



# Community Board 7

## Borough of Queens

Bay Terrace, College Point, Beechurst, Flushing  
Malba, Queensborough Hill, Whitestone and Willets Point

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Melinda Katz  
*Queens Borough President*

Eugene T. Kelty Jr.  
*Chairperson*  
Marilyn McAndrews  
*District Manager*

### COMMUNITY BOARD #7 PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup>, 2018

UNION PLAZA CARE CENTER

33-23 UNION STREET

FLUSHING, NEW YORK

#### PRESENT

Charles Apelian

Tyler Cassell

Alfredo Centola

James Cervino

Chin-Hsiang Chiang

John Choe

Kim Cody

Nicholas Corrado

Arlene Fleishman

Richard Forman

Fred Fu

Vincent Gianelli

Pablo Hernandez

Lawrence Hughes

Eugene Kelty

Phil Konigsberg

Peter Kwiath

Esther Lee

Li Mei Li

Rev. McEachern

Barbara McHugh

Selma Moses

Kim Ohanian

Millicent O'Meally

John Park

Terence Park

Kris Ram

Paul Rifino

Belal Salim

Warren Schreiber

Kevin Shields

Matthew Silverstein

Joshua Sussman

Peter Sutich

Joseph Sweeney

Alison Tan

John Tsavalos

Peter Tu

Harpreet Wahan Singh

Clarissa Wong

Lei Zhao

#### ABSENT

Michael Cheng

Marc Schiffman

Christine Colligan

Dian Yu

Jeff Huang

Linna Yu

Frank Macchio

Jie Zhu

#### COMMUNITY BOARD #7 STAFF

Marilyn McAndrews, District Manager

Mary Zuliani, Community Assistant

Mary O'Neill, Community Assistant

#### GUESTS

Lynn Koester – Assemblyman Daniel Rosenthal's office

J. Antonopovlos - Assemblyman Edward Braunstein's office

Brian Lam – Assemblywoman Nily Rozic's Office

Marilla Li – Assemblywoman Nily Rozic's Office

Tony Cao – Assemblyman Ron Kim's office

Justin J. Connor – Congressman Thomas Suozzi's office

Tim Hopper – Congresswoman Meng's Office

Vito Tautonico – Councilman Vallone's office

Joyce Choi – Councilman Peter Koo's office

In the absence of **Chair Kelty** who was to arrive later, **First Vice Chair Charles Apelian** opened the meeting at 7:10 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag followed by a moment of silence to honor our armed forces around the world.

Attendance roll call was taken with

**(41) Present (5) Absent (3) Excused.**

Last June at the Award Service Ceremony, Borough President Katz give awards to **Josh Sussman, Selma Moses and Tyler Cassell** for their **fifteen years** of service, and **Millicent O’Meally** and **Charles Apelian** for their **thirty years** of service. In early August, **Kevin O’Donnell** of the 109 Precinct was honored as our home town hero.

**First Vice Chair Apelian** read the announcements as follows: Be aware there will be closure of some lanes on the Van Wyck Expressway; Free tests will be administered by 311 to individuals living near or above dry cleaner establishments for possible contaminants endangering their health; The DOT will increase metered street parking rates in Queens on November 1, 2018; An important reminder to everyone to report any suspected gas leaks in the home and anywhere outside in your immediate neighborhood. Upcoming events in Queens from September 26<sup>th</sup> to October 18<sup>th</sup> included a Suicide Prevention workshop; ribbon cutting for Delson Transitional Housing; the Moon Festival Parade; Poppenhusen’s Oktoberfest; Wheels Across the Borough on 10/18/18; Councilman Koo’s free screening of the film “Coco” at Kissena Park on 10/5/18; and the “Evening Under the Sphere” on 10/4/18 as a fundraiser for the Alliance of Flushing Meadow Corona Park at \$50 per person with Paul Simon as the headliner. More importantly, on Thursday, October 11, 2018 from 5 to 9 pm, a Borough Hall workshop is being held and open to all community board members. It’s basically an update on what City Planning does, how zoning and Environmental ULURP Reviews work, and how the Community Boards participate in the City Budget.

