

Community Board 1, Queens – Board Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2018

Board Member Attendees: List attached.

Opening: 6:45 pm

Chairwoman Marie Torniali opens the meeting; the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Board of Standards and Appeals

Calendar #: 2017-286-BZ – Special Permit Application for a Physical Culture Establishment (PCE), The Rock Health and Fitness located at 22-06 31st Street, Astoria, NY 11105. The Application seeks a special permit to authorize a PCE in a C4 and R5 zoning district.

The Rock Health and Fitness (“The Rock”) currently located at 22-15 31st Street, Astoria, NY 11105 has lost their lease and is in the process of moving to the above noted address.

Two representatives from The Rock, Erick Palatnik, P.C. and Elyse Foladare described to the Board The Rock’s new location and its intended use:

- The space is 11,551 sq. ft. located in the cellar of the building.
- The building is in process of being constructed which will be a retail 3 story building.
- There are no enclosed rooms; the space is similar to Planet Fitness, consisting of basic equipment and unenclosed classes.
- The Rock will be offering a Silver Sneaker Program to senior citizens in our community.
- The hours of operation are Monday through Friday, open 24 hours and 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.
- There will be 10-14 employees.
- Peak number of patrons is 80, usually after work.

Questions & Answer Session with Board Members:

Vote: 25 in favor; 1 abstention for cause (Gerry Caliendo) 1

Motion to approve: Elizabeth Erion

Second: George Alexiou

Marie then asked if any elected officials who would like to speak.

Nick representing Councilmember Costa Constantinides’ office advised there will be a Participatory Budget held from April 4, 2018 through April 15, 2018. Please stop by and say hello; volunteers are appreciated.

Deborah Tharrington, representative from Councilmember Jimmy Van Bramer’s office also advised they will be conducting a Participatory Budget on the same dates with voting locations throughout her

district. The Chair asked if voting could be done on line. Deborah provided Kenny Medrano's phone number, 718-383-9566, he would be able to assist with on-line voting.

Theodore Kasapis, representative from Aravella Simotas' office. Aravella wishes everyone a happy and healthy Passover and Easter.

Chairwoman Torniali then invited members of the public to speak.

Public Session:

Sharon Cadiz: She was recently advised that there was a press conference held at the Municipal Parking lot located at 31st Street between 34th Avenue and Broadway. The proposed project is to eliminate the parking lot and build Affordable Senior Housing. Since it is the only parking on that strip, businesses, restaurants and residents will be tremendously affected by lack of parking. As a result of shutting down of the train and businesses already suffering, this parking lot is mandatory for the area. Perhaps the Council can find another location to build affordable housing for seniors.

Ms. Cadiz advised she already has a Petition circulating and that they are approaching drivers as they enter/leave the lot. George Alexiou asked if the Community Board has a position on the proposal. Chairwoman Torniali replied that this has not come to the Community Board yet. She advised Ms. Cadiz to put her position in writing to the Board.

Neil Herdan, Friends of Whitey Ford Field, advised they raised \$3,020.00 for the month of February, 2018. He stated that they are formulating events for Spring. On June 24, 2018 the Whitey Ford family will be at the field, which promises to be exciting event, together with the organization of a cleanup of the field and an opportunity to meet the family.

Benjamin Plaut, Bike of New York advised there will a Bike Tour on May 6, 2018 and encourages Astoria to participate. There is usually 32,000 people who participate in the tour which takes place once a year. They offer free classes for children to adults with the emphasis of safe riding in the city.

Andre Stith commented: Every year anyone who lives between 21st Street and 31st Avenue to Astoria park is locked in; cannot cross Astoria Park South. Is there some way that there is a street we can have access to? If there is a medical emergency at this location, people can't get out.

Tony Meloni commented that the bikers do not listen to the volunteers and suggested maybe add more volunteers. He also stated "It's a tour, not a race."

Chairwoman Torniali requested Benjamin to bring back these comments to his people and get back to the Board.

A representative of the Floating Hospital advised they have a new provider, Erin Karrie, Astoria Health Center, is offering medical services on Mondays and Fridays for non-insured residents in our community. The Astoria Clinic is located at 8-13 Astoria Boulevard, Astoria NY 11102, telephone number (718) 545-0934.

Two representatives of the Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria, advised they will host the 10th Annual Cultural Event on May 11, 2018 from 2:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. which celebrates 66 different languages that comprise the school. All proceeds go to the students for scholarships for college.

John Beuter, store owner on 30th Avenue commented that the shutdown of the trains is resulting in stores losing money; stores closing.

Frank Arcabascio is concerned about the MTA timeline. He was advised the train work would be completed by June; June 1 or June 30, 2018, no clear date. He advised the shuttle this weekend showed a lot of people getting off bus, so shuttles work. He requests MTA come to a Community Board meeting to find out exactly what's going on and so as not be surprised. Chairwoman Torniali replied that the District Manager will reach out to them and see if they can make the next meeting. Frank Arcabascio commented that 8 months of train shut down should be illegal. There should be legislation and tax relief for business owners who are inconvenienced after a reasonable amount of time. He was advised by Chairwoman Torniali to speak with Assemblywoman Aravella Simotas and Senator Michael Gianaris regarding this matter.

Chairwoman Torniali - Motion to approve minutes:
Jean Marie D'Alleva made motion; Andre Stith seconded.

Florence Koulouris stated that the Police Department received a cancellation of work for Passover through Easter. Florence confirmed with MTA and there will no work during the holiday season. Track work is being suspended.

Committee Reports

Consumer Affairs – Andy Aujla stated he had a Committee meeting last week with four local businesses and discussed terms of Stipulations with them in order to work better with the 114th Precinct. All of the businesses on the spreadsheet that had Stipulations had no major issues with the 114th Precinct and Mr. Aujla asked for a motion to approve.
All in favor.

