



Chairperson, Martha Taylor

The City of New York
Borough of Queens

Community Board 8

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

Minutes of Community Board 8 Meeting held on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at the Hillcrest Jewish Center at 183-02 Union Turnpike, Queens, NY 11366.

Attendance:

Board Members Present:

Dilafroz Ahmed, Saaif Alam, Heather Bennett-Idels, Edward Chung, D. Lavelda Davis, Sheleeza Deen, Maria DeInnocentiis, Marva Dudley, Armando Echeverry, Allen Eisenstein, Bhithara Martha-Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Wendy Gennaro, Ahsan Habib, Michael Hannibal, Mohammed “Delwar” Islam, Neeta Jain, Jennifer Martin, Caitlin Marziliano, Nikolas Michael, Doretha Mcfadden, David Mordukhaev, Dilip Nath, Alan Ong, Tammy Oshero, Hersh Parekh, Simon Pelman, Marisol Perez, Israel Peskowitz, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Seymour Schwartz, Kelly Sexton, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Amy Tse, and Rabbi Mayer Waxman.

Board Members Absent:

Kenneth Cohen II, Howard A. Fried, Joshua Glickman, Roger Joyner, Elke Maerz, Jesse Rosenbaum, Aliyah Salim, Douglas Sherman, Steven Villaran, and Jacob Weinberg.

Others Present:

Kevin Morris representative of Mayor Eric Adams, Shanar Whito representative from Grace Meng, Shubhra Datta representative from Borough President Donovan Richards, Ruocheng Chen representative from Council Member Linda Lee, Peter Paolo representative from Council Member James Gennaro, Rokeya Akhter representative from District Attorney Melinda Katz, Scott Sieber representative from Senator John Liu, Juan Palare representative from Senator Toby Stavisky, James Mongeluzo representative NYC Comptroller Brad Lander, Denise Downing representative of Queens Public Library, D.M. Marie Adam-Ovide, and CB8 Staffer Nettie V. Norris and Soleil Griffin.

Call to Order:

Chairperson Martha Taylor called this Board Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Public Participation:

Stacy Gordon and Estephany Paredes representing Queens Community House

They provide home delivery meals for homebound older adults, case management services, and Expanded Un-home Services for the Elderly (EISEP) for older adults who need assistance with their personal care or household chores. Flyers were left on the table for more information.

Elected Officials' Announcements

Rokeya Akhter representing District Attorney Melinda Katz

The Queens District Attorney, NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch, and New York State Police Superintendent Steven James announced that twenty defendants have been indicted and variously charged in a wide-ranging scheme to steal cars throughout NYC and its suburbs. The vehicles are valued at more than \$4.6 million. The defendants are charged with larceny and criminal possession of 126 cars, 44 of which were purchased by undercover officers.

Anthony Lemma representing Assembly Member David Weprin

The state budget was passed. There was a deal made with the discovery. He will come back next month to talk about the legislation that was passed.

Peter Paolo representing Council Member James Gennaro

Informed the community of the events their office is hosting. Flyers were available.

Joshua Simanowitz representing Assembly Member Samuel Berger

Assembly Member Berger is pleased with the discovery law. The discovery law will stop backlog and help to make due process efficient.

Ruocheng Chen representing Council Member Linda Lee

Informed the community of the various events their office is hosting. Flyers were available.

Chairperson Taylor requested for the roll call.

DM Adam-Ovide announced we have a quorum.

Salute to the flag – Martha Taylor led the salute to the flag.

Chairperson Taylor called on Dr. Penny Stern to conduct the election of the Community Board 8 Officers for 2025-2026.

