

Community Board 1, Queens – Board Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2020

Meeting opens with Chairperson, Marie Torniali at 6:30 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEM:

Department of City Planning

**42-01 28th Avenue Rezoning Piccola Venezia
ULURP Application #C190517 ZMQ and #N190518 ZRQ**

Application submitted by Vlacich LLC requesting approval to:

- a) Rezone from R5 and R5/C1-2 to R6A and R6A/C1-2 property located on the north side of 28th Avenue between 41st and 43rd streets (Block 685 lots 1, 3, 5, 7 and p/o 10; Block 701, Lots 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 108 and p/o 9);
- b) Amend Appendix F of the Zoning Resolution to establish the proposed rezoning area as a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) Area.

This action will facilitate construction of an eight-story (85 ft.), 51,463 SF mixed-use building with 54 dwelling units (16 MIH) under Option 2, a ground floor restaurant and parking for 66 cars.

Presentation made by Jaclyn Calcagno Scarinci, Akerman LLP and she stated that it is amended to a six-story building design.

Christopher Vlacich, Family Member - Spoke on behalf of the family and gave a brief history of the restaurant and explained why they are making these changes.

Nelly Hennessy, Architect - Spoke briefly

Natalie, Resident - Made a statement in favor of the project.

Motioned by Amy Hau; Seconded by Rose Anne Alafogiannis

In Favor: 30; Against: 0; Not Voting: 3

ELECTED OFFICIALS/REPRESENTATIVES - Announcements:

Joseph Nocerino, Community Coordinator, Office of the Queens Borough President –

- Virtual event for Veteran’s Day at Borough Hall on November 10, 2020.
- Early voting on October 24, 2020. The early voting locations are different from your regular/normal voting locations.

Deborah Tharrington, Director of Constituent Services, Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer’s Office –

- Queensbridge Community Garden is opened.
- Community Fridge at 10-03 40th Avenue in Queensbridge.

- The Council Member celebrated the reopening of the local compost site at the Big Reuse in Queensbridge, they have food scrap drop off, with help from their budget.
- The Council Member joined Transportation Alternatives on the Queensboro Bridge calling for the south outer roadway to be converted into a dedicated pedestrian path opening the northern roadway for bicycles, the Council Member has committed the funding to make this happen along with Council Member Kallos.
- They met with DOT Commissioner Trottenberg on the bridge on October 6th, they went for a walk across the bridge on both sides. Commissioner Trottenberg sent over a couple of plans to the Mayor's Office and are waiting for him to pick one of the plans so that they can act on it.

Ernest (Ernie) Brooks, Queens Representative, Office of Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney -

- Congresswoman Maloney has been working on holding the pharmaceutical companies accountable, taking them to task over the prescription prices, something of course that the administration said they would be doing and haven't done so.
- Negotiations are still going on over an updated and probably smaller HEROES Act but hopefully one that will include some money for New York State and New York City.
- The Census was cut short, Queens is not fully counted, the government may be telling us differently. The Congresswoman's job with the Census will be trying to make sure what has been counted, at least figures, are not played with.
- Congresswoman Maloney held a conference on the waterfront in Long Island City about climate change, it had to do with a new report by Congress, it was particularly focused on economic and health impacts that climate change could have on the City and the State. It is very relevant to us as being a waterfront community along parts of Community Boards 1 and Boards 2.
- On October 21st there will be a waterfront press conference/event, an unveiling of a mural which is being painted about Newtown Creek, it's on the side of the Hunters Point Community Middle School, at 12 noon, at Center Boulevard and Borden Avenue.

