

Community Board 1 Queens Full Board / Public Hearing Meeting Transcript

Tuesday April 21, 2025

Present:

Antonio Alfonso
Daniel Aliberti
Ingrid Baquero
Kian Betancourt
Gerald Caliendo
Christina Chaise
Alma Cruz
Eleni DeSiervo
Julie Drexler Johnson
Stacey Eliuk
Katie Ellman
Elizabeth Erion
Robert Feltault
Dean Feratovic
Adam Fisher-Cox
Frank Fredericks
Shahenaz Hamde

Evie Hantzopoulos
Christopher Hanway
Amy Hau
Richard Khuzami
Huge Ma
Athanasios Magoutas
Patricia Mahecha
Gabriella Malave
Brian Martinez
Amin Mehedi
Andreas Migias
Stella Nicolaou
Dino Panagoulas
Phyllis Parra
Juliet Payabyab
Plinia Sarchese
Dominic Stiller
Ryan Van Manen

Mario Vergara
Quinella Williams
Selena Witcher
Corinne Wood-Haynes
Hassan Yousuf

Excused

Michelle Amor
Cristian Batres
Jean Marie D'Allewa
Tyrone Gardner
Jacqueline Ibarra
RoseMarie Poveromo
Thomas Ryan
Marie Torniali
Kathleen Warnock
Pablo Zuniga

Absent

Board Staff:

Florence Koulouris, District Manager

Elected Official / Representatives:

BP Donovan Richards- Claire Collins

Assemblymember Diana Moreno - Aaron Fernando

CM Tiffany Caban - Jackie Cohen

Chair Evie Hantzopoulos: Meeting called to order at 6:30pm. The Chairwoman presented the agenda then welcomed newly appointed board members.

Presentation - Amanda Iannotti, Sheldon Lobel, PC - YouTube marker 0:14:30

Item #1: BSA 608-85 BZ 33-56 11th Street, Ravenswood J C Organization (Applicant) requests an extension of a variance term and waiver of BSA rules pursuant to section 1-07.3(b)(2) for an expired variance. The variance was granted in 1986 to allow a 3,792 SF building used for general contracting and custom woodworking business, located in an R5 zoning district. In 2003 the variance was amended to allow for an expansion into the second-floor mezzanine. In 2011, the variance was again extended and amended to allow for a further expansion of the mezzanine into a full second floor and a change in use from woodworking to just a general use group 16 contractor's establishment. Seeking an extension of term to permit the continued operation as a contractor's establishment. The block is mixed use with a heavy industrial presence.

Question & Answers -

Elizabeth Erion - How does the business affect the traffic on the street?

Amanda Iannotti - There are approximately 15 trucks on a weekday and 6 trucks on a weekend end depending on the job. The trucks do not park on the sidewalk.

Daniel Aliberti - Where are the trucks parked at night?

Amanda Iannotti - The trucks are always parked off the street unless they're loading and unloading.

Business Section

Motion to approve the March 2026 minutes - YouTube marker 0:21:29

Motion - Amin Mehedi Second - Phyllis Parra

Motion approved unanimously.

Chair's Report - YouTube marker 0:22:10

Evie Hantzopoulos - Thanked everyone for filling out the interest surveys. Awaiting the return of several more and will then make committee assignments in time for the May meeting.

Committee Reports - YouTube marker 0:23:00

Business and Economic Development, Brian Martinez - No Report

Capital & Expense Budget, Amy Hau - Remind committees to start discussing Capital/Expense for next year.

Communications & Public Outreach, Quinella Williams - No Report

Education, Libraries & Youth, Amin Mehedi - Thanked Governor Hochul for electronic device control in schools. Noted that the local council member did the same.

Environmental/ Sanitation, Patricia Mahecha - Department of Sanitation provided an update on waste management and responsibility. Effective June 1, 2026 all property owners of residential buildings with one through nine units must use bins for the waste disposal or face fines.

Health and Human Services, Shahenaz Hamde - No meeting.

