



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, **Chair** / Joseph Marziliano, **District Manager**

TO: All Board Members
FROM: Henry Euler, Committee Chair
DATE: May 27, 2021
RE: Various issues

On Wednesday, May 26, 2021, a meeting of the CB11 Environmental Committee was held via Zoom teleconference to discuss several topics. CB11 Landmarks Committee members were also invited.

Present

Michael Budabin, Chair
Victor Dadras, 1st Vice Chair
Christine Haider, 2nd Vice Chair
Henry Euler, 3rd Vice Chair and Committee Chair

Committee Members Lourdes December, Paul DiBenedetto, Joan Garippa, Christina Scherer, Jyothi Sriram

Community Board Members Jessica Burke

Non-Board Committee Members Edward LaGrassa

CB11 Staff

Joseph Marziliano, District Manager
Jane Bentivenga, Community Coordinator

Guests

Michael Gannon, Douglas Manor Association

Mr. Euler called the meeting to order. Mr. Euler stated that the director from the Natural Resources Defense Council, Eric Goldstein, had been invited to the meeting but was not present.

Mr. Euler began the discussion regarding the use of solar panels. The Environmental Committee would like to see the use of solar panels expanded even in landmarked areas. In landmarked areas, they can be installed as long as they are not be visible from the street. Mr. DiBenedetto agreed but also said that would depend on the exposure of the building. The panels are usually installed on south-facing roofs; so that may not be an option. He also raised the issue of the panels becoming part of the fabric of a landmarked building. Mr. LaGrassa said it would become part of the real estate. He added that roofs are visible from other streets and sides of a house. Mr. Euler said, currently, panels are being produced that would blend in with a roof; this will get better as the technology improves. Mr. DiBenedetto stated that some companies are making roof tiles that are solar panels. Mrs. Haider added that she investigated getting panels and there are

some stringent requirements; a 30-year lease is required and there are many fire safety conditions that must to be met.

Mrs. Garippa stated that this type of installation in a landmarked district would change the origin of the building. The whole prerogative of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) is to preserve what was originally built. She also said since the technology will be evolving, this may not be the best time to take a stand on this issue. Mr. Marziliano said that CB11 is starting to see applications for solar panels in our landmarked district. Therefore, it would be a good idea for the community board to decide on a policy moving forward. CB11 has had one proposal and several inquiries about this. Mr. Dadras said it is his understanding that LPC will be reviewing this on a case-by-case basis. He agrees with Mrs. Garippa and does not think it is the place of the community board to decide this issue. He does not think the historical value of these properties should be compromised. Mr. DiBenedetto and Mrs. Haider agreed. Mrs. Garippa added that movies and tv shows are often filmed in the landmarked district bringing revenue in for the City. The production staff scouts for these historic homes. Ms. Sriram said that there are other types of alternative energy that may work better for historic buildings. Mr. Gannon, Douglas Manor Association, does not think these panels have a place in the historic district. He also said LPC does allow solar panels in historic districts if it is not visible from the street.

Ms. Burke addressed the comment about the landmarked district being used for filming. She pointed out that many productions now utilize CGI technology eliminating the need to be on site for filming. Ms. Burke is much more concerned with the climate and the environment rather than the esthetic in a certain area. She said that smaller, stand-alone units could be used in a backyard. Ms. Burke also inquired how far above sea level Douglas Manor is. She feels that we need to show our elected officials that things that are, perhaps, more esthetically pleasing are not better for the environment as the climate is changing and tides are rising. Mr. LaGrassa said that a 2' x 5' panel would not be enough to power a water heater. He also stated that he lives about 100' from the water and his home is about 25' above mean high tide. Ms. Burke said the base would be about 2' x 5'. The unit would be approximately 10'. She said that it is much more important that the environment be preserved for future generations and this committee should be focusing on that rather than esthetics. Mr. Euler expressed his disappointment that Mr. Goldstein, from the Natural Resource Defense Council, was not present at this meeting. Mr. Marziliano screen-shared the NYC flood map for everyone's information. He explained the map and shared the web address.

