

Community Board 1, Queens – Board Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2020

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

The Chair introduced Captain Ray A. Jenkins.

GUEST SPEAKER:

Captain Ray A. Jenkins, Commanding Officer, 114th Precinct - Captain Jenkins introduced himself. He said the Community is very diverse and shared that prior to this position he was in the Gang Division in Queens North, spent most of his time was in the Housing developments; Astoria Houses, Woodside, Queensbridge and Ravenswood. Captain Jenkins said they have seen increases in crime overall. I have been working with the Community Affairs unit and Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs) in making plans, listening to concerns, formulating plans and ideas, constituent concerns and quality of life. Working on how to address issues and/or new ones that may be coming.

The Chair asked what is the biggest rise in crime that he has seen in the area?

Captain Ray A. Jenkins responded that Revel scooters are a big concern; people stealing the lithium batteries inside of the scooters, there are approximately over 300 in Astoria; people leaving cars running; the key fobs are a target and outdoor dining limiting the view. The auxiliary officers are working hard distributing awareness flyers alerting the community of these issues.

Evie Hantzopoulos addressed an issue regarding lights being shined on children, residents of Queensbridge while participating in outdoor activities for no apparent reason. Ms. Hantzopoulos also requested new barricades for the 31st Avenue Open Streets because the ones in use are falling apart.

Captain Jenkins responded that Queensbridge is also governed by PSA 9, housing bureau. He stated Captain Giambrone and he have a good working relationship. He said that about a week ago he spoke with Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer about the issue which was directed towards the Housing Development Commander and how the vehicles are positioned, it is a deterrent for crime, illicit activities he is unable to speak for the Housing Commander. He said they will look into the barricade requests.

Daniel Aliberti asked if there are any gang issues in the community.

The Captain responded overall each development has about 3 to 4 gangs or crews. He shared that robberies are down for the year.

Vanessa Jones-Hall reported that there have been shootings in Astoria Houses, and it is a concern. She said despite the gangs in the housing developments it does not mean that it is totally unsafe. She added that there is a lot of good happening as well.

Captain Jenkins said there are a lot of good things coming out of Queensbridge spreading to all the Community. He said during these times it is socially awkward for the youth and to keep in mind that they are unable to experience special celebrations right now like proms, graduations, parties, etc. He shared that they are having a Turkey Drive, tomorrow, they are giving away 100 turkeys and some pre-made plates. It will take place at 1-25 Astoria Boulevard.

Thomas Ryan asked about bringing back the NCO meetings as well as the Community Council meetings.

Captain Jenkins responded that at this time because of the COVID outbreaks they are not holding them, but the NCO meetings are taking place. He said he is available by phone if needed as well as Community Affairs.

Dominic Stiller stated he lives in the Dutch Kills area and wants to know about the impact of the significant influx of homeless in their area and how it has affected crime. Which are the permanent ones?

Captain Jenkins responded that there is an increase of Homeless Shelters in the area. They have 14 sites in the area. The hotels are manned by DHS. Problematic residents would be relocated elsewhere.

Chair Torniali asked about advertising/letting public know about the "Build the Block" meetings.

