

COMMUNITY BOARD #7 PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2015  
UNION PLAZA CARE CENTER  
33-23 UNION STREET  
FLUSHING, NEW YORK

PRESENT

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

Kevin Kang  
Gene Kelty  
Phil Konigsberg  
Esther Lee  
Frank Macchio  
Barbara McHugh  
Selma Moses  
Kim Ohanian  
Millicent O'Meally  
Vana Partridge  
Kris Ram  
Andrew Rocco  
Belal Salim  
Marc Schiffman

Warren Schreiber  
Kevin Shields  
Matthew Silverstein  
Joshua Sussman  
Peter Sutich  
Joseph Sweeney  
Carlos Talisaysay  
Alison Tan  
John Tsavalos  
Arnold Wagner  
Harpreet Wahan  
Clarissa Wong  
Linna Yu  
Jie Zhu

ABSENT

Timothy Chuang  
Fred Fu

Peter Kwiath  
Rev. R. McEachern

Devon O'Connor  
Terence Park  
Peter Tu

COMMUNITY BOARD #7 STAFF

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

GUESTS

Eric Kim, Congresswoman Meng's office  
Steph Campanha, Senator Avella's office

GUEST (continued)

Tess McRae, Senator Stavisky's office  
 Erin Rogers, Assemblywoman Rozic's office  
 Tim Thomas, Assemblyman Simanowitz's office  
 Vito Tautonico, Councilman Vallone's office  
 Chae No, Councilman Koo's office  
 Elaine Fan, NYC Comptroller's office  
 Adam Chen, Public Advocate James' office

Nicole Garcia, NYCDOT Commissioner  
 Richard Gippetti, NYCDOT Borough Planner  
 Aaron Sugiura, NYCDOT Project Manager  
 Luke DePalma, MTA Government Relations  
 Simone Price, MTA Government Relations  
 Patrick Dougherty, NYC Transit  
 Susie Tannenbaum, QnsBorough Pres. office

**First Vice-Chair Chuck Apelian**, on behalf of our Chair Kelty, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence in remembrance of our military forces in harms way protecting us at home and abroad, and also our emergency responders who keep us safe here at home. Also, 2 weeks ago was the anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy. Let us remember those who perished on that day. Keep them all in your hearts and prayers.

He described our board as the largest in Queens geographically and in population. He introduced Community Board #7's Executive Board and staff, and happily announced Marilyn McAndrews' status change to Assistant District Manager.

The roll call attendance was taken with **(41) Present (3) Absent (4) Excused**

**First Vice-Chair Apelian** read the announcements of the evening, which will be available to anyone interested at the end of the meeting, as well as tomorrow at the office. Also the Queens Borough President's approval of the Tow Pound application was received with the recommendation the tow pound staff and towed vehicles be contained within the facility; operations never conducted on surrounding streets; and vehicles diverted to other facilities when total capacity reached. An e-mail was received Friday, 9/18/2015 from Harold Goldman, the RKO Keith's attorney, advising us their application was approved by the BSA, and thanking the Board for the work done. Executive Board Member, Barbara McHugh, has arranged our Christmas Dinner for December 14, 2015 at Tony Roma's in Bay Terrace. The menu will follow by mail. Councilman Ron Kim, who wanted to be with us this evening, is stuck at a meeting in the City, so he graciously sent a text with his regards. He recently made the news as our own super hero stopping a robbery in progress by tackling the man and holding him until the police arrived.

**The motion to approve the minutes for June 22, 2015, with corrections made earlier, was seconded by Marc Schiffman and unanimously approved by the Board.** **Item #5** from the Mayor's office on Sustainability was cancelled due to a no-show. **Item #6**, by the Sanitation Marine Transfer Station was tabled again at their request to our November 9, 2015 Public Hearing. **Item #8**, Calendar #139-15 (10-24 154 Street) and **Item #9**, NYC Plaza Program were both tabled, leaving **Item #7** on the agenda. Added to this evening's agenda will be the **2017 Preliminary Budget**, the **DOT/MTA Select Bus Service**, and the **Education Resolution**, in that order.