Nominations – Dr. Penny Stern, Chair of the Nominating Committee

As per our by-laws, the nominations to serve on the Community Board 8 Executive Committee were held last month. The slate was approved and there was no nomination from the floor. The nominations were then closed. The candidates for the Executive Committee are:

- Chairperson – Martha Taylor
- 1st Vice Chair – Michael Hannibal
- 2nd Vice Chair – Seymour Schwartz
- 3rd Vice Chair – Dilip Nath
- Treasurer – Harbachan Singh
- Secretary – Bhitihara Fulton

Dr. Penny Stern

I make a motion to elect Bhitihara Fulton who is running unopposed, for the position of secretary. May I have a second?

Answer [Saaif Alam] – I second.

Bhitihara Fulton was unanimously elected as Board Secretary.

Dr. Penny Stern

Since the rest of the candidates for the Executive Committee are running without opposition, I am going to ask our newly elected secretary, Bhitihara Fulton to cast one vote for the slate.

Answer [Bhitihara Fulton] – I cast one vote.

The slate was elected unanimously.

Chairperson Martha Taylor

We have now completed our election. Thank you everyone and congratulations to the Executive Committee. We will go back to the order of the agenda.

Chairperson Taylor called on Shubhra Datta to speak.

Shubhra Datta – representing Queens Borough President Donovan Richards

The Queens Borough President is hosting various events. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to their office at 718-286-3000.

Chairperson called on Captain Tsang to speak.

Captain Mo Tsang, 107th Precinct Commanding Officer

During the 28-day period, crime is down between 111 and 130 by 19% or minus 14.6%. Almost all categories are down except rape and grand larceny. Most of the rape are done by friends or families. Two out of three people are arrested. For grand larceny, we have 51% verses 38% which is up by 34%. Eight of the cases are tires and rims. We are doing well aside from grand larceny. Please do not leave anything valuable in your vehicles or in open areas. Also, watch out for scam text messages and emails.

Chairperson Taylor requested a motion to approve the minutes.

Approval of Minutes: Harbachan Singh made a motion to approve the minutes of Wednesday, April 9, 2025, seconded by Michael Hannibal.

Chairperson Taylor requested that those in favor of approving the minutes say aye.

39 Yes

0 No

0 Abstentions

The motion passed unanimously with corrections.

Members for: Dilafroz Ahmed, Saaif Alam, Heather Bennett-Idels, Edward Chung, D. Lavelda Davis, Sheleeza Deen, Maria DeInnocentiis, Marva Dudley, Armando Echeverry, Allen Eisenstein, Bhitihara Martha-Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Wendy Gennaro, Ahsan Habib, Michael Hannibal, Mohammed “Delwar” Islam, Neeta Jain, Caitlin Marziliano, Nikolas Michael, Doretha Mcfadden, David Mordukhaev, Dilip Nath, Alan Ong, Tammy Osharov, Hersh Parekh, Simon Pelman, Marisol Perez, Israel Peskowitz, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Seymour Schwartz, Kelly Sexton, Harbachan Singh, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Amy Tse, and Rabbi Mayer Waxman.

Chairperson’s Report – Martha Taylor

Congratulations to Wendy Gennaro and Council Member Jim Gennaro on the wedding of their daughter! I know they had a wonderful time. In addition, I want to mention that Jim’s Chief of Staff, Henry Yam also got married on the same day at a different place and different person (*the audience laughed*). Tell Henry we said congratulations.

There will be a Zoning Committee Meeting here next week on Thursday, May 22, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. Fresh Meadows Development will make a presentation on changes that they would like to plan for their properties. As you know, they are in a Special Preservation District. Any changes they make must go through ULURP [Uniform Land Use Review Process]. Please make it your business to be here. We are having it here in this building so we will have enough room for everyone.

There will be a Special Transportation Committee meeting on Thursday, May 29, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. It will be right here in this auditorium. The MTA will be discussing the implementation of the new bus routes (*Chairperson Taylor requested that they present for 10 to 15 minutes*). We will also have the Department of Transportation (DOT) to brief us on the e-scooter corrals planned for our district. They will also present the Hillside Avenue Bus Priority Project.

