



COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 9

Queens Borough Hall
120-55 Queens Boulevard, Room 310-A
Kew Gardens, NY 11424

(718) 286-2686

Fax (718) 286-2685

Email: qn09@cb.nyc.gov

Website: www.nyc.gov/queenscb9

Facebook: [@communityboard9](https://www.facebook.com/communityboard9)

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

FEBRUARY 10, 2026, MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING

QUEENS BOROUGH HALL, ROOM 200, 120-55 QUEENS BOULEVARD, KEW GARDENS, NY 11424

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

ABSENCES AS OF APRIL 2025-MARCH 2026

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

Inderpaul Ahluwalia	(0)(0)	Warlito DeLeon	(2)(2)	Cristal Rivera	(1)(1)
Sherry Algreto	(1)(1)	Hilary Dvorkin	(2)(2)	Philip Ross	(1)(1)
Faiuze Ali	(3)(3)	Stephen Esposito	(3)(3)	Regina Santoro	(1)(1)
Visnoonand Bisram	(3)(3)	Vanessa Fuentes	(1)(1)	Jarnail Singh	(2)(2)
Zoila Bofill	(1)(1)	Albert Gamarra	(2)(2)	Matthew Singh	(2)(2)
John Carter	(2)(2)	Sylvia Hack	(0)(0)	J. Richard Smith	(1)(1)
Swapan Chakraborty	(3)(3)	Alicia Hassin	(2)(2)	Andrew Taranto	(0)(0)
Rick Chetram	(1)(1)	Joseph Iaboni	(0)(0)	Harpreet Toor	(2)(2)
Daniel Chu	(1)(1)	Carmela Isabella	(2)(2)	Alyssa Velez	(2)(2)
Rev. Ruben Cruz	(2)(2)	Fahlovi Noman	(3)(3)	Seth Welins	(0)(0)
Marilyn Custodio	(2)(2)	Kevin O'Leary	(0)(0)	Stacey Yearwood	(0)(0)
Joan DeCamp	(1)(1)	Ijaaz Rahim	(1)(1)		

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Dulal Bhattacharjee	(2)(2)	Stephen Forte	(2)(2)	Mohinder Singh	(5)(5)
Kirpal Billing	(2)(2)	Daniel Grieve	(1)(1)	Raghbir Singh	(1)(1)
Maricela Cano	(3)(3)	Rabbi Daniel Pollack	(4)(4)	Esta-Joy Sydel	(2)(2)
Andrea Crawford	(4)(4)	Himmat Singh	(1)(1)	Keith Villanueva	(1)(1)

ALSO PRESENT

James McClelland, District Manager

Irina Barayeva, Community Coordinator

LEGISLATORS/REPRESENTATIVES, CITY AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Kevin McAleer, Rep. Council Member Lynn Schulman

Ann Marie Costella, Rep. Senator Joe Addabbo

Rokeya Akhtar, Rep. Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz

Rohene Gocool, Rep. Assembly Member Jenifer Rajkumar

Kevin Wisniewski, Rep. Assembly Member Hevesi

Max Rose, Rep. Congress Member Gregory Meeks

Anthony Lemma, Rep. Assembly Member David Weprin

Vanessa DiNando, Rep. Assembly Member David Weprin

Phyllis Inserillo, Rep. Council Member Joan Ariola

Clare Collins, Rep. Queens Borough President Donovan Richards

Frederice Latchman, Rep. Senator Comrie

Jonathan Bethancourt, Rep. Congress Member Nydia Velazquez

Chief Christopher McIntosh, NYPD, PBQS
P.O. Joyner, NYPD, PBQS
Capt. Maldonado, NYPD, 102nd Pct.
Capt., Galane, NYPD, 102nd Pct.
Det. Nick Salamone, NYPD, 102nd Pct.
P.O. Martinez-Aguilar, NYPD, 102nd Pct.
P.O. DiMarco, NYPD, 102nd Pct

Chair Algreto recognized February as Black History Month and quoted Shirley Chisholm : “You don’t make progress by standing on the side lines whimpering and complaining, you make progress by implementing ideas”.