Daniel Bonthius, Operations Coordinator, Office of Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez -

- Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez hosted a virtual Town Hall alongside Representative Earl Blumenauer who represents Portland, Oregon. The event was focused on environmental justice and housing justice and the unique challenges that both of our districts face, recording of the Town Hall is on their Facebook page, @repaoc
- The Congresswoman and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer urged The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to release federal funeral assistance to the families of COVID-19 victims. The representatives reached out to FEMA, requesting this assistance in the spring and received no response since then, however, President Trump has authorized FEMA to use other needs assistance for all the COVID-19 major disaster declarations through the Lost Wage Assistance Executive Order. This Presidential authorization would give FEMA the authority to provide disaster funeral assistance to New York State and any other states that request it, so the members urged FEMA to utilize it.
- In late September, congressional leaders reached an agreement to fund the government through December 11th, the bill provides an additional \$8 billion dollars for nutrition benefits extends waivers for the National School Lunch Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and extends EBT through September 2021.
- The Congresswoman voted against H.R. 4447 this legislation would have prolonged our dependence on fossil fuels while the legislation takes an important step to support environmental justice and renewable energy, it not only fails to address the climate crisis we face but includes unacceptable giveaways to fossil fuel corporations. The Congresswoman urged democratic leadership to remove troubling elements of this bill and put forth transformative legislation that

fundamentally addresses the global climate crisis before the end of this Congress like the Green New Deal.

- Reports on the Census in how New York City did in comparison to other large cities around the country compared to 2010, overall is good considering the challenges we were up against.
- Their office continues to assist constituents with casework and while their staff are following social distancing guidelines and working from home, they continue to accept cases. Their website is: <https://ocasio-cortez.house.gov/> or over the phone at: 718-662-5970.

Jessica Schabowski, Queens Borough Director, Mayor's Community Affairs Unit –

- The City provided an update to the City Planning Commission (CPC) yesterday regarding the borough-based jails. They asked the CPC to amend the Public Place ULURP to change the date from December 31, 2026 to August 31, 2027. As the City dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic, there were delays related to procurement and engagement.
- The NYPD is undertaking a department-wide initiative that is aimed at transforming policing in New York City and asked to please complete the Reform and Reinvention Collaborative feedback survey at: <http://surveymonkey.com/r/reformcollaborative>
- The deadline to request an Absentee Ballot is October 27th and early voting starts in 4 days, October 24th - November 1st. The City is partnering with Curb to offer \$5 off for the first 5,000 people going out to vote for early voting, who participate. She said you can download the Curb app and use the code VOTEEARLY between October 24th and November 1st.
- The City encourages all New Yorkers to get a COVID-19 test as well as a flu shot. Please go to: nyc.gov/covidtest to find your nearest test site. Please go to: nyc.gov/flu to find sites near you, on where you can get a flu shot.

Haris Khan, Queens Borough Liaison, Comptroller Scott M. Stringer's Office –

- On October 14th the Comptroller's Office released a plan called Lifting Up New Yorkers, this plan addresses this recession. It was part of their economic analysis in the office regarding the recession we are in right now, it's disproportionately affecting low wage jobs and it's also accelerating long extending trends with digitization, automation, and e-commerce. The plan in short asks that community colleges to be tuition free in New York City. It calls for a universal expansion of CUNY at all community colleges and if people know it's a program that provides textbook vouchers, transportation, like in New York City MTA cards. Also, specialized advising to students at the community colleges, it also asks for universal paid internships. We know from our studies that 20% of CUNY students do an internship and only 12% them do a paid internship, that automatically puts them way off tracks compared to the job market and other institutions where students are regularly engaging with internships. It calls for creating a CUNY Tech Core to help small businesses adopt digital tools, it asks to align private industry and workforce training for the 21st century, focuses on apprenticeships and it's basically a 21st century workforce development strategy to make sure that we come out of this crisis stronger.

BUSINESS SESSION:

Adoption September 2020 Minutes

Motioned by Gerald Caliendo; Seconded by Thomas Ryan

Chair Report: Marie Torniali reported regarding voting, if you have friends and neighbors that have absentee ballots you may collect it from them to drop off at a secured ballot box. The absentee ballots must be signed and dated. This is a great way to get everyone out to vote and for those that cannot go out.

