



## COMMUNITY BOARD #14

COMMUNITY BOARD #14  
City of New York  
Borough of Queens

DOLORES ORR  
Chairperson

JONATHAN GASKA  
District Manager

### COMMUNITY BOARD #14 VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING MARCH 9, 2021

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#### PRESENT

Audrey Amsterdam-Handy, Louis Caucig, John Cori, Dr. Gerald David, Ahmad Edwards, Noreen Ellis, Jack Epter, Joanne Fogarty, Eugenia Gibson, Yitzchok Goldstein, Tamara Jacobs, Felicia Johnson, Paul King, Betty Leon, Denise Lopresti-Neibel, Nancy Martinez, John McCambridge, Sonia Moise, Helen Montero, Al Moore, Daniel Mundy, Dolores Orr, Dr. Harold Paez, Eugene Pasternak, Isaac Parsee, Dr. Eli Shapiro, Karen Sloan-Payne, Chris Tedesco Michael Tubridy Jose Velez, Wanda Warden, Edwin Williams

#### ABSENT

Andrea Colon, Temina Feldman, D. Brian Heffernan, Annette Lord-Cohen, Ife Maijeh, Rosalyn Mason, Alicia Mazyck, Kevin Morgan, Linda Plummer, William Gordon

#### GUESTS

Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer-Amato, Stephanie Castillo Samoy-Rep. State Senator James Sanders Jr., Sandee Doremus – Rep. State Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr., Dan Brown – Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz

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The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:20pm. .

#### MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 9, 2021

John McCambridge made the motion to accept the February 9, 2021 minutes as written. Denise Lopresti-Neibele seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

#### CORRESPONDANCE

1. Letter dated February 19, 2021 was sent to Mayor De Blasio and now Ex-Chancellor R. Carranza. Letter requested the reinstatement of “Sibling Preference Policy” at the Scholars Academy.

2. Letter dated February 16, 2021 was sent to Gateway National Recreation. Letter requested that Rockaway Little League be allowed to remain at the current location at Fort Tilden.

#### REPORT OF THE CHAIR

The Chair announced that the Board has a new ULURP for a senior housing development project and up-zoning to be located at Beach 67 Street and the clock has started. Board members already know that we have 60 days to vote. The Land-Use Committee has to meet with the developer and have a committee meeting to discuss the ULURP.

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The ULURP deadline is May 10, 2021. Therefore, the monthly Board meeting will have to be moved to May 4, 2021 instead of May 11, 2021.

The City Council is in the process of introducing "Planning Together" which requires a comprehensive plan every 10 years that could impact communities. The plan involves no parking requirements for development and no more zoning requirements for 1 & 2 family homes. Mr. Paul Graziano of Associated Cultural Resource Consultants has worked on zoning issues with other Community Boards for years and he has agreed to meet with the Land-Use Committee on March 25, 2021 to give further in-site on the issue.

The Chair wished everyone Happy Passover and Easter.

**REPORT OF THE DISTRICT MANAGER** - District Manager, Jonathan Gaska reported, to honor of Board Member Steve Cooper who passed away in March 2020 his family, Janet Rashes and Edgemere Community Civic Association has requested in writing that Beach 46 Street be called re-named "Steve Cooper's Way". This has been referred to the Commemorative Committee.

The Land-Use Committee will be very busy with an upcoming ULURP for a Beach 67 Street that will involve rezoning. There will be 4 citywide zoning text amendments. Two important ones are "Zoning for Accessibility" that involve rezoning spaces adjacent to or near train stations to include improvements to access subways for example elevators and "Fresh Too" that allows supermarkets to increase their floor area if they agree to sale fresh fruits and vegetables.

### **ELECTED OFFICIAL CALL IN**

#### **STATE SENATOR JOSEPH ADDABBO JR**

Sandy Doremus reported that Senator Addabbo and Lew Simon are partnering to conduct a Food Drive for and donated items can be dropped off at St. Camilla's on Beach 100 Street. Also, Senator Addabbo is in favor of an investigation into allegations against Governor Cuomo.

#### **ASSEMBLYWOMAN STACEY PHEFFER-AMATO**

Assemblywoman Pheffer-Amato provided an update on St. John's Hospital advising that the hospital is not closing and all of the elected officials are united on that issue and monitoring the situation. The story came about because of Dr. Becker working with Tony Dorf Consulting Group, which



was one of three consulting groups that were chosen to propose cost savings for the hospital, left the consulting group and was hired by the NYS Department of Health. He then used the date he obtained as a consultant and presented a cost saving plan without consulting the NYS Dept. of Health, St. John's Administrator, 1199 Union workers and elected officials.

