



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, January 7, 2026, at the Hillcrest Jewish Center at 183-02 Union Turnpike, Queens, NY 11366.

Attendance:

Board Members Present:

Dilafroz Ahmed, Saaif Alam, Heather Bennett-Idels, Kenneth Cohen II, D. Lavelda Davis, Sheleeza Deen, Maria DeInnocentiis, Armando Echeverry, Howard Fried, Bhitihara Martha-Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Michael Hannibal, Mohammed “Delwar” Islam, Neeta Jain, Jennifer Martin, Caitlin Marziliano, David Mordukhaev, Dilip Nath, Alan Ong, Tammy Osheroov, Hersh Parekh, Marisol Perez, Israel Peskowitz, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Aliyah Salim, Kelly Sexton, Douglas Sherman, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, and Amy Tse.

Board Members Absent:

Edward Chung, Marva Dudley, Allen Eisentstein, Wendy Gennaro, Joshua Glickman, Ashan Habib, Roger Joyner, Elke Maerz, Doretha McFadden, Nikolas Michael, Jesse Rosenbaum, Seymour Schwartz, Steven Villaran, Rabbi Mayer Waxman, and Jacob Weinberg.

Others Present:

Shannar White representative of Congresswoman Grace Meng, Georgia Katsalis representative of Queens Borough President Donovan Richards, Peter Paolo representative of Council Member James Gennaro, Rokeya Akher representative of District Attorney Melinda Katz, Scott Sieber representative of Senator John Liu, Waael Abdallh representative of Senator Toby Stavisky, Ryan Alwi representative of Senator Comrie, Josh Simanowitz representative of Assembly Member Samuel Berger, Lucla Cappuccio representative of Department of City Planning, D.M. Marie Adam-Ovide, and CB8 Staffer Soleil Griffin-Green.

Call to Order:

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

Elected Officials’ Announcements

Rokeya Akhter representing District Attorney Melinda Katz

The Queens District Attorney, Melinda Katz, and Governor Kathy Hochul hosted a press conference where the DA unveiled a 780-count indictment that charged 13 individuals with stealing more than \$2.2 million in merchandise from Home Depot stores. The defendants are variously charged with grand larceny, conspiracy and other crimes.

Peter Paolo representing Council Member James Gennaro

Last month, the veteran service was canceled. It will start this month on Tuesday, January 20th and every 3rd Tuesday after that. Flyers were provided. To make an appointment, you can call their office at 718-217-4969.

Scott Seiber representing Senator John Liu

Senator John Liu is hosting a lung cancer screening event on February 19th. Flyers will be distributed when ready. To learn about upcoming events, feel free to contact his office at 718-765-6675.

Georgia Katsalis – representing Queens Borough President Donovan Richards

Queens Borough President Donovan Richards is hosting virtual housing connect webinar. The community board application was launched. The deadline is February 5th. To learn about upcoming events, feel free to contact his office 718-286-3000.

Joshua Simanowitz representing Assembly Member Samuel Berger

There is going to be a protest in Kew Gardens Hills on Thursday, January 8th. NYPD is aware. We ask that everyone stay safe and advise that everyone avoid the commotion.

Keith Felsenfeld representing Council Member Linda Lee

Council Member Linda Lee's office has a CUNY lawyer who comes to the office on the 1st of every Wednesday. If anyone has any Veterans issues, we provide assistance every 4th Monday at the VFW in Bellrose. If there is anyone who needs legal assistance, you can reach out to the office at 718-468-0137.

Wael Abdallh representing Senator Toby Stavisky

Senator Toby Stavisky's office is hosting a coat drive in collaboration with Common Point Queens on January 12th. To learn about upcoming events, feel free to contact her office at 718- 445-0004.

Ryan Alwi representing Senator Leroy Comrie

Senator Leroy Comrie is hosting several events. To learn about upcoming events, feel free to contact his office at (718) 765-6359. Also, when it comes to legislation the most notable bill passed was S5157A, provides property tax relief for seniors/homeowners by increasing the income eligibility for the property tax exemptions, which already exist for seniors and disabled homeowners.

George Hadjiconstantinou representing Queens Chamber of Commerce

The Queens Chamber of Commerce is hosting a seminar for any business that has commercial waste picked up by a private carter in the Queens Board East Zone. To learn more about this upcoming event, feel free visit their website at <https://www.queenschamber.org/>.