Parks – Katie Ellman spoke on behalf of the Parks Committee. She advised there will be an event held on March 24, 2018 at Oak Ridge, Forest Park regarding how people feel about dogs in the parks. Topics to be addressed include: updated rules signage, ongoing maintenance, dog run etiquette, etc.

Housing – Evie Hantzopoulos said that on Thursday, March 22, 2018 will be her first meeting as Chair and the first item on the agenda will be to assess what the housing looks like in Astoria in order to come up with a set of recommendations, work with other Committees, such as Community and Economic Development and Land Use and Zoning and invited any Board Members who are interested to attend. She also mentioned Councilmember Costa Constantinides will be attending the meeting and going forward, will invite Councilmember Jimmy Van Bramer and HPD.

Land Use and Zoning – Elizabeth Erion advised there is a packet of information concerning work the subcommittee has been researching since January, 2018. Although the Committee has information on the land itself and size of the buildings, what is missing is how the community feels about rezoning an *area* and what residents want to see accomplished in their community going forward. A draft survey has been developed which will start with Ravenswood Queens residents, which is in the packet. Since this is

a draft, Chair Erion wishes the Board to review and give their comments regarding same. She advised she wants to go live with the survey by the end of March, 2018 and leave the survey online for about 4 weeks so that the residents have time to respond. The survey will be in English, Bengali and Spanish. She is requesting a motion be made in support of Community Board 1's outreach to residents, businesses and institutions to complete this survey in order to determine neighborhood priorities, issues and what they wish for the future.

Questions & Answers to the Board:

Daniel Aliberti – Requested a change in verbiage to the survey introduced by the Land Use and Zoning Committee. Section 6, fifth item, "people with disabilities – mentally ill" he feels is not appropriate. He requested to strike "mental illness" and replace with "persons with disabilities".

Chair Erion advised her team will go out to events, Tenant Associations, specific organizations and church meetings to conduct hard copy surveys as well, in order to reach as many people as possible.

Gerry Caliendo – has encouraged City Planning to study certain areas of our community and give feedback. They always reply that they are short of staff. He commended Chair Erion for implementing the survey and commented that it is a message to City Planning, they are not doing their job.

Richard Khuzami– What is exact procedure for on-line survey?

Katie Ellman - There will be a link provided, which is included on flyer. Residents can request a paper survey through CB1 and there will be a link on CB1's website.

Chair Erion advised the outreach subcommittee worked really hard compiling non-profit organizations in the community and finding out when they meet. She said she will try to get to them during the month of April, 2018. Since this a first time attempt at the survey, there will be mistakes and have to work out the kinks. She went on to say this survey can be a model for other committees, such as Transportation or Housing, down the road.

Richard Khuzami – He asked, how will you know the person taking the survey is a resident of that area?

Chair Erion – She replied that the survey asks for the zip code of the applicant so we will know whether or not they come from that area. We are also planning to have the Gazette, Times Ledger and Long Island City Journal advertise this event.

Motion was made to proceed with the survey:
Show of hands – 1 opposed

Public Safety – Tony Meloni stated there is a flyer regarding the IRS impersonation scam – if you owe taxes you will not get a phone call from the IRS. He stated that over \$25 million has already been lost due to this scam and to hang up the phone if they call.

Tony also advised when they started letting trucks onto the Grand Central, now have 3 lanes rather 4 which is backing up traffic. Emergency Vehicles can not get passed the traffic. Is this a State DOT issue or a City DOT issue? We need the Community Board to push them.

Transportation - Co-Chair Piazza said he had an informational meeting with the DOT regarding Steinway Street. The DOT informed that they will be installing 3 crosswalks with traffic lights on the main blocks of Steinway between 30th Avenue and 31st Avenue; 31st Avenue and Broadway; and Broadway and 34th Avenue, which will make walking for pedestrians safer.

Co-Chair Piazza also advised that he spoke to MTA to provide buses from Ditmars to Queensboro Plaza, the same route as the N/W, which is a great alternate for the train traffic and for people who do not want to walk up the stairs. This would provide elevator access at Queensboro Plaza. A draft letter is set up.

Rod Townsend – Another alternative would be bus route from Ditmars to Court Square where there is an elevator at Court Square.

Youth Committee – Norma Nieves-Blas stated that as a reminder, the summer youth employment (SYEP) has extended application time to March 30, 2018. She recommended that anyone from the ages of 14-24 can go online and apply (SYEP link). If persons are 19 years or older they are deemed Crew Chief and salaries are a little higher than the younger applicants.

Old business/new business:

Andre Stith – Added to Norma Nieves-Blas' announcement – He said, "If you know of any students that attend Long Island City High School that he has a partnership between Long Island City High School and HANAC. There are 100 guaranteed jobs. If anyone is interested, please see him in room 540."

Yawne Robinson announced that on Thursday, March 29, 2018, the NAACP and Women on the Rise are holding their first Annual 21st Century Year of the Woman Awards with Bishop Mitchell G. Taylor at the Center of Hope International. The honorees are: Dr. Lenora Fulani, Erica DeJesus, Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan, Veronica Franklin, Renee Edwards, Marion Jeffries, Bethany Goldszer, Tenya Smith, Cynthia Davis and Ariana Cepeda. Honoring women who do amazing community work, that don't often get recognized.

Chairwoman Torniali asked for a Motion to Adjourn – Motion made by George Alexiou, Andre Stith seconded.

Meeting adjourned: 7:55 pm

COMMUNITY BOARD 1, Queens

DATE 3/20/18

Full Board Meeting

[illegible]