PUBLIC HEARING

➤ **Woodhaven BID – “Wonderful Woodhaven Street Fair” Oct. 4, 2026, no speakers**

1. Opening of Meeting & Reading of Minutes

Chair Algreto read the correction submitted by Stacey Yearwood: on page 3, under Public Forum, there was a typo in Jennifer Lambert’s name.

Steven Esposito motioned to accept the minutes as amended. Hillary Dworkin seconded the motion.

Motion # 1: To adopt minutes as amended

Vote # 1: 28 in favor and 7 abstentions

2. 102nd Precinct Briefing – Special Guest Speaker, Assistant Chief Christopher McIntosh, Commander Queens Borough South

Chief McIntosh, Commanding Officer of Queens South, introduced himself and noted that although he was newly appointed to the position, he previously served as Executive Officer in the command. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend the meeting.

The Chief emphasized that public safety is a partnership between the Police Department and the community.

Chief McIntosh reported that six of the eight major crime categories saw reductions last year, including murder, felony assault, robbery, grand larceny auto (GLA), and burglary. The categories that experienced increases were grand larceny and rape.

The increase in rape cases was largely attributed to changes in the law that expanded the definition and reporting criteria.

The rise in grand larceny was primarily driven by retail theft, organized shoplifting patterns (including perpetrators traveling from outside the borough), and “confidence” scams, commonly referred to as the “gold swindle” scheme.

The Chief noted that homicide numbers are at historic lows when compared to the past 20 years. Shooting incidents and shooting victims have significantly decreased, particularly in the 102nd and 106th Precincts. Grand larceny auto has also declined substantially. He credited these achievements to the leadership of command staff and precinct commanders.

Year-to-Date Update: overall crime in Queens South is down 8.9% year-to-date. Of the nine precincts within Queens South, only the 101st and 103rd Precincts are currently experiencing increases. The 102nd Precinct reported a nearly 50% reduction in crime, which the Chief described as an extraordinary achievement. He attributed this success to strong leadership from the precinct’s commanding officer Maldonado and Executive Officer, Captain Evans.

Chief McIntosh recognized the dedication and hard work of police officers who implement strategies daily. The Chief expressed appreciation for the community’s ongoing support, stating that continued success depends on both departmental leadership and strong community partnership.

The Chief answered Chair Algreto’s question regarding 4th of July safety stating the following:

On the Fourth of July, all levels of command and staff — including the Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, supervisors, and officers — are assigned to duty. Additional personnel are deployed, and overtime is authorized due to the high level of activity associated with the holiday. Significant resources are dedicated to the Fourth of July, similar to deployments on New Year's Eve and certain other holidays.

A dedicated 311 response unit is assigned, along with a fireworks confiscation team specifically tasked with addressing illegal fireworks. The Command emphasized that there is a substantial operational footprint on these holidays.

While acknowledging that it may not be possible to address every incident, the Commander stressed that extensive resources are deployed and enforcement efforts are taken very seriously.

Residents who prefer not to approach officers directly are encouraged to report concerns through 311 or 911. On the Fourth of July, all fireworks-related 311 complaints are flagged and monitored at both the borough and command levels. If a complaint remains open without a response for more than a few minutes, the CO is notified and required to account for the delay.

The Chief noted that strong oversight and accountability measures are built into the system. The Fourth of July and New Year's Eve receive particularly heavy deployments and remain priority dates for enforcement efforts.

Question and answer period followed.

CO Maldonado reported that there are currently no significant crime concerns and noted that crime conditions in the area have improved. She attributed this progress to active community engagement, including residents' calls and 311 reports. She emphasized that community input is taken seriously and that concerns are addressed collaboratively, with an effort to resolve issues at their root cause rather than dismissing them.

She highlighted the work of two team officers who monitor recurring problem locations. As an example, she mentioned a restaurant that had been parking on the sidewalk; corrective action was taken to ensure compliance, particularly to maintain safe pedestrian access during winter conditions and for parents with strollers. She encouraged residents to contact her or the Community Affairs officers with any concerns, reaffirming the department's commitment to being responsive and supportive.

