

Community Board 1, Queens – Board Meeting Minutes

June 19, 2018

Opening: 6:30 pm- Pledge of Allegiance - Greetings

Chair Torniali introduced Councilman Costa Constantinides who had updates for the community:

He began by thanking the Community Board, Chair Torniali, District Manager Florence Koulouris, the staff and all Board Members for the participation, efforts and hard work that everyone puts in all year to accomplish the common goals of improving our community.

Recent Developments through the efforts of Councilman Costa Constantinides and the City Council:

- Passed the City Budget on Thursday, June 14, 2018;
- Fair Fares will be going into effect January, 2019 wherein NYC agreed that people making less than poverty line will be receiving half price Metro Cards which would enable them to get to where they have to go, i.e., job interviews.
- Obtained \$418 Million Dollars for improvements for the MTA, not for cosmetic purposes, but for more efficient service;
- Was granted \$125 Million Dollars for Fair Funding to our schools which is roughly 90% of what the schools actually need for guidance counselors, etc.
- He further was granted \$108 Million Dollars for our district's environmental issues such as water sewer overflow, so that when it rains, the overflow doesn't go into our water;
- He requested and received for the Community seven (7) Science Labs for Long Island City High School, PS 171, PS 17, Q 300, IS 141, PS 85 and another, he stated, could not recall at the moment;
- Was granted an additional \$3 Million Dollars for Astoria Libraries which now totals \$7 Million Dollars to build new elevators, better-technology and electronic drop off system. This will be a state of the art facility. He further advised that the Steinway Library will be going into construction this summer;
- He received \$510,000.00 to be used towards Environmental Education in our district, such as solar panels, in order to get away from fossil fuel. He wants our schools to be solar ready so that our children get better air quality;
- Lastly, he received \$1 Million Dollars to be used for our clean-up program which will keep our routes maintained and is also an opportunity for the homeless to get jobs.

In closing he asked that Community Board 1 be flexible in the application for St. Michael's Cemetery, as the original proposal was to use the proceeds of the sale for Astoria Park renovations, which already have taken place.

Fran Luhman-McDonald asked Councilman Constantinides the status of credit on our neighborhood's real estate tax and he replied that not everything could be "brought home". He did, however agree that the tax assessment system is outdated and should be looked into. There will be Public Hearings in the near future regarding our tax system in order to revamp same. He also advised that the water/sewer cost to homeowners has been frozen.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:

Item 1. Board of Standards and Appeals and NYC Department of City Planning:

Application #180175 MMQ and 180174 ZMQ St. Michael's Park

De-mapping. Disposition and rezoning from Park to R4 of a parcel of land located along the east side of the BQE, between Astoria Boulevard South and 30th Avenue.

Mr. Lopez, representing DPR, the applicant, reported that the parcel is 3.24 acres, acquired by the City of New York in 1941, is an irregular plot and was never improved as a park. St. Michaels Cemetery was founded in 1857. The Application's purpose is to de-map, rezone and sell the property. The City will then give the proceeds to the Parks Department to either create more playgrounds or to make improvements on already existing ones in the proximity.

Questions/Comments from the Board Members:

How much is this parcel actually worth? Mr. Lopez responded that an appraisal had been done a few years ago and that at that time it was appraised at roughly 1.5 Million Dollars at that time. The City follows a process; once there is an approval to alienate, de-map and rezone, then an appraisal can be conducted.

It will be priced at Fair Market Value as of the date of conveyance. The parcel cannot be sold higher or lower; no discounts.

There was further discussion by the Board as to how the proceeds should be spent, such as local park improvements, trees that would be cut down, lighting for the entrance of the BQE, future roadway realignment and/or improvements at the entrance ramp. There were questions raised such as would the space be used for burial purposes, and cost of maintenance of the property to-date.

There were no further speakers and the hearing was closed.