Captain Jenkins said they are posted on their Twitter and Facebook pages "114 Precinct" and are posted about 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Council Member Costa Constantinides reported that today the City Council voted at a Landmarks Sitings for the Sanitation Garage, they have to go in front of the whole council at the end of this month. He stated that it will be moving to the site that the Community Board voted on back a few months ago. He said cars will be going around 19th Avenue and 33rd Street. Council Member Constantinides said, number one, the trucks will not be allowed to come out onto 20th Avenue because 20th Avenue is already a tight street so they will be coming and going through 19th Avenue only. He stated there will be no garbage trucks on that street unless they're picking up garbage on the 20th Avenue or they're plowing 20th Avenue. He said the second part is that it's going to be fully sustainable, they are going to have a solar power that's going to power a large part of the building. Councilman Constantinides said there will be an opportunity when COVID is over that our young students from the local schools will be able to take field trips. He said it will not smell because it will off the street, it is going to be far back. The Councilman said the other two pieces is that there will be a traffic study of 21st Street because the BQX is not happening. He stated that DOT committed to the study and Housing Preservation Development (HPD) committed to going through a community process because right now the Western Queens Community Land Trust and the Ravenswood tenants have been holding meetings along with Community Board 1 on the future of the 21st Street site. He said they got them to commit to doing a full process and that it cannot be sold to a private developer, this is not going to be business as usual. Council Member Constantinides said they are not going to balance the City Budget by selling this property, they put it into the commitment letter from HPD that it can only be a 100% affordable housing on public land or public use and they have to work with the community to come up with a vision for what it is. He said this site is not going to be sold, it's been an environmental justice issue. He stated he knows Queensview and North Queensview, in his district, and Councilman Van Bramer's district, the Ravenswood tenants have been dealing with this for generations. The Councilman said this will finally be resolved once we get the money to build the garage and hopefully that'll be soon. The Councilman said, \$3 million dollars was allocated Mount Sinai Queens for new equipment for MRI's and other things. He said they gave Florence Koulouris, District Manager of the Community Board, a thousand masks. The office is mailing them to everyone in 11105. He stated the numbers for COVID right now in our district are not good, last week was at 4.81%, every zip code in our district is close to almost 3% those are scary numbers. The Councilman said we need to grab a hold of this situation very quickly so that means wearing a mask, that means social distancing, that means washing your hands all the time, that means avoiding large social gatherings, and staying indoors. He said he knows this is tough, he is Greek who is married to an Italian, they have big family gatherings for Thanksgiving. The Council Member said this year if you are having Thanksgiving with someone you don't live with, it is very risky. He asked everyone, that we have a chance here to fight back on a second wave that's bearing down hard. He said he does not want to see our small businesses get hit, see our schools close, or see our hospitals go through what they went through in April. The Councilman said he was in the emergency room in April and May and too many people lost their lives, too many people got very sick. He said he is imploring everyone, please take this seriously. Councilman Constantinides thanked Kate Peterson and her volunteers who are going to be out there and

have been out there already volunteering. Council Member Costa Constantinides thanked everyone for having him and wished all a Happy Thanksgiving.

The Chair, Marie Torniali told Councilman Constantinides that it was wonderful to see him and thanked him for bringing us all this wonderful news. She stated that there is some concern about 11105 and the lack of testing sites in the area because the City MD lines are blocks long so if we could get some other testing or mobile testing sites here, it would be great.

Council Member Constantinides reported that there is a site at Northern Boulevard in the old Sports Authority location which is not 11105. The site at Sports Authority just expanded the rapid testing, he said they are doing the PCR, they are doing the molecular testing and they're doing the rapid testing. They are looking for a location in 11105 that has a bathroom for staff that is indoors and is not a school. He asked if anyone has any ideas to let him know. The Councilman said there is going to be more contact trace testing in 11105, they're working on that and there will be a Day of Action.

Richard Khuzami thanked the Councilman for all the help he gave along with Andre and Lisa Stone from P.S. 171 and Claudia Coger for working on getting the four-way stop at 12th Street and Astoria Boulevard.

Costa Constantinides thanked Richard Khuzami for all his work and his work at Old Astoria Neighborhood Association to make that happen. He said it was a great thing and the best part about this stop sign is that we did not have a tragic incident that led to it. Councilman Constantinides said the community got together and said this should happen, they were proactive rather than reactive.

Vanessa Jones-Hall thanked Council Member Costa Constantinides for coming out on Sunday. She reminded everyone that Astoria Houses has a building that gas lines are fully down and then another building that has just a line down. Ms. Jones-Hall shared that the Councilman, Queens Borough President Elect, Donovan Richards and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney were all there to support them and introduced themselves to the residents. She said they listened to their concerns about how they're dealing with this issue as well as being involved with the Test and Trace for Astoria and Long Island City. Ms. Jones-Hall also thanked him for also giving his testimony on the seriousness of COVID-19.

Council Member Costa Constantinides thanked Vanessa for what she did on Sunday. He stated that the residents at 104 Astoria Boulevard have been suffering for weeks and that NYCHA has really messed this up. He acknowledged the fact that Queens Together was able to organize and get food to them as did Evie Hantzopoulos for the holidays. He said they are going to continue to advocate to get the gas on. He said he personally thinks it should be electric stoves instead, we need to get that, we need to get something for them to cook on. He also said we need to be able to support them.

The Chair, Marie Torniali and Council Member Costa Constantinides thanked each other and wished each other a Happy Thanksgiving.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEM:

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

The Queens Plaza Clocktower Windows

Queens Plaza South, Long Island City

This action requests Landmarks Preservation Commission approval to facilitate replacement of eleven (11) windows on the west façade of the building.

Presentation made by Michael Granville, Architect with the firm Darius Toraby, P.C.