3. Chairperson's Remarks & Exec. Report—Sherry Algreto, District Manager's Report—James McClelland

DM McClelland extended birthday wishes to Faiuze Ali, Kirpal Billing, Stephen Forte, Rabbi Daniel Pollack and Andrew Taranto. He reported on the following:

Community board applications are due on February 13. Members who need to renew are encouraged to submit their applications before the deadline.

The Queens budget hearings will take place on February 23. This will provide an opportunity to highlight the district's capital needs and discretionary priorities to the Borough President and elected officials. In addition, one-on-one meetings will be scheduled with Council Member Ariola and Council Member Schulman to discuss funding opportunities for key capital projects.

Recent snowfall and prolonged cold temperatures created challenges throughout the district, particularly at bus stops and crosswalks. While there were service concerns, the DM acknowledged multiple contributing factors, including extreme weather conditions. The DM extended his appreciation to the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) for their efforts, noting they performed an outstanding job given the available resources and the difficult circumstances.

An update was provided by DDC regarding the Woodhaven Library project:

- Design completion is anticipated by Fall 2027.
- Following design completion, the project will move into bid packaging, labor review, and procurement.
- A Notice to Proceed is expected to be issued in Fall 2028.
- Project completion is anticipated in 2029, pending all approvals and processes.

4. Public Forum

Sol McCants III, Richmond Hill Resident, spoke regarding various issues (testimony submitted and is available upon request).

Ann Marie Kelly, Richmond Hill Resident, emphasized that every second counts during emergencies. As a former law enforcement officer, she advocated for keeping Freedom Drive open to ensure rapid access for first responders.

Noted a specific instance during a recent rally at P.S.66 where a fire apparatus utilized Freedom Drive to respond to a fire on Jamaica Avenue, illustrating the road's utility for emergency transit.

Raised concerns regarding the validity of petitions favoring the closure of the Drive. Ms. Kelly stated that a significant portion of signatures appear to come from individuals outside the immediate neighborhood who prioritize general "less cars" advocacy over local infrastructure needs.

Called for mutual respect between opposing sides and urged the community to avoid the spread of misinformation.

Andrew Smith, Richmond Hill Resident

The speaker addressed the Board regarding traffic safety conditions on Freedom Drive, referencing a petition supporting a car-free Freedom Drive with nearly 1,000 signatures, over 75% of which are from local residents, and offered to provide supporting zip code data if requested.

He reported that a recent rally drew approximately 50–60 participants, including residents, community leaders, families, and the principal of P.S. 66. He stated that Council Member Joann Ariola drove through the area, posted on social media, and engaged with participants, but did not attend the rally despite having been invited.

The speaker identified ongoing concerns including speeding vehicles, inadequate pedestrian crossing signage, and the need for a marked crosswalk.

He further clarified the Department of Transportation's daylighting analysis, noting that signage-only measures have limited effectiveness, while physical interventions such as barriers and curb extensions provide greater safety benefits. He stated that the parking impact of daylighting is minimal—approximately 20 feet per corner, rather than the loss of two full parking spaces per side.

He urged that any daylighting plan incorporates physical safety measures and improved sightlines to enhance pedestrian safety.

Laura Nuss, Kew Gardens Resident, addressed the Board for the first time and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend and observe members of the local community gathered.

She raised concerns regarding the commercial corridor along Lefferts Boulevard in Kew Gardens, particularly between Metropolitan Avenue and Kew Gardens Road. The speaker noted a significant number of long-term vacant storefronts, some reportedly vacant for over a decade, and expressed concern about the negative impact of these persistent vacancies on neighborhood vitality.

Ms. Nuss referenced a discussion on a local Kew Gardens Facebook page regarding a proposed wine bar that allegedly did not open due to opposition or denial by the Community Board. The speaker asked whether this information was accurate and, if so, requested clarification regarding the reasons for such action.