Land Use & Zoning, Co-Chairs Elizabeth Erion - Other than the earlier mentioned request for variance, the committee heard a request for a BSA variance for supportive housing that will be located on the east side of 21st Street between 36-37th and 38th Avenue - approximately 124 dwelling units of supportive housing for formerly homeless individuals at or below 60% of AMI to be voted on in future. The committee will host another meeting to discuss how to better meet community needs with respect to zoning. The committee is reviewing neighborhood studies to pinpoint deficiencies and successes.

Motion to approve BSA 608-85 BZ 33-56 11th Street, Ravenswood J C Organization for an extension of a variance term and waiver of BSA rules pursuant to section 1-07.3(b)(2) for an expired variance. YouTube marker 0:30:31

Elizabeth Erion Seconded - Gerald Caliendo

No Discussion - Motion carries - 39 in Favor 0 Against 0 Abstentions

Parks/Recreation/Cultural Chair Richard Khuzami - The committee discussed the petition requesting a tennis bubble in Astoria Park which was presented last month, and it developed a response letter for board approval. Key points of the letter include: No tree damage; All power from the electrical grid; Concessionaire provides restroom facilities; No more than 8 to 10 of the 14 courts will be covered to ensure players have a free option; Food concession to be provided by concessionaire; Bubble is seasonal; CB Parks Committee to review the final contract before it is executed.

Motion to approve the letter YouTube marker 0:39:44

Richard Khuzami second - **Amin Mehedi**

Discussion:

Hassan Yousuf: Asked if there would be down time on the tennis courts during construction.

Richard Khuzami: That wasn't discussed but we will find out.

Christopher Hanway: Parks stated it was a quick turnaround.

Richard Khuzami: Parks is not the concessionaire.

Motion carries.

Public Safety, Chair Christopher Hanway - No Report.

Consumer Affairs, Chair Evie Hantzopoulos - The committee has no objection to anyone being granted a license or an extension in any of the categories.

Motion to approve April Liquor License Applicants - YouTube marker 0:42:25

Motion - Phyllis Parra Second - **Stella Nicholau**

No Discussion - Motion carries - 2 abstentions

Motion to approve April Cannabis License Applicants - YouTube marker 0:44:26

Motion - Kian Betancourt Second - **Athanasios Magoutas**

Discussion

Phyllis Parra: Asked about the address of the location stated.

Answer: If the location is not appropriate, they will locate to another address.

Motion carries - 2 abstentions

Chair Evie Hantzopoulos: Informed the board that concerns expressed at the last meeting regarding the number of tables for the French Workshop has been addressed. At the request of the board, the applicant removed a row of tables to allow for better flow on the sidewalk.

Motion to approve April Outdoor Dining Applicants - YouTube marker 0:46:03

Motion - Amin Mehedi Second - **Chris Hanway**

Discussion:

Christina Chaise: Questioned whether there are regulations regarding cigarette smoking in outdoor seating.

Chair Evie Hantzopoulos: Smoking is not allowed in outdoor dining. If anyone believes an establishment is violating that regulation, call or email the board office or call 311.

Motion carries

Item #2: Informational Presentation by Jason Banrey, Deputy Bureau Commissioner for the New York City Department of Transportation and Chris Brunson, Director of Research, Implementation and Safety Team - YouTube marker 0:50:35

Presentation regarding the 31 Street (Northern Blvd to 20 Ave) Improvement Project which aims to improve safety on this Vision Zero Priority Corridor with treatments including Protected Bike Lanes, painted pedestrian islands, marking improvements, turn calming, and hardened daylighting. These safety treatments organize the roadway, improve visibility among all road users, slow turning vehicles, improve predictability for motor vehicle users, create shorter and safer crossings for pedestrians, and provide safer and more convenient bicycle travel. Spoken to 150 businesses - 84% of those businesses provided feedback which was incorporated into the project. This is 2.5 miles from end to end north south route through all of Astoria. The corridor is under an elevated structure. There are two schools on the corridor. There is a high rate of injury on this corridor. 31st Street is in the top 10% of high injury corridors in Queens. The most common pedestrian injury - 47% are caused by turning truck drivers failing to yield to pedestrians crossing with a light, especially left turns higher than the boroughwide average of 36% of pedestrian injuries. There are multiple instances of cyclists getting doored - 20% of all injuries involve motorized, two-wheelers and 30% of all motorized two-