### **CITY COUNCILMAN ERIC ULRICH**

Ciara Donnelly reported that the office will allow COVID testing Mondays and Tuesday 9:30 to 4:30pm on March 15 & March 23, 2021. The office is answering the phones and responding to emails.

### **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS**

#### **US Army Corps of Engineer –Re: Coastal Storm Risk Reduction Project for Rockaway Beach**

Dan Fault, Project Manager for the installation and construction of groins for Rockaway Beach gave an updated presentation on the installation of the groins that are approved and completely funded. The full presentation is available on line at the Army Corp. of Engineers website.

The first contract involves the construction/reconstruction of 19 stone groins reduce re-nourishment requirements and to enhance resiliency on the Atlantic Shoreline. NYC is also providing additional funding to remove remnant wooden groins located between the new stone groins. The groin for Beach 32 Street has already been constructed and fully completed.

A reinforced dune structure with total dune height of 18 feet from Beach 9 Street to Beach 149 Street, with dune crossing features will also be included as well as sand fill to rebuild the beach in total. High frequency flooding risk reduction measures for the bayside of Arverne and Edgemere is also included in the first contract. The timeline for the flooding risk measures is controlled by the length of time needed to negotiate the large number of property easements and necessary procurement of federal, NYS and NYC property acquisition requirements.

Timeline for construction work between Beach 105 to Beach 90 street time is September 2020 to May 2024. Schedule details can change because the project will take a long time and it covers over a large area.

The first contract was awarded to H & L Contracting, LLC of Bay Shore, NY for \$114 million is of work in the Beach 140s.

Work hours will be Monday thru Friday 7am to 3:30pm. Each groin work area will have 500 feet of beach access closed to the public. A pedestrian access corridor behind the work site will be provided. Access through the work site will always be provided for emergency vehicles. Monthly updated community meetings will be held to discuss progress, timelines and other issues. The Army Corp of Engineers and contractors will be the main communication between the community board, elected officials and residents.

### **Rockaway United Resilient Rockaway Micro Grid**

William Schacht representing Rockaway United reported to the Board that their mission is to focus on a community owned microgrid to provide 24/7 light, power, communication and security to the Peninsula. Environmental Committee has been asked to meet with Rockaway United for further discussion.

State Senator James Sanders Jr. asked Rockaway United to begin to first provide this proposed microgrid capability to include St. John's Hospital. In addition, improvements for transportation will also be included.

Mr. Schacht stated that this is new technology that is designed to be owned by the community and to understand the recent experiences of the communities who have gone without power and been through this process by outreaching to them for input. Other communities include Red Hook, South Bronx, Huntington, Long Island, and Fairfield, Connecticut.

Mr. Schacht explained that would try to develop 6 to 10 sites for sustainable energy sources and social economic-cultural community goals for each site also because Rockaway United was recently awarded a National Science Foundation Grant. For more information please email [wfschacht@aol.com](mailto:wfschacht@aol.com) and [pallison304@gmail.com](mailto:pallison304@gmail.com).

**Public Speaking** – The Chair opened the floor for public speaking. Those who signed up to speak were recognized and heard. The Chair closed public speaking.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Transportation Committee**

Chris Tedesco, Chair of the committee reported that a virtual meeting was held on February 22, 2021. The first agenda item for discussion was regarding the following:



## **1 – NYC Transit – Rockaway Shuttle alignment with A train schedule at Broad Channel**

Lucille Songhai from NYC Transit outlined a new Rockaway Park Shuttle schedule overhaul that will launch on March 8th. They will prioritize the shuttle schedule to better align with the A train schedule. They also stated that they are working on better communication, cooperation, and decision making between the motor men and dispatchers, as well as with the South Channel bridge operators.

It was also noted that communication regarding planned track work in March was not circulated or posted effectively. Midday weekday track work between Mott Ave and Beach 67th lacked in station signage at certain stations, and email blasts did not go to the right places. The MTA website also lacked information.

## **2 – DOT updates** – Andrew Arcese, representing DOT reported:

**Back In Parking Study** – none of the three locations met the criteria for angled parking at Beach 59<sup>th</sup> Edgemere to Boardwalk, Beach 56th Place from Edgemere to Boardwalk, and Beach 58th St from BCD to Alameda Ave.

**Freeway parking under the EL on the de-mapped sections** (Beach 62 – Beach 67; Beach 69 – Beach 76) has not had any progress because it has still not been turned over from the city to ABTS. New efforts by DOT will be made to move that process forward.

**Enforcement and signage for Beach 60th street** – NYPD was invited but was not in attendance. There was some email dialogue with Sergeant Grimm from 100th Precinct traffic. They are aware of the situation of wrong way drivers on Beach 60th and we are hopeful they will have a presence in the area to discourage drivers who are knowingly and willfully disobeying the new street direction. DOT will take another look at improving signage, specifically at the intersection of Beach Front Rd and Beach 62nd Street.