District Manager Report: Florence Koulouris reported, today at the borough cabinet they met with the Mayor's Office of Media. She said they learned they are now also handling the hotel and the restaurant outdoor dining. Ms. Koulouris said they have assured us that they are going to reach out to us, and they are going to keep in contact with us regarding the outdoor dining. The agency has also acquired the responsibility for Channel 25 TV and 95.1 Radio Station. During this time, they have been working with the film industry in order to maintain lower occupancy rates, unlimited casting crews are allowed to work together.

Committee Reports:

RoseMarie Poveromo, Airport Committee – Reminding everyone as a precaution to keep your masks on if you are flying/traveling.

Eric Mouchette, Consumer Affairs Committee – Asked everyone to review the Consumer Affairs spreadsheet that was emailed. Mr. Mouchette said they are going to vote on applications for the month of October, the entities with which we've agreed to stipulations are marked. He said the 114th precinct provided a report stating that there were no significant issues with any of the businesses on the list. Mr. Mouchette stated that in light of the 114th precincts report, he would move to vote to approve the applications and stipulations on the list and asked if anyone would motion, Rose Anne Alafogiannis; Seconded: Pauline Jannelli. He asked if anyone opposed to the approval, hearing no opposition, the motion passed unanimously.

Antonella Di Saverio, Environmental Protection Committee – Reported, on October 9, 2020 they had a walkthrough of the dilapidated section on the promenade opposite of Astoria Houses. Ms. Di Saverio said it was nice to see that there was a collective effort a lot of people who were interested. She said many attended; Ms. Claudia Coger, Vanessa Jones- Hall, Joe Nocerino from the Borough President's Office, Congresswoman Maloney, District Manager Florence Koulouris and some Community Board Members. She stated the Parks Department is going to start their process in repairing the sidewalk and the fence at the end of October. Ms. Di Saverio also shared that the Army Corps of Engineers has been brought in and they are all going to work together. She shared that Congresswoman Maloney asked for a meeting to be put together in about a week or so and all the players are going to get together and try to make sure that all of the points are addressed so that any of the weather type events that are to come will be addressed in any of these enhancements that are made to that area. Ms. Di Saverio said they will keep you posted as to the progress on that.

Marie Torniali, Chairperson – Thanked Antonella Di Saverio for all the work she has done on this project. She also thanked the rest of the group, Kathleen, Katie, Florence, Congresswoman Maloney and Ms. Coger.

Judy Trilivas, Health & Human Services Committee – Reported that they had a meeting in September regarding the Capital & Expense budget but unfortunately, they did not have a quorum, they have not had quorum for the last few meetings and would like to address that. Ms. Trilivas said there were others on the call that are interested in joining the Committee and she would leave that to Marie and Florence to handle so that they can have quorum for future meetings. She said they added additional items to the Capital and Expense list. Ms. Trilivas advised going into the fall season please make sure you get your flu shot, it is very important.

Elizabeth Erion, Land Use & Zoning Committee - Ms. Erion reported that the Committee itself had a little problem coming to an agreement. They had 2 motions that were not passed. She stated that she thinks the Committee was very supportive of the concept of having a better restaurant and additional housing in the Community but were worried about the impact of the number of cars in the area with Piccola Venezia,

the amount of residents and also the size of the building, the height of the building in relationship to the existing community. The existing community is R5 which is a low-rise community, it's like 3 and 4 stories maximum. The buildings in the immediate area surrounding the project are 4, 5 and 6 stories but those are pre-existing buildings that were there before the R5 zoning became effective. She said, yes, they are overbuilt for the R5 zone, but they were there like probably around the 1940s, 1930s they were constructed. In light of that, the Committee finally came to an agreement on a conditional approval which is to recommend conditional approval to the Community Board and based on the condition that first, the maximum building height would be no higher than 6 stories and secondly, that the income levels for the affordable units would come under the jurisdiction of Option 1 so that it would allow a lower affordability ban for the applicants, for the apartments. Ms. Erion asked if there were any questions or clarifications that any board members have, before she asks for a motion for vote.

