



# COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 9

Queens Borough Hall  
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Sherry Algreto, Chairperson \* James S. McClelland, District Manager \* Donovan Richards Jr., Borough President

## NOVEMBER 13, 2025, MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING ROOM 200, 120-55 QUEENS BOULEVARD, KEW GARDENS, NY 11424

### BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

ABSENCES AS OF APRIL 2025-MARCH 2026

2<sup>nd</sup> # Represents Absences as of January-December 2025 (Borough President's Attendance)

Inderpaul Ahluwalia	(0)(0)	Marilyn Custodio	(1)(1)	Ijazz Rahim	(1)(1)
Sherry Algreto	(0)(0)	Joan DeCamp	(1)(1)	Cristal Rivera	(0)(0)
Faiuze Ali	(2)(2)	Warlito DeLeon	(0)(0)	Philip Ross	(0)(0)
Dulal Bhattacharjee	(1)(1)	Hilary Dvorkin	(1)(1)	Regina Santoro	(3)(3)
Kirpal Billing	(1)(1)	Stephen Esposito	(3)(3)	Himmat Singh	(0)(0)
Visnoonand Bisram	(2)(2)	Vanessa Fuentes	(0)(0)	Jarnail Singh	(2)(2)
Zoila Bofill	(1)(1)	Albert Gamarra	(1)(1)	Raghbir Singh	(0)(0)
Maricela Cano	(1)(1)	Daniel Grieve	(0)(0)	J. Richard Smith	(0)(0)
John Carter	(1)(1)	Sylvia Hack	(0)(0)	Esta-Joy Sydel	(0)(0)
Swapan Chakraborty	(2)(2)	Alicia Hassin	(2)(2)	Andrew Taranto	(0)(0)
Rick Chetram	(0)(0)	Joseph Iaboni	(0)(0)	Alyssa Velez	(2)(2)
Daniel Chu	(0)(0)	Carmela Isabella	(2)(2)	Keith Villanueva	(0)(0)
Andrea Crawford	(2)(2)	Fahlovi Noman	(3)(3)	Seth Welins	(1)(1)
Rev. Ruben Cruz	(2)(2)	Kevin O'Leary	(0)(0)	Stacey Yearwood	(0)(0)

### BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Stephen Forte	(1)(1)	Matthew Singh	(1)(1)	Harpreet Toor	(2)(2)
Rabbi Daniel Pollack	(2)(2)	Mohinder Singh	(3)(3)		

### ALSO PRESENT

James McClelland, District Manager  
Irina Barayeva, Community Coordinator

### LEGISLATORS/REPRESENTATIVES, CITY AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Council Member Joann Ariola  
Assembly Member Jenifer Rajkumar  
Melissa Thomas, Rep. Council Member Joann Ariola  
Carl Moore, Rep. Senator Joe Addabbo  
Frederice Latchman, Rep. Senator Leroy Comrie  
Rokeya Akhter, Rep. Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz  
Max Rose, Rep. Congress Member Gregory Meeks  
Laura Shepard, Rep. Queens Borough President Donovan Richards  
Kevin Visniewski, Rep. Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi

## 1. Opening of Meeting and Reading of Minutes

Chair Algreto asked if there were any corrections/additions to October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, minutes and motions. There were none. J. Richard Smith motioned to accept the minutes as presented. Andrea Crawford seconded the motion.

**Motion # 1:** To adopt minutes as presented

**Vote # 1:** 30 in favor and 12 abstentions

The minutes were adopted as presented.

## 2. Chairperson's Remarks & Exec. Report–Sherry Algreto, District Manager's Report-James McClelland

Chair Algreto reported on the Queens Borough Board meeting where an SCA presentation was given to multiple community boards with updates on school projects. There was a discussion on the proposed school site at the former Ruby's Costumes location on Jamaica Avenue, which the board talked about extensively.

Chair Algreto raised the need for a middle school in that neighborhood, but it was brought to her attention that one is already in the early planning stages. She identified the area near the old movie theater as a potential site. Since the SCA is always focused on land availability, she volunteered to provide photos.