Chairperson called on Captain Michael Black-Larkins to speak.

Captain Michael Black-Larkins, 107th Precinct

Captain Michael Black-Larkins introduced himself and looks forward to working with the community.

Chairperson Taylor requested 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 requested a motion to approve the minutes.

Approval of Minutes: Michael Hannibal made a motion to approve the minutes of Wednesday, December 10, 2025, seconded by Howard Fried.

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

33 Yes

0 No

0 Abstentions

The motion passed unanimously without corrections.

Members for: Dilafroz Ahmed, Saaif Alam, Heather Bennett-Idels, Kenneth Cohen II, D. Lavelda Davis, Sheleeza Deen, Maria DeInnocentiis, Armando Echeverry, Howard Fried, Bhitihara Martha-Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Michael Hannibal, Mohammed “Delwar” Islam, Neeta Jain, Jennifer Martin, Caitlin Marziliano, David Mordukhaev, Dilip Nath, Alan Ong, Tammy Osheroov, Hersh Parekh, Marisol Perez, Israel Peskowitz, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Aliyah Salim, Kelly Sexton, Douglas Sherman, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, and Amy Tse.

Chairperson’s Report – Martha Taylor

The Board Members, who are up for renewal, may now re-apply online at the Borough President’s website. The applications opened on January 5, 2026, and the deadline is close of business day February 13, 2026. If you are unsure whether you need to renew this year, please see the district manager after the meeting.

The 2026 Open Streets Application is now open for submission and the deadline is approaching. It is January 13, 2026, for full street closures for Spring and Summer 2026. For schools applying for the 2026-2027 school year, the deadline is March 31, 2026. For more information, please go to: <https://www.nyc.gov/openstreets>.

Health Minute with Dr. Penny Stern – Health Committee Chair

January is Glaucoma Awareness Month. This is a disease related to elevated pressure inside the eye that leads to damage of the optic nerve. The pressure can sometimes be normal and still damage can occur. As a result of this damage, vision is gradually lost and if left undiagnosed and untreated, blindness can result. More than 4 million people in the US have glaucoma and it is an important cause of vision loss and blindness. If you have your vision checked, make sure that the ocular pressure is also measured. Treating glaucoma aims to lower intraocular pressure and the options include prescription eye drops, oral medicine, laser treatment, surgery or a combination of approaches.

Public Hearing:

Zoning Chairperson Hersh Parekh invited the applicant to present their request.

Lea Vallone – St. Francis Prep was rezoned in 2013 from an R3-2 to an R4 district. The rezoning allowed for a new music facility, science facility and physical education facility. The high school has been in this location since 1974. The current enrollment is 2,500 students and it is the largest private catholic high school in the nation. The sign is double sided and non-flashing. The C1-2 Overlay is usually mapped in residential districts to serve local needs such as restaurants, grocery stores, and gas stations. This overlay would cover an area that has been used by non-residential uses for over sixty years. There is a commercial overlay that already exists on Francis Lewis Boulevard. There is no proposed development. We are requesting to keep the existing sign. The proposed action would legalize the existing illuminated non-flashing sign. Accessory signs are allowed in an R4 District, but only for hospitals and related facilities that are defined in the zoning code as buildings that are tied to a hospital’s functional use. Educational facilities are not included in this definition. The sign does not flash, it changes to show different messages. A commitment letter has been circulated to the community board stating that the school does not intend to build anything further or use this commercial overlay to have an enlargement. The school is already

built to the maximum floor area ratio. They would not be allowed to build any further. We also received confirmation from the Archdiocese of Brooklyn that the school has a restrictive clause that the property is limited to educational use.

Steven Sinacori – Just to reiterate, putting the commercial overlay for the school allows for the legalization for the illuminated sign. The sign provided messages to the students, parents, and community. It is an expression of the schools faith. There is a restriction on the site that does not permit residential use. The notion that you can sell part of the site or sell the site for development is fiction. Adding the commercial overlay does not allow for residential development. This action would only allow for the legalization of a sign. There is no development and no enlargement.