Elizabeth Erion, Co-Chair of Land Use and Zoning Committee, the Committee recommended the Board approve the application with stipulations:

- All proceeds from the conveyance and sale of the subject parkland shall be used to improve parks or playgrounds located within CB1, Queens;
- The local Council Representative and CB1, Queens shall be consulted in selecting the parks and playgrounds and type of improvements to be made with the proceeds;
- The applicant shall secure an opinion from City DOT that determines whether an easement should be retained to accommodate future roadway realignment and/or safety improvements at the intersection of Astoria Boulevard South and the BQE entrance ramp roadway and driving conditions for vehicles entering the BQE entrance are hazardous at this intersection; inadequate signage and a narrow turning radius at the ramp entry.
- Land within any roadway easement for the BQE entrance ramp should be under city ownership; and
- There shall be fencing and dense planting for screening purposes along the roadway.

Motion to approve the Application with Stipulations:

Motion by Melanie La Rocca; Thomas Ryan seconded.

First vote for the elimination: 41 in favor/1 against; Chair Torniali advised Motion carries.

Second vote for the rezoning of the parcel: Unanimous 42 in favor; Chair Torniali advised Motion carries.

Item 2. Application #2018-59 BZ BSA special permit application for a Physical Cultural Establishment (Powerhouse Gym) located at 30-30 Northern Boulevard

Land Use and Zoning Co-Chair, Elizabeth Erion asked the Board Members to approve a letter going to the BSA stating that CB1 would review the application and make a recommendation in September.

Motion to approve the letter: Motion by Eddie Cadiz; Norma Nieves-Blas seconded.

Item 3. An Application # C 180211 ZMQ and C 180212 ZRQ 12th Street Rezoning:

An application to rezone property located at 11-14 35th Avenue, Ravenswood from R5 to R6A/C1-3 in order to construct an eight-story, mixed use building with 74 dwellings, ground floor commercial uses and 71 parking spaces – Public Hearing continued from May 24, 2018.

#1: An application submitted by Akerman LLP, on behalf of Ravi Management, LLC to rezone the east side of 12th Street between 34th and 35th Avenues, (Block 3331, Lots 27, 50 and p/o Lots 8, 17 and 38) from R5 to R6A with a C1-3 commercial overlay; and

#2: Amend Appendix F of the Zoning Resolution to designate the rezoning area as a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) Designated Area.

Jaclyn Scarinci of Ackerman, LLP explained that the property is located at 35th Avenue to the north; 11th Street to the west, 12th Street to the east and 36th Avenue to the south. The proposed rezoning is only for the eastern portion, which is lot 27, at the southeast corner of 35th Avenue and 12th Street owned by the applicant. The existing parcel is a warehouse building used for crane storage directly across the street from Ravenswood houses. The proposed application is a zoning map amendment changing the rezoning area from R5 to R6A with a C1-3 commercial overlay.

She described the development as a new eight story mixed use building. The proposed building will contain approximately 87,033 square feet including 14,246 square feet of retail space, 74 dwelling units of which approximately 22 units will be affordable under Option 2 of the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Program and 71 underground parking spaces.

Ms. Rivera, HANAC representative, explained that HANAC is a not for profit organization and will be handling the tenant selection process for the affordable units. She added HANAC has been managing affordable units for more than over 20 years and assure tenants met the income guidelines.

This is a continuation of a Public Hearing (the Board) held on May 24, 2018.

Questions/Comments with the Board Members:

A statement 71 parking spaces are not enough. Ms. Rivera advised that 71 actually exceeded the parking requirements and is almost double required.

Elizabeth Erion asked that Jaclyn review for the Board the income ranges and the breakdown of apartments. Jaclyn gave a breakdown of the income ranges and stated she could provide them to the Board at a later time.

There were no further speakers and the hearing was closed.

Land Use Committee recommendation:

- Applicant agrees to select MIH Option 1 at 60% of AMI with 30% of the project's residential floor area set aside for affordable units;
- Affordable units shall be located throughout the building;
- All building amenities shall be available to tenants of affordable units at reduced rates if fees are required.