Ms. Algreto acknowledged and thanked all veterans in the room, stating the importance of always recognizing those who have served our country.

DM McClelland wished happy birthday to: Marilyn Custodio, Albert Gamarra, and Raghbir Singh.

He stated that Capital and Expense Budget Priority List, which is included in the board members' packages, is CB9's annual submission to the Office of Management and Budget. He reminded all that while this list is important, the real opportunity to secure funding for projects comes from local elected officials. Council Member Arriola has been extremely effective in securing funding for key projects in CB9 area, and Council Member Shulman has done the same. If any of the projects are not on this list right now — there is time until March to submit additional requests.

Chair Algreto made a motion to accept the Capital and Expense Budget Priorities. Stephen Esposito seconded the motion.

**Motion # 2:** To accept the Capital and Expense Budget Priorities

**Vote # 2:** Unanimous

DM McClelland thanked the board members for their help and cooperation.

## 3. Public Hearing

### ➤ *NYC Department of Parks & Recreation – Freedom Drive*

Chair Algreto briefly addressed the issue regarding the transparency of a letter she signed last year. She stated that there was a discrepancy between agencies concerning Freedom Drive, and when Council Member Ariola sent a letter about that discrepancy, she signed it to acknowledge that she was aware of the issue. The Chair had pointed out that any discussion about protocols or procedures can certainly be addressed at another meeting.

**Meira Berkower, Chief of Staff, Queens Department of Parks & Recreation** provided some background information on Freedom Drive and the reason why they are attending the meeting tonight:

“Freedom Drive was originally closed during a period when New Yorkers truly needed outdoor space. We were pleased to see that the demand for this space continued well beyond that period. This aligns with what we’re all about in the Parks Department - providing recreational opportunities in many different forms.

That said, we’ve recently heard from community members who feel differently about the closure. We are here to consider reopening Freedom Drive during our off-season, which runs from October through April. And specifically, we’re talking about the section of Freedom Drive between Myrtle Avenue and Park Lane South.

Historically, this area experienced a significant amount of illegal dumping. Since the closure, we’ve seen improved safety for park users—less risk from speeding cars, and more positive recreational activity, including walking, running, and cycling. The additional foot traffic also provides more eyes on the park, which has helped deter negative activity.

The closure has also improved connectivity within Forest Park, whose layout can otherwise make navigation difficult. And importantly, with an elementary school nearby, the open space supports safe pedestrian access for students and families, while also encouraging active use of the park.”

Albert Gamarra clarified a few items from the City Charter regarding public hearings.

- Only members of the community board and individuals expressly authorized by the chairperson may question a speaker.
- The chairperson has discretion to set time limits for speakers. For today, given the number of speakers, the time limit will be one minute per speaker.
- The City Charter and related rules do not require a mandatory time gap between the public hearing and the final vote. However, the vote must occur at a duly called meeting - and he noted that this is a duly called meeting.

**Council Member Joann Ariola** addressed the board and spoke about the following issues:

#### Discussion on Freedom Drive Compromise

- It was noted that representatives from the Parks Department, FDNY, and NYPD met on-site approximately one year ago.
- The current proposal reflects a well-considered compromise supported by first responders.
- Board members were asked to keep this context in mind when evaluating the proposal.
- The Council Member supports the compromise put forward by Parks Department.

#### **City Hall Updates**

##### Hearings on EMS Pay Equity and Agency Structure

Multiple hearings were held at City Hall today. One hearing focused on EMS pay equity and a proposal to separate EMS from FDNY to create a stand-alone agency. EMS members are significantly underpaid; some cannot afford independent housing, and some experience homelessness. Efforts to secure equitable pay through collective bargaining have been unsuccessful due to lack of action from the Mayor’s Office, OMB, and the Office of Labor Relations. Because progress has stalled, legislation is being considered. The speaker does **not** support making EMS a standalone agency, citing concerns about operational capacity and the \$25M cost. Preference is to invest those funds into FDNY and achieve pay equity within the existing structure.

