



The City of New York

Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

Michael Budabin Chairperson / **Joseph Marziliano** District Manager

To: All Board Members

From: Fleur Martino, Committee Chair

Date: January 25, 2023

Re: Community gardens, student civics project, CB11 newsletter project

On Tuesday, January 24, 2023 the CB11 Public Relations Committee met to discuss several topics including a letter of support for Intro #0607-2022, discussion on the proposed student civics project and a possible CB 11 newsletter project. There was also a guest speaker to address the importance of child and adult education, participation and the American history of community plant gardening.

Committee Members Present

Fleur Martino, Committee Chair
Henry Euler, 3rd Vice Chair, ex. off.
Rosemarie Guidice
George Hadjiconstantinou
Stephan Popa

Community Board Members Present

John Kelly
Jessica Burke

CB11 Staff

Joseph Marziliano, District Manager
Jane Bentivenga, Community Coordinator
Christina Coutinho, Community Associate

Guest

Kimberly Beazer, Urban Environmental Science Education Consultant

Ms. Martino began the meeting by reviewing a proposed letter to be sent to City Council Member Aviles regarding Intro #0607-2022 which would require the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to collect data on community gardens and issue an annual report summarizing this data. The letter was screen-shared with those present. Mr. Hadjiconstantinou suggested that salutation be change to “Council Member”. Mr. Popa suggested that possible lot contamination where the gardens are planted and, ultimately, food safety be questioned in the letter. At this point, Ms. Martino introduced Ms. Beazer who recommended that wording regarding “support and funding” be added to the third paragraph of the letter that refers to criteria. A copy of the letter is attached for your information.

At this point, Ms. Beazer spoke about her background in environmental education and gardening programs. Mr. Euler asked if the use of pesticides in community gardens is regulated. Green Thumb and City-sponsored gardens have that requirement. They are very rarely, if ever, used. Ms. Beazer stated she is a proponent of green infrastructure and stormwater management in conjunction with land use; she also stated that civic engagement is crucial. Ms. Martino asked what resources the Board should be aware of. Ms. Beazer said there are local groups such as Green Thumb, Grow NYC and botanical gardens for secondary support. However, she tends to guide schools and groups to New York State and New York City resources as well as the USDA and the FDA.

Ms. Burke spoke about Friends of Crocheron Park. She stated they start a pollinator garden, but it is hard to keep up because they need a water source. She also mentioned an area in the northeastern part of John Golden Park that could be used for this purpose but again would need a water source. Ms. Beazer said the Dept. of Parks should be contacted. Irrigation would be a possibility but would have to be purchased. A lot would depend on the site itself.

Mr. Kelly stated he is part of a group that has worked to build the Meditation Garden in Kissena Corridor Park. It took about a decade to build on vacant parkland. He asked if some projects are easier to implement than others. He asked if there are “easier wins” to take in City parks and upgrade them. Ms. Beazer said yes and no; if there is an established group that is easier. Sites that need to start from “scratch” would naturally take longer. Some projects, such as raised beds, can happen quickly. Ms. Martino said to let her know of any questions. She will reach out to Ms. Beazer for the information.

Next, Ms. Martino said that at the last Public Relations Committee meeting, interest was expressed in fostering/adopting a community garden. Ms. Martino checked into the possibility of getting funds for that. The answer is possibly yes. Ms. Martino then spoke about the student civic competition/awards. She asked for opinions on combining the two projects. Mr. Popa said that could certainly be one of a student’s proposals. Discussion ensued about the elements and timing of the awards. Mr. Kelly expressed his support. He also added that Board Member, Ben Turner, previously suggested more community engagement within the library system which could be tied in with this. He also spoke of the Destination Greenway project which will include Peck Park in CB11 that contains a lot of vacant space that could accommodate a community garden.

Ms. Martino spoke about the need to communicate more frequently while implementing these initiatives. She mentioned lack of email response and asked if everyone thinks the committee should meet monthly. Ms. Guidice, Mr. Hadjiconstantinou and Mr. Popa think email is fine.

Ms. Martino asked about the frequency of these committee meetings. Mr. Popa said monthly meetings would be good. Ms. Martino said that would be beneficial while the Committee is trying to get these things organized.

Ms. Martino spoke to Chair Budabin and discussed scheduling more Board Member happy hour get togethers. She would like to have them in different areas of the Board. Mrs. Guidice said that some people are still not comfortable indoors, in large groups, in large spaces. She offered the Douglaston Townhouses pool area which is outdoors so it would have to be during warmer weather. Ms. Martino also reintroduced the possibility of a Community Board newsletter to further get to know each other; perhaps highlight one member per month. Ms. Burke agreed and stated achievements the Board has reached could be highlighted. Ms. Martino will send an email out regarding this idea.

Ms. Martino spoke about an email Ms. Burke put together with a lot of resources. Ms. Martino did investigate a SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) grant. CB11 does not meet the criteria of 30% eligibility in order to receive a SNAP grant. Mr. Marziliano confirmed that.

Mr. Marziliano asked for a final version of the letter regarding Intro #0607-2022 as it will need to be voted on at the February 2023 Board meeting. Mr. Kelly asked if the data collected referred to in this bill will go into the NYC Open Data Project (ODP); will it be accessible to the public? Ms. Martino said it will. She is not sure if it will be accessible through the ODP, however, a report will be published. Mr. Kelly requested the Community Board ask for the data to be included in the ODP. Mr. Hadjiconstantinou suggested that the Chair of the City Council Parks Committee (Shekar Krishnan) be copied on this letter.

The meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted 1/26/23