wheeler injuries caused by left turn crashes - higher than the boroughwide average. For motor vehicle occupant injuries, the most common injuries at 51% are caused by rear end and right angle crashes, indicating high rates of speeding and aggressive driving - again, higher than the boroughwide average. There are many injuries clustered around Astoria Boulevard, the largest intersection on the corridor. This is a 5-year transportation plan which includes legal requirements for NYC DOT to implement bus lanes and bike lanes to improve safety, accessibility, and quality of the city streets for all New Yorkers. Next is Vision Zero, the city's initiative to eliminate fatalities and severe injuries through engineering, enforcement, and education. It has resulted in the safest years on record for New York City streets. Next is the Western Queens Street Safety Plan, published in 2024 by local elected officials. That plan for a north south bike connection and 31st Street was identified as a potential corridor through the neighborhood. Finally, in January of 2026, our agency committed to restart the 31st street safety redesign effort. The plan will clean up ambiguous space; Increase visibility; protect cyclists; reduce pedestrian crossing distances.

Questions & Answers YouTube marker 1:20:10

Christina Chaise: The number of cyclist/pedestrian accidents and asked about the restoration of the bus lane.

Jason Banrey: The MTA's bus network redesign dictated a change, so DOT is repurposing the bus route. A specific cyclist/pedestrian KSI is not broken out of the total accidents on the corridor.

Hassan Yousuf: Stated that the changes did not adequately address pedestrian/cyclist safety i.e.: vehicles blocking the intersection.

Jason Banrey: The project has been approved by the NYPD and enforcement will be robust. Restricting turning will reduce the intersection from being blocked. Signal changes will help acclimate everyone to the changes.

Daniel Aliberti: Inquired about the specific enhancements for people with disabilities such as extending the truncated domes at the curbs out into the street farther beyond the columns so that blind people would know to walk straight across the street, and audible traffic signals, etc.

Jason Banrey & Chris Brunson: Audible pedestrian signals are going to be integrated where feasible. Truncated domes will be constructed along the corridor as funding permits. Following all ADA regulations but will continue to receive feedback to improve the plan.

Amin Mehedi: Asked how people with disabilities will be able to exit their buildings under the new plan.

Jason Banrey & Chris Brunson: There is a three-foot buffer between the bike lane and the vehicles parked in the floating parking area. For emergency situations or unique conditions, the vehicle can pull to the curb in an open space.

Richard Khuzami: Asked if holistic signals and controls are being considered in addition to the physical separation plan.

Jason Banrey: Bike signals will be aggressively installed throughout the project including on Crescent Street.

Plinia Sarchese: Asked whether there was enough bike traffic to warrant the project.

Jason Banrey & Chris Brunson: The goal of the project is safety. The bike lane is used by 63% of the businesses along the corridor.

Adam Fisher-Cox: Asked about a project start date.

Jason Banrey: Securing feedback from the community before a start date is determined.

Robert Feltault: Asked for highlights on how the project changed from the last presentation to the board.

Jason Banrey & Chris Brunson: Obtained more feedback from businesses - 83% response which is required to create a holistic project. Plus, the expansion of channelization and adding a quick curb in front of hydrants to increase access for FDNY.

Athanasios Magoutas: Asked about adding a mid-block crossing.

Chris Brunson: There must be demand in order to add mid-block crossings. We can continue studying. There is a mid-block at 30th Drive.

Dino Panagoulis: Asked about whether FDNY and other agencies have approved the new plan.

Jason Banrey: Share all proposed projects with sister agencies and the conversations have been documented. We received approval from FDNY. This project gives them better access to use their ladders during a fire. This project improves safety.

Kian Betancourt: Asked if the plan would expand LPIs.

Chris Brunson: LPIs will be expanded throughout the corridor. With respect to APS and truncated domes, we can't put the truncated domes in the painted space because it has to be a site that will be future proof for APS. We can't install the APS or the audible pedestrian signal in the asphalt on the paint until there's a curb.

Gabriella Malave: Asked how the project will impact the merging of vehicles off of the highway.