Our First Vice Chair happily announced that Borough President Melinda Katz issued a signed Proclamation that today is “**Gene Kelty Day.**” The Proclamation included his 39 years with the FDNY from 1979, his numerous citations, awards and actions including his response to the 9/11 Terrorist attack on the WTC as Captain and Company Commander of Engine #10 based at the foot of the WTC, his rise to Battalion Chief in 2003, his retirement from FDNY on 7/11/18, his 34 years on the board of Community Board #7 with 21 of those years as Chair, and more. He received a standing ovation from the board members; photos were taken. Chair Kelty thanked everyone present and added he had a lot of teachers along the way, and some were his board members. He wasn’t alone! At this moment, Kevin O’Donnell from the 109 Pct. just walked in, our hometown hero, and was asked to say a few words. He thanked everyone, the Board, the daily papers and the people in the community who realize his job is to help everyone and keep the community safe. He’s proud of the job he does and appreciates the community and the Board feel the same about him. He reiterated the 109<sup>th</sup> Pct. is only as good as its community.

**Both the May and June minutes of the Public Hearing were both approved unanimously by the Board!**

**ITEM #5 – DOT Reconstruction of I-678 Bridge –Ashley Richey, Sr. Project Mgr.** presented the reconstruction of I-678 access road bridge which affects the interchange between the Whitestone Expressway, the Whitestone Bridge and Cross Island Parkway. Constructed in 1939 the one lane bridge from the Whitestone Bridge to the Cross Island Parkway is a 77 ft. single span bridge which currently has structural steel, deck and joint issues which must be replaced, and will extend the bridge’s lifespan by seventy-five years. The reconstruction will be in three stages over a 16 month period. At each stage only one lane of the bridge on each side will be open while reconstruction of the other is closed. Nighttime closures on one of the Cross Island Parkway lanes may be required for 15 minutes with one full night of full closure at the very end to join the sides of both the Cross Island IP & Whitestone Expressway. We will have a community liaison.

Q. Gene Kelty – Just to confirm, this work will be on the bridge from Whitestone Bridge Southbound to the Cross Island Pkwy?

A. Yes!

Q. Tyler Cassel – When will you start construction?

A. Next summer.

Q. Will you message this on the digital road signs a month in advance?

A. Yes!

Q. Kim Cody – What will you do to alleviate the issues with congestion during construction on the CIP?

A. There's no daytime work on the CIP.

Q. Gene – Can we make sure the detour messaging tells people to get off at 14<sup>th</sup> Ave.?

A. Yes!

Q. Where will the off-site offices be?

A. There will be a staging area in the grassy area in the middle of the interchange.

Q. Do you foresee traffic spilling over into local streets?

A. No, we're going to message detours to discourage that.

Q. Do you have plans in place for traffic agents?

A. Yes, we have a provision for agents, and it's budgeted.

Q. What is the timing of the construction during the day?

A. CIP work will be during the overnight hours. On the bridge itself, during the day.

Kim Cody commented traffic agents aren't really doing their jobs even if they're out in the field.

Kevin Shields stated you have a very short exit to the 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue exit and it's dangerous.

Gene insisted the 14<sup>th</sup> exit should not, under any circumstances, be closed during the construction.

Q. What will noise pollution be like from this construction?

A. We will have active noise monitoring. We need to comply with the DEP code and we would have to use noise attenuation measures if the construction went above the limits.

Q. Gene – Will there be a holiday embargo?

A. I believe so, but we'll get back to you.

Q. Reverend McEachern asked if there will be cranes and where?

A. They will be on the CIP during the 15 minute closures, otherwise they'll be in the staging area.

**Gene Kelty** brought up the CIP going towards the Third Avenue exit to the Whitestone Bridge. Since you will be in the area, could you put up a flashing red on the CIP before the v-split to the Whitestone Expressway and the Whitestone Bridge entrance?