Motion to approve with the stipulations: Motion by Jean Marie D'Alleva; seconded by Vanessa Jones-Hall

Vote: 32 in favor, 5 against; 3 abstained – Chair Torniali advised motion carries.

Item 4. C180085 ZMQ and C180086 ZRQ Variety Boys & Girls Club Rezoning

Application to rezone property bounded by 30th Road, 21st Street and 30th Drive from R7A/R6B to R7X/C2-3 in order to construct a 14 story mixed use building at 21-12 30th Road with 112 dwelling units 1 story retail building and a five story community facility that includes space for the Variety Boys & Girls Club.

The residential building would provide 39 accessory parking spaces on the site. This is a continued public hearing from May 24, 2018.

1) An application submitted to Akerman LLP, on behalf of the Variety Boys and Girls Club for rezoning. Walter Sanchez, President; Larry Warner, Architect and Matthew Troy, Executive Director of VBGC were on hand to describe the project.

2) Amend Appendix F of the Zoning Resolution to designate the rezoning area as a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) Designated area

The Variety Boys & Girls Club is a not for profit organization. They are currently seeking a rezoning in order to construct a 5 story facility and a 14 story residential building with some affordable units.

Walter Sanchez, President of the Variety Boys & Girls Club stated it is an essential facility for the community. At this time, over 1,700 children are registered there and there can be up to 200 children at the premises during any given time. He explained the reason for the rezoning is to provide more space so that other children could benefit from the program. He mentioned, there are 642 children on the waiting list. They are doing this project themselves, not through a developer. The plan is to make the Variety Boys & Girls Club a state of the art facility, in order for our children to be productive, creative and responsible citizens.

Another reason for the rezoning of the Variety Boys & Girls Club is to increase the budget to 110%. In that case, it would lower the fees for the program. As of now, the after school program is 100% free and the summer camp is 60% free. They hope to create operating income in order to keep the fees of the program low and the number of children attending summer camp now is 200 and could possibly go up to 320 children.

Various programs were mentioned and some mentioned included a NASA Robotics and a hands on Biology Program.

Discussion with the Board Members followed and it was stated by Richard Bass of Akerman LLP that the Variety Boys and Girls Club would occupy 100% of the new 5 story building.

He also stated that they will not, in fact, have any other establishment at the premises. They also stated a plan to put the playground and science lab on the roof.

The topic of how many of the 112 units will be affordable housing, however, he did not have a breakdown but stated the affordable and market value will be determined as part of the process.

There were no further speakers and the hearing was closed.

The Land Use and Zoning Committee recommended conditional approval of the application with the following stipulations:

- Applicant agrees to select MIH Option 1, at 60% of AMI with 30% of the project's residential floor area set aside for affordable units;
- Affordable units should be distributed equally throughout the building.
- Access fees for building amenities shall be discounted for the tenants of affordable units.
- The building above the initial setback shall use materials that visually lighten the impact of the structure's height.

Motion by Ed Babor, Seconded by Rose Anne Alafogiannis to conditionally approve C180085ZRY rezoning application with stipulations suggested by the Land Use and Zoning Committee.

Roll call: 29 in favor; 8 against; 1 abstention and 1 member out of the room.

Thomas Ryan made a friendly amendment to add a stipulation to have the facility 35% green with LED characteristics, environmentally neutral and to include landscaping.

Motion to accept amendment made by Eddie Cadiz, seconded by Vanessa Jones-Hall

Show of hands: 37 in favor; 1 abstained, 1 out of the room.

Motion to approve the rezoning; 37 in favor, 1 abstained, 1 out of the room.

Motion to approve the proposed MIH-designated area C180086ZRY made by Ed Babor, Seconded by Rose Anne Alafogiannis.

Show of hands for MIH approval for Rezoning Resolution: 37 in favor; 1 abstained, 1 against.