Mr. Euler introduced the next topic of herbicide and pesticide use. Again, he was hoping to have Mr. Goldstein speak about this as well. He said these chemicals pose a danger to humans, pollinators and other animals. The current thinking about their use needs to be changed. Safer alternative should be used. Mr. LaGrassa asked if anyone knew what chemicals their gardeners used. Mrs. Haider stated her gardener advised her he has to attend classes regarding the type of chemicals that are allowable and how to properly use them. Mr. Marziliano shared his knowledge from his previous employment at the NYC Dept. of Health (DOH). He stated there is a state law that exists that says your immediate neighbors must be notified when your property is treated with a pesticide that is stronger than "over the counter" pesticides. He stated that even the DOH's larvicide and adulticide are not that much stronger than what the average consumer can purchase. Mr. Euler wondered how many homeowners do this. Mr. LaGrassa asked if gardeners/landscapers are required to use approved chemicals. Mr. Marziliano said yes. Mr. Marziliano said that the chemicals that are commercially available, dissipate in sunlight. Ms.

Sriram asked if Roundup, which currently contains glyphosate, was still available for home use and, if it is, was there any update on it being banned in New York. Mr. Euler said he has not heard anything further about that.

He also added that something called neonix is being used and all these chemicals have side effects and are potential carcinogens. These chemicals can affect underground water supplies. This is a huge problem in communities that use well water. Ms. Sriram noted that the people that apply these chemicals are at a very high risk. Mr. Marziliano said a fact sheet will be distributed to members of the committee.

Mr. Euler then introduced the topic of lawn care devices and leaf blowers. He stated that not only do they create a lot of noise, but they create a lot of pollution. Not only leaves, but chemical residues get blown into the air. Mr. Gannon said that he testified at CM Dromm's public hearing a few years ago regarding the restriction of leaf blowers. A pediatrician attended with him who testified on the dangers posed, particularly, to young children. Anything that is on the ground or pavement gets kicked up into the air by these blowers. The finer particles float around for some time. We are all inhaling this. The proposal is still languishing in the City Council or it may have been withdrawn. Senator Liu is introducing a similar proposal statewide. Unfortunately, there seems to be opposition to such legislation. There had been a proposal in the past to limit leaf blower use to the Spring and the Fall seasons. Mrs. Haider questioned the level of the noise that is allowable. Ms. Burke revisited the topic of the pesticides. She said there was an article in the New York Times about children at PS290 in Manhattan who worked on this subject. She suggested that the Environmental Committee work with the Education Committee, PTAs and teachers to further educate everyone about these harmful chemicals. Mr. Euler agreed saying that the children are our future. Mr. Euler agreed that pollinators are a crucial part of this; something Ms. Burke stated earlier. Unfortunately, the population of pollinators is declining.

Mrs. Haider said CB11 should investigate the status of CM Dromm's proposed legislation since it was introduced several years ago. Mr. Euler said he contacted CM Dromm's office to inquire. He was advised they would research it and get back to him.

Mrs. Haider spoke about the issue of people sitting in their vehicles with the motor running while the exhaust fumes go into the air. Mr. DiBenedetto pointed out that there is an idling law. Mrs. Haider is aware. However, many people do not abide by it. Mr. Marziliano advised anyone who knows of a chronic issue with this, to email the Community Board and a complaint will be filed. This type of complaint falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Protection. Ms. Burke added that there is a similar problem with school buses in Crocheron Park with the World of Discovery Day Camp. Mr. DiBenedetto agreed and stated it is a problem with large trucks as well. He then inquired if illegal signage falls under the environmental umbrella. Mr. Marziliano said it is a sanitation (DSNY) issue; signs are not allowed to be fixed on public infrastructure. However, he explained that in the past, there was a \$100 fine for each illegal sign. One of the entities that received a fine for numerous signs fought this and now only one ticket is issued to an advertiser no matter how many of the same signs they put up. If a location is reported through 311, DSNY does respond and takes them down. He asked anyone to report locations through the CB11 email, and it will be reported for removal.

Respectfully submitted 5/27/2021