## PUBLIC HEARING

**ITEM #7 – A.K.A. RIDER – 149<sup>TH</sup> STREET & WILLETS POINT BLVD – In Memory of CHARLES P. LUCANIA** who perished on 9/11/2001 and whose remains, as of today, were never found. Committee Chair, Joseph Femenia, held the Transportation Committee meeting on July 22, 2015 to discuss the A.K.A.

Rider for 149<sup>th</sup> Street & Willets Point Blvd. to be also named as “Charles Lucania Memorial Way”, a 9/11 sign. The applicant making the request, Patrick McCutchen, who grew up with “Charlie” and was his best friend. Charles Lucania grew up in Whitestone, graduated from Holy Cross, played with the Dwarf Giraffe football team, later was Coach for the league, was well liked and always helped those in need. Under our guidelines, the 9/11 attack comes under criteria #5 (event recognition) and #6 (memorialize deceased persons). Although, Board Members Pablo Hernandez & Selma Moses wanted more clarity during our committee meeting, we have approved A.K.A.’s in the past for those fallen on 9/11, even though they were not first responders. Considering three prior approvals for 9/11 signs and the guide lines presented by City Council, a future meeting to re-review the guidelines is recommended. He gave the floor to Mr. McCutchen who is representing the Lucania family. On 9/11 at age 34 Charlie was working on the 98<sup>th</sup> Floor of the South Tower for P.E Stone as an electrician for Local 3 Union. He would have celebrated his 35<sup>th</sup> birthday on 9/18/2001. Patrick and other friends helped at the site hoping to find his remains. Charlie had a heart of gold and went out of way to help others without hesitation. He was involved in the Whitestone Charity softball tournament raising monies for various children's charities. He left his mom, dad and younger sister, but there is no grave for them to visit and the pain has never left them. Only now are they able to accept a personal memorial in the neighborhood for people to remember him by, especially for those who can't make it downtown to Ground Zero. We hope you will consider this memorial to honor him. Committee Chair Femenia said the vote taken at the committee meeting was 8 to 1 in favor. The memorial sign will be placed in front of his family home on 149<sup>th</sup> Street & Willets Point Blvd.

**The motion now on the floor is to approve the A.K.A. Rider for 149<sup>th</sup> Street & Willets Point Blvd to be known as “Charles P. Lucania Memorial Way”, seconded by Marc Schiffman.**

**The vote taken was (39) For (0) Against (2) left room before vote**

On Sunday, September 20, 2015 the **Hindu Temple Society** had festivities honoring their Lord Ganisha was attended by **District Manager Bitterman** in Chair Kelty's place. She described the temple as positively magnificent and beautiful. Thirty to forty thousand people marched in front of the temple to 45<sup>th</sup> & Elder Avenues and feasted on delicious fare, all with only the presence of one policeman, Kevin O'Donnell and four auxiliary police.. Everyone had a wonderful time without incident. It was a sight to behold!

On Friday, September 25, 2015, our Environmental Committee Chair, **James Cervino**, reported a petroleum spill to the DEC at the old Flushing Airport runway on Linden Place Exit Road after reports of terrible odor received by people in the area. Mr. Cervino visited the site as well as did Senator Avella. Wetlands mitigation opened up approximately one quarter mile of the runway and discovered liquid petroleum contaminants coming up. At this point the size of the spill has not been ascertained. Mr. Cervino will follow up with this information.

**ITEM #8 – Preliminary Budget Input FY 2017 – Committee Chair Kim Ohanian –**

In the absence of **District Manager Bitterman** who became ill and left early, **Committee Chair Ohanian** ask for input from the Board Members and listed them in her report, even though she felt some were already in the budget. The fifteen suggestions were reviewed the next day by District Mgr. Bitterman who listed them as follows:

**Add to the Budget as a new item**

- \* Funding for restoration of the Willets Family Farm House in Fort Totten.
- \* Additional Funding for Meditation Garden.