Health Minute with Dr. Penny Stern – Health Committee Chair

May is Better Sleep Month. More than ¾ of adults in this country are not getting enough sleep. The bare minimum number of hours of sleep needed per 24-hour period is 6 hours. About 20% of people get less than 6 hours of sleep. Sleep deficits are linked to car accidents, slips and falls, and relationship problems. We get irritable, angry and depressed with chronic lack of sleep. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that fatigue, relating to lack of sleep, is a contributing cause to more than a million crashes a year.

To improve your sleep, you should do the following:

1. Go to sleep and get up at the same time every day even on weekends.
2. Try to go to bed within an hour of when you first start to feel tired.
3. Keep your room cool, dark and quiet and not use electronic devices before bed.

District Manager's Report, May 2025

Queens Public Library

They announced the winner of the “Banned Books Library Card Design” competition. The information was posted on their website. They are celebrating Jewish American Heritage Month and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AAHPI) Heritage Month. They will have special programs to celebrate.

Department of Buildings

The agency announced the “Get Sheds Down Law” is now in effect. It is about the sidewalk sheds/scaffolding. The representative did not have all the information yet. He will send a flyer for us to add to our Newsletter in June.

The Department of Buildings had their representative here in the office last Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. They helped many residents with their DOB issues. We look forward to inviting them back for another session in the fall.

Department of Parks and Recreation

Cunningham Park's garage is still under construction. There is limited parking on the upper lot this season. Farm Playground and Hoover Playground are also under construction.

Department of Transportation

We have a meeting scheduled for Special Transportation with the MTA for the implementation of the Bus Network Re-design on May 29th at the Hillcrest J.C. at 7:30 p.m. The Department of Transportation is planning to have e-scooter corrals within our district. They will be included on the Special Transportation Committee agenda for that evening. They are looking to place the corrals at daylighting locations.

The representative discussed some of the issues with the e-scooters. She addressed some of the concerns with e-scooters ending up at the local parks. They slow down and stop working as they are taken to the park. Once the batteries die, they cannot be tracked for removal.

Department of Environmental Protection

There were 301 complaints for our area in April. The top complaints were:

74 noise from alarm, 54 air and smoke, 16 noise complaints for barking dogs, 13 no water complaints and 13 sewer backups.

NYC Commission on Human Rights

The representative stated that many New Yorkers have concerns about the Executive Orders coming from the president. He reminded us that New York City will continue to follow all the laws regarding gender, race, etc. Executive orders are not laws.



Happy Birthday to: Heather Bennet-Idels, Edward Chung and Jacob Weinberg!

Marie Adam-Ovide

Chairperson Taylor - We will have a presentation on the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan [from the Department of City Planning]. Our Zoning Chair Hersh Parekh will make the introductions. They are only going to talk about the one that affects us. Right?

Answer [Hersh Parekh] – Correct.

Public Hearing

Chair of Zoning Committee – Hersh Parekh

We have a public hearing on the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan. There was a Zoning Committee meeting held not too long ago. The minutes are in your packet. I would like to highlight what Chairperson Taylor mentioned, which was that the majority of this zoning plan does not impact our district. There is a very small strip on Hillside Avenue that is incorporated in this plan. Most of the plan is south of us in CB12. We are going to have the Department of City Planning focus on the Hillside Avenue corridor.

Jasmin Tepale

Introduced herself as the Senior Lead for Community Planning at the Department of City Planning. She also introduced her colleague Lin Zeng who is the Director of the Queens Office for Community Planning at the Department of City Planning. The Department of City Planning submitted a land use application start the ULURP process for the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan. Though the full application covers a broad area, they focused on a small portion of the area that affects CD8.

The Jamaica Neighborhood Plan proposal would update the zoning rules and include strategic investment to enhance the infrastructure, transit access, open space and more. Queens Community Board 8 has until May 27, 2025 to submit a written recommendation to the proposal. Though tonight is a space for the community board and public to share feedback, there will be other opportunities during each step of the process to share feedback.