Motioned by Edward Babor; Seconded by Antonella Di Saverio

In Favor: 35; Against: 2; Not Voting: 0

Elizabeth Erion reported that Mr. Granville spoke with the Committee on November 4th at their meeting. She stated that it is a very straightforward, it is a simple replacement of windows with a product that is replacing a product that doesn't exist anymore with something that is as close as possible. She said there were very few questions about the substance of replacing it in terms of reproduction etc. Ms. Erion said the only issue that was the fact of whether or not there would be future public hearings for other things and to her understanding is that for window replacements no but if there are any other changes in the building façade that there would be.

Mr. Granville responded that it depends on the character of the change, if it is something that is approvable on a staff level at Landmarks Preservation Commission and there would not be a public hearing for that but they have really done a pretty comprehensive restoration of the building and he thinks apart from these windows they are not going to see much work there in the future.

Ms. Erion shared that she passed by the Clocktower that is completed now and she has never seen it so beautiful in all her life even with the reproduction materials. She recommends that you are on the train going around that curve or if you're driving over the bridge, to stop and look at it. Ms. Erion asked if it is going to be functional soon?

Mr. Michael Granville responded that the motors are all in. He said it is ready to tell time and they are working on tweaking the lighting to get that to work as well so it is illuminated at night, it is very close to telling time again on all four sides.

She said they will talk about the recommendation during the Committee reports.

Daniel Aliberti asked a question pertaining to the material being used for the window replacements and Mr. Granville responded.

ELECTED OFFICIALS/REPRESENTATIVES – Announcements:

Taiquan Coleman, Office of State Senator Jessica Ramos -

- Turkey Giveaway on Friday at Louis Armstrong middle school, families will receive either a Turkey or a Turkey voucher
- Constituent Services team are available Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Telephone number is: 718-205-3881

Joseph (Joe) Nocerino, Office of the Queens Borough President Sharon Lee -

- November 18th at 2:00 p.m., the Borough President will be hosting the 11th Job Fair
- November 19th at 6:00 p.m., They will be having a Virtual Parent Advisory Board
- December 3rd at 4:30 p.m., They will be hosting The Borough Hall Tree Lighting on the Lawn (social distancing) and Santa will be present

Ernest (Ernie) Brooks, Office of Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney -

- Discussed Sunday's event at Astoria Houses
- NYCHA is putting a Pilot Program in place to redesign the Maintenance System because it has been too much time and a huge problem for the residents to be without gas, 45 families for over 50 days
- He thanked Evie Hantzopoulos, Queens Together, Jonathan Forgash, M. Wells Restaurant, Costco and others that have made various contributions
- The Congresswoman is pushing for a new relief package

Daniel Bonthius, Office of Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez –

- The House is back in session this week, unfortunately, we don't have an update about a stimulus package, but negotiations are ongoing
- The Congresswoman hosted a Virtual Town Hall on 11/12, it can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6XBnYptBnproA_ydn-b0A
- To get notified about future events please sign up for our mailing list:
 - English Newsletter: <https://ocasio-cortez.house.gov/contact/newsletter-subscribe>
 - Spanish Newsletter: <https://ocasio-cortez.house.gov/contact/boletin-espanol>
- The Congresswoman will be honoring the Centennial of the Jewish Center of Jackson Heights on the House Floor this week. If you know of other institutions or individuals who should be honored, please reach out to me, daniel.bonthius@mail.house.gov
- Our office can be reached at our website, <https://ocasio-cortez.house.gov/>, or over the phone at 718-662-5970

Vanessa Jones-Hall thanked the Public Officials and the Board for all the prayers and aid they have given to the Housing Developments. She also thanked Senator Gianaris for helping them in possibly getting restitutions on their rent. Ms. Jones-Hall also thanked Evie Hantzopoulos and her team for all their help.

Andre Stith thanked Vanessa Jones-Hall for all her dedication and hard work.

Ernest (Ernie) Brooks, Office of Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney added that the Congresswoman is working on a restitution.

Deborah Tharrington, Office of Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer -

- Their office is still working remotely but they can be reached if anyone needs assistance through the office at: (718) 383-9566

Haris Khan, Office of the NYC Comptroller Scott M. Stringer -

- They are doing a city-wide survey on Work and Family as affected by COVID and they are trying to figure out what has really changed over the past eight months in our lives and how that has affected our lives. In using the survey, they will be able to identify policy recommendations for the way we recover from this pandemic and the way we move forward as a city going forward. There are self-explanatory questions, if you choose it can be anonymous, it gives you an option at the end of the survey and then submit. They are trying to get a diverse group.