**ITEM 5A - Bay Terrace Playground Renovation – Parks Committee Chair Kim Ohanian** reported that Councilman Paul Vallone and Borough President Katz allocated \$3.2 million for the renovation to include the redesign of two full size handball courts and a basketball court visible from the street with proper drainage, security night cameras and security lighting at night, a running track and concrete gaming tables. Also the replacement of current fencing with different heights depending on the area. The handball court will be moved to the northern end and rotated so the concrete walls do not obstruct views from the street, thereby making it easier for the police to monitor activity in the park from the street. Workout equipment will be adjacent to the handball court. The basketball court in the middle will have a walking/running loop around it and the second basketball court will have some stadium seats. The playground on the eastern side will not be affected. New high iron fencing will be around the handball and basketball courts, but the remaining fences will be lower.

Q. Will there be a comfort station?

A. There's an existing comfort station that we won't be touching.

Q. Will you be installing irrigation sprinklers?

A. No.

Q. When will construction start?

A. There is 9 to 10 months remaining on design and then a procurement cycle. Construction will begin in winter 2019.

Q. You mentioned you would be lowering the fencing. Will this lead to increased safety issues?

A. We'll be installing standard park security lighting.

Q. Instead of stairs from one level to the next, couldn't we have a ramp?

A. We could look at an ADA compliant ramp instead.

Q. Will you have street trees along the outside of the park?

**Chair Kelty** injected trees can block drains.

A. We aren't planning planting street trees, but can look into it.

Q. There is talk about reconstructing and expanding the kindergarten building that abuts the property. Have you talked to the people doing this?

A. We have had conversations with the principals and plan to speak to the School Construction Authority.

Q. Will there be specific areas for people and children who are disabled?

A. Yes, this site is accessible, but we are not redoing the playground.

Q. Will construction hours be during the day?

A. Yes, but will work with the schools to avoid days identified by the principals as "test days" etc."

Q. How long is the running track?

A. One tenth of a mile.

Q. Security seems to be a primary concern. Will there be a blue light station, giving instantaneous contact with the police?

A. I'm aware of this used on sites located in isolated areas, but I don't think it's needed on this site. Committee Chair Kim Ohanian gave her meeting report of September 12, 2018 which ended with an approval motion by all present.

**The motion now on the floor is to approve the Bay Terrace Playground Renovation, seconded by Terrence Park.**

Discussion followed:

Board member, Matt Silverstein made a friendly motion to amend the renovation to include looking into the installation of an ADA-compliant ramp between the two halves of the site.

**The amendment was adopted and approved unanimously by all present!**

**ITEM #6 – Input on Preliminary Budget Submissions for Year 2020 – Committee Chair Peter Sutich** said it's that time of year again when CB #7 submits Capital & Expense budget priorities to the Mayor and the City Council. As an explanation, Capital budget projects are defined as land acquisition, major construction projects and equipment which cost more than \$35,000 and expected to last more than five years, such as park renovations or major sewer and roadway projects. Expense budget items are personnel, on-going operations including purchase of short-lived equipment, materials and supplies from Parks and Police personnel to senior and youth program needs. Forms are now available to residents and community groups to submit feedback to Community Board #7 for consideration. The form will be mailed or e-mailed to any community member who requests it, and we can also put it on our website. Community members will have the opportunity to speak in support of their requests at our October 22, 2018 Public Hearing. **Sam Sambucci** from Willets Point thanked the Board for getting attention to the repaving of Willets Point. The situation has deteriorated to the point where emergency vehicles cannot access the site, which truly is a sad state of affairs.

**Assemblyman Ron Kim**, who came in to pick up his wife who is expecting their third child, was asked to say a few words, and thanked the Board for their work. He reminded us this month marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the financial crisis of 2008 and thinks we are still in danger with many households still deep in debt. We have a half million graduates are on verge of defaulting on student loans and although more people are working, they are more in debt than ever. We've moved away from pro anti-monopoly policies where more than 16 million are in debt. Large companies are getting bigger while small businesses are losing ground. He is trying his best to re-circulate money into our community and asks you to come speak to him.