There are two land use actions that affect Community District 8. These are the zoning map amendment and zoning text amendment. They are being proposed to update zoning districts and rules specific to Jamaica to provide more opportunities for housing and jobs in the area. The zoning map and text amendment is not a proposal to build buildings. What they are proposing is to adjust rules and zoning districts to create conditions or make it possible for different types of development to happen in the future. The proposal will affect around thirty

blocks along the north side of Hillside Avenue from the Van Wyck Expressway to 172nd Street. It will also affect a small portion of Queens Boulevard from Hillside Avenue to 86th Avenue. In comparison, their entire study area is about 230 blocks.

The current zoning district for Hillside Avenue and 150th Street is R7A/C2-4 commercial overlay. This means that buildings today can be built around eight to eleven stories. The R7A is a residential district which means housing is allowed, but today, there is no requirement for any affordable housing. The C2-4 overlay allows local retail such as convenience stores, dry cleaners, supermarkets, restaurants, etc. They are usually on the first or second floor of a building and can only be built to 10,000 square feet. DCP is proposing to change the district from R7A/C2-4 to C4-4D district. The proposal would allow future buildings to be built up to around ten to fourteen stories. Housing would still be allowed; however, any new housing would be required to include a portion of affordable units through mandatory inclusionary housing. The same retail usage would still be allowed, but zoning would enable more floors of commercial space. Instead of one to two floors of commercial space, there could be multiple floors of commercial space since there would be no restrictions on the size. It will make space for larger businesses like multi-floor supermarkets, retail space, health clinics, or school.

There are rules that are specific to Jamaica Queens known as the downtown Jamaica Special District. DCP is updated those rules with two new rules. The two rules are the only ones that affect Community District 8. The first one is called the School Floor Exemption. This would encourage the creation of new school spaces by providing floor exemption for schools in future developments. They also have an authorization to allow for an additional thirty feet to accommodate the school if they need it. They also have a rule that would make developments create a better walking experience by requiring glass transparency and limiting the use of curb cuts along Hillside Avenue.

In summary, they are proposing land use actions to update the zoning in portions of Queens Community District 8. The board has until May 27, 2025 to submit their recommendations.

Zoning Chair Parekh thanked the DCP for the presentation and opened the floor for questions from the board members.

Amy Tse

When you mentioned a school siting having multiple floors, would it be above or below the commercial premise?

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – With developments, there could be a scenario where a school could be in a mixed-use development. Schools that are being developed have the first few floors at the bottom and residential above.

Amy Tse

I was concerned with safety.

Answer [Lin Zeng] – The text that we have is not about siting any specific location. It is really hard to find space for public facilities such as schools. In a zoning law, it could mean mixed-use which would be a school on the base and development on top or a stand-alone school. It depends on the site. The purpose of the exemption is to find opportunities for school spaces.

Martha Taylor

What uses or business will be allowed that are not allowed now?

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – The usage will stay the same such as retail usage, supermarket, clothing store, laundromat. Most of the usage that you see on Hillside Avenue will stay the same. The key difference would be the space they can use. Now they can use the first or second, in the future, they could have multi-floor commercial in the building.

Michael Hannibal

There was a question asked during the zoning committee about the MTA being involved. Would there be a strategic plan to talk to the MTA about how they are going to bring more mobilization and trains so that people can commute?

Response [Hersh Parekh] – We raised this issue at the committee meeting along with the fact that the accessibility of the subway station on Hillside Avenue is nonexistent. We are adding housing for families or for people that may have limited mobility. They are not going to take the stairs. This will add crowding on the buses. We encourage DCP to engage further with the MTA and explore opportunities for extending transit capacity on this corridor.

Marie Adam-Ovide

Are you certain that the same use groups for C2 and C4 are the same, because I do not think they are the same?

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – We can pull the list and share it with the board.