Amy Hau motioned to approve the conditional approval. Rose Anne Alafogiannis seconded the motion.

Ms. Erion said the motion is on the floor for discussion. Hearing no comments, she said they had to do a Roll Call vote because it is a ULURP item. She stated the motion on the floor for vote right now is that recommendation to approve conditionally conditions include maximum building height no higher than 6 stories and that the income level for the affordable units come under the MIH Option 1.

Roll Call vote taken by Amy Hau

In Favor: 30; Against: 0; Not Voting: 3

The Chair stated the motion passed.

Katie Ellman, Parks/Recreation/Cultural Committee – Ms. Ellman said she had a few announcements one of which is that it's a free admission week at the Noguchi Museum from tomorrow through Sunday in celebration of the release of their mobile guide so you can download that and get more information about that on their website. She said you still have to place a reservation in advance and tickets are as most institutions around the city now are first come first serve so you have to book your ticket in advance you can find out more at: <https://www.noguchi.org/> . This week on the 22nd and 23rd at 8 pm the Astoria Performing Arts Center is presenting American Arcana on their new television channel which is at: <https://www.fiveohm.tv/apac> , tickets are \$25 and benefit the performing arts center and also <https://www.vote.org/> . The current exhibit at Socrates is Monuments, it's great, check it out. This Saturday, October 24th at the sitting area on Hoyt Avenue and 21st Street, Astoria Urban Agricultural Alliance, this group is looking to convert the sitting area on 21st Street and Hoyt Avenue north into a public garden and they're working with the Parks Department and Green Thumb. If you are in the neighborhood in around this Saturday, the 24th between 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. please go there. There will be a composting workshop and information on growing edible plants. Ms. Ellman also shared that there was a Committee Meeting a couple of weeks ago with the Parks Department. They presented the much-anticipated plans for the renovation of Rainey Park which was made possible through funding from former Borough President Katz, the City Council and from Council Member Van Bramer. Ms. Ellman said overwhelmingly the Committee approved it, appreciates and supports the plans. The plan does not include renovations to the Field House which is in bad shape or the waterfront esplanade. She shared that the baseball diamond will be removed and the basketball court will be moved to the south end of the park and finally, there will be designated barbecue and picnic areas for the Community to use since Rainey Park is heavily used by people having family events, parties and barbecues. The playground which is in terrible shape as we all know will be replaced by a toddler playground and a big kid playground. Mitchell Waxman, Transportation Committee - Reported that last night they had a presentation from the New York City Department of Transportation detailing the expansion of Citi Bike. He said this is apparently Phase 3 of Citi Bike and they have asked for our comments and input as far as the placement

of additional Citi Bike racks around the community. He shared that they sent a link today. He asked District Manager, Florence Koulouris if she can disseminate to the rest of the group so everyone can put their input in as far as where we would like to see a Citi Bike rack appear in the neighborhood.

New Business:

The Chair said they would discuss the Capital & Expense list.

Richard Khuzami stated the Capital & Expense report is probably one of the most important functions of the Community Board. He said it lays a map for what our vision is for the Community for the future, it can have both items that need immediate remediation and conceptual things. He said if there is something here that you particularly think is important but you don't think it is highly prioritized at this point understand that it will find its way up to become a more important item at some point. He stated one thing to keep in mind this year because of the City Budget, it may be difficult to get a lot of new items funded. Mr. Khuzami said we are hoping this year that all the items that were listed as Continued Support (CS) do receive their already promised funding. He stated there are 2 different budgets, one is the Expense Budget and the other is the Capital Budget. Mr. Khuzami thanked all the Committee Chairs and Committee Members that came up with the new items. He asked if anyone had any suggestions that they would like to make, either changes or additional items on the list.

