



Community Board No. 5

Borough of Queens
Ridgewood, Maspeth, Middle Village and Glendale
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Vincent Arcuri, Jr.
Chairperson

Gary Giordano
District Manager

Minutes of Community Board 5 Public Meeting February 8, 2017

Board Members Present

Vincent Arcuri, Jr; Tobias Sheppard Bloch; Walter E. Clayton, Jr.; Peter Comber; Henry Cross; Jerome Drake; Dmytro Fedkowskyj; Sarah Feldman; Steven Fiedler; Patricia Grayson; Fred T. Haller, III; Fred Hoefflerle; Robert Holden; Paul A. Kerzner; John J. Killcommons; Kathleen Knight; Katherine Masi; Margaret O'Kane; Michael O'Kane; Donald Passantino; Michael Porcelli; Theodore M. Renz; Kelvin Rodriguez; Luis Rodriguez; Lee S. Rottenberg; David Sands; Carmen Santana; Connie Santos; Lorraine Sciulli; Catherine Sumsky; Jean Tanler; Barbara Toscano; Maryanna Zero

Board Members Absent

Robert Cermeli; Patricia Crowley; Karamjit Dhaliwal; Brian Dooley; Thomas C. Dowd; Caroline Fuchs; Angela Giovannello; Michael LoCascio; John Maier; Lydia Martinez; Alexander Maureau; Eileen Moloney; Walter H. Sanchez

Elected Officials

NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr, 15th SD and Staff Neil Giannelli
Don Capalbi – US Representative Grace Meng, 6th C.D.
Evelyn Cruz – US Representative Nydia Velazquez, 7th C.D.
Alexa Arecchi - NYS Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, 28th AD
Meredith Wittman - NYS Assemblyman Brian Barnwell, 30th AD
Alison Cummings – NYS Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan, 37th AD
Carmela Isabella - NYS Assemblyman Michael Miller, 38th AD
Maggie Hayes - NYC Council Member Elizabeth Crowley, 30th CD
Boris Santos – NYC Council Member Antonio Reynoso, 34th CD

Staff Present

Gary Giordano, District Manager, CB5 Queens
Catherine O'Leary and Laura Mulvihill, Community Associates - CB5Q Staff
Joseph Nocerino – Queens Borough President Melinda Katz

GUESTS

Robert Rolandi, City Assessor, NYC Dept. of Finance, 3030 Third Ave, Bronx, NY 10455
Sonia Villamil, Outreach Liaison, NYC Dept. of Finance, 1 Centre Street, NY, NY 10007
P.O. Charles Sadler, Community Affairs Unit, 104th Police Precinct, 64-02 Catalpa Ave, Ridgewood, NY
Susan Paredes, Manager – Queens Public Library, 72-31 Metropolitan Ave, Middle Village
Craig Bolton, Assistant Manager – Queens Public Library, 72-31 Metropolitan Ave, Middle Village

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Board Chairman Vincent Arcuri called the monthly Board Meeting to order at 7:45pm, following the Salute to the Flag. He introduced the first Item on the Agenda as:

PUBLIC HEARING Re: The Fiscal Year 2018 Preliminary Budget of the City of New York

District Manager Gary Giordano gave a brief outline of his testimony that was submitted to the Queens Borough Board on behalf of Community Board 5 Queens at the Annual Budget Hearing in Queens Borough Hall that was conducted on February 6th, 2017.

Regarding the most important budget priorities of CB5Q, he said that the Board's top ten Capital Budget priorities for FY 2018, with explanations are:

1. Redesign and Reconstruction of the Sewer System in Portions of the CB5Q Area. He explained that after heavy rains, the Board has received complaints of extensive street flooding and sewer backups in basements in many parts of our communities. Aged sewer lines likely need to be replaced, enlarged or realigned to reduce flooding and resulting property damage. This year, we look forward to completion of funded sewer projects in the Penelope Avenue area, in Middle Village, and along parts of 69 Street and Calamus Avenue, on the Woodside/Maspeth border. Our primary need now is to find solutions to reported sewer backups and street flooding in the Cooper Avenue Underpass area and in the 77 Avenue and 78 Avenue areas of Glendale.