Lea Vallone – We have heard from the community that the sign benefits them. They appreciate seeing the weather and time. The only reason we are here is because ST. Francis Prep received a violation from the Department of Buildings due to a mistake from the architect. It was an oversight that St. Francis Prep is trying to correct. This sign allows for the continuous spread of information to students in a modern way.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh – *Why are you seeking a zoning change as opposed to a variance?*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – We were in contact with the Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA) for a preliminary discussion as to whether a variance would have a likelihood of success. They expressed to us that it would not. They have never granted a variance for any type of signage. They said that a solution was to seek a zoning change.

Response [Hersh Parekh] – I will just note that District Manager Marie Adam-Ovide did reach out to the Department of City Planning to confirm that statement. They did confirm in the affirmative that a variance would not be granted. It does not fit within a very discreetly defined category under which a variance could be granted.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh – *If this zoning change is approved, could you subdivide the lot and sell a piece of it for another purpose?*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – There is a restriction on the site that requires the site to only be used for educational purposes. It cannot be sold for any other purpose. Otherwise, it would be taken back by the Diocese of Brooklyn. They own the underlying land and had placed the restriction to only allow St. Francis Prep to use it for educational purposes. Furthermore, from a practical point of view, we have so many students that it would not make any sense to sell it. We are in the education business not developers.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh took questions from the board to the applicant.

Aliyah Salim – *Why did you show an illustration of the sign and not a picture?*

Answer [Lea Vallone] – The presentation may look like it is an illustration of the sign, but it is an image. It is probably the projector.

Aliyah Salim – *What kind of messages does the sign provide?*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – It provides the weather, time, religious messages, and information to the students and parents.

Amy Tse – *What were the actual violations?*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – When institutions put up these kinds of signs, they hire an out of state company. The violation was for putting up a sign without proper permitting.

Answer [Lea Vallone] – Just to clarify, educational facilities are allowed to have signs and banners. They are just not allowed to be illuminated.

Martha Taylor – *The violation was for zoning code R4, not for the one you are asking for now?*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – Yes. It was recommended after we went through all our due diligence to bring over the C1-2 that is already on Francis Lewis Boulevard. It would allow us to legalize the sign that we love so much.

Amy Tse – *The map we were given shows a really large radius.*

Response [Hersh Parekh] – The board has a policy that they send out notices to affected residences within a 400 feet radius. The purpose of the map is to show what is included in the 500 feet radius. It was prepared by the CB8 staff.

Response [Marie Adam-Ovide] – I chose 500 feet to see if there was anyone we could send notices to; however, we could not find someone's home that would be affected.

Dilip Nath – *You received the violation due to the illumination. If that is the case, just take out the illumination and you can still have the rotation. Just place a simple light so you do not have to go through the process to change the zoning.*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – We cannot add a light because the sign is already illuminated. Adding a light would mean the sign would have to be taken down.

Answer [Lea Vallone] – It is an electrical sign used to display different messages. It is completely intertwined and would not be possible to have one without the other. There are not large amounts of illumination. The school lowers the illumination at night so that it is not bright on the streets. Students have said that it makes them feel safer at night, but it is dark along Francis Lewis Boulevard.

Howard Fried – *Besides getting the zoning change, were there any other options available to the school short of that drastic change?*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – No. We spoke with the New York City Board of Standards and Appeals and inquired as to if we could get a variance for the sign. We were told that they would not look favorably on a variance. The likelihood of success would be zero. They referred us to the Department of City Planning to do a zoning change. This was our last option. It was not my choice since this is the most cumbersome option since it takes a long time. This was the only option, so this is what we pursued.

Howard Fried – *Alternatively to having the sign where it is, does it make a difference if the sign was moved on the building?*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – No. The underlying zoning does not permit this sign. That is the reason why we have to add the overlay. Add the overlay does not make a substantive difference because it does not allow for any expansion of the building. All the square footage gathered for the underlying R4 zoning district has been used. Adding the overlay only allows us to legalize a sign.

Howard Fried – *Other than a complete zoning overlay change, could there be a partial change to permit the sign as compared to the whole property?*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – Unfortunately no because you can not do a spot zoning. We would have rather done what you are suggesting.

Marisol Perez – *Has any community member complained about the sign?*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – We have no complaints from anyone in the community about the sign.