Additionally, she raised concerns about the condition of the Lefferts Bridge and the deterioration of adjacent buildings, expressing worry about potential structural decline. She inquired whether the Community Board has any authority or advisory role in addressing these matters and in supporting community advocacy efforts related to Lefferts Boulevard. The speaker also noted speculation within the community that high commercial rents may be contributing to storefront vacancies and described the situation as demoralizing for residents.

Paul Capocasale, Woodhaven Resident, expressed his disbelief that the closure of Freedom Drive has created traffic problems, particularly affecting 109th Street and adjacent avenues. He questioned testimony previously provided by a constituent who spoke in favor of closing Freedom Drive, stating that, to his knowledge, the local firehouse supports keeping the road open and may have submitted a letter to that effect. The speaker also raised concerns about whether the principal of PS 66, and the Forest Park Trust, who support the closure, reflect the views of their respective broader communities.

A petition supporting keeping Freedom Drive open year-round has gathered over 300 signatures within approximately nine months.

Mr. Capocasale emphasized his view that a drive is distinct from parkland, stating that Freedom Drive was designed as a roadway and that, given the size of Forest Park (approximately 558 acres), sufficient park space already exists while roadway access remains necessary.

5. Health & Social Services Committee Report – Carmela Isabella, Chair

➤ Presentation by Frederick Beekman, EVP & COO, Jamaica Hospital Medical Center on the Emergency Room Expansion Project

Mr. Beekman began by briefly referencing the historical origins of the hospital's name, noting that it dates to its founding in 1891.

He provided an overview of MediSys Health Network, which includes Jamaica Hospital Medical Center and Flushing Hospital Medical Center, totaling 695 beds. Services include:

- A long-term care facility and nursing home on the Jamaica campus
- Two dedicated pediatric emergency departments
- A psychiatric emergency department and 56 inpatient psychiatric beds
- Chemical dependency inpatient and outpatient services at Flushing
- 10 community-based ambulatory care centers
- Outpatient and mobile crisis psychiatric services
- 13 ambulances operating within the 911 system
- 6 network ambulances for interfacility and discharge transport
- 2 ambulances stationed at John F. Kennedy International Airport

Mr. Beekman noted that under President and CEO Bruce Flanz (since 2012), the institution has emphasized quality of care. In 2024, Jamaica Hospital was named one of the 100 Best Hospitals by Healthgrades. The hospital is also the only Comprehensive Stroke Center in Queens, capable of performing advanced clot-removal procedures.

2025 Expansion and Capital Projects

Pediatric Unit Restoration

During COVID-19, the pediatric unit was temporarily converted into an adult inpatient unit to meet surge capacity needs. In 2025, the pediatric unit reopened in a newly constructed, modernized 13-bed facility.

Ambulatory Surgery Expansion

A new dedicated ambulatory surgery unit was opened, adding four operating rooms separate from the main Operating Room suite (which includes six ORs). The facility includes advanced technology such as DaVinci robotic surgical systems.

Emergency Department Expansion

The speaker highlighted significant overcrowding in the emergency department:

- Original design capacity: 65,000 annual visits
- Current volume: approximately 120,000 annual visits
- Increased demand attributed in part to the closure of five Queens hospitals

With support from Governor Hochul and the NYS Department of Health, the hospital secured a \$150 million Safety Net Transformation Grant to fund a \$155 million emergency department expansion project.

Planned improvements goals:

- 16% increase in clinical care space
- Increase from 55 to 91 treatment spaces
- Expansion from 3 private rooms to 33 private treatment rooms
- Increase from 1 isolation room to 15 airborne infection isolation rooms
- Upgrade from 1 undersized trauma bay (2 beds) to 4 individual state-of-the-art trauma rooms
- ICU expansion from 26 beds to 48 beds, including a dedicated Neuro-ICU

The first phase of construction is expected to be completed and occupied in summer 2026. Two additional phases will follow, including renovation of the existing emergency department space and reconfiguration of adjacent clinical areas.