**Motorized Scooters and bicycles on Boardwalk** – Parks Dept. was invited but was not in attendance. Email correspondence with Sergeant Grimm was not answered or addressed. We will continue to push for rules because it is clear that no city agency wants to tackle this issue.

**Bus lane on RBB between Beach 73rd and Beach 64th** - we stated, once again for the record, that taking away a travel lane on this corridor is unnecessary, counter-productive, and goes against a specific agreement with DOT (from ABTS negotiations) that no East-West lanes would be taken away because of the de-mapping of Rockaway Freeway in that area. We received a tepid response from Andrew that DOT would take a look.

**Shorefront Parkway pedestrian crossings-** DOT is planning on installing additional uncontrolled (enhanced) crossings to improve safety at several locations on Shore Front Parkway east of Beach 81 St. Uncontrolled crossings are pedestrian street crossings where there is no traffic signal. No exact timeline given, but Andrew is pushing for progress before beach season starts.

Additional issues brought up by committee members included clarification of speed limits for bikes (or any wheeled mode of transport) on DOT marked bike lanes. This is 25mph. The poorly marked bike lanes on the Boardwalk are not official DOT bike lanes. Issue with lack of compliance by cyclists to dismount while riding over the Cross Bay Bridge path.

Better timing and alignment of South Channel Bridge opening with A train schedule. NYCT acknowledged this is a tricky issue because once a barge is in motion it is not able to stop and under law has the right of way. We think there is still room for improvement on this timing.

DOT will present a new Street Improvement Project for the Seagirt Blvd corridor at the next Transportation Committee meeting, likely in April. This will include the misalignment of lanes on Seagirt at B26th/Camp Rd, as well as the intersection of Seagirt/Beach Channel Drive/Rockaway Freeway.

**TWO issues have updates as of March 5, 2021:**

1-Additional signage request for Beach Front Rd & Beach 62nd Street for no outlet/dead end is under review.

2-Bus lane on RBB bet Beach 73 and Beach 64, going against community agreement with DOT to not take away east-west lanes (ABTS negotiations 20 years ago)

**DOT RESPONSE:** the agency maintains that this treatment is appropriate as a comprehensive study of traffic patterns along the corridor had determined that this segment of eastbound Rockaway Beach Boulevard could operate at sufficient capacity with one general travel lane, one bus lane, and left turn lanes where needed, and that in the event of an emergency situation, the bus lane would be available to all vehicles traveling from the peninsula.

**PARKS & PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE** -Jose Velez Co-chair of the Committee reported that a meeting was held on March 2, 2021. The agenda item for discussion was regarding and update on beach season.



Jose Velez reported that Parks Dept. is planning for normal beach season opening, however swimming season will depend on evolving public health concerns and other condition such as beach erosion and lifeguard staffing.

Based on Jan. budget plan anticipated Seasonal staffing should be similar to 2019 staffing (80%). Lifeguard recruitment is underway and Parks is working to have them designated as first responders so that they can get their vaccine shots. If you know someone who is interest, please tell them to visit Parks website.

Parks is working with the city to provide summer employment through the SYEP. The water safety campaign started last year will be expanded. Volunteers will be recruited to help with the Anti-litter campaign. March 17th is when water will be turned on for comfort stations and water fountains.

Erosion - more sand than usual has been lost in the 30s, 90s, as well as dunes in Belle Harbor and Neponsit. Sand replenished in 2019 is gone. Erosion surveys has been shared with DEC and ACOE. Previous weather patterns have redeposited sand in eroded areas and parks is hoping that this will happen again. Parks and Sanitation are using a D9 bulldozer to regrade some areas to allow beach access.

ACOE is working on the advancing sand replenishment but it is not possible to get a sand replenishment for this beach season. Groin construction will be wrapping up on beach 32nd and 36th this month with work transferring to Beach 149 and 145, expected completion of those groins should be mid-summer. Work will then shift to beach 135 and 140 in July. Work to begin on beach 92 and 98 after beach season.

Due to Covid 19 most capital projects were put on hold last spring. Funding for projects was still in place but construction was put on hold. As of yesterday 380 projects that had been paused can now resume. Parks is working on a phased approach to resuming these projects as to not overwhelm oversite agencies. Given the many projects pending, Parks will be in touch with the community as to the exact dates when local projects will resume.

The following is a summary of pending projects:

Construction on Phase 2 of Lanett Playground began last fall is expected to be completed later this year.

Following projects in **Procurement**: Redfern Playground; SFP -Beach 98th Street, playground, Adventure course, dog run, performance space, multi-

purpose sport field, labyrinth and seating along Shore Front parkway; Beach 59th St. Playground; Broad Channel playground; bayside playground comfort station and Nameoke Park.