Answer [Lea Vallone] – The school also said that they never received a complaint about the sign.

Neeta Jain – *I drive through that corner almost every day, the sign is very bright. It comes right in the eyes of drivers.*

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – I drive there every day. At night, the illumination is lowered. During the day, it is not bad at all.

Mohammed “Delwar” Islam – *You said the sign helps the community. How does it help the community?*

Answer [Lea Vallone] – The sign provides information not just related to the school itself, but showcases upcoming holidays, the weather, time, and information about certain events and courses not just limited to students.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh – One thing I noticed after the zoning committee meeting was that there are cameras on the sign where the bus stop is. Do those cameras provide security?

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – Those cameras tape what is going on at night and during the day.

Israel Peskowitz – With the new administration, is it possible that with the new people in office, you will be able to get the variance?

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – No. I am the former counsel to the Board of Standards and Appeals. Historically, the board has never before issued a variance for a sign.

Response [Israel Peskowitz] – I then suggest that the elected officials propose an amendment to the zoning code to allow for educational facilities to have illuminated signs.

Heather Bennett-Idels – You said that there are cameras. Can the cameras be on the school building and not on a sign? That way, you will be getting what you need separate from the sign. Let's say the sign does not pass, you should still have cameras.

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – This is not about cameras. This is about a sign.

Response [Heather Bennett-Idels] – You brought up the cameras.

Response [Hersh Parekh] – I brought up the cameras.

Response [Heather Bennett-Idels] – Someone brought up the cameras. It is irrelevant to the sign.

Heather Bennett-Idels – If lighting is an issue, which is also irrelevant to the sign, then there needs to be lighting. Lighting from a sign is completely insufficient for safety. Get lighting by putting them on the poles, get them on the trees, placing them on the school.

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – The cameras and the lighting is ancillary. We are here because the sign is very important to our student population, school and faith. We are here to ask for a zoning change to legalize a sign that is important to our school community.

Response [Heather Bennett-Idels] – You brought it up in your presentation that there is lighting and cameras. That has nothing to do with your sign.

Answer [Lea Vallone] – To be clear, the security camera and lighting were not brought up in my presentation. The school has security cameras and lighting.

Response [Hersh Parekh] – Just to clarify Heather, I brought up the security cameras. They did not. I just asked them about it. It was just my observation. The cameras are not part of their request.

Answer [Lea Vallone] – In response to that, students have said that the lights from that sign has made them feel safe. That is not to say that there are not other lighting and security cameras around.

Michael Hannibal – This is the first time that this sign has come up at our board meeting. How long has the sign been there?

Answer [Lea Vallone] – The sign has been there for two years. The school has reported that they had not received any complaints about the sign.

Armando Echeverry – Can you explain to me why it is going from an R4 to a C1-2? Who owns the actual land?

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – The underlying zoning is R4, which allows for the school/community facility to exist. We rezoned the location, in which we received approval from your board years ago. The property is owned by the Diocese of Brooklyn/Queens. St. Francis Prep has operated that property on behalf of the Diocese since the 70's. There is a restriction on the property that says it cannot be used for anything else other than for educational use. The C1-2 Overlay already exists on Francis Lewis. We are trying to bring it on top of the R4. It is useless for us to use it to expand the building because it goes with the underlying R4, which we already maxed out. The only thing the C1-2 does for us is to allow us to legalize the sign.

Armando Echeverry – If at some point the Diocese decides to sell and a developer buys the property; they can use the C1-2 Overlay to build a building there.

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – No. The C1-2 Overlay has nothing to do with any expansion of the building envelope. The C1-2 Overlay is just a commercial overlay. The underlying R4 zoning district permits residential and community facilities. All the square footage has been used up. The likelihood of this school being sold when it has a population of 2,500 students since the 70's is never going to happen.

Response [Hersh Parekh] – Just to clarify, the point is if the Diocese decided to sell the land, the R4 remains. That is not changing.

Jennifer Martin – What else can the overlay provide in the future?

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – We are not a pizzeria or candy store.

Jennifer Martin – If you are not there and you have an R4 plus the overlay, what does that allow for the next person.

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – We are going to remain here. Trust me. It would allow for any mild commercial use like a candy store, newspaper stand.