2. Reconstruct deteriorated catch basins and provide new catch basins in the Board 5 Area. There is an increasing need to replace deteriorated brick catch basins with pre-cast concrete structures. We have had many catch basins that have adjacent cave-in conditions, and/or where the structure is sunken. There is an on-going need for new catch basins to reduce street flooding during rainstorms. For example, there is a real need for basins to be installed in Edsall Avenue, from 71 Place to 73 Street.

3. Provide new street tree plantings and provide funding for the removal of dead trees and stumps, and for the planting of replacement trees, especially considering the loss of hundreds of mature trees during the Macroburst in 2010, and Hurricanes Irene and Sandy in 2011 and 2012.

4. Improve traffic and pedestrian safety, through traffic calming measures and installation of physical barriers, particularly in the vicinity of Grand Avenue at 69 Street, at the Grand Ave/LIE Eastbound Service Road, and at the 69 Street/LIE Service Road Intersection in Maspeth. Funding is required to implement this project, he said.

5. Evaluate the structural condition of the elevated "M" Train Line in the Board 5 Area, and perform repairs and paint the structure from Wyckoff Avenue to Metropolitan Avenue. The elevated "M" Train structure is unsightly in our Community Board 5 area, from Wyckoff Avenue to Fresh Pond Road. The structure itself needs to be evaluated for necessary repairs and must be painted, to prevent physical deterioration and to reduce the appearance of decay. The "M" train is our backbone in the NYC public transit system.

6. Rehabilitate Ridgewood Reservoir - Phase 2 - and Surrounding Area, including parts of Highland Park. This request is for the rehabilitation of the old pump house, or construction of a new building to serve as an Environmental Center with bathrooms at the Ridgewood Reservoir site. This reservoir is the closest place to a nature preserve anywhere near the Board 5 Queens area. We are also requesting that funding be allocated to reconstruct ball fields in Highland Park, as Board 5 Queens has opposed development of the 3 basins in the Reservoir into ball fields or other active recreational uses. He said that under the Phase 1 Project, new lighting, 4 foot fencing, pathways around the Reservoir and a new handicapped access ramp from Vermont Place were completed in 2015. He said the Reservoir site includes 3 basins, encompassing 55 acres of parkland. He encouraged everyone to visit the Reservoir to enjoy nature.

7. Repower polluting LIRR freight train engines used by NY & Atlantic Railway in the Glendale Rail Yard. He explained that the Fresh Pond Rail Yard, in Glendale, is the location where all freight entering or leaving Long Island has to travel through and be sorted out. He said that the polluting locomotives used for this purpose are leased by NY & Atlantic Railway from the Long Island Rail Road. More freight, especially City garbage, is being

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transported by rail now. He said that 2 locomotive engines were replaced last year, and funds were allocated to repower 2 more engines this year. NY & Atlantic leases a total of 14 locomotives, which should all be repowered with new, cleaner burning engines.

8. Rehabilitate the Glendale Branch Library, located at 73-15 Myrtle Avenue. This local library project includes the need for an elevator or other means of handicapped access; new windows, new boiler and air conditioning system, new doors, facade restoration including pointing of bricks, reconfiguration of the adult and teen reading rooms on the first floor and mezzanine, and restoration of the Tuscan garden and outdoor reading room. A Phase I project is funded to install an elevator, provide some other upgrades to the front entry area on 73 Place, and for renovating the main floor section of the library. And, a Phase II project is requested to point the brick building and for other needed improvements that are not included in Phase I. He said that Phase I of this project was slated to begin last year. Additional funding is needed to complete Phase II of this project, he said.