Relocation of Ambulatory Care Services

To accommodate the emergency department expansion, ambulatory care services are being relocated to two new sites:

1. Metropolitan Avenue Location
A newly renovated 6,000-square-foot facility providing surgical and orthopedic services. The site received NYS pre-opening approval on January 9th and is now operational.
2. Jamaica Avenue Location
A leased building across from the hospital's Family Medicine site, intended to house pediatric and internal medicine services. Construction has been delayed pending issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. Final approval is contingent upon completion of paving work, which is weather-dependent.

On January 17, 2025, Governor Hochul announced a \$188 million dollar grant to Jamaica Hospital Medical Center to develop a Comprehensive Cancer Center in partnership with Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK). It will bring world class cancer care to the community and serve the residents of Queens.

Mr. Beekman concluded by emphasizing that these expansion projects are designed to increase capacity, modernize facilities, and improve quality of care for the Queens community.

Question and answer period ensued.

6. Parks, Recreation & Environment Committee Report – J. R. Smith, Chair

The Committee Chair reported that the Committee recently held a Zoom meeting with a representative from the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to review newly issued rules and regulations governing events held in City parks.

Community members were advised to visit the official NYC Parks website to review the full list of updated regulations, as there are numerous changes that may affect event planning.

For example, bounce houses are no longer permitted at park events unless:

- Attendance exceeds 500 people; and
- The event is sponsored and hosted by an elected legislative official.
Community organizations may not independently host bounce houses. The event must be sponsored by an elected official.

Live Music & Generators - certain restrictions now apply to live music and the use of generators. Organizers are encouraged to carefully review the guidelines, as some previously permitted activities may now require additional approval or may no longer be allowed.

Food & Beverage Distribution:

- Food and beverages may only be shared with volunteers and invited guests — not the public.
- A \$75 fee is required.
- Completion of a food-handling training video is required.

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 – New

Elegance Lounge LLC
124-14 101st Avenue
South Richmond Hill, NY 11419

No Speakers

Motion # 2: Not to oppose new On Premises Liquor, Wine, Beer & Cider License Application

Vote # 2: 31 in favor, 2 opposed and 2 abstentions

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

Queens Buffet & Cajun Seafood Inc.
90-02 Atlantic Avenue
Ozone Park, NY 11416

No speakers

Motion # 3: Not to oppose new On Premises Wine, Beer & Cider License Application

Vote # 3: 33 in favor, 1 opposed and 1 abstention

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

Woodhaven Manor & Caterers
96-01 Jamaica Avenue
Woodhaven, NY 11424

No Speakers

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

El Pollo Inka Inc., D/b/a El Pollo Inka
89-20 101st Avenue
Ozone Park, NY 11416

No speakers

e. Class Change Application

Apple Mini Market Corp.
107-19 Jamaica Avenue
Richmond Hill, NY 11418

No Speakers

f. Change in Method of Operation Application

Jophsua 19 Grocery Rest. Corp.
134-06 Jamaica Avenue
Richmond Hill, NY 11418

No Speakers

Letters of **no opposition** to these applications will be sent to the SLA.

The next Public Safety & Consumer Affairs Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 24th, 2026.

Chair Algreto acknowledged the legislative representatives who gave their updates.

Kevin McAleer, Rep. Council Member Lynn Schulman, stated that January marked the beginning of the new Council session, and the Council Member has been introducing several new pieces of legislation. One item is a resolution that the Council Member has been working on with her colleagues at the state level to advance legislation which would prohibit claims adjusters from approaching victims of a fire or similar incident affecting their home for at least 72 hours. The goal is to give homeowners time to collect themselves, assess the situation, and make informed decisions without feeling harassed or pressured into agreements they might not otherwise

sign. This effort was prompted by an incident last summer that Chair Algreto had brought to the CM's attention. This Resolution will help to prevent similar situations in the future.

