

**MINUTES OF COMMUNITY BOARD 11  
GENERAL BOARD MEETING**

*February 5, 2024  
Paul DiBenedetto – Chair*

**PRESENT AT MEETING**

*CB 11 Staff:*

Joseph Marziliano – District Manager

Christina Coutinho – Community Associate

*Elected Officials and/or Representatives Present:*

Ludy Thenor  
Vicky Paladino  
Evelyn Mallo  
Lois Marbach

Jon Gallo

Jess Muller

Jamilla Uddin

Gus Huiskamp

Kahleel Bragg

Anthony Iuliano

Representing Queens Borough President Richards  
Council Member District 19

Representing Council Member Paladino

Representing Council Member Lee

Representing State Senator Liu

Representing Assembly Member Braunstein

Representing Assembly Member Rozic

Representing State Senator Stavisky

Representing Queens Borough President Richards

CAU Deputy Commissioner

*111<sup>th</sup> Precinct*

PO Corey – Community Affairs Unit

*Dept. Citywide Administrative Services*

Chris Grove

Kyle Daniels

Alex Trzaskowski

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Chair, Paul DiBenedetto,

Mr. DiBenedetto led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

There was a moment of silence in honor of former Council Member Paul Vallone.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Raphael Schweizer spoke regarding how he is organizing a five-borough comic book tour. He left flyers that listed the comic bookstores in the area.

Daniel Socci spoke against the issuing of a license for an adult-use cannabis dispensary, Canna Budda located on 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This location is in the middle of a residential area and near two schools.

Jean Ann Wallace spoke against the issuing of a license for an adult-use cannabis dispensary located on Horace Harding Expressway. This location is near several schools and afterschool programs.

Marie McCann spoke against the issuing of a license for an adult-use cannabis dispensary, Canna Budda located on 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This is a residential area, and it is not zoned for a retail dispensary store. Mr. DiBenedetto said the Board will investigate this for the Public Safety and Licensing Committee meeting.

Ahman Karim spoke against the issuing of a licenses for an adult-use cannabis dispensaries stating that opening a dispensary is a negative social impact to the community.

Felix Lam spoke against the issuing of a license for an adult-use cannabis dispensary, Canna Budda located on 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He stated that there are several schools and churches nearby. This is a residential block with private homes. He believes that this location does not meet the requirements. Something should be done about the illegal establishments.

Mr. DiBenedetto asked the audience for a show of hands for those who are against cannabis dispensaries. He said there are about 100 hands raised. He then asked who was in favor and there were no hands raised. Mr. DiBenedetto said that the illegal cannabis stores need attention. He introduced Ms. Fields to speak on this topic. Ms. Fields said she is a CB11 Board Member and sits on the CB11 Public Safety and Licensing Committee, she is an attorney and lives in the district. She spoke regarding the NY State requirements to open a dispensary. She urged everyone to visit the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) website. This district is on the border of Nassau County which opted out of the cannabis program; this will create traffic because of the influx of customers from Nassau County. The dispensaries are closely monitored by OCM. She urged everyone to attend the committee meetings.

Linda Silvestri spoke regarding the MTA's Bus Redesign Proposal which includes the Bell Blvd. stop of the Q13 and Q31 routes. Mr. Dadras said the CB11 Transportation Committee has been reviewing this proposal and there will be discussion at the next committee meeting. Information can be obtained on the MTA website.

Sean Walsh spoke regarding the City sale of city-owned sliver properties in the district stating his opposition to the lot near Rushmore Avenue. He also spoke regarding the proposed text amendment for casinos. Lastly, he spoke regarding the proposed bus redesign.

Council Member Vicky Paladino spoke regarding the MTA's Bus Resign Proposal and how this is still in the beginning stages. She spoke about cannabis dispensary applications. CM Paladino also spoke the newly passed How Many Stops Act. She spoke very highly of former Council Member Paul Vallone.

