

COMMUNITY BOARD #7 PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2014
UNION PLAZA CARE CENTER
33-23 UNION STREET
FLUSHING, NEW YORK

PRESENT

Charles Apelian
John Byas
Tyler Cassell
James Cervino
Chin-Hsiang Chiang
Kim Cody
Nicholas Corrado
Joseph Femenia
Arlene Fleishman
Rose Forkan
Pablo Hernandez
Jeff Huang
Kevin Kang

Donald Kirchhofer
Phil Konigsberg
Peter Kwiath
Esther Lee
Frank Macchio
Rev. R. McEachern
Barbara McHugh
Selma Moses
Kim Ohanian
Terence Park
Vana Partridge
Kris Ram
Jean Ren

Andrew Rocco
Kevin Shields
Marc Schiffman
Warren Schreiber
Lynda Spielman
Joshua Sussman
Peter Sutich
Joseph Sweeney
John Tsavalos
Peter Tu
Arnold Wagner
Linna Yu

ABSENT

Dilip Chauhan
Timothy Chuang
Fred Fu

Eugene Kelty
Frank Keppel
Nicholas Miglino

Millicent O'Meally
Carlos Talisaysay

COMMUNITY BOARD #7 STAFF-

Marilyn Bitterman, District Manager
Marilyn McAndrews, Community Assistant
Mary Zuliani, Community Assistant

GUESTS

Don Capalbi, Congresswoman Meng's Office
Rich Stein, Senator Avella's Office
Elaine Fan, Comptroller Stringer's Office
Gene McSweeney, Assemblyman Braunstein's Office

GUESTS – continued

Barbara Baruch, Assemblyman Kim's Office
Courtney Cariello, Assemblywoman Rozic's Office
Munir Avery, Assemblyman Simanowitz's Office
Allen Hsu, Councilman Koo's Office
Stacey Eliuk, Councilman Lancman's Office
Vito Tautonico, Councilman Vallone's Office

First Vice-Chair Chuck Apelian called the meeting to order in the absence of Chairperson Kelty, who is on vacation, and asked everyone to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance and to remain standing for a moment of silence in honor of our Military in harm's way protecting us and our freedom, and also for the 239 people on the missing Malaysian flight to China.

The roll call attendance was taken by First Vice-Chair Apelian with **(38)** members present **(4)** absent and **(4)** excused, and mentioned one of our members, Francis Keppel, being excused because of a broken leg. He followed with the public announcements and indicated they would be available to anyone after the meeting or the next day at the board office. He reminded everyone if you don't have health care coverage by March 31, 2014 you will be penalized \$95.00 or 1% of your income, whichever is larger. Unfortunately, the web site, nyhealthplace.com is terrible, and may take you hours....but you must do it.

The **February 10, 2014** minutes were approved unanimously with no corrections and seconded by Marc Schiffman.

First Vice-Chair Apelian then asked **Lynda Spielman**, the **Committee Chair**, to speak on the Budget. She announced we were on the next step of the budget process and there being no further input from the Board this evening, will continue to push for the items the Board committed to during the initial budget process.

McNeil SeaWall – A committee meeting was held on December 12, 2013 for discussion and committee vote, and a presentation to the full board is on the agenda tonight. **Committee Chair Kim Ohanian** gave the floor to Ricardo Hinkle, Senior Landscape Architect Designer and Martha Burgess, Assistant Landscape Architect for Parks Department to present the reconstruction of the sea wall and esplanade of McNeil Park with a budget of \$2.4 million and an additional \$75,000 to create a Kayak launch. McNeil Park's 29 acres, with some sections in the 100-year flood zone, was acquired in 1930 and named after renowned sculpturer, Herman Atkins McNeil. The main concern is the collapsing seawall and pavement in the north and northwest that must be redone. The northeast and southern portions are in fairly good condition, but nonetheless will be refurbished. Plans include improvement of the path system, concrete steps to be repaired in granite to the water, ramps connecting to the circulation system, sitting areas with new benches (similar to those at the World's Fair), creation of a separate fishing area with an alcove, replacement of current chain link fences with aluminum painted black, and restoration of the tree canopy with native trees. Also, they plan on two additional access points to the seawall, one on the north/northeast side and one on the northwest side on the left.