##### Paraprofessional Pay Legislation

The second portion of the hearing focused on paraprofessionals, who are also severely underpaid.

Their work, particularly with students with special needs, requires significant skill and responsibility. Due to agency inaction, legislation has been proposed to raise pay and provide bonuses. The speaker expressed confidence that the legislation will pass and credited UFT for supporting the effort.

#### Upcoming Hearing: Fire & Emergency Management

- An eight-bill package addressing firefighters and public safety will be reviewed. Recent incidents, including a fatal subway attack where no fire extinguisher was available, highlight gaps in safety infrastructure. Legislation includes requirements to restore or secure fire extinguisher availability in transit settings.
- First Responder Health and Safety

Concerns were raised regarding exposure to PFAFs, toxins released during fires and present in firefighter gear, particularly hoods. These chemicals are linked to rising rates of thyroid cancer among firefighters. One bill in the upcoming package will prohibit fire departments from using gear containing PFAFs.

Council Member Ariola expressed her appreciation for the Parks Department's work in crafting the Freedom Drive compromise, with acknowledgment of key contributors. She emphasized the importance of compromise within community decision-making.

#### Assembly Member Jenifer Rajkumar addressed the board stating the following:

Congratulated Chair Algreto on the vote and stated that the issue is of particular concern to her because Freedom Drive is within her district. She noted that she was involved throughout the period since its closure during COVID and thanked the Board for its robust deliberation. She acknowledged both the community's concerns about the burden of closure and the safety concerns expressed by others. She committed to working with the community and DOT on mitigation measures such as stop signs, speed bumps, traffic lights, and additional crossing guards.

She also announced several upcoming events:

- November 22 at 2 p.m. – Annual Thanksgiving Turkey Drive, offering free turkeys to the community.
- December 1 – First-ever Woodhaven Zumba Party, a free community event.
- December 11 – NYC Veterans representatives will be at her office to assist veterans.
- November 14 – She will visit Elizabeth Blackwell School with veterans, where students will write appreciation notes as part of instilling patriotism in the next generation.

Sarah Haga, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke in opposition to the Freedom Drive re-opening.

John Colpitts, Woodhaven Resident, spoke against the Freedom Drive re-opening for vehicles.

Rose Wernver, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke in support of the compromised version of the Freedom Drive re-opening.

Nancy Zapata, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke in favor of the Freedom Drive re-opening.

Massiel Lanz, P.S. 66 Principle, voiced strong opposition to the Freedom Drive re-opening.

Joseph Carpenter, Richmond Hill Resident, expressed his belief that board members should make decisions that best serve the needs of the community.

Julia del Palacio, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke against the compromised version of the Freedom Drive re-opening.

Eric Stowers, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke against the Freedom Drive re-opening for vehicles.

Manuel Acosta, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke in favor of the Freedom Drive re-opening for vehicles.

Maud Newton, Woodhaven Resident, spoke against the Freedom Drive re-opening for vehicles.

Andy G., Forest Hills Resident, spoke against the Freedom Drive re-opening for vehicles.

Richard Monaco, Queens Resident, spoke against the Freedom Drive re-opening for vehicles.

Lauren Santoro, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke in favor of the Freedom Drive re-opening for vehicles.

Deborah Adams, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke against the Freedom Drive re-opening for vehicles.

Martin Colberg, Woodhaven Resident, spoke in favor of the compromised version of the Freedom Drive re-opening and asked for DOT to implement more safety measures in the area.

Tom Balbone, Howard Beach Resident, spoke against the reopening of Freedom Drive to vehicular traffic.

Anne Marie Kelly, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke in favor of the reopening of Freedom Drive to vehicular traffic.

Andrew Smith, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke against the reopening of Freedom Drive to vehicular traffic.

Elliot Eustis, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke against the reopening of Freedom Drive to vehicular traffic.

Hillary Dvorkin, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke against the reopening of Freedom Drive to vehicular traffic.

