

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

PRESENT-

Charles Apelian
John Byas
Tyler Cassell
Chin-Hsiang Chiang
Nicholas Corrado
Joseph Femenia
Arlene Fleishman
Rose Forkan
Fred Fu
Pablo Hernandez
Jeff Huang

Phil Konigsberg
Peter Kwiath
Frank Macchio
Barbara McHugh
Selma Moses
Kim Ohanian
Millicent O'Meally
Vana Partridge
Andrew Rocco
Marc Schiffman
Warren Schreiber

Kevin Shields
Matthew Silverstein
Joshua Sussman
Joseph Sweeney
Carlos Talisaysay
John Tsavalos
Peter Tu
Arnold Wagner
Linna Yu
Jie Zhu

ABSENT-

Tyler Cassell
Timothy Chuang
Kim Cody
Eugene Kelty

Donald Kirchhofer
Esther Lee
Rev. R. McEachern
Devon O'Connor

Terence Park
Kris Ram
Jean Ren
Peter Sutich
Clarissa Wong

COMMUNITY BOARD #7 STAFF-

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

GUESTS-

Don Capalbi, Congresswoman Meng's office
Elaine Fan, NYC Comptroller Stringer's office
Courtney Cariello, Assemblywoman Rozic's office

GUESTS (continued)

Scott Wolff, Assemblyman Simanowitz's office

Amber Yoon, Assemblyman Braunstein's office

Allen Hsu Councilman Koo's office

Mona Valentin, CAU office

Adam Chen, Public Advocate's office

Susie Tanenbaum, Queens Borough Pres. office

Chair Eugene Kelty is doing well and happens to be attending another meeting. In his absence, the meeting was called to order at 7:15 P.M. by First Vice-Chair Chuck Apelian. At his request, we stood and proudly Pledged Allegiance to our Flag on this memorable day, Veterans Day. He asked for a moment of silence to commemorate our armed forces who are in harms way protecting our freedom, and to remember those who have given their lives so we can be free. God Bless them.

The roll call was taken with (32) present (6) excused and (7) absent. As the meeting progressed, three members left early missing some of the vote taking.

Scott Wolff, from the office of Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz, was given the floor to speak on a recent press conference regarding a discount card program for our veterans being offered by 40 businesses in Queens County on day one thus far, with many more expected to join in the weeks and months ahead. If you have any questions, you can call their office at 718-969-1508. God Bless our veterans! It's a very small thing we can do for all the tremendous sacrifices our soldiers have given us. Spread the word wherever possible so all our veterans can take advantage of it. This is not limited to Community board #7's district, but all of Queens.

First Vice-Chair Apelian proceeded to read the announcements, which will be available at the end of the meeting as well as at the community board office tomorrow.

Item #5 – Toilet Replacement Program – Karen Ellis, from NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection spoke on the 2014 toilet replacement program to qualified multiple family property owners. Participants will receive a \$125.00 instant rebate on each new EPA toilet to replace older toilets with 3.5 gallons per flush or more with the highly efficient 1.28 gallons per flush or less. The program started in September 2014 and **does not** apply to those who participated in the past program from 1994 to 1997. If you have a multi-family property of four or more, your water and sewer account is in good standing, you are connected to the AMR device, and you do not have 1.6 flow high efficiency toilets in your building, you are eligible. Your supplier in Queens is Blackman Plumbing Supply at 134-07 Northern Boulevard. If you have to flush more than once, and/or your water bill is too high because of a possible leak, you can dispute your bill by calling Customer Service at 718/595-7000 or e-mail us at www.nyc.gov/dep and/or to monitor your use, click on "my dep account" in the upper right hand corner and set up your own account. Water is our most valuable resource and the DEP is committed to preserving the quality and conservation of our drinking water. They've been monitoring a leak since 1990 in the Delaware Aqueduct that carries approximately 50% of the City's water supply. Repairs to

the Aqueduct will be completed 2017-18. In 2016 we will commence Phase II of the toilet program with one, two and three family homes to be eligible for the replacement program.