Lois Marbach, representing Council Member Linda Lee, said that CM Lee sent a letter against the opening of a cannabis dispensary that is in her district on Horace Harding Expressway. She also spoke regarding events hosted by CM Lee.

Anthony Iuliano, representing the Office of the Mayor, gave his condolences to the family of former Council Member Paul Vallone. He stated that the World Cup will be coming to Queens. He thanked uniform officers for their services.

Gus Huiskamp, representing State Senator Toby Stavisky, stated that Senator signed a letter along with CM Lee regarding the opposition to the opening of a cannabis dispensary.

Jess Mueller, representing Assembly Member Ed Braunstein, read a letter that the AM wrote to OCM in opposition to the issuing of a license for the cannabis dispensary on 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Kahleel Bragg, representing Donovan Richards, Queens Borough President, spoke regarding Board Member applications. The deadline to apply is February 16, 2024. He spoke regarding events hosted by the QBP.

Jamilla Uddin, representing AM Rozic, spoke regarding upcoming events hosted by the AM.

PO Corey spoke regarding crime prevention and the monthly crime stats within the district. Every first Thursday of the month is the 111<sup>th</sup> Police Council meeting.

## **ROLL CALL**

### *Members Present*

Adriana Aviles, Lana Bind, Jessica Burke, Susan Cerezo, Sharon Chin, Carmen Collado, Victor Dadras, Paul DiBenedetto, Henry Euler, Mario Ferazzoli, Michelle Fields, Jack Fried, Albert Galatan, Joan Garippa, Roy Giusetti, Michael Golia, Rosemarie Guidice, George Hadjiconstantinou, Tim Hao, Laura James, Mohan Jethwani, Travis Kessel, Jena Lanzetta, Matthew Mamak, Fleur Martino, Karen Mazza, George Mihaltses, Eileen Miller, Stephen Pivawer, Ann Puckett, Megan Rha, Seihee Ryu, Christina Scherer, Jyothi Sriram, Benjamin Turner, David White, Sam Wong

### *Members Absent*

Dawn Anatra, Michael Budabin, C. Omarr Evans, Elias Fillas, Christopher Fuentes-Padilla, Robert Liatto, Douglas Montgomery, Akshar Patel, Wendy Pelle-Beer, Gunjan Rastogi

## **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

A motion was made to accept the minutes of the January 2024 meeting by Ms. Garippa. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hadjiconstantinou. There was one correction to add Adriana Aviles to the attendance. A vote was taken resulting in 37 in favor, one abstention and one present. The minutes were approved with correction.

*(In favor - Adriana Aviles, Lana Bind, Jessica Burke, Susan Cerezo, Sharon Chin, Carmen Collado, Victor Dadras, Paul DiBenedetto, Henry Euler, Mario Ferazzoli, Michelle Fields, Jack Fried, Albert Galatan, Joan Garippa, Roy Giusetti, Rosemarie Guidice, George Hadjiconstantinou, Tim Hao, Laura James, Mohan Jethwani, Travis Kessel, Jena Lanzetta, Matthew Mamak, Fleur Martino, Karen Mazza, George Mihaltses, Eileen Miller, Stephen Pivawer, Ann Puckett, Megan Rha, Seihee Ryu, Christina Scherer, Jyothi Sriram, David White, Sam Wong – Abstain – Benjamin Turner – Present – Michael Golia)*

## **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

Thank you was given to Library Committee Chair, Benjamin Turner, for inquiring on the update of the status of the Queensborough Community Library. It is still scheduled to open the end of this year. Queens Community Boards 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 14 all voted no to the Mayor's City of Yes proposal. There will be a meeting for improvements the Northern Blvd. bike lane. There will be a Public Safety and Licensing Committee meeting; he urged members to attend.

## **BOARD MEMBER NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Euler spoke regarding the City Yes proposal and how there will be a vote at the end of February or the beginning of March. The portion regarding housing will be voted on in the Spring.

Ms. Martino spoke regarding the Blood Drive that will take place in March 2024 at KCS.

Ms. Lanzetta spoke regarding a conference call with the District 26 Superintendent on February 26, 2024.