**Already in the Budget**

- \* Reconstruction of Union Street from Northern Blvd. to Willets Point Blvd.
- \* Reconstruction of Ulmer Street.
- \* Complete repair of the seawall in McNeil Park (*in process*)
- \* Reconstruction of all streets in Willets Point (23 city blocks).

**Agency Contacted or to be Contacted**

- \* Clean up Kissena Lake.
- \* Repair College Point Sports Field – Ulmer Street to Linden

**Not a Budget item - Taken care of via letter or e-mail**

- \* Install sidewalks by Harvey Park – 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue going north.
- \* Red light cameras by P.S. 214 – 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue west to Union Street. (*In place already*)
- \* Redesign exit ramp from C.I.P. at Clearview golf course. (*DOT doing a study*)
- \* Redesign C.I.P. exit ramp heading south to the L.I.E.
- \* Fence repair on Union Street & 31<sup>st</sup> Road/31<sup>st</sup> Drive.
- \* Roosevelt Avenue trash cans from College Point Blvd. to Main Street.

**ITEM #9 – SELECT BUS SERVICE – Q44 Route – Bronx Zoo to Jamaica – MTA/DOT – Committee Chair Warren Schreiber** and his committee met with the MTA twice in discussion and had raised many concerns about congestion, loss of parking and fare paying as some of the problems they foresee. He gave the floor to the **Patrick Dougherty** of NYC Transit who opened the dialog for a planned express bus service that will run from Jamaica, into Flushing, then into the Bronx along the Q44 route. Mr. Dougherty stated there is currently eight (8) SBS operating in the boroughs, giving 15% to 23% faster service and 10% increase in ridership with a high customer satisfaction rate. It also gives faster fare collections, more connections, safer streets and better traffic flow. Fare collections will be completed on the street before the bus arrives, and there will be three (3) entries into the buses. Secondly, buses will only be riding in the designated bus lanes. Also when approaching an intersection and the traffic light is about to turn yellow, the bus can communicate with the signal and control the green light to add a few seconds more so he/she can continue through. There will be improved passenger information all along the way; i.e., where the buses they are waiting for are, and how long before it arrives, as well as the number of stops yet to come and the time it will take to reach your destination. Also pedestrian safety is paramount with refuge areas if they can't make it across in time, or if they need help in crossing. Finally, there will be more efficient curb regulations along the corridor. Our focus was more on Main Street since it was identified as one of the most dangerous corridor in Queens. On a daily basis, the service itself serves 42,000 riders between the Q44 Limited and the Q20A&B, but the most concentrated ridership is in the Flushing downtown terminal area. The Q44 SBS, however, will have fewer stops in Flushing (Whitestone Expwy Southbound at Center Drive, Parsons & 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Parsons & 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Main Street & Northern Blvd.). Those stops not covered will be taken up by the

Q20A&B. Mr. Dougherty gave the floor to **Aaron Sugiura**, the NYCDOT Project Manager who gave the slide show to illustrate the plan. He pointed out the two major areas that get jammed up are in downtown Flushing and Jamaica Center. Traffic signals in both these areas in the future will be manipulated to give more green time to clear out a grid lock area. In Flushing right turning bay lanes at certain intersections will allow cars to move forward without waiting for cars turning. Certain left turns will be eliminated altogether. At New York Hospital the current bus stop on Main Street will be moved a little North of the hospital to allow a buffer space for the hospital entrance as well as free the east/west corner traffic south of the hospital on Main.

Q. Is the bus stop move north of the hospital going to be before the gas station after it? Our concern is if it's before the gas station, queuing for gas is going to interfere with the bus.

A. Unfortunately it's going to be before the gas station so passengers will have a short walk to the hospital entrance.

Q. Please go back to Slide 11. (Mr. Sugiura insisted he's almost finished, and will go back after the next last slide. He was asked again to go back to Slide 11, at which point the Chair said his First Vice-Chair asked to review Slide 11, so have the courtesy to acknowledge his request).