Q. What causes discoloration of the water.

A. It can be the Fire Dept. has opened a fire hydrant in the area or it could be a water main break or construction work nearby. However, a call to 311 can solve or explain the problem.

First Vice-Chair Apelian reminded board members to stay until the end of our Public Hearing & Regular Meeting, unless there is a real emergency where you must leave. Also, you are responsible to be part of the community's Public Participation for their opinions and concerns. It's only once a month and your presence and vote is important.

Item #9 – Willets Point Update, etal - First Vice-Chair Apelian thought it best to first do the Regular Meeting update on Willets Point, as well as Flushing Commons, Macedonia Plaza, and Muni Lot #3, etc. before the Public Hearing items. We are in Phase I of **Flushing Commons** and still have issues with traffic flow problems surrounding the construction, but are working with the Police and Dept. of Transportation. **Muni Lot #3** has been released for an RFP for affordable housing. Our land use committee must demand continuous input on potential problems with plans, layout, parking, etc. from the PD, DOT, and HPD. Community Board #7 belongs in the process from day one because this is our community. Our input is essential, if they want success. The lesson was learned with **Macedonia Plaza**. Mayoral overrides surfaced, the parking was gone, setbacks gone, zoning laws violated. We weren't allowed in the process and it was dumped on us at the end by HPD, which was wrong. Now we're hearing the complaints of no parking from residents and even the church. Today we received a BSA project for **Two Fulton Square** which is very large in area and requires a waiver on bulk and parking. We've already scheduled two hearings on it and will work on it until we get it right. **The Sears Site**, a very big project, came into being some 10 years ago. It has a hotel, commercial and retail space and residential. We've done informals on it, but it always went nowhere. Two years ago Atty. Eric Palatnik met with us, but we never heard back from him. Last week we received word from City Planning it was certified. Unfortunately, our 60 day clock ends December 29th which leaves us with very little time. As far as the **RKO Keiths**, the owner is going to reduce the unit count from 357 to 269 and parking to about 300, all of which is close to what we requested. The 15,000 square feet for a "community facility & senior center" is still in the plan. The owner appears sincere to build the project and hopes to commence breaking ground January 2015. If there is a need to modify the variance, we will deal with it. After having received a grant from the State, the **Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA)** will go forward with rezoning of the area along College Point Blvd., Prince St., Roosevelt Ave. and Northern Blvd. Also, the owner of the **Bayrock** site in Whitestone was to clean up the manufacturing contamination, reclaim the waterfront, get a public park, and build single family homes. However, they now are looking to build townhouses. First and foremost we require the site be cleaned. Then we can reconvene a committee meeting. Our October 8th quarterly meeting with **Willets Point Redevelopment** wasn't too productive. They still do not have title to all the properties and not all the businesses have been relocated. But it's important to remember that it's an **information update** which gives the board the opportunity for an open forum and discussion with members, elected officials and

the community. However, we are not an enforcement body, and it's particularly upsetting when the board is expected to enforce what should be done. We do not like the fact that Board #7 gets thrown in the middle of something political by those who have an interest in Willets Point and use CB #7 as their leverage against the City and negotiations. We don't want people challenging us to do good things under the guise of good government or community representation. It's about what is fair and good for the community and not for special interests. Some of the letters we get from Willets United have some merit, but lose credibility when they attack the board unnecessarily and unfairly. We just received the Willets Point remedial cleanup work plans that were approved by DEC and Health Department, which include history of water soil to determine areas of contamination. The cleanup includes every lot in the first 23 acres of Phase One with the developer presently owning only 10% and the City owning 90%, but still have no information on what's outstanding. If we find anything is missing in the plan, our letter will go out immediately to incorporate them. By January we hope the remedial action plan will be ready to go forward. We've asked them to have their Environmental Engineer at the next quarterly meeting. **The Sunrise Co-Op Group** was to get a group of businesses on board and move to another M3 zoning location, which in itself is difficult since M3 zones and sellers are scarce in NYC, has stalled. Although EDC has committed their help to the Group, Sunrise is suing the City at the same time causing delays. Also, Senator Avella's suit against the developers and Sunrise, although lost, was appealed and will be heard sometime in 2015. To top it off, new FEMA regulations since Sandy affected the Affordable Housing component at Willets Point to be changed from Phase One to Phase Two causing more delays. Our Land Use committee members have a tough job with all the huge projects in downtown Flushing, yet we continue to be diligent and professional and are respected by the City. As Committee Chair I thank each and every one of the Land Use members.