Ms. Garippa stated that there was another accident involving the stanchions on the Northern Blvd. bike lane.

Mr. Hadjiconstantinou said that the Queens Chamber of Commerce is conducting their Queens Best Bagel vote.

Mr. Dadras urged everyone to vote in the special election for Congressional District 3.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### ***Douglaston Zoning and Little Neck Zoning – The disposition of City-owned sliver properties.***

There was a presentation given by the Dept. of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) representative, Alex Trazaskowki. He explained the application process of four properties through the Dept. of City Planning. There are two ways DCAS has the authority to sell sliver lots; public auction or offering to the abutting owners by direct sale. The land use application must be approved to sell these properties. The first property is Block 8136, Lot 74 (Little Neck Parkway and 41 Road). The second property is Block 8136, Lot 129 (41 Road and 41 Drive). The third property is Block 8185, Lot 58 (Rushmore Avenue at 244<sup>th</sup> Street) and the fourth property is Block 8260, Lot 226 (253-19 Pembroke Avenue). Little Neck Zoning Committee Chair, Joan Garippa reviewed the Committee meeting report of January 25, 2024. Il Bacco Restaurant is interested in purchasing the lot adjacent to their property. Each property will be voted on separately. These are very small lots and still must conform to zoning regulations. A motion was made to approve Block 8136, Lot 74 and Block 8136, Lot 129 by Karen Mazza. The motion was seconded by Benjamin Turner. There was discussion on the motion stating that these are very small properties. The Committee voted unanimously in favor. A roll call vote was taken resulting in 32 in favor, 2 opposed, one abstention and one present. The motion carried.

*(In-Favor -*Adriana Aviles, Lana Bind, Jessica Burke, Susan Cerezo, Sharon Chin, Carmen Collado, Victor Dadras, Paul DiBenedetto, Henry Euler, Mario Ferazzoli, Michelle Fields, Jack Fried, Albert Galatan, Joan Garippa, Roy Giusetti, Michael Golia, Rosemarie Guidice, George Hadjiconstantinou, Tim Hao, Laura James, Travis Kessel, Jena Lanzetta, Matthew Mamak, Fleur Martino, Karen Mazza, George Mihaltses, Eileen Miller, Ann Puckett, Megan Rha, Seihee Ryu, Christina Scherer, Benjamin Turner, David White – *Opposed* – Mohan Jethwani, Sam Wong – *Abstained* – Jyothi Sriram – *Present* – Stephen Pivawer)

Sean Walsh explained Block 8185, Lot 58 (Rushmore Avenue) is a pathway that is maintained by the community. The Civic Association is opposed of the application and is recommending this property to stay in public domain. A discussion ensued on how the abutting owners already maintain the property, what would motivate them to purchase? Ms. James agreed with Sean Walsh that this property is a pathway that is used by the community to get to Overbrook Street. The Committee unanimously approved this application. A motion was made to approve the

application by Jack Fried. The motion was seconded by Laura James. A roll call vote was taken resulting in 11 in favor, 24 opposed, and one present. The motion was denied.

(*In-favor* – Jessica Burke, Susan Cerezo, Sharon Chin, Carmen Collado, Jack Fried, Roy Giusetti, Travis Kessel, Ann Puckett, Seihee Ryu, Benjamin Turner, David White – *Opposed* - Adriana Aviles, Victor Dadras, Paul DiBenedetto, Henry Euler, Mario Ferazzoli, Michelle Fields, Albert Galatan, Joan Garippa, Rosemarie Guidice, George Hadjiconstantinou, Tim Hao, Laura James, Mohan Jethwani, Jena Lanzetta, Matthew Mamak, Fleur Martino, Karen Mazza, George Mihaltses, Eileen Miller, Stephen Pivawer, Megan Rha, Christina Scherer, Jyothi Sriram, Sam Wong – *Present* – Lina Bind)