Response [Jennifer Martin] – I really want to know what the overlay really provides. I do not think you really understand what another owner of this property could have. If we provide this, it is not just for the next fifteen/twenty years, this is for a very long time.

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – This is the largest Catholic high school in the nation. In any reality that I can see, this school is going to be here for another fifty years and beyond. To put a commercial use here is not part of any reality.

Maria DeInnocentiis – I want to answer Jennifer Martins question. In an R4/C1-2 Overlay, you can build a multi-story building. The Mayflower Hotel is a R4 C1 [the correct zoning is C4-2] because it touches the Lidl's parking lot. I am pointing out because it is a commercial building. The R4/C1 allowed for the Mayflower Hotel, which was illegal. We were all told that they were allowed to do that. That is what is allowed in an R4/C1 district.

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – That is incorrect. The underlying R4 District only permits residential. A hotel is only permitted in a C5 district. The City Council passed a law that in order to maintain a hotel in the City of New York, you need a special permit. You need a C5 district and a special permit. An R4 district does not permit a hotel.

Response [Maria DeInnocentiis] – That is what it was at that time. What I am trying to say is that any commercial overlay allows for massive development above the regular residential zone.

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – That is not true.

Response [Maria DeInnocentiis] – Across the street, we have an R2A district. They are building a huge complex because of that C1 overlay.

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – There is no more FAR left to the site. It does not matter.

Response [Maria DeInnocentiis] – I have been a zoning committee member for many years. When we tried to change the zoning in this neighborhood to an R2A to make it harder for developers to build huge buildings, the Department of City Planning put us through turmoil. I have nothing against the school. I do believe that putting up a sign illegally and then telling us that the only change is to change the zoning is a step too much. The research I did shows that they can have an illuminated sign, it just cannot rotate.

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – This is not true. The underlying R4 district permits community facilities or residential use. The square footage on the site is already maxed out. Adding the commercial overlay to the site does not allow you to add any square footage.

Howard Fried – You mentioned that the BSA advised that they are unlikely to grant a variance on the sign.

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – Correct.

Response [Howard Fried] – The BSA is just one step before you go to the Supreme Court after that BSA rules. Either way, there is an appellate remedy if you get turned down by the BSA. Is that correct?

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – Having been a zoning lawyer for about 30 years, the courts give deference to the agency that makes a decision. If the BSA rules five to zero to disapprove the sign, the notion that you will go to the Supreme Court to get that overturned is zero.

Response [Howard Fried] – In all fairness, the BSA rules and then there is a court above the BSA that can consider the decision. You did not exhaust that option when you could have taken that up correct?

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – No.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh opened up the public hearing portion.

Elaine Young – opposed the application.

Terry Katz – opposed the application.

Gary Roebert – opposed the application.

Sherri Daniels – opposed the application.

Sol Strum – opposed the application.

Jefferey Greenberg – opposed the application.

Anne Staheli – opposed the application.

Marcia Levine – opposed the application.

Susan Kent– opposed the application.

Sherry Reisner – opposed the application.

Mark Hmats– opposed the application.

Phyllis Gambino – in favor of the application.

Johann Kim – in favor of the application.

Paul Modano– in favor of the application.

Benedict Santos – in favor of the application.

Alexia Stampf – in favor of the application.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh concluded the public hearing.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh – We are now going to make a motion and have a brief board discussion before we take our vote. As you know, we always make the motion in the affirmative. I will make the motion to approve the zoning amendment. Do we have a second?

Answer [Martha Taylor] – I second it.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh opened up for members of the board to have a brief discussion before the vote.

Dilip Nath – Can you explain what is going on? The board is somewhat confused.

Answer [Hersh Parekh] – Confused about what?

Response [Dilip Nath] – About the zoning and the sign. Make it easy for us.

Answer [Hersh Parekh] – This is a requested amendment to the zoning. The current site has an R4 zoning. That zoning does not permit a rotating illuminated sign. In order to legalize that sign, there needs to be a change to that underlying R4 zoning. The action requested is to add a C1-2 Overlay to the zoning. That specific overlay to the zoning would allow for a rotating illuminated sign. This zoning only applies to this site. One additional comment I would like to make was that the notion of precedent was brought up. Zoning by its definition is not precedent centered. It is specific to the site under question. Just because one site has some sort of zoning change, it does not set a precedent that adjacent sites are entitled to that same change. Zoning laws do not allow for things to extend in that way.