ITEM #7 - One-Way Proposal 159th St. Northbound between Booth Memorial & Horace Harding Expwy and One-Way Proposal 160th St. Southbound between Booth Memorial & Horace Harding Expwy. Committee Chair Joseph Femenia read his committee report of October 2, 2014 wherein the Principle of P.S. 163, Nicole Bullen Stinchcomb and parents voiced their concerns for their children dodging double parked cars, vehicles blocking bus stops, motorists driving around stopped vehicles, vehicles making illegal U-turns... all on narrow two-way streets. Petition signatures were gathered from residents on 159th and 160th Streets. The school faculty said the Police, DOT and local community representatives have observed these conditions and the close calls that occur. However, there is only one crossing guard and not enough staff to monitor pickups and drop-offs. Assemblywoman Nily Rozic and Don Capalbi of Queensborough Hill Flushing Civic Association are in favor of the one-ways and stop signs and Board #7's committee voted to approve the requests. The DOT is also being asked to do a study again for all way stop signs at 159th Street and 59th Avenue. Also we request the bus stop now on 59th Avenue be moved to 159th Street near corner of 59th Avenue so students can exit at the curb.

Speaker James Moglia, resident of 159th Street since 1957, feels the community's solution to the problem is a "displaced solution". The problem is 59th Avenue because signs of "No

Standing” on 59th Avenue are being ignored. We are going to inconvenience everyone on two streets because of 3 school buses. Is that going to stop the parents? Absolutely not! Is anyone from the school coming out to help? Absolutely not! It’s not the school crossing guard’s job. Her job is to take care of the kid’s safety. When the petition came around, I signed it because it was for traffic North to South which I felt was a good option. However, this change is not being made for the safety of the children, but for the convenience of the school to accommodate 3 buses. Why can’t the buses come down or come around Parsons Blvd.? I have only one option and that will be to go south. I can’t go North, make a left or right turn on 59th Avenue. People who live in the neighborhood walk their children to school. The people who drive children to school live out of the area. So your solution is to make an exception 24/7, 365 days a year for the people there for a few hours a week.

First Vice-Chair Apelian clarified Mr. Moglia contention that traffic on 159th Street **is going Northbound** and not Southbound. In any event, he is still against the solution.

Speaker Patricia Moglia’s concern is with 160th Street Southbound to the Bus Stop on the L.I.E. service road, and where L.I.E. traffic exits onto the service road, there is a health food store on the service road that receives deliveries by tractor-trailer leaving only one lane open to traffic and patron’s parking making it difficult for her to traverse the already congested area.

Speaker Lisa Shiller, a teacher for 31 years at P.S. 163, is there at 6:15 a.m. in the morning. The children’s safety comes first. It’s not about your inconvenience. She’s been out there trying to get the traffic to keep going and the children safe. They’ve nicknamed her Sheriff Shiller. She calls 311 when residents park their cars in front of hydrants or put garbage pails in the street to save parking spaces. Some children are latch-key students. It’s not 1957 anymore or 1984. More of the students are walking. The streets need to be made safe for them and the community.

Speaker Dolores Morris has lived in the neighborhood since the 1960’s with 4 children who all attended P.S. 163 from 1960 to 1990. Safety of the children is paramount. However, she questions whether changing 159th St. and 160th St. to one-ways will help. She would be interested in a meeting with both the parents of children attending school and those who live in the neighborhood to come up with a fair solution.

Speaker Richard Morris, husband of Dolores, added his main concern is the ongoing traffic on 160th St. that never stops and suggests using speed bumps.

