



Chairperson, Martha Taylor

The City of New York
Borough of Queens

Community Board 8

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

DEP/Sanitation Committee Meeting

Date: Monday, January 27, 2025
Time: 7:35 p.m.
Place: Community Board 8 Office
197-15 Hillside Avenue
Hollis, NY 11423

Mohammed Tohin, *DEP/Sanitation Committee Chair*

Committee Members Present: John Gebhard.

Committee Members Absent: Ahsan Habib and Mohammad Rahman.

Also in attendance: CB8 Members James Gallagher Jr., DEP representative - Queens Commissioner Alfonso Lopez, DSNY representatives Asst. Commissioner Gbubemi Okotieuro and Antonio Whitaker, CB8 Staff Soleil Griffin.

DEP/Sanitation Committee Chair Mohammed Tohin called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. This was followed by self-introductions of all those present.

Commissioner Alfonso Lopez

Mr. Lopez is the new Queens Department of Environmental Protections Commissioner. This the first time DEP has had designated Borough Commissioners. Mentioned that Andrew Sokolof is one of the two members on his the team. He is designated to CB8. He provided an email that will go directly to him and the members of his team. The email is queensdep@dep.nyc.gov. The email is used to address any complaints, i.e. flooding, ponding, dirty catch basin and any other matter under DEP's jurisdiction. It is encouraged to provide an image, file a 311 complaint, location and brief description when. Then include CB8, the Queens Borough President and Council Member for accountability.

Chairperson Tohin opened the meeting for questions from the Board Members.

James Gallagher Jr.

There is a manhole cover that is leaking located at 73rd Avenue and Francis Lewis Blvd. We have taken picture and sent it in either in October or November.

Answer: [Alfonso Lopez] – Send it to me.

Soleil Griffin

Did you send the complaint to CB8?

Answer: [James Gallagher] – Not yet.

DEP Commissioner Alfonso Lopez

On February 10th, at Queens Valley Playground there will be the installation of a green infrastructure and storm water storage under the park. This will be able to handle hundreds of gallons of storm water a year. The project will help increase the capacity of the sewage system and reduce flooding. There will be large asphalt in the multipurpose area that will be closed. The area will then be repaved. The playground will remain open throughout the project. The project will last about four to five months.

James Gallagher Jr.

What are the cross streets?

Answer: [Alfonso Lopez] – It is on the corner of 76th Avenue and 137th Street by PS 164.

James Gallagher Jr.

Have you received any complaints about rain gardens?

Answer: [Alfonso Lopez] – Assembly Member Nily Rozic did flag one. We have received complaints in Central Queens about it being messy or they are not kept. Some residents have requested one; however, there is no application process. When we do receive these requests, I flag it for our team. It lets them know where there is interest; however, it does not guarantee that one will be placed there.

Chairperson Tohin turned the meeting over to the Department of Sanitation (DSNY)

Antonio Whitaker – representative of DSNY

Mr. Whitaker introduced himself as the Assistant Director of the Community Affairs Bureau of the Department of Sanitation. He briefly went over the new containerization program rules. The current regulation state that single family homes, two family homes and buildings with nine units or less need to purchase the new sanitation bins.

John Gebhard

What will be the regulation for buildings that have 30+ units?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – In a couple of months, the department will issue rules for buildings that are ten or more units. Buildings that have ten to thirty units will have two options. The first option is to use Empire Bins, which are large on the street bins, the building manager/super will have a key, and sanitation will have access to it. The bin will be assigned to your building. If you have multiple buildings, a bin will be assigned to each of those buildings. A second option would be to use the official NYC bins or any bins that are fifty-five gallons or less with a secure lid. The building would have until June 2026 to use the official black trash bins that the city had contracted out. Buildings that have above thirty units will be required to only have Empire Bins.

John Gebhard

Buildings with above thirty units will be required to use bins that take up parking?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – Yes. The bin is large and will take up space. They have to be placed near the vicinity of the building to which it is assigned.

John Gebhard

Will the bins be tilted and dumped in the truck, or will they have to be removed from the bin?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – Those larger bins are fitted so that a mechanized truck could pick it up.

John Gebhard

If you put it on our site, how will they gain access?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – Wherever we service your garbage, that is where we would expect that bin to be located so that we have easy access.

John Gebhard

Will the city make that determination?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – We would work with the building super and management to determine what the best location is for those bins. Manhattan Community Board 9 is the pilot for this program. We are speaking with building supers and property managers in that area about what their preferences are. They have until Friday, January 31, 2025 to let us know. This will be phase one of the program to see what works and what best practices are before it is scaled up to the rest of the city.

John Gebhard

Are these bins going to be paid for by the city or property owner?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – The first bin assigned to the buildings will be at the expense of the city. If you need more, than the building will be able to purchase more.

John Gebhard

The more bins needed; the less parking spaces are available.

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – Yes. It really depends on how big the building is and how many Empire bins they would need to containerize all the trash.

John Gebhard

I want there to be communication to the building manager or the super that details when this is going to happen and when they need to purchase the bins by.

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – There is a program in which the department holds seminars for building supers. If you email customerservice@dsny.nyc.gov, we can connect those supers to our training unit.

John Gebhard

What is there to train when it comes to taking out the garbage?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – You would be surprised. There are some supers that know one thing and others who are not sure of the rules.

John Gebhard

When can the building manager and/or super expect the communication as to what the regulation will be?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – When the rules for those buildings come out, your supers and building managers will be told.

John Gebhard

Will it be distributed by email or snail mail? Will it be distributed to building supers or managers?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – It will be distributed to the building managers. We have the list of apartment buildings and houses in the city.