Ann Marie Costella, Rep. Senator Joe Addabbo, reported on the following:

- A bill sponsored by Senator Addabbo has passed the Senate. This legislation would permit local sanitation departments to install new security cameras to assist enforcement officers in identifying individuals engaged in illegal dumping. Under the bill, authorized municipal agencies may use surveillance cameras in accordance with local laws and privacy protections, ensuring the technology is used responsibly and solely for enforcement related to illegal dumping. The bill now advances to the Assembly for consideration.
- The New York Conference of Italian American State Legislators is now accepting applications for four \$3,000 scholarships — two academic and two athletic. The scholarships are open to current college students as well as high school seniors entering college. Applications are available on the Senate website, and the deadline is Monday, March 16. Please note that applicants do not need to be of Italian heritage to qualify.
- Many residents contacted Senator Addabbo's office regarding the flag atop the clock tower at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center. The Senator donated a flag in August; however, due to severe weather conditions, it became worn and needed to be replaced. This past week, the Senator donated a new flag. The replacement also coincides with the 85th anniversary of the United Service Organizations (USO).

Rokeya Akhtar, Rep. Queens District Attorney Melida Katz, shared an important update about a cold case that was solved a few weeks ago in Far Rockaway. In 1992, a 15-year-old girl was found dead in her bathroom. Her mother discovered her, and for 34 years there were no answers as to who was responsible or how exactly she was killed. The case remained unsolved for decades. Recently, District Attorney Katz's Cold Case Unit reopened the investigation. Using advanced DNA technology, including DNA recovered from fingernail clippings, investigators were able to identify the individual responsible.

The defendant, now 61 years old, has been charged and convicted of Murder in the Second Degree. After more than three decades, the victim's family finally has answers and a measure of closure. This case reflects the ongoing commitment of the Queens District Attorney's Office to pursue justice — no matter how much time has passed.

Ms. Akhtar shared a brief update about the office's work in 2025:

- The office processed more than 60,000 arrests
- Conducted over 45,000 arraignments
- Through the Crime Victim Advocacy Program, provided services to 4,976 victims
- And resolved 44,468 cases.

Rohenee Gocool, Rep. Assembly Member Jenifer Rajkumar, shared the important work the Assemblywoman is doing to serve our community:

Snow Removal in South Queens - there continues to be dangerous snow and ice conditions throughout South Queens. The Assemblywoman has been in direct contact with the Sanitation Commissioner, the Transportation Commissioner, and the Mayor to push for faster and more thorough snow removal so that everyone, including children, seniors, and New Yorkers with disabilities, can safely access the streets.

So far, approximately 50 different sites have been reported to the city for immediate action. Shared contact information for Jacob Gross, the Chief of Staff: 347-585-0327 or grossjay@nyassembly.gov.

As the 2026 Legislative Session begins in Albany, the Assembly Member is fighting for legislation to:

- Crack down on reckless e-bike use
- Protect cats and dogs from abuse
- Reduce crime in the neighborhoods
- Hold the City accountable for proper snow removal

Kevin Wisniewski, Rep. Assembly Member Hevesi, stated that the Assemblyman is currently in Albany at the start of state budget negotiations, which are scheduled to be finalized by April 1st. Queens' priorities are being finalized. The Assembly Member is advocating for approximately \$192 million in funding for Queens, covering general infrastructure, storm resiliency, arts programming, school funding, and community-based initiatives. In addition, in his role as Chair of the Assembly's Children and Families Committee, the Assemblyman is working toward establishing a framework to build universal childcare across New York State.

At the 1st Vice Chair Taranto's request, Mr. Wisniewski spoke about Lefferts Bridge stating that their office received a preliminary proposal from the LIRR in a meeting in June of last year. Since then, there have been some delays in receiving the framework materials they had committed to providing.

At this point, the next formal update is expected in April 2026. AM Hevesi recognizes that this project has had a frustrating history. While funding had been secured, the earlier congestion pricing issues caused a temporary pause. Given that context, he is focused on making sure they stay on track for the April deadline, and he will continue to keep the Board updated as he receives more information.

Max Rose, Rep. Congress Member Gregory Meeks, stated the following:

In Washington, D.C., House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Gregory W. Meeks and Chairman Brian Mast have sent a letter to Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick emphasizing the need for closer cooperation with partners and allies to restrict the People's Republic of China's access to advanced semiconductor manufacturing equipment. Maintaining these restrictions is critical to protecting U.S. national security.