Speaker Nicole Stinchcomb, Principal of P.S.163, feels both sides can reach a common ground. Enrollment in 2005 was 385 students. They now have 620 students and, with the extension, they anticipate it will continue to grow. The sheer number of families now living in the area, the increase in traffic and the shortage of staff and funding, all contribute to the current crisis which will only become worse. She hopes a solution can be reached

Speaker Maggie Klocek, Assistant Principal, added it’s about the children’s safety coming first.

Speaker Pamela Gather, Assistant Principal, is also concerned about the children and the community regarding the traffic situation and hopes we can all work together and reach a peaceful solution.

Speaker Judy Leong, a parent concerned with the safety of children, feels the one-ways would eliminate U-turns and benefit residents using their driveways.

Speaker Janet Fiala, a resident homeowner from 160th St. agrees children's safety is very important, but feels a one-way is not the solution. Right turns from 160th St. onto the L.I.E. service road are very dangerous. What is needed is the Police giving tickets for double parking.

Speaker Eric Hsu, P.S. 163 PTA Treasurer spoke on behalf of his board, who all feel the one-way pattern traffic changes are necessary.

Speaker Phil Chambas commented the one-way plan does add some inconvenience to the homeowners in the area. He pointed out whatever the inconvenience to homeowners, the current two way traffic cannot remain. Everyday traffic is getting worse and we are getting closer to a terrible tragedy.

Speaker Claudia Echeveoir, a parent whose daughter attended P.S. 163 and is a resident of the area, agrees something must be done soon for the safety of the children whose lives are at risk. She emphasized we must make the sacrifice and not wait until it's too late.

Speaker Al Consolantis said it's the same story over and over. Schools against the homeowners! The problem is speeding motorists as well as cars double and triple parking to let off children. Get the police involved to give tickets, install speed humps and full stop signs.

Speaker Jennie Vazquez, a resident in the area, votes Yes for a one-way Northbound on 159th St. Safety for the children comes first!

Speaker Mike Carlamusto, a 40 year resident on 159th St., reminded us the Kissena Blvd. exit onto the service road every morning is backed up with traffic with cars making right turns onto 159th St. He believes making it one-way will allow cars to speed up on 159th St. increasing the danger to the children and the community. He would rather see the DOT get involved and do a traffic study.

Speaker Don Capalbi, President of Queensborough Hill Neighborhood Association, said this problem is quite common with all schools. P.S. 120 in his area, which is between 136th and 138th Street, used to be a two-way street is now a one-way which helps children cross more safely. Speed humps are a good idea which slows down traffic, but not congestion. Stop signs are another good idea, but it's already in the proposal. It would be great if a traffic cop was available all the time, but there is not enough manpower to cover all the schools. He too has to use circuitous routes because of the one-way but the inconvenience is minor compared to the loss of a child.

First Vice-Chair Apelian took the time to make it clear his light banter with the speakers in no way detracts from the seriousness of this discussion by the board.

Committee Chair Femenia mentioned he used to live on a two-way street that was changed to a one-way. Coming out of his driveway is much easier now. Also, at his committee meeting, representative David Ng for Nellie Rozic said she was in favor of the one-ways for 159th and 160th Streets. As far as speed humps, approval must come from all homeowners on the block. The DOT then will choose where it will be placed. The homeowner chosen will have the sign in front and get to hear the noise when motorists or trucks go over it. The DOT has a program

called Safe Routes to School with one-ways, speed humps, all way stop signs and now may include a five block area with speed cameras and 20 miles per hour limit initiated by Mayor DeBlasio. You will get tickets! The October 2, 2014 meeting concluded with a **6 to 0** approval of one-way for 159th Street Northbound and 160th Street Southbound.

The motion on the floor now is to approve a one-way proposal for 159th Street Northbound between Booth Memorial Avenue & Horace Harding Expressway & to approve a one-way proposal for 160th Street Southbound between Booth Memorial & Horace Harding Expressway, seconded by Marc Schiffman.