9. Construct an Athletic Field at the Planned NYC DEP Newtown Creek Aeration Facility Property. The NYC DEP is building an aeration facility at 58-26 47 Street, in Maspeth, Queens, to improve Newtown Creek water quality. Local soccer advocates request that the land owned by N.Y. City, adjacent to the planned aeration facility, be developed as an athletic field because there is a shortage of sites where soccer can be safely played.

10. Provide Replacement of the Synthetic Turf Soccer/Football Field, and the Running Track, at the West End of Juniper Valley Park in Middle Village. Both the turf soccer/football field and the running track at the west end of Juniper Valley Park are past their 10 year useful life, and need to be replaced. The turf field is more deteriorated than the running track, and both the field and the running track get extensive use by residents from numerous communities. Soccer has become extremely popular with children, teens and young adults, and local soccer teams need a new playing surface for safer play.

The District Manager pointed out that work has begun on the bridge deck replacement over the LIRR on Metropolitan Avenue at Fresh Pond Road. He said that this emergency bridge deck replacement project is vital, considering holes in the bridge deck, which had received a rating of only 3.603, out of a possible 7 rating. He also pointed out that construction of new school space, where needed in the Board 5 area, remains one of the Board's capital budget requests.

Regarding the Board's Expense Budget Priorities for FY 2018, the District Manager said that the district's needs include:

- An additional 20 police officers at the 104th Police Precinct. He said that since 1995, there's been a 25% reduction in the number of Police Officers assigned to the precinct. And, there have been too many tours when the precinct is in alert status, when patrol officers are holding several jobs in backlog status.
- NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) Field Workers in sufficient numbers to decrease the backlog for sewer system and water system repairs. He said that for the better part of a decade, until the last 2 years, DEP repairs backlog numbered at least 5,000 citywide, with more than 2,000 of them in Queens. Our sewer system in many areas is more than 80 years old, and repairs and replacements will be more and more necessary.
- Dept. of Building Inspectors and Plan Examiners, in sufficient numbers, to reduce illegal property uses and questionable construction.
- Additional Sanitation Dept. Cleaning Personnel to clean illegal dump sites and for additional weekly litter basket collections. He said that there are ongoing problems with illegal dumping and overflowing litter baskets, making many neighborhoods appear unsightly.
- Funding for essential Fire Dept. Services, including keeping all Engine and Ladder Companies open and reducing EMS response times.
- Funding for Youth Education and Recreation Programs After-School and on Weekends, especially those that are funded through the NYC Dept. of Youth and Community Development.

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- Funding for programs that provide needed services for senior citizens, especially the frail elderly.
- Funding for sufficient personnel to conduct NYC Dept. of Transportation traffic safety studies, and for the installation of pedestrian and traffic safety improvements.
- Increased funding for the NYC Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development and other litigation services, to reduce the problem of tenants being harassed by property owners who want to evict tenants so that they can lease their apartments for much higher rent. and
- Provide school garbage and recycling collections 5 days a week.

The District Manager expressed his concerns about proposed budget cuts in the following city agency budgets in FY 2018:

- a reduction of almost \$36 Million in funding for the Dept. for the Aging;
- \$177 Million less funds for the Dept. of Youth and Community Development;
- almost \$436 Million less for the Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development;
- \$360 Million less for the Dept. of Environmental Protection;
- \$52 Million less for the Dept. of Parks and Recreation; and
- \$492 Million less for the Dept. of Design and Construction.

The Board Chairman invited the next speaker to address the Board.

Gerard Frohnhoefer, a Middle Village resident, former CB5Q Youth Coordinator, and Adjunct Professor at LaGuardia Community College, spoke about the need to help homeless people. He said that he personally knows of at least two Middle Village residents who are homeless. He said that when he contacted Catholic Charities to request housing applications for them, he discovered that there is an 8-year backlog of applications on the waiting list.

Mr. Frohnhoefer said that according to this fiscal year's budget projections, the city will spend at least \$1.5 Billion to pay for transitional housing for the homeless population that exceeds 60,000 people this year. He said that the city is paying up to \$400 per day per unit for hotel rooms now. He said that this level of expenditure for temporary housing accommodations for homeless families is not sustainable.