Mohammed Tohin

There are many people who have purchased the bins and have not received them. How is DSNY addressing this?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – We are making sure that individuals who ordered a bin, that did not come, do not get tickets.

Mohammed Tohin

Is DSNY currently enforcing and giving tickets?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – Yes. There is a caveat. If a sanitation worker tries to write you a ticket, they will not be able to since their system will show that an order was placed for a bin. If a ticket was issued and the resident ordered the bin, you can send the ticket to Antonio or myself.

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – This only applies to residents that order their bins online from the vendor the city chose. You can also buy the official black trash bins in Home Depot, but it does not apply to purchases made at Home Depot.

Mohammed Tohin

What are the regulations for residential buildings with commercial overlay?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – For the residential portion of the building, the landlord/property owner needs to provide bins to the residential units. The commercial overlays need to higher a private carter. They cannot mix their trash

Mohammed Tohin

I received a complaint from a doctor's office that is only there for two days. They received a letter from DSNY to hire a private company. Is this mandatory?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – Yes. It is mandatory because they are a business. It does not matter if they are there one day a week of all seven days. Any commercial space must hire a private carter.

James Gallagher Jr.

Do the same rules apply to NYCHA?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – NYCHA handles their own garbage.

Soleil Griffin

Just to clarify, if a resident gets a ticket after purchasing their bin through the vendor, how can they fight it?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – They would have to go to the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH). The Commissioner has stated that if a resident ordered a bin online, they would not receive a summons. The inspector/supervisor would not be able to issue a summons since it would reflect that a purchase was made for the bins. If the supervisor does a handwritten ticket, in which they are unable to see that a bin was purchased, the resident should notify the community board.

Soleil Griffin

How do you plan on conducting your outreach for buildings with above thirty units?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] –First, is mailing a notice to every property in the affected. Second, it will be posted on our website, social media feeds, and 311. Third, we will canvas the neighborhood that is affected.

Soleil Griffin

Our office received a complaint from a resident about how their garbage is not getting picked up. The resident has spoken with our last three superintendents about this issue. We want this to be addressed.

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – You can send me the address.

Soleil Griffin

How are you supposed to properly dispose of recycling materials? Are you supposed to purchase a recycling container?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – There is no requirement for residents to purchase a bin for recycling material. Plastic and cardboard materials can be in a clear bag.

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – Even though DSNY offers the option to purchase the recycling containers, they are not mandatory. If a resident wants to use a bin, they can use any bin they want so long as they are fifty-five gallons or less and has a secure lid. They can place their recyclables in a clear bag or for your paper and cardboard can be tied up in twine.

John Gebhard

When the trucks pick the recycling up, do they keep them separate?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – Yes. On recycling day, two trucks will come by. The first truck is for your garbage and the second is a split truck which is for your recyclables. The split truck allows for recyclable materials on one side and compost on the other side.

Soleil Griffin

Our office received images from a resident who picked up garbage that was blowing in the street. They stated that their neighbors are not properly disposing of their garbage. Is there any education or information as to how to properly containerize their garbage?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – Yes. It is all on our website.

DSNY Assistant Commissioner Gbubemi Okotieuro

Was this garbage in a container?

Answer: [Soleil Griffin] – No. The resident who made the complaint had received a fine, since the garbage was in front of her home, even though it was her neighbors' garbage that was blowing in the street.

Response: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – Sometimes it is kind of hard for enforcement to determine whose trash it is. There are times when enforcement can use their discretion when it seems as though the trash is from a bag that was ripped. We will still hold the residents responsible for keeping the area clean.

Soleil Griffin

Even if a resident receives a summons for garbage that is not theirs, would they still have to go to OATH?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – Yes.

Soleil Griffin

There is a corner house on 85th Avenue and 162nd Street that has been reported as an unkept property. What is sanitation doing when it comes to properties that are unkept?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – If it is a private property, the owner has to do the work. DSNY can clean up the area, but then we will bill the owner of the lot.

Soleil Griffin

That property also has ice on their sidewalk. What agency can look into that?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – We can look into it.

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – When it comes to ice on the sidewalk, the property owner can receive a summons. If there is overgrown grass behind the fence, that is a Department of Health and Mental Hygiene violation. We only have jurisdiction from the sidewalk out. Anything beyond that is private property, in which we are not legally allowed to enter that threshold.

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – It is rare for DSNY to get involved unless there is an emergency.

James Gallagher Jr.

Is it true that DSNY is going to have drones?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – We know nothing about that program.

James Gallagher Jr.

What is DSNY doing for people who have reported that their compost bins have been stolen?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – If a person's bin is stolen, they would have to reach out to NYPD.

Soleil Griffin

Do you know how many containerized bins have not been shipped?

Answer: [Antonio Whitaker] – We are not privy to that information; however, there is a list that the company provides to the department of people who have not received their bins. That list gets uploaded into our enforcement system so that residents do not get issued a ticket. When it comes to bins getting delivered, they are delivered in batches. Some areas may receive their bins faster than others, because the company waits until there is a critical mass of people who have ordered bins. As long as a resident has their order number, they will not receive a summons if they put the garbage in a bag. If a resident does get a ticket, have them reach out to your office and then you reach out to us to get the ticket discharged.

Soleil Griffin

Can a resident receive a fine if they purchase the bins at Home Depot rather than purchasing them on the website?

Answer: [Gbubemi Okotieuro] – If you buy it from Home Depot, you get it the same day so the resident will not receive a fine.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Soleil Griffin, Community Board 8 Staff
January 31, 2025*