Richard Khuzami thanked Councilman Van Bramer for helping them in renaming, he believes it is 43rd Street and 34th Avenue to Whitey Ford.

BUSINESS SESSION:

Adoption October 2020 Minutes

Motioned by Rose Anne Alafogiannis; Seconded by Thomas Ryan

Chair Report:

Chairperson, Marie Torniali reported that they had a presentation with Test and Trace Corps. The Chair said she feels all New Yorkers should be tested whether or not you have a symptom, it is irrelevant, everyone should be tested. She shared that you can get more information on the testing sites at:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/index.page> or
<https://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/test-and-trace/>

She reiterated that it is very important that we all get tested because unknowingly we might be spreading the disease. The Chair wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and she thanked everyone for all they do, every single one of you. She said, eat well, drink well, be happy, wear a mask, and stay safe everyone.

District Manager Report:

District Manager, Florence Koulouris greeted everyone. She shared that today they had the District Service Cabinet meeting for the Queens Borough President's Office and today Sanitation made a presentation regarding winter scheduling. Ms. Koulouris shared that the scheduling has changed for a lot of the local homes and businesses in our area to evenings so what is happening is you're seeing the snow trucks out and the trucks are doing test runs preparing for what will be. She said we are going to see a little bit of changes due to the fact of the outdoor dining there are concerns about the restaurants which are on the right side of the road. She said Department of Transportation (DOT) is working alongside the Department of Sanitation to identify different pictures. Ms. Koulouris indicated that a lot of the restaurants in our district have made substantial financial input into these outdoor dining areas and DOT and Sanitation want to work with them so that the areas may not be damaged. The snow trucks have the shovels to the right so the major concern is for the businesses which will be on the right side of the road when the trucks are coming down the streets with snow removal. They will be looking at the major roadways, that they are cleared first. You can follow the snowplows, on their site. She shared that there is a 15-minute delay on the map, and we have the map listed on our website. District Manager Koulouris wished a Happy and a Healthy Thanksgiving and as The Chair said please continue to follow all the guidelines; wear your mask, wash your hands and do everything you need to do.

Committee Reports:

RoseMarie Poveromo, Airport Committee - No Report.

Rod Townsend, Community & Economic Development Committee – No Report.

Pauline Jannelli (on behalf of Eric Mouchette), Consumer Affairs Committee – Ms. Jannelli asked everyone to review their Consumer Affairs spreadsheet. She stated they are voting on an application for the month of November and that the entities with which they agreed to stipulations are marked. She shared that the 114th Precinct provided a report stating there was only one business with issues, Crystal Lounge. She stated that the Committee intends to address the 58-311 complaints and there were 15-911 calls that included assaults. Ms. Jannelli said the report provided by the 114th on Crystal Lounge was delayed and only received it a few days prior, and as a result they are going to ask the State Liquor Authority to delay the review of Crystal Lounge's application. She said they are going to invite Crystal Lounge to meet with the Committee and have the Board vote on the application in December. Ms. Jannelli said considering the 114th Precincts report that none of the remaining businesses have any significant issues, they are going to vote on all the applications and stipulations on the list, except for Crystal Lounge. She motioned to approve all the applications and stipulations on the list, with the exception of Crystal Lounge and asked if anyone would second the motion, it was seconded by Rose Anne Alafogiannis. Ms. Jannelli asked if anyone opposed to the approval and if there were no objections and stated the motion will pass unanimously.

The Chair stated the Motion was carried.

Antonella Di Saverio, Environmental Protection Committee – Ms. Di Saverio reported that they had their 3rd Zoom meeting regarding the work at Astoria Houses Esplanade. She said they still must address the resiliency aspect of it, which is still being worked on. Ms. Di Saverio said they are at the stage of identifying a local partner or local partners to share costs with the Army Corps of Engineers. She stated that they will keep everyone updated as the meetings progress. Ms. Di Saverio shared that they will be having a meeting every Friday until all the repairs are done and resolved.