He also said that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is encouraging all taxpayers to create an IRS individual online account to securely access their tax information and help protect against identity theft and fraud.

Mr. Rose stated that "Know Your Rights" document is available for anyone who is interested. He provided the contact number for their office - 718-725-6000.

Anthony Lemma, Rep. Assembly Member David Weprin, mentioned that the Assemblyman is currently in Albany. He will have much more to discuss at the next meeting once budget negotiations progress.

He stated that as Chair of the Insurance Committee, the Assemblyman is advancing legislation that would require insurance companies to cover acupuncture treatments, which is a very positive step forward in expanding access to care.

Mr. Lemma stated that their office has been receiving calls regarding the cannabis situation from all over the community. The way the law is currently structured is problematic. For example, a cannabis dispensary opened right down the block near Martin Van Buren High School. There is another school very close to it, and approximately 16 buses stop directly in front of this location every day. Many residents understandably find this concerning.

At present, legislation in Albany would require cannabis dispensaries to be located at least 500 feet from schools and 200 feet from houses of worship. There is a bill in the Assembly addressing this issue, and likely companion legislation in the Senate. By next month, he will have the specific bill numbers and be able to provide a more detailed update.

Phyliss Inserillo, Rep. Council Member Joan Ariola, stated the following:

- Council Member Ariola participated in a joint hearing of the Committee on General Welfare and the Public Safety Committee regarding the ongoing homeless crisis and the Code Blue currently in effect. She has serious concerns about how the city is handling this situation. As Captain Maldonado mentioned earlier, police officers often have their hands tied when it comes to bringing individuals into shelter against their will, even in sub-zero temperatures, despite clear concerns about their ability to make safe decisions for themselves. The office is working on legislation that would require body cameras for DHS and DSS outreach workers. The purpose is to ensure encounters are documented, that the appropriate questions are asked, and that people are genuinely being offered the help they need.

- Ms. Inzerillo spoke about the parks issue: Councilmember Ariola hosts numerous events in the parks and intends to continue doing so. The office will be meeting with the Parks Department to better understand these newly imposed regulations. For decades, community organizations have held events with bounce houses, music, and generators - responsibly and without damaging parkland. Clarity is needed on why new restrictions are suddenly being implemented and how they affect the community groups. Parks are meant to be used and enjoyed by residents.
- Regarding cannabis dispensaries: the City's ability to regulate cannabis dispensaries is extremely limited. CM Ariola has attempted to introduce legislation but was consistently informed that state law preempts the City's authority. Any significant regulatory changes must come from the state representatives.
- Addressed the board regarding the status of Freedom Drive and related public safety concerns:

Freedom Drive is included in the 1927 Spot of Circulation Plan for first-response access. They asserted that individuals who advocated for reopening the road did not vandalize gates but instead communicated with appropriate parties and followed proper channels, which resulted in the road being reopened.

She referenced allegations reported in newspaper articles claiming that Councilmember Ariola advanced toward protesters. The speaker stated that the NYPD was present at the scene and that no arrest was made. A video documentation exists of the interaction. She described a traffic situation in which a police officer signaled a vehicle to stop at a green light to allow protesters to cross and stated that this was the only gesture made by law enforcement.

She also addressed claims that the Council Member was being chauffeured, clarifying that they were seated in the passenger seat and disputing that characterization.

Ms. Inzerillo stated that there have been no reported accidents on Freedom Drive over the past 15 years. She further stated that, prior to 2020, no principals or families had rallied to request closure of the road.

She referenced Local Law 6, stating that any road closure must comply with its procedural requirements. The office possesses letters related to the matter, including correspondence stating that the road should remain open. Chief of Staff Inzerillo also reported that 11 emergency response tickets had been opened in the past five days for major incidents requiring access via Freedom Drive.