Discussion followed with Board Member Joshua Sussman asking for a motion to table the discussion.

The vote taken to table the discussion was (14) For (16) Against

The original motion is back on the floor to approve the one-way proposals. Discussion followed:

Board member Andy Rocco, who is an Assistant Principal for the Dept. of Education has had to grapple with this issue. Funding by the 109th Precinct for Crossing Guards is not the issue, but finding volunteers in this district is. Access to shut down streets temporarily for a half hour, however, is available. **District Manager Bitterman** intervened to say we can no longer do street closings. We requested it for one or two schools and it was denied by the DOT. It was basically done for parochial schools with no school yards. **First Vice Chair Apelian** asked **Susie Tannenbaum** from the Queens BP office to check on it. **Board member Phil Konigsberg** supports the teachers, but feels a stop light on 160th Street and Horace Harding Expressway would help immensely. **Board member Nick Corrado** was looking for assurance that a one-way would definitely help if he voted for it. **Third Vice Chair Warren Schreiber** commended the educators for their dedication to their work under these trying conditions. However, he has some concerns that changing to one-ways will not alleviate the problem. He quoted from the Principal's letter the dangerous conditions such as "cars stopping in middle of street while others speed around them as students are trying to cross, families parking in designated bus areas causing traffic to back up all the way to Booth Memorial Ave., students being released from cars in the middle of the street as traffic is still moving in both directions, families trying to park on the school sidewalks in an attempt to avoid the traffic, and a student almost getting hit trying to avoid a car while crossing". Maybe with one-ways it won't be as bad, but it won't remediate it entirely. **Board member Arlene Fleishman** agrees with Warren. There has to be traffic signals and better focus by the Bd.of Education and the Dept. of Transportation around ever single school. **Board member Josh Sussman** felt enforcement by the Precincts with the help of the Dept. of Education is essential, whether the streets around the schools are one-way or two-way. **Board member, Peter Tu**, also feels the parents must come to the plate and drive responsibly. **Committee Chair Femenia** said the issue for one-ways has come before the Board twice before and both times it was tabled, and nothing followed. Enforcement with

ticketing is difficult because there is not enough police manpower to cover every school. However, if the Safe Routes To School is applicable, the five block area with cameras and corresponding 20 mph limit would cover the lack of manpower. Finally, **First Vice Chair Apelian** summed it as not being fool-proof, but obviously has helped to some degree. No one has ever called and said it made it matters worse.

The motion now on the floor is to pass the one-ways for 159th Street and 160th Street

The vote taken was (28) For (1) No (1) Abstained/conflict

ITEM #8 - A.K.A. Rider for Police Officer Phillip Cardillo Way - 28th Avenue between College Point Blvd & Ulmer Street - Committee Chair Joseph Femenia gave his Committee meeting report of October 21, 2014 regarding Police Officer Phillip Cardillo who was cowardly ambushed while rushing into a building on a false report of an Officer in need of assistance. He was taken hostage and executed. Though he wasn't from College Point, it's an event to be memorialized by the Police Academy for purposes of training. A motion was made by Marc Schiffman and seconded by Kim Cody to approve. The vote was unanimous 9 to 0.

There was no discussion, but it was mentioned that an episode on Blue Bloods was based on this event.

The motion is now on the floor to approve the A.K.A. Rider for 28th Avenue between College Point Boulevard and Ulmer Street in honor of "Police Officer Phillip Cardillo Way", and seconded by Marc Schiffman.

The vote taken was unanimous (29) Approved (0) Against

First Vice Chair Apelian, before closing, pointed how many representatives from our elected Officials are with us today. We have representatives from Councilman Peter Koo's office, the Comptroller's Office, three representatives from the Assembly for Simanowitz, Rozic, and Braunstein, Congresswoman Meng's office, the CAU from the Mayor's office, the Public Advocates, and our Queensborough President's office. It speaks volumes on the quality and work we do and how important this District is across the City. There being no public participation this evening, the meeting closed at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Zuliani