John Gebhard – Can the overlay be reversed at some point in the future?

Answer [Hersh Parekh] – Yes it can. What you do can also be undone.

Caitlin Marziliano – It is my understanding that historically, St. Francis Prep’s relationship with us has been good. They do not have a history of acting first and then asking for forgiveness/permission. This seems like an anomaly. This is ultimately about a sign. There was a lot of discussion of the Diocese of Brooklyn/Queens is closing down schools. They are the largest Catholic high school in the country and ridiculously profitable. The

idea that they would sell that land after sinking tens or millions of dollars over the last ten years seems a little ridiculous to me. It is for that reason, I am not opposed to this.

Kenneth Cohen II – In my research, before St. Francis Prep was there, there was another Catholic school owned by the Diocese. To think that they are going to sell it after they owned that land for this long, does not make sense. The thing that does not jive with me is precedent. We have had a few different instances where businesses come before the board and we have a decision to make. Whether we are going to change the zoning for this for-profit entity or not change the zoning. We have made decisions that I do not necessarily agree with in the past, but it has become our precedent. This is a school that is trying to keep up to date with the technology and the times. Yes, it is a for-profit school, but at the end of the day, it is still a school. You want kids to have access to modern technology. What do you? Do we allow this school to make this change or do we side with changing zoning that is going to impact the footprint of our community in the foreseeable future?

Zoning Chairperson Parekh – Just to clarify, is it a for-profit entity or non-profit entity?

Answer [Steven Sinacori] – Non-profit.

Martha Taylor – In all of my years in living in this community, chairing this board and being a member of this board, I have never seen anyone change a very successful religious institution to a C1. This means it would allow a candy store or a newspaper stand. It is the most minimal kind of commercial use that anyone can do. It makes no sense. There is no precedent as Hersh said, in zoning. You need facts and circumstances, and everything is different from everything else. Also, yes you can make changes. If this does not work out, you can make other changes. We now have laws that were passed in November that are going to change all kinds of land use in ways that you are not going to like at all. It is no big deal to give them a sign that they want. Drive down Lakeville Road. There is a big sign for Great Neck South. The sign doesn't bother me. This is all nonsense.

Maria DeInnocentiis – There were complaints on that property. The latest complaint is still active. It says that “the digital sign on the corner of Horace Harding Expressway and Francis Lewis Boulevard is too bright in the evenings and it is distracting and blinding for drivers driving southbound. It also causes a safety hazard because every time the sign changes it makes it appear as if the traffic light is changing”. There are complaints and past complaints that say the same thing. When I did research on this, what makes the sign illegal is that it rotates. My understanding from reading things is that they can have an illuminated sign that does not flip. You do not need a zoning change to have a non-flipping sign. I am asking our members to think about the impact on zoning on our whole community. I am asking you to support voting no.

Aliyah Salim – As a community board, we are here to hear from the community. The community is genuinely concerned about what this will look like moving forward.

Jennifer Martin – Changing the zoning for a sign seems a bit extreme. As former President of the Kew Gardens Hills Civic Association for ten years, listening to the leaders are the people whose opinions matter rather than a school who has an interest. I do not think the sign is crazy, it does not affect me and I do not think it is necessary to change the zoning for the sign. I think we need to listen to the leaders of this community.

Howard Fried – I support schools. I do not have a problem with the sign. I do not have a problem with technology either; however, they did not try a variance. They were told that it would not work. As good lawyers and litigators, you always try. You have to exhaust your options. You had students speak on how passionate they are with the sign. They were beautiful thoughts; however, bring them to the BSA and let them plead their case. If the BSA says no, then you can come back and discuss it; however, you did not do that. You told me that you do not have a remedy, you cannot do it, and that the school spent a lot of money with the lawyers. I am happy for

the school to have what it needs. I am not happy with rezoning for a sign. It is either you fix the sign and make it work or appeal to the BSA for a variance.