Clare Collins, Rep. Queens Borough President Donovan Richards, made an announcement regarding upcoming events:

- Education Community Resource Fair will take place at the Atrium on February 11, 2026, at 6:30 PM
- Food & Clothing Distribution at Moore Homestead Park (Elmhurst) - Tuesday, February 17, 2:00-5:00 PM
- Lunar New Year Celebration – at the Atrium on Monday, February 23, 5:00 PM
- Black History Month Celebration - at the Atrium on Wednesday, February 25, 5:30 PM
- Dominican Independence Day Celebration at PS 307 (Corona), on Thursday, February 26 at 6:00 PM.

Ms. Collins reminded all that the Community Board application portal closes on February 13. Applications must be submitted online at QueensBP.nyc.gov. Current board members who are unsure whether they need to reapply, please contact the BP's office before the deadline. First-time applicants must complete a short phone interview. Reapplying members do not need to interview.

Frederice Latchman, Rep. Senator Comrie, about bill S9120, introduced by Senator Comrie. This legislation would amend the Public Authorities Law to establish the Senior Homeowner Foreclosure and Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Program, administered by the State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA). This program would provide low-interest loans, deferred payment loans, forgivable loans, or a combination of these options to eligible senior homeowners who need assistance — particularly those at risk of foreclosure or in need of critical home repairs.

Jonathan Bethancourt, Rep. Congress Member Nydia Velazquez, wished a Happy Black History Month stating that Black history is American history, and it's important that we continue to recognize and honor that.

Shared a few updates from the Congresswoman's office:

- With the most recent federal funding bill that passed the House and Senate and was signed into law, the Congress Member secured over \$15M in Community Project Funding across the district. In Community Board 9 alone, he secured more than \$2.3M. That includes \$850,000 for safety improvements along Woodhaven Boulevard, and another \$850,000 for the permanent construction of the Drew Street Plaza at the far end of CB9. We're proud to see these investments coming directly back into the community.
- Congress Member Velasquez will be hosting a Student Internship and Resource Fair at Franklin K. Lane High School. The fair will take place on Saturday, February 28, 2026, from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The office is bringing together nonprofits, community organizations, and companies offering internships and opportunities for high school and college students.

8. PUBLIC FORUM

Charline Mitchell, Birth by Queens Foundation, spoke on behalf of Birth by Queens Foundation and Wellness Center. They are working to develop the first community-based birth center in Queens. Birth centers serve individuals with low-intervention pregnancies - which account for approximately 90% of all pregnancies. This model of care supports physiologic birth in a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment.

Birth center care has been proven to cost less than traditional hospital-based care, while offering more comprehensive, holistic support.

9. Old/New Business

Regina Santoro reminded everyone about the Memorial Mass for Detective Brian Simonson. It will take place on Thursday at 11 a.m. at Holy Jesus Christ Church in Richmond Hill.

John Carter spoke regarding several pressing community issues:

- Borough-Based Jail and Rikers Island – Mr. Carter expressed concern about the development of the new borough-based jail near the community and its potential social and fiscal impacts, particularly considering the City's current \$12B budget shortfall. He noted that Rikers Island remains overpopulated and that the appointment of a federal receiver highlights ongoing systemic challenges within the correctional system. Mr. Carter stated that he has not seen clear communication from local representatives regarding how these developments will affect the community.
- Gambling and Sports Betting – Mr. Carter raised concerns about the growing integration of betting platforms into professional sports and the potential impact on the community.
- Forest Park – Freedom Drive – Mr. Carter acknowledged improvements in the Forest Park area, including his childhood neighborhood. He stated his concern about how the confrontation was initiated.

Chair Algreto emphasized the importance of civility and respectful dialogue within the community. While acknowledging that disagreements are inevitable, she encouraged the parties involved to meet - potentially through the Community Board - to discuss their differences constructively.

The Chair commended all participants for their passion and engagement but stressed that disagreements should not escalate into disruptive behavior. She concluded by urging the parties to work collaboratively, agree to disagree when necessary, and prioritize unity and cooperation for the benefit of the community.

Cristal Rivera made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Alyssa Velez seconded it.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chairperson at 9:25 PM.