Paul Capocasale, Queens Resident, spoke in favor of the reopening of Freedom Drive to vehicular traffic.

Maria Rubio, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke in favor of the reopening of Freedom Drive to vehicular traffic.

Fahad Riaz, a Queens resident, spoke against the reopening of Freedom Drive to vehicular traffic.

**Motion # 3:** To support NYC Parks Department proposal to open Freedom Drive seasonally from October to April

**Vote # 3:** 33 in favor and 9 opposed

#### 4. 102<sup>nd</sup> Precinct Briefing

Capt. Pratima Maldonado stated the following:

- The precinct is approaching the end of the year, and overall conditions are good, and general performance is positive.
- Grand Larceny Autos continue to be a significant issue throughout the city. Residents are encouraged to use tracking devices in their vehicles and avoid keeping key fobs near main doors to prevent relay-type thefts.
- “Gypsy Scams” targeting the elderly. Typical pattern: Offenders often drive SUVs with out-of-state plates. Usually, one male driver and a female accomplice. Offenders approach elderly individuals, claiming they resemble a family member; they ask for a hug or close contact. During the interaction, offenders steal jewelry or swap it for fake jewelry. Elderly people are encouraged not to engage with strangers approaching them in this manner. Precinct officers are actively looking for suspected vehicles and individuals. Numerous stops are being made, but offenders are widespread.

**5. Education & Youth Services Committee Report, Cristal Rivera, Chair, reported on the following:**

- The Education Committee met on October 15<sup>th</sup> and discussed school outreach strategies, which were used to notify schools about CB9 Capital and Expense Budget priorities. She stated that they are very pleased to see strong representation from CB9 schools on the priority list that was voted for tonight.
- They also talked about building a stronger relationship with the Community Education Council - the parent-led advisory body for each education district. The committee members plan to attend their meetings, advocate for the board's priorities, and support their priorities when they align with the board's.
- Additionally, the Richmond Hill Library was discussed. Efforts are being coordinated to raise awareness and engage residents and families. The committee's goal is to build support for a rally or press conference to draw attention to what is happening with the library.
- Ms. Rivera attended the Conference of Community Board Education Committees, hosted by the Queens Borough President. It brought together education chairs from across the borough and was very productive in sharing strategies and highlighting issues that should be focused on. There will be another meeting in the future.
- This fall, she had the pleasure of attending several school events with Sherry, Marilyn, Zoyla, and others. It was wonderful to celebrate school communities together.

**6. Transportation & Traffic Committee Report – Stephen Forte, Chair, *not present to give a report.***

**7. Public Safety & Consumer Affairs Committee Report/Public Hearing (Letters of Intent Received)  
Albert Gamarra, Chair**

**a. On Premises Liquor, Wine, Beer & Cider License Application – Renewal**

Jefe De Jefes Corp., d/b/a Junix Bar & Lounge  
112-04 Jamaica Avenue  
Richmond Hill, NY 11418 *No Speakers*

Simply Fried LLC  
83-06 Austin Street  
Kew Gardens, NY 11415 *No Speakers*

Peruvian Kitchen Incorporated, d/b/a Don Pollo  
83-03 95<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Ozone Park, NY 11416 *No Speakers*

**b. On Premises Wine, Beer & Cider License Application – Renewal**

New Fuji Brother, Inc.  
116-09 Metropolitan Avenue  
Kew Gardens, NY 11418 *No Speakers*

New Metro Sushi Cafe, Inc.  
118-21 Metropolitan Avenue  
Kew Gardens, NY 11415 *No Speakers*

**c. On Premises Beer & Cider License Application – Renewal**

3 In 1 Deli Grocery Inc.  
131-11 Jamaica Avenue  
Richmond Hill, NY 11418 *No Speakers*

**d. All Night Permits – New Year’s Eve Requests**

Ellis Bar & Lounge Inc.  
105-06 Jamaica Avenue  
Richmond Hill, NY 11418 *No Speakers*