Israel Peskowitz – My non-profit organization bought a piece of land during COVID-19 to open a youth center. We put up a beautiful, illuminated sign. A couple of weeks later we received a letter from the city with an obnoxious fine for having an illuminated sign. We went to unplug it, but the electrician wired it so that it would not shut off. Eventually we unplugged it and it was solved.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh – Before we call the question, I would like to make a few final comments. The first is that it is wonderful to see members of the community out at a community board meeting. I also want to thank the students who came out and observed local government in action. Zoning as a policy matter is not precedent centered. Every single site is subject to its own review of the conditions and facts of that site. I also recognize that there are a lot of passionate views about what is being considered, proposed, explored or whatever you want to call it in Fresh Meadows. I appreciate those passionate views. That proposal should not weigh on your decision when it comes to this application. I am requesting the board to not let one project impact another project. This sign brings value to the students and parents at St. Francis Prep. They had this sign up since 2023 and believe it or not, they were not aware that it was illegal. We had cases before this board in recent memory where other sites have done something like this and have waited five to twenty years before coming before us. In many cases, we have approved that modification. The fact that when they received this violation and decided to explore their options about how they can address that, is a good thing. To the point made about the variance, they sought guidance from the Department of City Planning. We also sought guidance from the Department of City Planning, and they confirmed to the board staff that this project cannot receive a variance. It is not eligible for a variance and that the only way to address this is through a zoning change. It is not us taking them for their word or saying that they should have done more. We had the board staff that is one of the best board staff in the City of New York reach out to the BSA, the Department of Buildings, and the Department of City Planning.

Yes - 19

No - 14

Abstention - 0

Members For: Dilafroz Ahmed, Saaif Alam, Kenneth Cohen II, D. Lavelda Davis, Sheleeza Deen, Bhitihara Martha-Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Michael Hannibal, Mohammed “Delwar” Islam, Neeta Jain, Caitlin Marziliano, Dilip Nath, Hersh Parekh, Marisol Perez, Kelly Sexton, Douglas Sherman, Martha Taylor, and Mohammed Tohin.

Members Opposed: Heather Bennett-Idels, Maria DeInnocentiis, Armando Echeverry, Howard Fried, Jennifer Martin, David Mordukhaev, Alan Ong, Tammy Osherov, Israel Peskowitz, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Aliyah Salim, Dr. Penny M. Stern, and Amy Tse.

The motion passed.

District Manager’s Report, January 2026

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

This New Year, the Department of Health released a notice to not ‘Drop The Ball’ on Health and safety, including reminders for taking measures to avoid getting RSV, COVID-19, the Flu, or the common cold and practicing additional preventative measures such as masking up, washing hands, and covering your coughs. The release also warned to avoid mixing drugs and alcohol, and support for those seeking treatment for alcohol and/or drug issues. Mental health support is available 24/7 through the 988 talk and text helpline.

Department of Parks and Recreation

The agency wanted to remind residents of the Mulchfest Event at Cunningham Park. It will be happening this weekend on January 10th and 11th from 10 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Bring your Christmas trees without decorations for recycling. They will be turned into mulch.

Department of Transportation

DOT has a new commissioner - Mike Flynn. Below are the stats from 2025:

- Through December 31, 2025, the overall number of traffic fatalities is at 205, a 22% decline from the 253 fatalities recorded in 2024. 2025 has been the safest year on record in the City's history, as per DOT. The overall traffic deaths are down 31 % since the launch of Vision Zero in 2014.
- As for the borough of Queens, there was a 23% decline in traffic deaths, down from 74 traffic deaths in 2024 to 57 in 2025.
- Every major travel mode experienced a decline in traffic deaths in 2025, including among pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicle occupants.
- Leading the decline was the sharp drop in deaths among people in cars, by 40% and motorcycle users, by 32%.
- Pedestrian fatalities remain at the lowest levels ever and have also declined 9%, from 122 pedestrian deaths in 2024 to 111 in 2025. Deaths among motorized two-wheelers, generally—which include e-bikes, motorcycles, stand-up e-scooters—are also down 19% from 73 deaths in 2024 to 59 in 2025.

In 2024, the agency also completed the final phase of the Queens Boulevard redesign adding protected bike lanes in Sunnyside and Long Island City, helping to reduce injuries and fatalities on what was formerly known as the 'Boulevard of Death.' NYC DOT built on this success this year, which added more than 26,000 square feet of new pedestrian space to the street.

