

COMMUNITY BOARD #14
VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING
APRIL 13, 2021

PRESENT

Audrey Amsterdam-Handy, Mark Anaya, Yaakov Berger, Lailah Boyd, Natasha Carter, Louis Caucig, John Cori, Eric Diaz, Rosemarie Duggan-Gulston, Ahmad Edwards, Noreen Ellis, Jack Epter, Joanne Fogarty, Jaden Gabb, Eugenia Gibson, Yitzchok Goldstein, Randy Hall, D. Brian Heffernan, Felicia Johnson, Kelly Brian, Paul King, Maggie Larkins, Betty Leon, Denise Lopestri-Neibel, Annette Lord-Cohen, Ife Maijeh, Nancy Martinez, John McCambridge, Isa Mitchell, Sonia Moise, Helen Montero, Al Moore, Daniel Mundy, Dolores Orr, Dr. Harold Paez, David Rood-Ojalvo, Karen Sloan-Payne, Chris Tedesco, Jose Velez, Wanda Warden, Lisa Williams

ABSENT

Gabrielle Bennett, Giselle Carte, Andrea Colon, Dr. Gerald David, Temina Feldman, Tamara Jacobs, Rosalyn Mason, Eugene Pasternak, Linda Plummer

GUESTS

Councilmember Selvena Brooks-Powers, Stephnie Castillo-Samoy - Rep. State Senator James Sanders Jr., Sandee Doremus - Rep. State Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr., Assembly District Leader Lew Simon, Ciara Dooley - Rep. City Councilman Eric Ulrich, Karl Valaere - Rep. Assemblyman Khaleel Anderson

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

MINUTES FROM MARCH 9, 2021

Paul King requested the following corrections:

-Page 3, under the US Army Corp of Engineers - the correct spelling for Dan's last name is Falt.

-Page 10, under Old/New Business- the correction of the last comment was made by himself Paul King not Jack King his father.

Betty Leon made the motion to approve the minutes with the stated corrections. Joanne Fogarty seconded the motion. 3 Abstained. The motion carried.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR

The Chair reported that there are 16 new board members that will be introducing themselves.

As a reminder the board meeting for next month will be on the May 4, 2021 because of two ULURPs that are on deadline for the Board's vote.

REPORT OF THE DISTRICT MANAGER - District Manager, Jonathan Gaska reported that we are entering mosquito season and the office will take locations of standing water including vacant lots that can breed mosquitos. The office will report the locations to the Department of Health and 311.

The City is allowing Street Activity permits now that the weather is getting warmer. The permit application process is done online and has to be submitted 60 days in advance of the event. The office does request a petition of signatures/addresses including phone #'s of 75% of the block being requested to be closed. The office will call the numbers to verify that person lives on the block and supports the street closure. The application fee is

less than \$23 and the applicant would need a debit/credit etc. The website for the permits is NYC Street Activity Permits.

ELECTED OFFICIAL CALL IN

QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY MELINDA KATZ

Dan Drown reported that on Wednesday April 21, 2021 at 5:00 DA Melinda Katz will be having a National Crime Rights Week Event to support victims, Build Trust & Engage community on live zoom. Participants include Special Victims Unit, Hate Crime Unit, Homicide and Human Trafficking Unit. Please register at Queensda.org

STATE SENATOR JAMES SANDERS JR.

Stephanie Castillo-Samoy reported that all are invited to participant in Health Awareness Day on Monday, April 26, 2021. NYS Senator Sanders Jr. and Ocean Bay Cornerstone will host the outdoor event from 12:00 to 4:00pm at 57-10 Beach Channel Drive Arverne, NY 11692. Beach 58 Street will be closed. Participants will include Planned Parenthood, Addabbo Family Health Center, Food, Yoga and a lot more.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER STACEY PHEFFER-AMATO

Robby Swlach representing Assembly Member Amato reported that the week of April 19, 2021 the office will begin an E-Waste Recycling Event that allows residents to drop off electronics and any other e-waste items expect air conditioners and refrigerators. The office address is 95-16 Rockaway Beach Blvd. Rockaway Beach, NY 11693. Please call office at 718-945-9550.

On April 28, 2021 all are invited to an Offshore Wind Public Information Session that is sponsored by Senator Addabbo Jr., Assembly Member Anderson, and Senator Sanders Jr. The session is to talk about what is coming, what to look for and to answer questions. Please call the office at 718-945-9550.