The last property was the lot next to Il Bacco restaurant, Block 8260, Lot 226 (253-19 Pembroke Avenue). This property is used by the adjacent businesses. There is an easement on this property that is not affected by this application. The Committee voted against this application. There was a representative from Il Bacco restaurant, and it was stated that the easement would stay because it gives access to the property. The owner is interested in purchasing the property. A motion was made to approve the application by Matt Mamak. Discussion ensued regarding air rights. The Il Bacco building is already at maximum height. The reason for wanting this property is to use the easement into property as a driveway. The motion was seconded by Mario Ferazzoli. A roll call vote taken resulting in 28 in-favor, 7 opposed and one present. The motion carried.

(*In-favor* - Adriana Aviles, Jessica Burke, Susan Cerezo, Sharon Chin, Carmen Collado, Victor Dadras, Paul DiBenedetto, Mario Ferazzoli, Michelle Fields, Jack Fried, Albert Galatan, Roy Giusetti, Michael Golia, Rosemarie Guidice, George Hadjiconstantinou, Tim Hao, Jena Lanzetta, Matthew Mamak, Fleur Martino, Karen Mazza, George Mihaltses, Eileen Miller, Stephen Pivawer, Ann Puckett, Megan Rha, Seihee Ryu, Christina Scherer, Benjamin Turner, David White, Sam Wong – *Opposed* – Henry Euler, Joan Garippa, Roy Giusetti, Laura James, Mohan Jethwani, Travis Kessel, Jyothi Sriram – *Present* – Lina Bind)

**Ad-Hoc Zoning – Dept. of City Planning’s (DCP) proposed Gaming Facility Text Amendment.** The Dept. of City Planning has proposed a Citywide zoning amendment to allow gaming facilities as a permitted use in certain commercial districts and manufacturing districts in the Zoning Resolution. There are two proposed lots in Queens that would allow for a casino. Mr. DiBenedetto said that one location would be Willets Point which is City parkland and another location in CB10. Mr. DiBenedetto discussed points as to why he is against this proposal; this would remove the full Land Use Application process (the CAC would make the decision), it removes the local city council input and vote, it removes community board input and the CAC will be able to make the decision for gaming facilities, hotels, entertainment, and anything related to a casino. Lastly, Dept. of City Planning has not forwarded the gaming text to community boards that don’t have a proposed location in their district. A motion was made to approve the application by Mr. Euler. The motion was seconded by Ms. Mazza. There was discussion on the motion stating that taking the land use process away is not in the best interest of the community. Mr. Euler stated that Willets Point is parkland. It was stated that casinos are a way for the City and State to make money; Queens already has two casinos; more are not needed. Mr. White said he was in favor because there should not be a monopoly on casinos; this will create jobs and generate revenue for the City. He stated that other casinos do not have problems in their area. Ms. Fields rebutted this comment and stated that the residential areas in the vicinity of the casino in Queens has seen an increase in crime since its opening. Mr. DiBenedetto agreed and supported Ms. Field’s comment. A roll call vote was taken resulting in 3 in-favor, 30 opposed and 1 present. The motion was denied.

(*In favor* - Susan Cerezo, Seihee Ryu, David White – *Opposed* - Adriana Aviles, Lana Bind, Jessica Burke, Sharon Chin, Carmen Collado, Victor Dadras, Paul DiBenedetto, Henry Euler, Mario Ferazzoli, Michelle Fields, Jack Fried, Albert Galatan, Joan Garippa, Roy Giusetti, Michael Golia, Rosemarie Guidice, George Hadjiconstantinou, Tim Hao, Laura James, Mohan Jethwani, Travis Kessel, Jena Lanzetta, Matthew Mamak, Fleur Martino, Karen Mazza, George Mihaltses, Eileen Miller, Stephen Pivawer, Ann Puckett, Megan Rha, Christina Scherer, Jyothi Sriram, Benjamin Turner, Sam Wong – *Present* – Lina Bind)

## **MONTH AHEAD**

There will be a Public Safety and Licensing Committee meeting on February 7<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 PM