Dilip Nath

There is no public parking besides parking in the street. Has there been consideration for building public parking? My second question is, will the development be 200 or 300 feet?

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – The new developments that are market rate still need to provide some percentage of parking. That will help with parking along Hillside Avenue. The Department of Transportation would have to consider a parking garage situation and street parking. We would have to bring it back to them. To your second question, development has to be 200 feet from Hillside Avenue.

Saaif Alam

The E train runs at a limited rush hour service to 179th street. Is there consideration in extending the E train 179th Street and possibly the R or M train to Jamaica Center?

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – We can bring that back to the MTA; however, they are a state agency. They run a different system from the city. We can bring it back to them and encourage you all to put that in your recommendation.

Maria DeInnocentiis

In the zoning changes that you mentioned to allow for fourteen story buildings, would that include required parking for tenants, or would that be optional?

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – There is required parking for tenants, but only a certain percentage. They do not have to provide parking space for the entirety of the building. There is still a requirement for a small percentage of parking.

Maria DeInnocentiis

Do you know what that requirement is?

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – It has to be 12% of the units. It is only for the market rate parking. I want to emphasize that because, if they are providing affordable housing units, they do not have to provide parking.

Maria DeInnocentiis

I was thinking that if they build a school for four floors, where are the teachers going to park? Is that considered part of the parking, or would the teachers have to drive around the neighborhood looking for spots?

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – Commercial developments have a different kind of parking requirement than housing. They are still required to provide some parking spaces.

Maria DeInnocentiis

Tenants will also be allowed to park? Like commercial tenants.

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – As long as it is market rate, then yes.

Martha Taylor

It says in the zoning minutes that “the proposed zoning can allow for ten to fourteen story buildings, which can include affordable housing.” Can means it may not.

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – It is actually required. If this passes new buildings are required to provide a certain percentage of affordable housing.

Martha Taylor

A certain percentage does not tell us anything. You have to tell us what the percentage is. You also have to tell me if this is just poor wording or whether it means can which also means maybe not. I do not think we can accept that if we need affordable housing.

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – The program that we are proposing is called mandatory inclusionary housing. New buildings are required to provide affordable housing. The number of units changes for every building. The range is about twenty to thirty percent of the units have to be affordable housing.

Answer [Lin Zeng] – Right now the proposal is to map any of the three options and mandatory inclusionary housing. When it gets to the City Council, that is when they choose the option for the area. That is why the range is twenty to thirty percent.

Hersh Parekh

We will make sure that the minutes from this meeting reflect that it is not can. We will have that new housing requires mandatory affordable housing for a range of twenty to thirty percent depending on the City Councils action.

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – Correct.

Nicolas Michael

What is in the toolbox of the city to both prevent tenant harassment and hold development accountable? I have seen cases where tenants are taken to court for small claims.

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – The Department of Housing and Preservation (HPD) have a range of tools that we are look through in the neighborhood plan. They are trying to find better ways so that people can access those tools. We are making sure we share the resources to the community board.

Hersh Parekh

Make sure you get back to Marie about the difference in use groups between the two commercial districts. This would include what is currently allowed, what would be allowed, and what would not be allowed if this was approved.

Marie Adam-Ovide

Based on the information that you have at City Planning, it shows Use Groups 9, 10, and 12. I do not believe these use groups are currently allowed.

Answer [Jasmin Tepale] – They updated the use groups. We will get back to you.

Marie Adam-Ovide

I specifically asked that you include it in the presentation so that the members are voting based on correct information.

Answer [Hersh Parekh] – If this is something that the board wants that could impact our vote, we can do a conditional recommendation.

Zoning Chair Parekh opened the public hearing portion. The person who signed up for the hearing was not present. He then made a motion to approve the proposal and requested a second.

Saaif Alam seconds the motion.

Zoning Chair Parekh opened for a short board discussion.