Judy Trilivas, Health & Human Services Committee – Ms. Trilivas reiterated on some of the Chair's report regarding the meeting that took place regarding the Testing and Tracing, that they're encouraging everyone to be tested so that if they are positive it can be traced. She stated that this is all starting with

clusters and will be leading to community spread. Ms. Trilivas said the numbers are growing in Astoria, and that people talk about this as if it is a war but we have to be on the front line of prevention and the only way we can do that is by doing things that we can control. She said it is the same thing that we have talked about and many people have talked about all night but it really works so the key is to make sure that we are doing everything we can to prevent this from spreading. Ms. Trilivas said that Thanksgiving is a time that everyone is worried about, that there might be a very big chance for spreading. She asked, please make sure that you try to obey the rules such as less than 10 people, try not to go into close spaces, social distance, wear your mask, wash your hands and try to stay away from high-risk people or people that have traveled.

Evie Hantzopoulos, Housing Committee – Ms. Hantzopoulos reported that they had a Second Visioning Session for the Ravenswood Garage in October and there will be a summation report that is issued so she will share that with everybody. She shared that there is also a youth committee that is involved and engaged so they are also going to give input. Ms. Hantzopoulos also mentioned Astoria Houses and the gas situation there, she said there will be a Rally and Press Conference on Saturday at 11 o'clock right by the building which is 1-04 Astoria Boulevard, by Radial Park, right next door. She said this calls attention to the issue of the residents not having gas for 55 days and share that there is also another building that has half a gas line out as well as down in Ravenswood there is a building with no gas. Justice for All is coordinating the Press Conference and Rally with the residents and that Vanessa Jones-Hall is involved as well as other residents. Ms. Hantzopoulos also shared that they will be scheduling Housing Committee meeting soon. She also shared that Frontline Foods is going to be providing Thanksgiving meals to any family within the buildings that does not have gas that would like a Thanksgiving meal.

Elizabeth Erion, Land Use & Zoning Committee – Ms. Erion stated that the hearing closed, and they needed to vote on it and they will send a letter to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) on what they determined at the end of the meeting. She said she mentioned before the members really did not have many questions except clarifications about what was happening within the building itself and then the recommendation that they agreed upon that they voted unanimously was to recommend approval of the certificate of appropriateness for this work and for future window work. Ms. Erion stated the motion would be approval of certificate of appropriateness for window replacement on the Clocktower building. She asked for a motion from someone on the Board, motioned by Edward Babor and Seconded by Antonella Di Saverio.

The Chair asked if anyone opposes because this is not a roll call vote and announced that Daniel Aliberti and Rod Townsend opposed.

Elizabeth Erion announced there were 35 members present, 2 opposed and the motion carried. She stated that a letter will go to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in support of this project. Ms. Erion thanked Mr. Granville for the time that he spent explaining this interesting project and stated it would be nice to get a few more landmarks in our district. She said maybe the Land Use Committee can work on that in the future because we have some nice structures, some nice residential buildings. Ms. Erion announced the next Land Use Committee meeting is scheduled for December 2nd and at that time there will be 2 informational presentations for rezoning's in Halletts Point but more importantly is the zoning for the Coastal Flood Resiliency Text Amendments that are coming up. She stated the Community Board will have to hold a hearing on these text amendments because in December, by the end of the year they will have to have a response to City Planning and we will review those, and added there will be a presentation by City Planning at the next meeting. Ms. Erion recommends that everyone go on to the City Planning website and find the Coastal Zone Flood Resiliency Text Amendments and review them because she understands they are a little bit more complex than before and when she gets the information she will distribute it to the to the Board.

Katie Ellman, Parks/Recreation/Cultural Committee – Ms. Ellman reported that last month in their report they talked about the Parks Department giving a presentation and update on a Capital Project in Rainey Park and stated what they did not bring up was the fact that they need a letter of support from the Board to share with the Parks Department so hopefully the changes and the repairs to the park will commence in 2021 and will last a minimum of a year. She stated the changes to the park include, retaining the basketball court but moving it to the south end of the park, removing the baseball diamond but keeping the undulating nature of the open field, renovating the playground, redoing landscaping, additional trees, it does not include the Waterfront Esplanade area and the railing and it does not include repairing or replacing the Field House. Ms. Ellman said the Committee unanimously supports the plan and the only thing they are going to ask for is for there to be consideration in this project and in all future projects in our district and city-wide for greater accessibility.

Richard Khuzami asked if it was included in the construction of the barbecue pits, that was a big change right there, having barbecue allowed.

Katie Ellman responded that grilling will be allowed, there will be designated grill stations but in general Rainey Park as everybody knows is highly used by families and groups as a place to gather and hold events including barbecuing. She said to formalize that in a way, there will be set picnic areas but understanding that people will not only use those areas they will use other areas. Ms. Ellman said hopefully now they will try to include more containers for spent coals and things like that, but it will be officially a space where you can barbecue where unofficially forever everyone's been doing it.