**ITEM #7 – Charter Revision Resolution -Chair Gene Kelty** – On September 4, 2018 the Mayor’s Charter Revision Commission recently put forth proposed reforms to all Community Boards including term limits to be voted as a ballot measure this November. At our meeting Community Board #7 stated we already have term limits. You are not guaranteed automatic reappointment to another term on the board. Also, every position on the Executive Committee is elected every year by all our board members. Most important is the fact that the Board is not responsible for the appointment of any board member. At our recent committee meeting, a recommendation to formulate a resolution expressing our concerns was approved unanimously by the committee, and read this evening by First Vice Chair Chuck Apelian.

Q. What are the term limits on the proposed ballot for term limits?

A. Two- year terms with a maximum of four consecutive terms.

Q. Does this affect everybody?

A. Yes.

Q. Will this be on the ballot?

A. Yes.

Board member **John Choe** spoke about the huge gap between demographics of the community and Board membership and doesn’t feel the board represents the diversity of their area. The Board, however, believes John Choe is actually making it seem like it is white versus others, which is further from the truth since membership isn’t completely white. There is diversity within the white community itself. Over time people do move on. It was pointed out the board isn’t considered just downtown Flushing, and the entire CB #7 community is not exclusively Asian. Many people are not sure, but feel developers as well as the Mayor’s Commission may have an interest in this. **John Choe** asked “did any of you attend the nineteen hearings that took place?” He went on to say the City did approve term limits for City Officials, even though some officials removed it when they came into power. He also mentioned several people who tried to join CB #7 were declined membership. **Chair Kelty** stated the Board never makes recommendations. We are an advisory board only. Recommendations are initiated by the City Council Members to the Borough President who has final say on who is chosen. **Alison Tan** added if a large portion of one group is systematically denied membership by the Borough President, we should be informed. Is this data available? **Chair Kelty** responded “Not that we are aware,” but emphasized that CB #7 has always maintained a non-discriminatory atmosphere. There were many instances we were implicated as being divisive when assessing issues on the basis of law and took great exception to these insinuations.

**The motion made by First Vice Chair Apelian is to approve a Resolution in opposition to the Mayor’s Charter Revision Commission’s recommendation to enact term limits for community board members, seconded by Pablo Hernandez.**

Discussion followed:

**Warren Schreiber** stated, after looking over the hearing testimony, some of the statements were offensive, especially about membership being too old; we don’t speak their language; and that our resolution is self-serving. It has taken us years to acquire the knowledge needed to serve. To term limit volunteers is absurd and remember with age comes wisdom. **Philip Konigsberg** agreed with Warren’s view and added we are not term limited yet! The experience and knowledge learned is irreplaceable and the Board should protect and keep those with the experience if they are willing to stay. **Kim Ohanian** supports the motion. Replacing those with years of experience will lead to nothing being accomplished. The fact is she is still learning. **Tyler Cassell** who is thus far with the Board for 15 years has asked many to join. They ask how much time and energy is required? When they hear the answer, they change their minds. He suggested we add the words “**represent the diversity of their community**” in statement 5, and in the last clause he’d like to add “**because they rely on community board input in making their decisions.**” **Lei Zhao** stated term limits won’t change the underlying process of appointee selection nor enhance diversity. He finds the implication that someone must have the same identity he does in order to represent him is dangerous to the concept of representative democracy. **Peter Sutich** feels it’s stupid to even bring up the discussion of diversity of the board when the board itself doesn’t have control over the selection. Also, he doesn’t believe the Councilmen or the Borough Presidents make these decisions based on race, but they look at your experience. **Millicent O’Meally**, who has lived in the community for 40 years, cannot be in a community without being a part of it. She’s been a board member for 30 years, early on joined the Precinct Community Council, tutors at the Library,

and as long as she can talk, walk and think, she will continue to be here with her community in every way. Her final comment to us all is “we have spent a lot of time commenting on the comments, but not what the board does.”