GUEST SPEAKERS

NYC Housing Preservation & Development

Rita Alagar representing HPD Resilient Edgemere Community Plan gave a brief update on the progress of the plan involving a set of actions surrounding the process for the remainder of the year. The RECP was a community planning process plan along with other agencies in the aftermath of hurricane sandy and released this long plan vision in 2017.

The agency pursued many projects and as a part of this plan to advance a land use strategy that also includes the need to facility the investment and will undergo the ULURP process and public review and will involve a full environmental impact study. The scooping session was held back in January. Currently a Community Land Trust Agreement is being worked on and community outreach is ongoing with organizations that would be eligible for a Request of Interest which will be released soon.

State Assembly Member Selvena Brooks-Powers

Assembly Member Powers expressed that she has been on the ground in the community for three weeks already. As an update the offices are still closed due to COVID 19 Guidelines but the phone lines are still active and callers should still call 718-471-7014 and someone will return the call.

An update on Albany involves the ongoing budget process and she requested reopen/extend deadline for requesting Discretionary Funds.

Already outreached to Health & Hospitals for vaccine availability and have already been meeting with elected officials/ liaisons to tour the district and is aware of DEP and Homeless issues etc.

Already met with CB#14 Chair and District Manager to be given an update on important issues the mosquitoes.

PUBLIC SPEAKING – The Chair opened the floor for public speaking. 4 people signed up to speak. All were recognized and heard. The Chair closed public speaking.

Land Use & Housing Committee

The Chair introduced Paul Graziano of Associated Cultural Resource Consultants and also an Urban Planner to inform the all on the” Planning Together” and companion Intro.2186-2020 bill /legislature being introduced by City Council Speaker Cory Johnson.

Mr. Graziano expressed that four months City Council Speaker Cory Johnson introduced the ‘Planning Together” bill with little advertising and did not inform Community Boards, Elected officials or the press.

Mr. Graziano expressed that he reviewed the proposed bill/ legislature and it appear to be promoting that is will solve the City’s land-use problems and bring equity to the City through comprehensive fair land use planning.

Actually the proposed legislature would change land use in NYC by presenting a perception of up zoning in low income neighborhoods when compared to higher income homeowner downsized neighborhoods. Basically if the bill gets approved it will treat all lots the same and therefore create narrow definitions of up/downzoning and contextual zonings. Narrow floor area ratios and building square footage etc. also the changes will occur every 10 years. The long term effect will alleviate any input from elected officials, community boards and civic groups.

For example no more zoning regulations to require parking spaces for new developments, no restrictions in one or two family homes in communities, high/low-rise buildings on any small lots. The bill allows any kind of development without specifications. Other community boards opposed the bill because it does not need input from residents, business owners and elected officials.

John Cori made the motion for the Board to send a letter opposing City Council Bill#2186-2020 “Planning Together” introduced by NYC Counsel Speaker Cory Johnson. The motion was seconded by Ahmed Edwards. The motion carried by a roll call vote of 31 YES, 1 NO and 6 ABSTAINED.

YOUTH SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Harold Paez Chair of the committee reported that a virtual meeting was held on March 22, 2021. Agenda items discussed were the following:

Joseph Morrow Representing the Parks Department addressed the following questions from the committee:

Q. Can the public use Parks in Rockaway at this time?

Ans. All NYC Parks are now open for recreational activities. Social distancing guidelines must be observed as generally stipulated, including the use of masks. Basketball courts are open, skate parks and children playgrounds are open.

Q. Are there any plans for organized recreational activities in Rockaway?

Ans. Yes, the Parks Department in Rockaway will be working with the 101st Precinct to implement sports programming on the East end of the peninsula. Announcements to be made shortly on programming and scheduling of sports. Sports activities to include Flag Football and Basketball. Sports programming will attempt to include evening hours with the use of night event lighting in certain locations.

Q. Will Parks Department allow for sports tournaments in NYC parks?

Ans. This issue is currently being reviewed and will be released shortly following guidance by Department of Health.

Q. Will independent youth mentoring programs working in the Rockaway community, such as Queens Defenders and Team Crate, be able to engage with Parks Department on scheduling drop-in sports activities and/or sports tournaments?

Ans. Yes, Parks will work continue to work with community groups to make full and effective use of recreational space. Mr. Morrow provided direct contact information in order to work on planning for events this summer.

Q. The Sorrentino Center in Far Rockaway is an important community asset for youth sports programming. Currently, the center is being used as a Covid-19 testing site. Will the site be returning to its usual function as a youth facility in the near future?

