 7:40pm.