Antonella Di Saverio said they just added an item to monitor radiation from the cell towers, the 5G cell towers. She said the District Manager received an important letter from someone in our Community, where they posted a tower right in front of their house and their 2 tenants are moving out because of the 5G pole right outside of their house. She said he is concerned about his child and himself in the house with this constant radiation into his house. Ms. Di Saverio asked to move that up, she said they are starting to roll out 5G poles. She stated there are no studies right now with the current 5G so if there's any way we can move that up so that we can show that there's some priority, she would really appreciate it on behalf of these people that are being affected right now.

Motioned by Antonella Di Saverio; Seconded by RoseMarie Poveromo

Richard Khuzami stated there's a motion on the floor to exchange item 6 for item 47.

The District Manager, Florence Koulouris stated item 6 is not an active program in our district.

Richard Khuzami asked if there is anyone against this, hearing none it would be considered unanimous and moved, motion carried. He thanked everyone for all the work they did this year.

PUBLIC SESSION:

Margaret Rodgers – Thanked Community Board 1 for giving her the opportunity to make a couple of announcements. She announced that next year, 2021, Stan Morse who is the lead organizer of Justice for All is going to be running for Queens Borough President, there'll be a lot more news about that. She said he has done huge amounts of works in in housing with NYCHA, Queensbridge, Ravenswood, etc. They have really been working with Community Board 1 on the gas outage at the Astoria Houses, which has been months. She shared that Senator Gianaris wrote a letter to the head of NYCHA to make some firm deadlines and promises that this will be resolved. Ms. Rodgers said the West Queens Community Land Trust co-sponsored with Community Board 1 on 2 Visioning Sessions at Ravenswood to discuss what the residents would like to see happen with the Department of Sanitation building on 21st Street. She said they worked closely with Evie Hantzopoulos on that. She shared that a lot of Community Board members were there at the last one as well as a committee of young people.

Nancy Silverman – Stated, as a former Community Board member, now a current community member, she is interested in what goes on with the Community Board. She said that notices and information do not get out from the Community Board to the members of the public, for example, she would like to attend some Committee meetings. She said the only way community members can know is if there's a Committee meeting is if they constantly monitor the website because there are no notifications, there is no email list, there is no notification to the public. She said there was a Transportation Committee meeting last night that she did not know about and would have liked to attend and there have been other meetings that she would like to attend. Ms. Silverman shared that she now checks the website regularly. She said it only goes up a week in advance or so and everyone is busy.

The Chair responded that we are working on that and that they are also posted on social media. She also added that we are currently working on a mailing list.

Maria Zois (Mic not working – Thomas Ryan read comments from the “Chat”) – Stated she has concerns regarding 31st Avenue Open Streets. Ms. Zois shared her son is disabled and they are denied access over and over. She said she contacted DOT. She also added that the yoga teacher is very aggressive, why can we not compromise.

The Chair asked Florence to look into it.

The District Manager responded that she has been working with Ms. Zois and DOT.

Max Nazario – Stated he is a resident of Astoria; he is a subway rider and a cyclist. He said he is speaking this evening to implore the members of Community Board 1 to support the Department of Transportation's proposed expansion of our district's Citi Bike network. He said he understands that some opposition has been conveyed due to DOT's proposal to place the majority of the 32 proposed docks on the roadbed rather than the sidewalk thereby reclaiming and repurposing street parking for non-drivers. He said while these concerns about parking are not unfounded he is sure that the neighbors of Astoria will agree that in this time of social distancing it is important for our district to prioritize forms of transportation that allow us that does not dirty our air, that allow us to spread out and that don't threaten the physical safety of the majority of CB1 residents who don't own private automobiles. He said our sidewalks are already extremely narrow and overcrowded without additional space being taken up by Citi Bike docks that are also on the sidewalk rather than the roadbed, the lack of parking in CB1 is not the result of too little parking, it is the result of too many cars.

Thomas Ryan read an additional message from Maria Zois – Asked to please take into consideration the accessibility of the disabled when installing Citi Bikes.

The Chair, Marie Torniali asked for a Motion to Adjourn

Motioned by Thomas Ryan; Seconded by Pauline Jannelli

Meeting Adjourned: 8:00 p.m.