Rod Townsend stated during the Visioning there were a lot of people asking about a dog run space. He asked was that just rejected or was there a discussion?

Katie Ellman responded that it came up during the meeting and unfortunately the Parks Department only held one official meeting. She shared that there was a large group of dog owners that came and said that the way things are working right now is fine so that is all they heard and took into consideration. She added that she also knows in her community visioning work that there was a big pool for a designated dog space but because of off leash hours and a really big love from dog owners in the Community they are opting to retain off-leash hours until 9 a.m. and not have a designated space for dogs it is something that may come up again in the future just because Socrates in some ways is also overrun with dogs and dog poop. Ms. Ellman said there is a need for some kind of designated space for dogs, but it is not going to be at Rainy Park in this current configuration of Capital Project.

Chair Torniali asked if anyone on the Board is opposed to CB1 sending a letter of support for the Rainy Park Project as described by Katie.

Jeffrey Martin disclosed that he works for Parks and he will not be able to vote on the matter. Mr. Martin commented that regarding the dogs at Rainy Park there was a lot of support to keep the off-leash hours. He said he knows it is used heavily by many residents and it is the one place that you can go and throw a ball with a dog in this area. He also added that at Socrates Park in general he knows they have been a lot stricter with dogs on a leash. Mr. Martin stated that in Socrates there has been a big dog issue and thinks they have gotten that under control and believes that they are doing a lot better job of enforcing off leash hours or enforcing leashed.

Katie Ellman said she wanted to be clear that she is not putting down Socrates at all and is not saying they are not doing a good job. Ms. Ellman said there is an abundance of dog poop there on certain days and that is not a slight on Socrates, that is a slight to the dog owners.

Richard Khuzami stated he wanted to clarify for everybody that this is an issue. He said if you build a dog run you are not allowed to have off leash hours on parks ground, this is the main reason why back in

the day they never built a dog run in Astoria Park instead they built it underneath the Triborough Bridge because many people wanted to keep the off leash hours in Astoria Park.

Mitchell Waxman asked if the document sent around about the waterfront access would be part of a different project.

Katie Ellman responded, yes.

Mitchell Waxman asked if they gave any indication that the project would be forthcoming at some calendrical moment or is it just someday.

Katie Ellman responded that we are in a budget crisis, the money for this current project was put together over years and to get to this point is a huge accomplishment and she does not want to downplay how wonderful it is and how grateful we are it's happening. She said there are still obviously outstanding things in the Park that need some attention.

Marie Torniali, Chair said those will be projects for another day. She said there was one abstention and you the Committee has been granted their letter of support for Rainy Park.

Ann Bruno, Public Safety Committee – Ms. Bruno reported that the 114th Precinct have no meetings scheduled right now. She also asked everyone to please take COVID very serious.

Mitch Waxman, Transportation Committee – Mr. Waxman announced that they did not have a November meeting, but they will be scheduling a December meeting. He shared that this Thursday the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) and Citi Bike will have a Town Hall for the roll out of additional bike racks in the neighborhood.

PUBLIC SESSION:

Navkaran Singh – He stated that he is a graduate student from CUNY School of Public Health and Health Policy. He talked about obesity in New York City being an issue right now. He stated 22% of the population is obese, 12.5% of the population has diabetes while 36.2% of New Yorkers are pre-diabetic predominantly affected by this are Hispanics and African-Americans and sugar has been linked sugar-sweetened beverages have been linked to the rise of obesity rates diabetes and heart disease and increasing the chance of premature death. Mr. Singh said we currently see these are factors that make people more susceptible to COVID and morbidity to it. He shared that recently Resolution 0179 was introduced which would require the FDA to place sugar warning labels on sugar shooting beverages which will allow consumers to make well-informed education decisions and allow them to make healthier choices.

Josephine Andolfi (Mario DiAntoni) – They are residents of Crescent Street between Hoyt Avenue and Astoria Boulevard and Astoria Boulevard and Newtown Avenue. They found out that the bike lane was put through during the pandemic in the wintertime. She said as homeowners and residents on this block, they are suffering with the bike lane because they do not have access to the front of their homes, senior citizens cannot get in and out of the car, package deliveries, and oil trucks cannot make deliveries. She asked if DOT can come out and reassess. She said it does not work for pedestrians, for the homeowners, that it is a danger for the cyclist, a danger for the older people, and the pedestrians. She asked if anyone can give them guidance on how to address this.