**Matt Silverstein**, said the Board has gotten much younger than it was. If term limits apply to other government positions, shouldn't it apply to us? **Joshua Sussman** was appointed to the Board by a councilman whom he campaigned against from the opposing party. When he asked him why he appointed me, he said because I was an active person. The Mayor handpicked the Commission, and he can't be sure of his motives in doing so. This Board has given considerable thought to buildings being built without consideration to schools, the effects on transportation and the ultimate needs of the community. He's not a strong opponent to term limits, but doesn't agree with how these term limits were arrived at. He's in favor of the Resolution. **Terence Park** has been serving the community board since 1999. He's seen fairness in appointments, and in discussions about community issues. He commends the leadership of the Board and he believes in volunteerism and those who are passionate about learning. He feels these are the people who make our Board great and they should stay on. **John Choe** states this is a resolution he does not support and feels there's room for improvement on this Community Board and asks we look beyond our own feelings. The public sees us passing a resolution celebrating our own diversity. Term limits are not undemocratic. **Pablo Hernandez** - What concerns me is the driving forces behind this are not aware of what the Board has done for the community. I would challenge anyone who would take on the leadership position Chair Kelty has held for 22 years. The people behind the Mayor's Commission are using the ignorance of the people to push their own agenda. We need to send a clear message to those spreading this false narrative. **Peter Sutich's** reply to John Choe's comments about our emotions was: “all of their motivations behind term limits are emotional.” You say you need more people of a particular race to represent the community. Does that mean because I'm white I don't think Grace Meng can represent me in Congress? Everything you cited about the Charles B. Wang Community Center variance was emotional. **First Vice Chair Chuck Apelian** said the City knows the Charles B. Wang Center variance was not a minimum variance and the vote was 2 to 1 against it. Many of our board members who voted against the variance were of the ethnic group Choe cited as the primary beneficiary of this center. You said we need to respect the will of the people and that we're undemocratic, but the vote hasn't happened and democracy allows us to defend our views. You accuse the Board of not speaking the languages of the community. By the way, the language of the City Government is English. Chair Gene Kelty apologized that he didn't attend all these hearings. Why didn't the Commission come talk to us? Eighty-One percent of the electorate didn't vote in the Mayoral election. So elected officials are getting elected by a small slice of the electorate. Board Members are not guaranteed re-appointment! Why didn't the Mayor's Commission go to the Borough Presidents with this issue? Every time the Mayor doesn't like something, he forms a commission, and now they're coming after volunteers. I understand the pros and cons of term limits. I think it's a lazy way to offline people. I don't consider this resolution self-serving and will vote for it!

**The motion on the floor is to vote on our resolution in opposition to the Ballot Proposal for Term Limits and ask all their Elected Officials and Communities at large to oppose this proposition on the November 6, 2018 ballot, with modifications suggested by Tyler Cassel, seconded by Pablo Hernandez.**

**The vote taken was: (40) votes FOR (1) vote AGAINST**

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**Pamela Chu of 42-26 Colden Street** needs help finding a solution about pollution on residential streets in downtown Flushing, vehicles idling, people tossing garbage, etc. She constantly has to clean the front of her home, hose down their driveway, etc. People use her property as a toilet and are rude and inconsiderate. Also, throughout the day there are vehicles blocking her driveway, and some come up with excuses why they think they can do it or they pretend not to understand English. She spoke to the NCO's from the 109<sup>th</sup> but they can only do so much. Chair Kelty said we will follow up on it and have the NCO's get in touch with again.

**First Vice Chair Apelian** said there was a recent newspaper article talking about new designs for School safety. He just wanted to let us all know that the resolution we passed on school safety is aligned with this.

The meeting ended at 10 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Zuliani