Item 5. N180349ZRY Citywide Zoning Text Amendment to require a City Planning Special Permit for new hotels in M1 districts.

Blake Montieth, representing City Planning, approached the podium:

Mr. Montieth provided an informational package where the hotel text amendment would apply. He explained it is a special permit in light industrial sections for new hotels to build in this area. This text amendment would protect industrial business. He stated that Long Island City is one of the most active in the region. Light industrial zones are affected by these hotels. There has been astronomical growth, with a 47% increase in tourism across the City over the past 2 years. Most hotels are being built in Brooklyn and Queens and in Queens, it has doubled. Fifteen percent (15%) of the hotels have been built in the light industrial areas. The issue is that developers are outbidding the industrial facility to acquire the lots, which leads to less jobs. There will not be any benefit to build more hotels.

He then went on to say that he's not recommending denying the building of hotels in the light industrial areas, but to put in place a Special Permit to build a hotel. The process would be to submit the application through City Planning; then the application would go to the Board, Borough President and then to Council Members to approve whether or not these hotels should be built on a case by case basis. The process could take up to 3 years.

If this Special Permit is approved, then in July, 2018 it will be presented to the Borough President, City Planning and the Mayor.

Land Use Co-Chair Erion advised the Board that the Committee in general disapproved of the text amendment because the issue of converting hotels to homeless shelters was not addressed, the text would not require a special permit for hotels constructed in Dutch Kills, where hotels are numerous and impeded commercial growth.

She also stated the Committee consensus was that the text amendment does give some protection to light industrial areas, but at this time the Committee did not have a motion to recommend.

Gerald Caliendo, Land Use and Zoning Co-Chair opened dialogue and a discussion with Board Members which included the idea of the development of hotels and restaurants could benefit the Community; why create a detriment when the Community is thriving. No developers would be willing to build a hotel with a three year waiting period.

Discussions also addressed to the fact that a lot of these hotels that had been built turned into homeless shelters.

The question was raised if Blake Montieth had presented the text amendment to other Community Boards and he advised that he did and they support the special permit.

Melanie La Rocca made a motion to support this special permit, Amy Hau seconded.

Show of hands – 19 in favor; 11 opposed – Chair Torniali advised the motion was carried (N 180349ZRY Zoning Text Amendment to require a City Planning Special Permit for new hotels in M1 districts.)

Public Session:

Shanel Thomas-Henry, LaGuardia Airport Redevelopment said the Program is currently hiring an Outreach Specialist and provided a handle out of the description of the position. She went on to mention that, Saturday, June 23, there will be a Kids Day Event sponsored by LaGuardia and the Kiwanis Club and it will consist of activities and food at the Marine Air Terminal.

She also stated there was a Press Release a few weeks ago announcing that the Port Authority has partnered with Vaughn College for a new \$1.3 Million Dollar Scholarship Program to provide local communities to share in the economic benefits of LaGuardia Airport's ongoing Redevelopment Program. The high priority zip codes are 11370 and 11105. The secondary ones are 11102 and 11103.

Greta Suarez, representative from City Parks Foundation provided a flyer for free events in Queens, City Parks Summer Stage.

Barbara, a resident, stated there are no parking spaces, no one can get on the buses, no one can get on the trains and there is no room for anyone. The area has become too crowded due to development.

Crystal Wolf created a non-profit catering service for the homeless and to get food to the homeless. She stated billions of tons of food go to waste. Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan have over 12,000 homeless people to who her catering service provides food. She is also an author and writes about solutions for the homeless and will be at the Astoria Bookshop on June 27, 2018 at 7 pm and invited the Board to the event.

Neil Herdan, Whitey Ford Field- The Whitey Ford Parks Group just found out they were awarded \$5,000, which brings the total to \$14,000.00 and hopes to raise \$20,000 by the end of the year. Also, they were approved by the Parks Department to put a lock box on the field.