The Chair told her to put their concerns in writing and to please forward them to the Community Board office.

The constituent asked how they can get it changed.

Marie Torniali, Chairperson told her the details come first and then it will be sent to DOT and added there might be no way to reconfigure that, but that they have to express their concerns and the office will forward that to the DOT.

Elmahdi Oummih – He stated he represents Astoria Values, a not-for-profit. He said they are providing help to parents right now and they have been doing this for the last two years with homework help, with languages, and with a lot of things that they need in order to make the most for their kids' lives. The kids learn new things, they do robotics. They also provide food security and do donations, so they have been distributing items and food. He said they are very grateful for the support that they have received from the Community. He also asked if anyone wants to get involved with them you can go to their website at: <https://www.astoriavalues.com/> or join them on Facebook. He mentioned the dog situation in Astoria. He said he lives by the park and that he has a phobia of dogs and feels like a prisoner in his home. He feels that dog owners should be ticketed when they leave poop on the ground and regarding the dogs without the leashes, he said it is going to take some kid being mauled to death before something is done.

Gloria Maloney, Dutch Kills Civic Association – Ms. Maloney said she agrees with the people who are having the problem with the Crescent Street bike lane because it comes all the way down into Dutch Kills and they are having a terrible problem. She said as far as this Citi Bike Virtual Town Hall, she feels that we do not need any more bike in Astoria, Long Island City, and in Dutch Kills. She said they have a problem on 36th Avenue, because they moved the bikes onto the street and took the parking spaces away from in front of the businesses. Ms. Maloney said they were told that it was probably temporary while they worked on the train. She said George Stamatiades is trying to get them to respond because the streets underneath the train are done, the sidewalks are done and there is more than enough room on the sidewalk to put those bicycle racks. Ms. Maloney said they don't seem to be listening to the people in the Communities and the businesses over there are suffering.

Maria Zois – She said she is a parent of a disabled 16-year-old who has physical cognitive disabilities and is non-verbal. Ms. Zois said Evie Hantzopoulos mentioned how they need more barricades. She said the barricades impact our seniors and the disabled in a very large way. She said that she feels the Community needs to be aware of the closure of 31st Avenue. She said the man hours she has spent with DOT and with the Community Board to get change is unbelievable. Ms. Zois said there is no reason they are denied access to a street for one yoga class, it is just unacceptable. She shared that Thursday evening, she was driving her son to the doctor in the rain and the entire street was barricaded and she had to move a barricade so she can take him to the pediatrician. Ms. Zois stated it is an ADA violation and asked who she needs to talk to other than DOT to get this resolved.

Marcy – She is also upset and has an issue with 31st Avenue being closed. She stated every time she walks or drives by no one is really in the streets at all so what is the purpose of barricading all that space for nothing. She said if the 80-year-old father needs to go to the hospital is she supposed to get out of the car and move a barricade. She mentioned that Astoria Park has been remodeled and a lot of money was spent therefore what is the purpose of having that street closed. She said it is time to remove them.

The Chair said all these comments will be relayed to DOT and maybe there is a solution whether the hours can be tweaked, or the days can be tweaked.

Katie Ellman stated the days are currently, Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. That people can still drive through.

Amin Mehedi stated the people are suffering and shared that he lives in this neighborhood. He said we need to do something and that he told the Transportation Committee meeting last month and it was not taken care of. Mr. Mehedi said it is November it is getting cold and it should be taken care of as soon as possible.

Michael – He shared that he lives in that area, he is a single father of 2 children, and he works multiple jobs. He stated one of them is as a delivery person. He said he witnessed on 31st Avenue and did notice in the chat that Evie is saying that there is no denying of access. He said he counted 35 people laying down doing yoga and the yoga instructor came out as a car was about to go through, ran to pull the barricade almost causing an accident. The instructor motioned to the people laying down on the floor saying he was sorry he could not do anything; they are laying down on the floor. He said are they waiting for someone to die, especially now it gets dark at 4:45 p.m. He asked that this should be reconsidered.

Wanda – Commented that this is fantastic and wanted to congratulate Marie. She wanted to let everyone know she will be a regular. She stated it is truly a democracy at work so congratulations to every one of us who is attending and caring.