Ans. The answer is unknown at this time. Mr. Morrow stated he would get back to us, with any additional information on the Sorrentino center, as soon as he gets more information.

NYC Department of Education: Deputy Superintendent David Norment, Deputy Superintendent Melissa Compson and Field Support Liaison Thomas Fox presented a summary of how the district has been working to continue its current mission of providing culturally responsive school learning along with a strong core instructional base. The huge challenge this school year has been the shift to remote learning. During the 2019-20 school year the focus was on small group instruction and discussion protocols aligned with advanced literacy. During the 2020-21 school year the focus has been on leveraging leadership teams to adapt a culturally responsive curriculum and social-emotional learning practices to the blended/online learning environment.

School Closures: the school system has been frustrated by frequent school closures. The Deputy Superintendent clarified that the current threshold for school building closure is determined by 2 or more positive Covid-19 cases within a 7-day period and traced to the same school. A classroom is closed for one confirmed positive case for a period of 10 days. Since the meeting, the guidelines have been loosened by the Mayor, to 4 or more cases within a 7-day period and traced back to the school. This would mandate a 10-day individual school closure period.

Citywide, a rolling 7-day average Covid-19 positive rate of 3% or more would mandate system-wide school closure. By contrast, NY State guidelines call for a system-wide school closure if regional infection rate rises above 9% on a rolling 7-day average.

Note: the daily positive rate for NYC has been approximately 2.9% in recent days with a rolling average above the 3% threshold. This would indicate that the mayor could decide to institute a citywide school closure. It is likely that the continued low positive school rates (1% range) have served to temper concerns about school related outbreaks.

A link to the regional case monitoring system is provided below:
<https://forward.ny.gov/percentage-positive-results-region-dashboard>

Attendance: among the 16 elementary and middle schools in Rockaway, attendance (remote and in-person) has averaged approximately 81%, the citywide average is approximately 85%. Within Rockaway schools, overall attendance rates range from a high of 96% to a low of 79% (specific school information available on the DOE pdf file). Attendance during normal school years averages 92%.

Remote vs. Blended Learning Data: Within the district there is a large disparity among schools with regard to the percentage of students choosing fully remote learning vs. blended remote/in-person learning options. Schools in Rockaway range from a high of 90% blended/in-person with 10% fully remote, to a low of 10% blended/in-person with 90% fully remote. The specific school data is available on the PowerPoint pdf file provided to the Community Board.

Although it is beyond our discussion today to delve into the specifics of the blended vs. remote learning data, the committee will point out that there are clear differences evident among Rockaway schools which appear to be drawn along socio-economic lines.

Randomized Covid-19 testing: will continue to be administered to students opting for in-person, blended learning. This requires a waiver signed off by parents and guardians. Very important to note is the statistic that testing in schools has consistently yielded a low positivity rate. Most recent data report the school testing rate in the low 1% range, which has been much lower than the overall citywide positivity rate and that of surrounding school communities.

State Exams: this year's ELA, Math and Science testing will be administered. The tests will be administered in schools as usual. Students opting for full remote instruction will not be required to take the examinations. Students opting for in-person, blended learning are expected to sit for the examinations.

Testing will be administered over multiple days to accommodate social distancing requirements.

Contrary to previous years, the examination results this year will not have accountability designation implications tied to school performance. In previous years accountability designations such as Priority, Focus and Reward schools, were tied to performance on state examinations.

Exam dates are as follows:

ELA 04/19/2021-04/29/2021

Math 05/3/2021- 05/14/2021

Science 06/07/2021-06/09/2021

Public School Athletic League (PSAL):

Mr. Norment was pleased to announce that PSAL sports activities would be re-activated in schools beginning this month (April). Despite disruptions in sports seasons and altered schedules, every attempt will be made to begin the long process of returning youth sports activities to the lives of so many students actively involved in them. Announcements with details and dates will be released over the next few days and weeks, through schools and district resources. Most recently, Chancellor Porter stated that the PSAL season will run through the summer months for the first time.

Additionally, schools continue to expand and enhance after-school activities such as STEM programs, sports and wellness programs, study labs, chess and music programs.

These programs will be expected to ramp-up over the coming months and may even include summer programming to ease transitioning into the Mayor's plan for full-time, in-person learning in the fall. More details are available in the PowerPoint pdf file provided.

The Deputy Superintendent finished the discussion by answering questions provided by the Youth Services and Education committee:

Q. What is the current policy with regard to returning all public-school students back to full time in-person learning?

Ans. The Mayor's current plan is for returning students back to full-time, in-person learning in fall of this year (2021) provided continued improvement in pandemic monitoring parameters.