Q. What is the time line for the project?

A. We hope to have the construction drawings completed by this summer. DEC approval of the drawings may take anywhere from 6 months to a year and a half. Construction would then start sometime in 2015 with possible completion in 2018.

Environmentalist and Board Member **James Cervino**, of the College Point Civic Association and Coastal Preservation Network said he would be glad to give them their proposal that doesn't add any building to the wetlands and only uses the existing steps to the Kayak beach that are there.

A. We are also contemplating handicap access to the beach with a ramp, but the slope cannot be too angled.

Q. The Kayak is a separate Fund, correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you explain the discrepancy of the City Council funding and Construction funding of almost a half million dollars discrepancy?

A. The total funding is \$2.4 million and what is traditionally done is to subtract 30% from the anticipated construction funding ; i.e. 10% for contingency, 10% for design and 10% for construction administration. It's too soon to know what the actual construction figures will be.

Q. Will the broken pavement that is cement be replaced with asphalt?

A. To make the 3 ft. deep concrete wall that abuts the walkway more stable, the L-footing will be in concrete, but the esplanade itself will be in asphalt.

Q. Will they allow additional fill in the kayak area?

A. Fill will not be allowed to extend a ramp, but we will see if a ramp is possible without fill, and if not, it will be with steps.

Second Vice-Chair, Frank Macchio, who just came back from Queens Borough Hall, said approval was given to the above Capital item at the Borough Board.

The motion on the floor is to approve the capital item plan as presented to us, seconded by Selma Moses.

Discussion from the floor!

Board member, **James Cervino**, commented the area of concern he brought up earlier was the area where hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent out-of-pocket for restoration. They received no funding for this area. Teachers, universities, local schools, residents all go there, conduct educational research, do coastal clean-up and improve the area. They are not asking for money, but a few steps with a railing to continue using the area without taking away wet lands. In essence they have been restoring wet lands. They have been unable to receive permits from the DEC. The Civic Association and the Coastal Preservation Network would like to be a part of the approval process. After discussion the following was agreed upon.

A friendly amendment is to be added to the motion on the floor to have access to the waterfront (the beach and kayak launch) on the northern end of the park.

The vote taken was unanimous (37) Yes (0) No (0) Abstained

Martin "Woody" McHale Fort Totten Playground – Committee Chair Kim Ohanian gave the February 20, 2014 committee meeting report for the renaming of Fort Totten Playground for deceased Fire Marshall Martin McHale. Originally Friends of Fort Totten Park wanted to name this playground from someone in their area who devoted a tremendous amount of time and who died last year. However, they were given alternatives such as "adopt a tree or a bench with a plaque or a garden." She then read the letter from Randall Wilson, Commanding Officer of the Bureau of Fire Investigation to District Manager Marilyn Bitterman asking for this honor in memory of his distinguished career, his relations with Fort Totten, his kindness, sincerity, integrity and respect for everyone, his love of family, especially

his sons, a strong supporter of his community, our military, our wounded veterans, and his country. His death was a great loss to everyone he touched. She then gave the floor to **Randall Wilson** from the Fire Marshall's office, which currently has two commands thanks to Community Board #7, and is looking for our support in naming the Ft. Totten Playground in Fire Marshall McHale's name. He praised McHale as a role model and mentor to those under his command. He thanked everyone present and asked if anyone had questions.

Q. Would it mean the Fire Department will be good stewards of the Park as well?

A. We would be proud to carry on the tradition Woody started and maintain the park.
Right now it's just designation C-26.

The motion on the floor is to approve the naming of Ft. Totten Playground in memory of Martin "Woody" McHale and referring the matter to the Mayor, City Park Commissioner and local elected officials for their approval, seconded by Marc Schiffman.