Jason Banrey: This will not impact that vehicular flow. The most impactful change will be with the restriction of turning bans that will be used throughout the day instead of just rush hours.

Antonio Alfonso: Asked how the new plan will not increase confusion and more traffic until people are trained into the new traffic pattern.

Chris Brunson: Traffic models have been done to mitigate congestion. Left turns are banned often along 31st Street to reduce traffic.

Gerald Caliendo: Asked whether street lighting would be included in the plan.

Jason Banrey: There will be new streetlights installed everywhere that is feasible. Some new lights have been installed already.

Stacey Eliuk: Asked for information about daylighting and driveways within the project.

Chris Brunson: Matching land use regulation is key. We have implemented channelization for better visibility. Defining space is a key part of the project.

Katie Ellman: Asked how the project would avoid creating traffic on the side streets.

Jason Banrey & Chris Brunson: The northbound conversion from Ditmars to 20th has been analyzed by our one-way conversion team. Changes to those intersections will bring on a little bit more volume, but the volume will be reduced on Ditmars Boulevard and increase safety. It reduces conflict at three different intersections. 31st Avenue will provide more north south valves for vehicles.

Andreas Migias: Asked about keeping the parallel parking on side streets at the current 14 instead of 20 to ensure two-way configuration of two 11-foot lanes going northbound.

Jason Banrey & Chris Brunson: This is a safety plan to reduce the conflict at this portion. It is important to connect 20th Avenue to Northern Boulevard. Will discuss further offline.

Julie Drexler Johnson: Asked whether there would be a reduction of legal, free parking.

Jason Banrey & Chris Brunson: The plan matches the curb regulations with the land use i.e.: in front of restaurants would have metered parking; industrial would have truck loading. The plan repurposes about 20% of the total available spots on the corridor.

Brian Martinez: Asked about coordination with the Department of Sanitation to keep garbage out of the bike lanes.

Jason Banrey & Chris Brunson: DSNY uses the protected bike lanes as curb access to pick up trash at the curb. We provide 11 feet clear so they can operate.

Elizabeth Erion: Commented that the sidewalk of 21st Street and Ditmars is very wide so you can expand the street. Requested continued access to Grand Central to avoid additional traffic on Astoria Boulevard.

Public Session: YouTube marker 2:09:00

Jonathan Novella, Department of Consumer Worker Protection: The agency is offering free financial counseling for adults 18 years and older. Will teach budgeting, debt counseling, credit knowledge, banking etc. www.nyc.gov/talkmoney

Kevin Coenen: Retired FDNY lieutenant: Alerting people that current bill in the Assembly to tax the rich actually taxes everyone. Under the bill every corporation pays more, even small businesses. There is not just a \$5 million threshold.

Joyual Abedine, Bangladeshi American Advocacy Group: Speaking against a liquor license application for a location next to the Islamic Center at 35-19 36th Avenue which serves the community from children to seniors. A petition was sent to the board.

31st Street Project - Opposed

Mike Schreiber: Fire ladders won't reach

Harry Panogiotopoulos: Businesses opposed

Anthony Roulizake: Unsafe

Joseph Mirabella: Judge ruled against

Matt Donnelly: No bikes in dangerous streets

Rachel Mirabella: Signed up but did not testify

Teresa Mirabella: Signed up but did not testify

Lou Gizamil: Signed up but did not testify

Nicholas Giaquinto: no room for bike lanes

Ishfaq Kai: Signed up but did not testify

Sazzad Hessain: Signed up but did not testify

Margaret Krupen: Signed up but did not testify

Diane Stokes: Signed up but did not testify

Guz Scoufaras: Bikers don't follow rules.