Andoni - said there is a lot of people on the chat commenting on the 31st Avenue issue where it is only on Saturdays and Sundays from 8 to 6 which is not true especially on 32nd Street and 31st Street, they close from 8 am 8 pm. He said that street in particular is closed every single day, he lives right in front of it, he can see the barricades every single day and sometimes now the problem is people will go there early at 7:45 and close the street for no reason and said he has argued with people multiple times and no one wants to collect it at 8 p.m. He said on several occasions the barricades were there until 9:00 p.m. in the middle of the street. He stated what people are saying is not true.

The Chair asked him to kindly send a photo and send it to the Board Office.

Richard Khuzami – He said the open street program which he thinks is a great program and he would like to see more streets open promoting human power transportation. Mr. Khuzami said this is a very successful program in Jackson Heights because they have a huge problem with lack of green space. He said he hopes that some kind of discussion can be made where a compromise happens to give some space.

The Chair said because there are a lot of issues with the barricades and if people must move them most of the time, they don't put them back. She also said if someone has a child or an elderly parent it is difficult but maybe there is a way to tweak it in the future.

Rodolfo Sarchese – He commented that there are a lot of complaints regarding the bike lanes and everyone seems to say these bike lanes do not make sense. He thinks they spent a lot of money and the money could be spent on something better than this. Mr. Sarchese also complained about the 31st Avenue street closure and the fact that it is not being used, he has only seen it used on the weekends during warmer weather.

Sara Frazier – She stated that she has been volunteering with the 31st Avenue Open Streets and it has been a really positive experience. Ms. Frazier said she is a mother of 3 children and the parks are far for them to get to. She stated not every family is lucky enough to have a car and be able to get out, so during the summer she thought it was a great experience and she thinks it is a real highlight for their community. She shared that their Halloween event was very successful and well distanced, very safe and a positive thing for all the neighbors and she thinks it is the kind of thing that we can do going forward. Ms. Frazier said she wanted to reiterate what everybody else has been saying that they have adjusted the hours for the winter which are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and if you do see some barricades out there after 6 p.m. feel free to pull them off to the side, they appreciate the help. It is helpful when everyone volunteers together.

Eli – He stated that aside from the yoga class, he is probably one of the people who uses the Open Street the most. He said no one is saying that this program is perfect. He said it is not true that they are asking people to show identification and if they want to get through all they have to do is ask. He stated that in terms of protection of the street, people are saying how it is an inconvenience, he thinks it is going to be a lot more inconvenient because they have crappy barriers and are not being replaced by DOT or NYPD. He said someone is going to get hurt and why don't we all work together to make it safer for everyone.

Eli said the complaints from people who are against the Open Street are saying 2 different things, the street is too full of all the yoga people and others are saying no one uses it.

Maria Zois - She said she found it appalling on Halloween because a box truck showed up that has hanging body parts and decapitated heads which she did not find it child friendly and maybe that's a little more traumatizing so she thinks it depends on who you talk to. Ms. Zois shared that she spoke with John O'Neill from DOT about compromising. She said she does not want the program to end but she wants fairness for the disabled and for the elderly. She said everyone's commenting that Monday to Friday no one is denying access. Ms. Zois shared that she had to show Randy the yoga teacher her son's disability placard. She said there is no reason during the week that we should have the street closed, they are residents and their input should be taken into consideration just as much as on the weekend. She said they should be able to barbecue, that it is great and have a weekend for the children but meet them halfway, you cannot have it every day. Ms. Zois said today at 3 p.m. a fire truck had an emergency call and had to stop to move the barricade to get through.

Max Frankston – Stated he lives on 20th Avenue by Steinway and for the past year there are drag racers on 20th Avenue and it gets so bad that on the back window of the apartment the fumes come in during the summer. He said he has called the police as well as the Community Board. Mr. Frankston said it is an issue of safety, air and noise pollution and asked what can be done.

The Chair, Marie Torniali suggested he call 3-1-1 when it occurs and that she too has drag racing on 23rd Avenue. She said hopefully it will get resolved sooner or later.

A constituent asked if there is any way to get more garbage cans around Astoria because the pails are full, and the garbage is overflowing, she thinks they are not being picked up.

The Chair said the basket pickup is not as often as it used to be, and it is her understanding that it is being worked on. They told her there have been budget cuts in the Department of Sanitation. She asked her if there is a specific location.

The constituent responded, Broadway and 30th Avenue.

The Chairperson, Marie Torniali wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and asked for a Motion to Adjourn

Motioned by Rose Anne Alafogiannis; Seconded by Edward Babor

Meeting Adjourned: 8:30 p.m.