Q. Please explain the six lane widths?

A. The lanes are 9 ft., 11 ft., 10 ft., 10 ft., 11 ft., and 9 ft. respectively.

Q. How can buses access the curb with 9 feet?

A. Nine feet is the normal curb space now.

Q. How can a regular bus get into the 9 ft. curb space, when Select buses are traveling in the express Lane next to it?

A. The buses are going to be doing what they do now, without being blocked by other vehicles.

**First Vice-Chair** said, "Not true!" You set up an express lane for Select buses, but you forget to acknowledge there are also trucks making deliveries, Intra City Buses, Vans, all types of vehicles looking for parking, as well as your regular buses accessing these lanes. It will be an issue!

**Chair Kelty** said with cars parked at the curb, it's impossible to make a delivery without double parking in the SBS lane.

A. If the situation on Main Street calls for significant commercial loading/unloading throughout the day, they will be happy to review it.

**Mr. Sugiura** mentioned the bus lanes, fare machines and curb regulations are in the process of being installed and November 15, 2015 is the launch date of the Q44 SBS. The capitol project for widening the sidewalks on Main will start sometime in 2016.

Q. Is this a done deal?

A. Yes, but your feedback will be taken into consideration.

Q. Would you consider doing something similar to the HOV lane on the Long Island Expressway?

A. The lane designs somewhat embrace the idea of the HOV concept to ease traffic flow.

Q. How many miles is the route of the Q44 SBS bus?

A. A little under 14 miles.

Q. Where will the location of the fare machines be?

A. There will be at least one coin and one metro card machine within 20 ft. of the bus stop. At very busy bus stops, there will be more.

Q. The City muni-meters constantly break down. How will you handle breakdowns and what will your response time be?

A. The metro card machines automatically send out messages to our tech guys. I don't know the average response time for repair.

**Chair Kelly** asked that they get back to us with that information!

Q. What happens if you get on board without a ticket because the machine is broke, and you receive a fine. Who is at fault?

A. A team of inspectors will know it's broken.

Q. What about transfers?

A. Transfers will be given as before.

Q. Will consideration be given the first few weeks after starting, since many riders do not speak or understand the language?

A. Yes.

Q. The area from the Long Island Express to downtown Flushing is already congested. If you take away two lanes on each side, how do you intend to diffuse the traffic movement with less lanes?

A. We've looked into Main Street traffic and it does move slowly, but we are not trying to speed up traffic but to maintain what we have now.

**Chair Kelly** added that the Board Member's concern is the daily fruit and vegetable trucks that deliver to the businesses, especially on Maple Avenue, creating a lockdown on traffic. Once the bus makes a stop with cars at the curb, and a left turn is allowed, you will grid lock traffic.

A. You are referring to an area where a left turn is allowed and will have a turning bay.

**Chair Kelly** countered "Slide 11 does not show a turning bay". This would also apply to right turns without a turning bay where you would use the bus lane to make the turn and would also encounter pedestrians. Will they have camera's taking pictures of cars in the bus lanes making turns?

A. Legislature was passed in Albany this past Saturday for bus lane cameras, and is considered different than the Red light cameras used in issuing violations. Bus lane cameras will ascertain whether you are picking up or dropping off someone, which is allowable.

Q. Is there a criteria that we will be held to?

A. It will really depend on whether you deliberately abuse the situation to cause a violation to be issued.

Q. What will be happen if a car is waiting in the bus lane for someone to leave a parking spot and causes a backup of cars, trucks and/or buses behind?

A. That will be an enforcement issue; in this case the 109<sup>th</sup> Pct.

Q. At the intersection of Booth Memorial Avenue and Main Street, I understand you are taking away the corner bus stop?

A. We are just moving it further north slightly.

**Chair Kelly** added that the Board Member's concern is that pedestrians will have to walk further to get the bus.

A. Only if you are coming from south of the current bus stop.

Q. Is the Q44 SBS making the same stops as before?

A. Yes, with the exception of four cancelled stops; i.e., Whitestone Expwy South at Center Drive Parsons & 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Parsons & 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Main Street & Northern Blvd. in both directions.