Jessica Colon: 31st too busy for bikes

Ingrid Curtis: Where will the snow go in winter

Kathy Sevall: Not mobility impaired friendly

Robert Evans: Signed up but did not testify

Snadra Gilbert: Signed up but did not testify

Donna McParhand: Signed up but did not testify

Vasiliki Karagiannis: Signed up but did not testify

Steve Morens: Signed up but did not testify

James Finuechin: Emergency vehicle access
Marino Ceko

Lauren LaCapra: Signed up but did not testify

Gloria Moloney: FDNY says plan unsafe

Neil Hurden: Too much truck traffic for bikes

Gary Costantino: Signed up but did not testify

David Nasses: Signed up but did not testify

Victoria Jibaja: 31st street too busy for bike

Kevin Coenen: Car door opens into bike lane

31st Street Project - Support

Dan Miller: Currently hazardous
Ashley Menard: Better serve the community
Chris Sanders: Safety
Alex Duncan: Enough room for bike lanes
Carl Bosley: Friend died riding bike
Michael Murtha: Visibility and safety
Courtney Williams:
Josh Brewer: Biker who needs safety
Mat Francke: Safety
Robert Reichenbach: We need safe change
Steven Corrent:
Christian Buechel: Data supports need
Krishna Ruano:
George Kistsior:
Joseph Jankoski: Brings order to disorder
Andrew Mitchell: Cars kill children
Pete Mayo: Plan is good for business
Manuel Diere: Safety for full-time bikers
Allissa Wickham: Biker safety
Aaron Fernando: Necessary for safety
Amy Obemeyer: Positive change
Martha Valenzuela: Safety
Tim Roeper: Safety for all
Noah Williams: Good plan for everyone
Drew Sarkes: DOT plan is good

Joseph Stuart: Plan + enforcement = safety
Margaret Oppenheimer: Consider buses
Sahy Fahy: Signed up but did not testify
Federica Sartori: Signed up but did not testify
Nicholas Mantolone: Needed for safety
Shahir Daud: Signed up but did not testify
Kelly O'Donnell: Will be an improvement
John Henney: Signed up but did not testify
Lynn Nevins: Signed up but did not testify
Benjamin Chon: Signed up but did not testify
Manny Salorito: Signed up but did not testify
Mark Dikauza: Signed up but did not testify
Shannon Rudd: Advocated for Crescent St
Jeremy Estrada-Perez: Signed up but did not testify
Maria Null: Safety
Lucas Browne: Signed up but did not testify
Alice Thumb: Not a cyclist but support
Mario Auvlema: Signed up but did not testify
Ben Chan: Safety
Anjalhi Bhat: Safety
Corey Hannigen: Safety
Dr. Rosamond Giannos: Save lives
Peter Moses: DOT needs to present better
Rachel Springer: Full time biker safety

Transportation Committee, Dominic Stiller: Committee heard 51st Street redesign; committee supports 31st Street redesign with Crescent Street bike lane;

Motion to send letter to DOT supporting the 31st Street Redesign - Athanasios Magoutas second - Mario Vergara YouTube marker 3:56:46

Discussion:

Christina Chaise: Opposes the letter due to FDNY stating they can't access the tops of building.
Adama Fisher-Cox: FDNY engineers signed off on the plan.
Athanasios Magoutas: Extensive communication between sister agencies.
Richard Khuzami: Supports the plan with the changes.
Frank Fredericks: The changes made to the plan makes it acceptable.
Amin Mehedi: Opposes the plan because doesn't believe the numbers are accurate.
Phyllis Parra: Opposes due to the ladder issue. Needs more pedestrian education.
Kian Betancourt: Rejects vibe-based objection supports the plan that the experts have developed..
Quinella Williams: Abstaining from voting due to conflict.
Christopher Hanway: Supports the plan
Andreas Migias: Suggested putting off vote to add more details in.
Antonio Alfonso: Will support the letter.
Stella Nicholau: Supports for safety reasons.
Elizabeth Erion: Letter should include the issues brought up at the meeting.

Friendly amendment to leave the incorporation of comments from tonight's meeting into the letter to the discretion of the Transportation Committee - Frank Fredericks - Accepted Dominic Stiller - YouTube marker 4:07:45.

Motion carries - In Favor - 36 Opposed - 4

Elected Official Representatives

Councilmember Tiffany Caban, Jackie Cohen, Chief of Staff - introduction.
Assemblymember Diana Moreno, Aaron Fernando, Chief of Staff. Contact (718) 545-3889

Motion to adjourn - Amin Mehedi Second - Antonio Alfonso.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:45pm