Q. Is the policy based on Covid-19 cases as a percentage of population, Covid-19 hospitalizations, Covid-19 deaths, rate of spread of Covid-19 cases?

Ans. The policies are based on Department of Health assessments of overall NYC/regional Covid-19 positive testing and randomized testing results within specific schools.

Q. Who is making the policy (Health Dept. DOE? Mayor's Office?) Determining the terms for in-school learning and when children can return to full time in-school learning?

Ans. Decisions are determined by a combination of agencies including the Mayor's Office, Department of Health, State guidelines, union representatives and CDC guidance.

Q. Are all teachers being encouraged to get vaccinated against Covid-19?

Ans. Priority vaccination status has been granted to teachers, school staff and childcare workers under federal guidelines. According to a CDC report (4/6/21), over 80% of teachers have received at least one vaccine shot to date.

Q. Is data available on the percentage of students seeking to return to full time, in-person learning?

Ans. The new window for students seeking to opt-in to blended, in-person learning opened up again from March 24th-April 7th, 2021. No data is available at this time as to the percentage of students opting for in-person learning.

Q. Are public school covid-19 infection concerns being borne out in private schools which have been re-opening for in-person learning at a rapid rate?

Ans. The DOE has not compiled the data comparing Covid-19 cases and infection rates between public schools and private schools in NYC.

Q. With a reported 4% decrease in NYC public school enrollment (many students leaving to private schools) since the beginning of the Pandemic is there a concern that the socio-economic in-equities we have been working to correct will be amplified by the attempts to limit Covid-19 exposure.

Ans. This is a very complex topic as it delves into the analysis of disproportionate effects of the virus in struggling communities and low-income communities. What is known is that these communities have had the effects of Covid-19 health concerns compounded by loss of work opportunities, child care opportunities and housing shortage issues. How these effects combine with the movement of certain student populations out of the public school system and presumably into private school systems, is to be determined by much future study and analysis. Much has yet to be learned on the long-term effects of school closures and the pandemic on the at-risk communities.

Q. Given what we have learned about Covid-19 since the beginning of pandemic over a year ago, are the negative effects of school closures (social isolation, increased suicidal ideation, increased depression rates, decrease in student scholastic engagement) worse

than the effects of the disease itself? (CDC: Infection Fatality Rate in age group 10-19 is 0.2% or 99.8% survival rate)

Ans. The decisions made throughout the pandemic have been based on analyses being made at the time. Guidance on the issue of opening and closing schools has been received from Federal, State and City health resources. The severe effects of the closures on student mental and physical health continues to be a primary concern of the Department of Education and the issues stated are certainly guiding the decisions being made to place a priority on moving towards full-time, in-person student learning environments as quickly as possible.

Q. The CDC director stated earlier this year that she believed that full teacher vaccination was not necessary for full school re-opening. Is the DOE considering this in its negotiations with teachers' unions?

Ans. The district 27 Superintendent's office and team do not have access to the details of negotiations between the Department of Education and the teachers' unions. The negotiations are ongoing with details released by DOE and Union spokespersons.

Q. Newly released CDC guidelines recommend that schools be "last to close and first to reopen". Why do public schools continue to be closed with as little as two cases of positive covid-19 tests?

Ans. The guidelines for school closure are being evaluated on a regular basis. The Mayor is on record stating that he will revisit the rules on school closure in the coming weeks. The school closure guidelines were instituted on the basis of concern over the possibility of schools becoming a route for transmission of the virus into the larger community. With new data being analyzed on school transmission rates and with increasing vaccination rates, there should be new guidance being put forward shortly.

*Note: Mayor De Blasio announced changes in school closure rules on April 8th, 2021.

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Felecia Johnson Co-Chair of the committee reported that a committee meeting was held on April 7, 2021. Present the meeting representing the Federation of Organizations were Juanita Scarlett, Tracey Falkner-Deputy COO of Federation Organization, George Poulon, Utralika Panda-Architect Firm-Urban Architectural Initiatives, RA, PC, and Beau Garden-Bldg. SUP.

The agenda item for discussion was regarding a proposed development project to be located at 20-50 Nameoke Avenue in Far Rockaway.

The Federation of Organizations are proposing to develop 117 unit housing project in which 71 units will be supportive service enhanced apartments for formerly homeless individuals with severe mental illness and 46 affordable units @30-60% AMI.