Sunset Cove Phase 2 and Beach 108th St. ferry landing designs are essentially complete, working on **permitting** now.

**Design** work is progressing on Bayswater Park, Bay Breeze Park, Thursby Basin Park, Broad Channel American Field and Rockaway Community Park Shoreline. Removals and site work for the Arverne East Nature Preserve to begin this summer. Rockaway Community Park is the top capital project priority.

Covid - outdoor gathering is to be limited to 50 people, Parks is working on special permits applications as they are received and issuing permits on a monthly basis per guidance on public gathering. Low contact sports will be permitted for spring season. High contact sports at this time will not be permitted. Mask will still be required at all Park venues. Presently there is no staff assigned to mask distribution. PEP officers and Urban Park Rangers will have them upon request, they will also be available at fixed post locate during the season. Concession will follow state and city regulations regarding distancing, seating and hygiene. Parks enforcement staff are eligible for vaccines; other park workers are being encourage to get shots if eligible.

Rockaway Beach Bazaar has been awarded a 15 year contract for 3 concessions along Boardwalk (B 86; B 97; B016). Contract recently signed and submitted to comptroller office for registration. They are in negotiation with sub licensees and various vendors and are developing plans for mobile concessions beyond beach 80th. Expecting concession to be open for beach season. Dred Surfer at beach 19th has been open year-round for take-out.

Plover site to remain in place as per US Fish and Wildlife regulations, access to Beach 38th to Beach 57th St. will be restricted as of April 31, 2021.

Volunteer projects can take place as long as they follow COVID guidelines

**Issues and Concerns raised:**

Erosion of the beach. Bulldozer is creating erosion issues and damage, day to day parks operations are also creating erosion. Seagrass and shell matter should not be removed. Signage/fines to keep people off dunes.

Questions regarding pending Shore Front projects and the lack of priority. Will the money for these project still be available, given that there are federal deadline for the money to be used. Status of Beach 59th St. Park.



How were the concession selected, can additional concessions come before the CB 14 before RRB awards sub licensees. Reinstate original construction report dates.

Who issues summons, only PEP officers can issue summons. (Approx. 15 officers) 40 seasonal employees who can assist with other issues.

Can determination of beach closure be made now? Parks is waiting for the end of the winter storm season before a decision is made regarding any beach closures.

A bulldozer was used on the boardwalk to remove snow and has damaged boardwalk expansion joints.

How many surf schools have permits? None at this time, schools must reapply for permits. Land north of the boardwalk is HPD land why are surf schools allowed to use that land.

Parking of Parks Dept. vehicles in certain areas. Extend Lifeguard hours, reduce speed of cyclists on boardwalk.

Groin construction, sand replenishment? Piping Plovers and beach access. Speeding vehicles on the boardwalk. How about a Parks Audit?

Motion was made requiring signage that bicyclist yield to pedestrian on the boardwalk and in the bike lane. 2nd by Karen, motion passed 7 to 1.

There was a 2nd motion regarding restricting motorized vehicles that was tabled and needed to be discussed.

The Chair requested that Jonathan look into writing a letter to composing a letter to the NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer requesting an audit of Rockaway Parks Dept.

Park's Committee made the motion for require signage that bicyclist yield to pedestrians on the boardwalk and in the bike lanes. The motion carried by a roll call vote of 15 YES and 10 NO.

### **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

-Felicia Johnson asked what the Board can do as a whole to be taken more seriously when it comes to the recommendations/votes on behalf of the community.

-The Chair suggested that the board send letters to officials to inform them of the Board's votes on major issues and that over the next weeks those listening come up with ideas to address Felicia's concerns.

-Betty Leon expressed that elected officials and police need to attend some board meetings in person.

-John Cori suggested again redistricting so that the peninsula have one elected official for city council, state and congress instead of two to stop dividing the Peninsula.

-Ahmed Edwards expressed that the same community issues have been going on for years and still with the same officials that are not doing a good job for years. Efforts can/will be made to remove officials by distributing flyers and social media throughout the community to motivate changes.

-Sonia Moise suggested that Rockaway voters should stop voting for the same people in office and to take action against petitions for elections that have the same set of people on one ballot.

-Harold Paez suggested that the board/community issue a performance report card to elected officials on listening to the community.

-Wanda Warden expressed that voter suppression is occurring in the community at the poles targeting seniors for the lack of that transportation and lack of information about polling site changes.

-Jack King expressed that more residents need to vote because more votes come from the other districts and residents from Beach 60 Street to Beach 149 Street and Broad Channel and Breezy Point are willing to assist the rest of the Peninsula to make a united voice for elected officials to take the Peninsula more seriously.

Respectfully Submitted By: M. Dunning