Discussion followed :

Q. Is there a criteria for this type of name change?

A. Yes, this would come under street naming guide lines.

District Manager Bitterman added Chair Kelty had already planned for the April agenda to include a review of BSA, City Planning and Street Naming guidelines.

Committee Chair Ohanian advised the committee meeting vote was (9) For & (1) abstention.

Board member Warren Schreiber took the opportunity to praise the Fort Totten Fire Department's dedication to the community and the wonderful neighbors they've been the past six years.

The vote taken this evening was (37) Yes (0) No (0) abstentions

First Vice-Chair Apelian's final comment was Community Board #7 was privileged to have been of help in finding the Fort Totten location for Fire Department's Bureau of Fire Investigation and their presence has added immensely to our community, for which we thank them. Procedurally, this is not an AKA, so it will go before the Mayor's office and the Parks Commissioner because it's not policy and then to City Council to assist in putting it through.

Q. Who was the member who abstained from the voting?

A. Chair Kelty abstained because of conflict of interest.

Q. Is it going before the City Council for the final vote?

A. District Manager Bitterman responded the Parks Department procedure is not to name a park for any individual, the exception being McNeil who was a Borough President. However, the board and committee felt very strongly about this particular request, and in view of the Mayor, who is looking for community involvement and input, it was decided to write to him and Parks, with a copy to Councilman Paul Vallone to do what he can to get them to approve it.

New York State Pavilion –On February 20th Committee Chair Ohanian and Parks committee met with the **People for the Pavilion**, a group garnering support for the preservation, rehabilitation and eventual reuse of the New York State Pavilion. Queens Borough president, Melinda Katz, agrees the Pavilion shouldn't be destroyed. One of the founders of People for the Pavilion, Matt Silva, at several sessions, detailed how it could best serve the interests to the surrounding communities, and how it might function as an economic driver for the area.

He spoke of the need to meet people who support the preservation of the structure on how best to utilize the Pavilion and to discuss ideas on organizing and moving forward with necessary funding plans. Chair Ohanian said Parks is supportive of maintaining the Pavilion. Their own DPR conducted a structural survey a few years back and determined the Tent of Tomorrow and the 3 Observations Towers are in relatively good condition and structurally sound. Thus far the responses from the sessions have been overwhelming in favor. It's in the early stages, however, with more presentations expected in the future. The group will come back to us periodically with more information.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Speaker **Don Capalbi**, liaison for Congresswoman Grace Meng, announced the Congresswoman is holding an event at Queens College, Rosenthal Library tomorrow, March 11, 2014, at 11 a.m. regarding small business issues. Anyone interested can speak with her. Also, during Women's History Month on March 17th at 6 pm she is having conversations on equal pay for women and the support of women entrepreneurs.

The next Speaker is **Maureen Regan** of Green Earth Urban Gardens and Queensborough Hill Flushing Civic. With a background running volunteer programs at the senior gardens at Botanical Garden and Evergreen Gardens, she started Green Earth Urban Gardens, a non-profit organization, specifically for teenagers and is looking for more sponsors. They've done park clean-up projects, have movie nights, a school band to play on Armed Forces day in May, etc. and reached out to schools and civic associations to give our youth incentive to participate in the community.

Board Member, **Tyler Cassell**, reminded homeowners you can qualify for the Basic Star exemption if your combined household income is \$81,900.00 or less and for the Enhanced Star exemption if your combined income is under \$500,000.00. He discovered recently that Veterans also have an exemption if they served during the war or a conflict. If you haven't applied, you can get the application on line and submit it with the required information.

The final speaker, **Juliana Gonzalez**, from the Mental Health Association of New York spoke about the free program for any survivor or responder of 9/11 still experiencing mental and health problems; those affected by Sandy who are having trouble coping; and last there is LifeNet, a twenty-four/seven, 365 day Hot line for anyone with a problem who will be referred to the proper services as needed.

There being no further business on the agenda, the meeting closed at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Zuliani
Community Assistant