Felecia Johnson made it clear to the committee that the discussion was to focus on the proposed programming, security and any other concerns of that nature. The project is an "AS OF RIGHT" project as far as zoning is concerned, and does **NOT** require the approval of the Community Board. City Councilman Donovan Richards provided a letter of support in 2019, without informing Community Board 14.

Representatives of the Federation of Organizations were allowed to make their presentation and provided information that included; it will be a 9-story bldg., with 76 studio apartments, 30-1-bedroom units, 11-2-bedroom units and 1 unit for the bldg. superintendent. There will be 2 elevators, a laundry room, community room, exercise room and office space, 24/7 front desk/security. The façade will be brick, and there is a

setback on the 5th fl. and it is handicap accessible. There will be parking for 13 vehicles, 45 units will not be for the severe MI. Those units will be available for those who apply and meet the financial eligibility requirements, following HPD application process and requirements. The land was purchased for \$4 million, and construction costs is estimated to be \$52-\$53 million. FOO stated that DOH approved the mental health services that will be provided.

The programming will be available for all who live in the building, not just the mentally ill population, and will include social work, housing case management, care coordinator and recreation. The funding for the project was through HRA and NYC 1515. The cost per client/year is \$21,000 for services provided and NYC-1515 will pick up the rental subsidy of \$1493/month. FOO stated there will be a rigorous screening process for the clients they will be renting to. They are looking to pull from Rockaway, other community programs, nursing homes, etc. But not all renters will be from Rockaway. Construction is to start July, 2021, and the funding contract is for 15 years.

The floor was opened for questions from the committee members. Several questions were asked regarding the programming that is to be provided to the severe MI population they are looking to serve. Through the discussion, the committee was informed that there is no DOH-OMH oversight on the programming. The services are not mandated by FOO. The clients can or cannot participate in services offered. There is no one to monitor that clients will be compliant in taking the medication, or engaging in activities that will be enhancing their mental wellbeing. It was asked if the 45 renters that are not severely MI would be made aware that they will be living and sharing common spaces with MI neighbors. That was not answered. The question of sex offenders and their eligibility was being addressed. The response was that no sex offenders would be allowed to rent from them. However, it was pointed out that legally, that status cannot be used against a person to prevent them from receiving public housing. Security was a major concern; especially when it was pointed out that the location of the building is near a housing development that has the highest crime statistics within the NYPD 101 Police Precinct area.

The concern was also for their clients possibly being victims based on their mental status. FOO responded that they did not believe so, as their clients were not going to be that impaired, and that there would be security cameras in place. However, when it was pointed out to them that their application, and packet provided to this committee, stated the population they were looking to serve are "severe mentally ill homeless clients". Queries regarding the population becoming transient as there is the possibility that they will require psych hospitalizations, and may not be able to maintain their independent living status. No response. Regarding the MI population they are looking to serve, the information FOO provided is that Rockaway and Broad Channel has a higher rate of adult psychiatric hospitalizations is higher than the citywide average. (1,158/100,000 adult psych. Hospital; versus 513/100,000 overall in Queens) With this in mind the question was asked if this was an appropriate program to bring to this area that is already overburdened; and why did they pick Rockaway to do this first-time project, instead of in West Babylon, LI where they are based. Again, there was no response, other than there is a need for affordable housing here. It was then proposed to FOO that perhaps this is really a housing project, and not a supportive service-oriented project. No response from the presenters. Questions regarding staffing, availability of staff for those MI in crisis, etc. were posed and definitive numbers or approximations could be provided.

The committee also asked if a CAB could/would be established, and if there would be preference/consideration for the hiring of Rockaway residents; the response was those areas could be looked at/considered.

The committee continued discussion on the project. Betty Leon made a motion that seconded by Felicia Johnson to send a letter of non-support in opposition of the project to the appropriate entities. The motion to oppose the supportive housing project was based on the following;

- The mental health component is unregulated by OMH
- No experience by FOO in this housing component type-new program for them and no clear oversight of services
- Participation in supportive services is not required by individuals, even though FOO will be paid \$1.5 million annually to provide Individuals not adjusting to the setting cannot be removed. They must go through housing court eviction procedures
- FOO was non-responsive when asked to explain why they felt Far Rockaway was an appropriate location for this project; when CB 14 had/has a higher rate of adult psychiatric hospitalizations in all of Queens

The Health and Social Service Committee made motion for the board to oppose supportive housing project development to be located at 20-50 Nameoke Avenue in Far Rockaway. The motion carried by a roll call vote of 30 YES, 0 NO and 0 ASTAINED.

Respectfully Submitted By: M. Dunning