Nick (no last name provided), a small business owner, stated there are a lot of community changes coming our way. Small businesses bring a lot of culture and community connections. He asked that the small business owners get help and not lose their leases, since there is no regulation on commercial rent rate. The Small Business and Job Act was created in 1988; maybe the Community Board could look into that information and push it forward.

Keith Dumanski of The Durst Organization stated that the second and third phases have commenced. He has partnered with Frank, the owner of Coffeed a local business, to look at a vacant space to create a community use area.

Motion to adopt May 15, 2018 Minutes: Ed Babor made the motion; Vanessa Jones-Hall seconded.

Deborah Tharrington, of Jimmy Van Bramer's office, stated that there is funding in the budget \$375,000 to go towards the Socrates Sculpture Park. She went on to say the Queens Libraries are now operating 6 days a week. Over \$3 Million Dollars have been set aside for cultural programs and that \$2.6 Million Dollars has been set aside for Rainey Park.

Chairwoman Marie Torniali's Report: The Chair stated she would like to send congratulations to Katie Ellman for receiving her degree and well wishes to Mackenzie on the birth of her new baby girl. "Have a Happy Summer" she stated.

District Manager Florence Koulouris Report: She thanked the Board Members for all their hard work and efforts and stated they have been incredible Board Members to work with. She thanked them, again and wished the Board a good summer.

Committee Reports:

Community and Economic Development, Chair, Thomas Ryan – The Committee had a meeting on June 2, 2018; one of the issues discussed was Steinway Street. Parking is an issue. Steinway Street also needs a cosmetic facelift and the Committee additionally discussed the possibility of requesting a Trolley Car between Northern Boulevard and Ditmars to develop foot traffic on Steinway Street; the variety of stores that are occupying the area are not what the neighborhood is looking for to shop. Workforce should bring apprenticeship, training and job opportunities. MTA repairs and the lack of foot traffic has a negative impact on the businesses.

Pauline Jannelli reported on behalf of Andy Aujla Chair of Consumer Affairs Committee: Fushion Lounge - This business is getting a lot of negative reviews; Security issues and negative police report. The committee approved with the understanding that they hire an elite security team. If you look at the spread sheet for June, there were stipulations attached to new applications/renewals she noted; no major establishment issues with the 114th Precinct.

Motion to approve the applications for liquor licenses and renewals: Motion by Pauline Jannelli, seconded by Andre Stith, show of hands: Unanimous.

Environmental Protection Committee, Chair, Antonella Di Saverio – The organic collections program expansion has been delayed for can distribution & pick up in our district, she also stated that poor air quality is a concern in our district.

Elizabeth Erion, Land Use and Zoning Committee Co-Chair thanked all of the Committee Members for all their hard work – this was a record year for rezoning. One hundred and thirty-three (133) responses from the Ravenswood survey so far have been received. A tutorial on zoning that would be basic information for Board members would be helpful and she stated she would like to work that in somehow this year.

Nancy Silverman, Chair, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Committee - Presentation of Department of Parks and Recreation: Ravenswood playground and park redesign – new playground for small children and older children and also exercise equipment for adults were presented to the committee. The Basketball Court and the Walking Track will remain the same. The Baseball Field will be converted into a Softball Field. The park is getting renovations that it deserves. Additional seating including bleachers will be incorporated.

The Committee unanimously approved the design with an additional garbage cans and water fountain near the Handball Court.

Motion to approve the letter to the Parks Department: Motion by Vanessa Jones-Hall; seconded, by Loren Amor.

Show of hands - Unanimous.

Ann Bruno, Street Festival/Public Safety Chair: Ms. Bruno spoke regarding the Carnival at Astoria Park. She stated an operator started a carnival ride and passenger was not strapped; luckily the passenger only sprained her wrist.

Robert Piazza, Chair, Transportation Committee – There will be a committee meeting on June 20, 2018, 6:30 pm at the Board Office.

Motion to adjourn by Jean Marie D'Alleva; seconded by Vanessa Jones-Hall.

Meeting Adjourned: 10:00 p.m.