Q. When and how will the coin fare collections take place?

A. It will be done during off peak times by armored truck without disrupting the area.

Q. Where will the collection boxes be?

A. Typically 5 ft. from the curb within 20/30 ft. from the bus stop.

Q. How long is a fare ticket good for?

A. The fare ticket you buy is good for **one hour**. You board the bus from any one of three doors with no interaction with a driver. You can even get off before final destination, and thereafter take another

bus to final destination, provided it's done within the one hour. The only time you need to speak with the driver is if you paid with coins and need a paper transfer.

Q. Have you experienced a loss of fares in other SBS routes?

A. No !

Q. What about fare evasions?

A. On SBS buses we have roving teams of inspectors traveling the routes every day, which has effectively reduced fare evasions.

Q. Can other buses use the SBS lanes?

A. Yes, all buses can use the bus lanes as well as emergency vehicles

Q. How many buses will run per hour?

A. The Q44 runs every six minutes per hour and the Q20 every eight.

Q. Will there be signs placed to educate riders with rules and regulations?

A. No, it would be too complicated. We'd rather inform everyone through the community board and civics associations, etc.

Q. What about using Easy Pass as a means for payment?

A. I believe they are working on that technology.

Q. What about making Main Street one-way?

**Commissioner Nicole Garcia** responded it was looked into before as a one-way conversion, but it didn't work out. If you want, she'll look into it, but does believe it's important to deliver full safety and mobility benefits to everyone in the community; riders, drivers, pedestrians, etc.

Vice Chair Apelian, for clarification, stated a lot of work went into the one-way conversion a half-dozen years ago and tied into Flushing Commons with approval, but it was pulled on a whim by the previous Commissioner in the eleventh hour, the eleventh minute. It's not about a revisiting consensus. It was our impression then and now the one-way conversion would work. This plan was ready to go! There was support of a SBS lane. With one-way traffic, without three lanes coming and going fighting each other and the narrowness of the lanes, it's a much safer plan. We ask that the old plan be reviewed.

Q. Are the other bus lines required to use the SBS bus lane?

A. There are no bus lanes north of Kissena Blvd & Main, by the Library. However, going South on Main Street from Kissena Blvd., although not required, any bus lines can use the SBS lanes. Also, North of Kissena, the core of downtown Flushing, there are 12 buses, whereas South of Kissena there is only the Q20.

Q. I believe there an SBS bus lane in Harlem at 125<sup>th</sup> Street. Has it proved to be successful?

A. Yes!

Q. What are the bus lane hours for the Q44 SBS?

A. When they're out from the curb, hours in effect are 7 am to 7 pm. When against the curb and on peak time, the hours are 6 am to 10 am and 4 pm to 7 pm, Monday through Saturday.

Q. Were any traffic and safety studies done?

A. Yes, and the analysis reached was that traffic speed would not increase. The review on safety, naturally, will take longer as the final analysis is dependent on how many incidents and over how long a period of time they've occurred.

Q. What is the cost to taxpayers for this program?

A. The estimated cost is \$5 million to complete this project.

Q. What about the new cost for bus inspectors?

A. We don't have that information as yet, but it is not part of the initial \$5 million

Q. How does this program protect the pedestrians?

A. We are looking to place pedestrian aisles in at least five areas for safety, two where there are

already types of pedestrian aisles and three more in blocks near the projected left turning lanes.

Q. On the southern end of the route there is concern the plan will have a negative effect on the businesses along the end of the route near the hospital and L.I.E.

A. We have spoken to the area civic group and made some changes based on their parking suggestions.

**Chair Kelty** asked the final question raised by Mary regarding the ability of the bus driver to control the green light allowing him added time to clear the intersection before the light changes. Won't this place the pedestrian, who may already be aware the light is about to change, crossing into harms way?