Flor A. Garcia, d/b/a El Rinconcito de Nagua  
76-20 Jamaica Avenue  
Woodhaven, NY 11421 *No Speakers*

Kiss Entertainment Inc.  
130-35 91<sup>st</sup> Avenue  
Richmond Hill, NY 11418 *No Speakers, rescinded their application*

Peter’s Grill & Bar Corp.  
75-11 Rockaway Boulevard  
Woodhaven, NY 11421 *No Speakers*

Serie 56 sport Bar Inc.  
94-10 Jamaica Avenue  
Woodhaven, NY 11421 *No Speakers*

Puerto Plata Fish Market Inc., d/b/a Puerta Plata Seafood Restaurant & Billiard  
75-16 Rockaway Boulevard  
Woodhaven, NY 11421 *No Speakers*

G’s Sports Bar Corp.  
76-06 Rockaway Boulevard  
Woodhaven, NY 11421 *No Speakers*

Joan DeCamp made a motion to oppose all All-Night Permit applications; Andrea Crawford seconded it.

**Motion # 4:** To oppose all New Year’s Eve All Night Permit Applications

**Vote # 4:** 41 in favor and 1 abstention

Committee Chair Gamarra stated that letters regarding the renewal applications mentioned in the agenda will be sent to the SLA.

The next Public Safety & Consumer Affairs Committee Zoom meeting will take place on Tuesday, November 25<sup>th</sup>.

**8. Public Forum**

Sol McCants, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke about honoring the veterans (testimony submitted).

Stacey Yearwood, Richmond Hill Resident, highlighted the Woodhaven Mural Project at 98<sup>th</sup> Street and

Woodhaven Boulevard, and thanked Jennifer Lambert for creating it as well as the Woodhaven BID for sponsoring it.

Paul Capocasal, Woodhaven Resident, voiced his opinion on the re-opening of Freedom Drive.

Surjio Talukder, Business Owner, thanked Chair Algreto for her help and support during the reopening of Ascend Spa on Austin Street.

Carl Moore, Rep. Senator Addabbo, extended season greetings from the senator.

Kevin Visniewski, Rep. Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi:

- Assemblyman Hevesy currently has five bills under negotiation with the Governor's Office.
- Domestic Violence Support: Co-hosted a hearing focused on expanding pathways for survivors of domestic violence.
- Developmental Disabilities Housing: Co-hosted a second hearing examining challenges faced by individuals with developmental disabilities in securing residential housing—particularly during the transition from childhood to independent adulthood.

Frederice Latchman, Rep. Senator Leroy Comrie:

- Extended holiday greetings on behalf of Senator Conley.
- She offered Veterans Day appreciation, recognizing and thanking all veterans present.
- Announced several upcoming events hosted or supported by Senator Conley's office.

Laura Shepard, Rep. Queens Borough President Donovan Richards:

- Expressed gratitude to all who attended last Thursday's Veterans Celebration.
- Announced a Transgender Day of Remembrance Ceremony on 11/19/25 at Queens Borough Hall and a Virtual Parent Advisory Board Zoom Meeting on 11/25/20 at 6PM.
- Shared her contact information and encouraged all to reach out with any questions: 717-286-3000, email: [lshepard@queensvp.nyc.gov](mailto:lshepard@queensvp.nyc.gov)

Rokeya Akhtar, Rep. Queens District Attorney Melida Katz:

- Extended her warmest wishes for a happy Thanksgiving, a happy holiday season, and a meaningful Veterans Day, stating that a Veterans Day Observance was held on November 6<sup>th</sup> at Elmhurst Park, where four veterans were honored.
- Highlighted that Queens held its first-ever Missing Persons Day, in partnership with Congress Member Grace Meng and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Families of individuals missing for 60 days or more provided information and DNA samples to support ongoing identification efforts. The DA's Cold Case Unit continues to investigate these cases, with 47 currently active.

## **9. Old/New Business, no speakers.**

EJ Sydell made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Andrea Crawford seconded it.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chairperson at 9:30 PM.