Dilip Nath

The parking they are requiring is for the building. There should be consideration for public parking on the Hillside Avenue corridor. Otherwise, it could hurt businesses. I ask the board to please consider this since this is an opportunity to provide public parking on the Hillside corridor.

Martha Taylor

I will not vote in favor of this motion until we have concrete answers that we asked for. It is too vague. It is not specific, and we have certain questions that need to be answered. My vote will be conditional on them.

Maria DeInnocentiis

I agree with Martha. We specifically called for you to include certain items. You are not providing details on what is specifically in the plan. I suggest we vote no until we get some decent answers.

Michael Hannibal

We have until May 27th for us to have a logical discussion about the proposal. That does not seem to be enough time, particularly with the missing information that we have. I concur with Maria.

Seymore Schwartz

This was discussed over a decade ago when they wanted to rezone to sixteen stories going all the way to Queens Boulevard to 179th Street. All these arguments are not new. They are not answering the questions.
Response [Martha Taylor] - That is what we said. It is conditional on getting answers to the questions.

Mohammed “Delwar” Islam

I am a small business owner on Hillside Avenue. The business community is hurting on Hillside Avenue because of parking. People are going to different neighborhoods. They do not have clear answers for the situation. They need to revisit and come back to us so we can have a clear picture.

Hersh Parekh

We are on a clock in which we have to be mindful. If we choose not to vote today, then we won't be voting at all since our review period ends on May 27th. We need to vote today to get our vote on the record. Voting today is critical.

Amy Tse

There are supermarkets with security guards that are watching people and timing them for parking. That is how crazy the parking situation is. Is it possible to have the parking as conditions on the vote?

Response [Hersh Parekh] – Yes. Our vote can be aye with conditions or nay unless these condition are made. Those are our options.

Caitlin Marziliano

I am disappointed with the answers that are given thus far on what parking would be required and changes that would be made to public transportation. It seems like you are adding congestion when there is already congestion without a plan to alleviate that. I also read in the minutes that there will be shadows cast over people's homes. There is no requirement to have outdoor spaces. It seems like it diminishes the quality of life for the people who already live in the area. My vote would be no even if we had the answers to the questions.

We made a motion to approve, but we should modify the motion. The new motion is approved with certain conditions. We can vote no on the motion. The conditions that I heard about were to include requirements for parking within the development that may get built, publicly available parking along Hillside Avenue, and a serious engagement with the MTA to address the limited transportation options. Those are the common conditions.

Wendy Gennaro

Answer [Hersh Parekh] – That is our position. If we vote yes, then we would only approve of this with those conditions. Remember, this is only an advisory vote. It can be taken into consideration by the Borough President, City Planning Commission, and City Council. The City Planning Commission and City Council cast the binding vote.

17 Yes **18 No** **1 Abstention for cause***

Members for: Saaif Alam, Edward Chung, Sheleeza Deen, John Gebhard, Wendy Gennaro, Ahsan Habib, Neeta Jain, Doretha Mcfadden, Dilip Nath, Hersh Parekh, Marisol Perez, Israel Peskowitz, Mohammad Rahman, Kelly Sexton, Martha Taylor, Amy Tse, and Rabbi Mayer Waxman.

Members against: D. Lavelda Davis, Maria DeInnocentiis, Marva Dudley, Armando Echeverry, Allen Eisenstein, Bhitihara Martha-Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., Michael Hannibal, Mohammed “Delwar” Islam, Jennifer Martin, Caitlin Marziliano, David Mordukhaev, Alan Ong, Tammy Osherov, Frances Peterson, Seymour Schwartz, Dr. Penny M. Stern, and Mohammed Tohin.

Wendy Gennaro

Chairperson Taylor requested a motion to adjourn.

Hersh Parekh made the motion. Adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Soleil Griffin, CB8 Staff
May 22, 2025*

**Nikolas Michael is an employee of the Department of City Planning and may not vote on any action brought to the Board by that agency.*