A. This technology will not be happening any time soon. However, the amount of additional time the bus can add to hold a green is in a range of 1-2 seconds. For example, if the bus is say 8 seconds away from the intersection, the bus will not be allowed to attempt it.

**Committee Chair Warren Schreiber** said his committee never took a vote on this. The same questions were raised in committee and they still exist this evening. The SBS plan is going forward nonetheless, but maybe some of our concerns will lead to improvements to their plan. The motion this evening will be either to approve the implementation of SBS, the implementation of the motion with conditions, or denial of the plan completely.

Before the voting, **Chair Kelty** reminded everyone this was not a Public Hearing on this plan, but a regular meeting to be voted on by the Community Board. He thanked everyone who attended this evening and hoped that the board asked all the questions that everyone wanted answered.

**The motion was made by First-Vice Chair Apelian for Community Board #7 to disapprove the Q44 SBS plan, seconded by Barbara McHugh.**

**The vote taken was (29) Disapproved (2) Approved (1) Abstained/Conflict (6) left before vote**

**ITEM #10 – Education Resolution - Reference new High School @ 30-48 Linden Place, Flushing**

Before Chair Kelty gave Committee Chair **Arlene Fleishman** the floor, he congratulated her on her well deserved Liberty Award from the State of New York. Committee Chair Fleishman had the opportunity along with district Mgr. Bitterman and First Vice Chair Apelian to discuss the community's opposition to the new high school site with Borough President Katz. The Borough President said she would support them in opposing it and asked for a resolution. Ms. Fleishman gave the board a brief description of the location. Adjacent to the site is the Whitestone Bowling Alley; west is the Pathmark Shopping Center; across the street is two newly built hotels and a car wash. Half a block east is P.S. 42 Stavisky Early Child School. Across from the Early Child School is a Universal Pre-K nursery school; across from the front of the school is the Queensborough Adult Senior Center; and two blocks from there is P.S. 14. Linden Place, a north/south main thoroughfare from Northern Blvd. to the Whitestone Expressway, is not a place for a high school. Chair Kelty read the letters from Senator Stavisky, Senator Avella, Councilman Koo, and Mitchell Linden Civic Association, who are all in opposition of the site. The resolution, which was mailed to the board members in advance, was then read aloud by Ms. Fleishman seeking the Board's approval. The only change was the fourth paragraph which was made into two separate resolutions for more clarification. Copy of the final resolution is attached to the minutes.

**The motion on the floor is to approve the Education Resolution as amended, seconded by Marc Schiffman.**



**The vote taken was (32) For (1) Abstained/Conflict (8) Left before vote**

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**Speaker, Bonnie Honya**, grandparent of a child attending P. S. 184, who had a severe asthma attack in school, said the EMS couldn't reach the child for 25 minutes because of traffic gridlock by parents picking up their children. The Principal, parents and grandparent are advocating turning 21<sup>st</sup> Road and 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue into one way westbound and eastbound respectively. Community Board #7 has been awaiting the promised petitions signed by residents living both on 21<sup>st</sup> Road and 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue so it can be approved. Originally the petitions received by the Board were from parents whose children attended the school and not by residents who also have a say in a one-way.

**Speaker, James Trikas**, Vice President of East Flushing Civic spoke against the plan to make the street narrower and expand the sidewalk on Main Street & Roosevelt Avenue. What he said should be done is to repeal the law that allows vendors to use 3 ft. of the sidewalk. Also he wasn't notified that on 156 Street and Northern Blvd. they are looking to construct a pedestrian Plaza, which would take space from the street. He took umbrage against infringement on his area by others, including other civic associations.

**Chair Kelty** countered by saying it's the job of our 50 board members to evaluate what is brought before us by the DOT, and work for all the neighborhoods in our district equally. As volunteers we do the best we can for the community with the findings and information given us, as well as some 30 years experience with all the agencies. You may not like everything we decide, but the final decision is never ours or yours.

The meeting ended at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Zuliani