District related approvals:

- Correcting No Standing signs in the next few weeks at 188th Street and 186th Lane.
- APS (Accessible Pedestrian Signal) approved for 85th Avenue and 164th Street
- Traffic Signal approval for 141st Street and 72nd Crescent (*will be installed when resources become available*).
- Key Food loading zone approved near 79th Avenue and 146th Street.

Department of Environmental Protection

Downspout disconnection letters have recently been mailed to residential property owners in MS4 areas (municipal separate storm sewer system) – the letter should serve as a reminder to owners that downspouts should not be connected to their sanitary lines as it is against the law to do so. The letter also references the DEP Website and QR code to learn more about this. Hyperlink is www.nyc.gov/dep/downspouts

- It is a primary benefit to residents who live in these MS4 areas to have their downspouts disconnected so that when rainfall occurs, they are not adding to the volume in their sanitary lines and the sanitary sewers. This will help reduce street flooding and backups, especially in basements.
- Generally, all residents in all areas of NYC should have disconnected downspouts conveying away from their foundations.

DEP continues to monitor our drinking water reservoir levels. It is currently at around 78% in storage capacity and improved from last month's average of 70%.

DEP reminds residents that as we are in the winter season, pipes may freeze, leak, or burst. It is an opportune time to remind the public about considering the AWR protection plan for their service lines – more information is available here - <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dep/pay-my-bills/service-line-protection-program.page>

Here are the stats for December 2025. There was a total of 390 complaints made to DEP in Queens CB8. The top 5 complaints were:

1. Noise: Alarms – 144
2. Hydrant Knocked Over/Missing – 40
3. Leaks – 26
4. Street Flooding – 18
5. Sewer Backup - 15

Department of Design and Construction

We have a new project coming to Community Board 8Q. **Project ID # SEBLQX01**, which will include water main and sewer replacement at various locations. The Community Construction Liaison (CCL) for this project is **Lisa Alfred**, and she can be reached by email at queenssewersccl01@gmail.com or call her at (347) 392-4830. The start date is still to be determined.

Project# HWPR20QC Updates:

Parsons Blvd., & Grand Central Parkway Service Road (westbound)

NWC - Excavated and installed a catch basin. Chute connections to be installed.

NEC- Currently excavating to install a catch basin and their chute connections

We will be working at the above location, (both eastbound and westbound) for the next several weeks.

Horace Harding Expressway Service Road (eastbound) and 164th Street SEC & SWC - Excavated & installed catch basins and chute their connections.

CCL Yatta Jerome-Gibbs can be contacted by email at hwpr20qcccl@gmail.com or by telephone at (718) 362-6052.

Queens Public Library

Winter Drive Continues through Saturday, January 31

- We are pleased to be partnering with [City Harvest](#), New York City's largest food rescue organization, for our QPL Winter Food Drive.
- We will be collecting canned food and plastic jars of peanut butter at all open Queens Public Library locations (except the Far Rockaway Teen Library and the Ravenswood Community Learning Center) from Monday, December 8 through Saturday, January 31.

QPL's Brand Ambassador Program for Teens

- Does the teen in your life love social media and content creation? Do they dream of becoming an influencer or a marketing maven? They can hone their skills and dive into their passions as a Queens Public Library Brand Ambassador!
- As brand ambassadors, teens will work with our marketing team to create fun and engaging content to help teens and young adults learn about the library's resources. They will gain real-world experience in content creation, writing, filming and social media influencing.
- The first Brand Ambassador activity will take place for three hours on **January 18th beginning at 11am**, with a video shoot at Central Library in Jamaica, Queens. For their time and efforts, teens will receive a **\$50 visa gift card**! During Spring 2026, they will have additional activities.

Link to apply: <https://qlmarketing.typeform.com/to/ROZb74QM>

Central Library

89-11 Merrick Boulevard, Jamaica
Sunday, January 18 at 11a.m.



Happy Birthday to: *Mohammad Rahman, Kenneth Cohen, Maria DeInnocentiis, and Martha Taylor!*

Marie Adam-Ovide

Chairperson Taylor requested a motion to adjourn.

Hersh Parekh made the motion. Adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Soleil Griffin-Green, CB8 Staff
January 16, 2026*