He said that the current crisis in homelessness in the city mirrors the problems that people faced during the Depression Era. He said that when Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia was elected, he marshalled city, state and federal resources in order to build tens of thousands of apartments in public housing developments in every borough, and the crisis was over.

He said that there are currently over 1,000 vacant city-owned lots in the city that are potential housing sites where modular housing units could be built to provide stable, permanent homes to house poor and working families, instead of warehousing them in transient hotels, homeless shelters and substandard cluster site housing units. He asked the Board to support the Fiorello Homes for the Homeless Campaign Association, that is working with Villages of Hope, to design and build foundations for permanent modular housing units in communities of 550-600 people with some combination of studios, one, two and three bedroom apartments with sliding scale rentals, based on the tenant's income. For more information, he welcomed anyone interested to go to their website at: www.FiorelloHomesfortheHomelessCampaign.org.

As there were no other speakers, the Board Chairman closed the public hearing and announced the next item on the Agenda.

PRESENTATION Re: Residential Real Estate Taxes

By Robert Rolandi, Tax Assessor for the NYC Dept. of Finance

Robert Rolandi, a Supervising Tax Assessor in the NYC Dept. of Finance, said that the city mailed Notices of Property Valuation in the past few weeks. He said that property taxes are based on the Assessed Value of the property, less the value of property tax exemptions that the homeowner was determined to be eligible for.

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Mr. Rolandi informed everyone about the proposed real estate tax increases in Fiscal Year 2018, which begins on July 1st, 2017. He said that if a homeowner disagrees with their property tax assessment, they can challenge the city assessor's valuation, or go before the city's Tax Commission, which is a separate agency from the Dept. of Finance. He said that tax assessment challenges can go back as far as 6 years, provided the homeowner fills out an Administrative Review Clerical Error Form. This form is available at NYC Department of Finance offices, or on their website at: www.nyc.gov/finance, and can be filed all year-round.

Mr. Rolandi explained that the Department of Finance administers a number of property tax benefits for owner-occupied homes in the form of exemptions and abatements. He explained that exemptions lower the amount of tax you owe, by reducing your property's assessed value, and abatements reduce your taxes by applying credits to the amount of taxes you owe. He said that Personal Exemptions include:

- The **Disabled Homeowners' Exemption (DHE)** provides a property tax exemption to disabled owners of 1, 2, and 3 family houses, condominiums, or cooperative apartments. All of the owners must be persons with disabilities, except for property that is owned by husband and wife, or by siblings. In those cases, only one owner needs to have a disability. The combined income of all owners and their spouses cannot be more than **\$37,399**. The application instructions specify the sources of income used to determine your eligibility. The property must be your primary residence if you are applying as an owner who is disabled. If you are receiving health-related care as an inpatient of a residential health care facility, your property may also be eligible. The law requires people with disabilities who receive this property-tax exemption to renew it every year to continue receiving it. The DHE can mean an exemption of between 5% and 50% of the property owner's real estate taxes, depending on their eligibility.

- **Senior Citizen Homeowners' Exemption (SCHE)** provides a property tax exemption for senior citizens who own one, two, or three family homes, condominiums, or cooperative apartments. Applicants must be 65 years of age or older in the year that they apply. The combined income of all owners and their spouses cannot be more than **\$37,399**. Income includes, but is not limited to, Social Security, retirement benefits, interest, dividends, IRA earnings, capital gains, net rental income, salary or earnings and net income from self-employment. All required documents must be postmarked by March 15th for your exemption to begin on July 1 in the same year. And, all owners must occupy the property and have it as their primary residence unless:

One of the owners is a non-resident because he or she is a spouse or used to be a spouse of the resident owner and is not living there because of divorce, legal separation or abandonment, or

One of the owners is absent because he or she is receiving health-related services as an in-patient of a residential health care facility.

If either of these situations applies, the only person who can reside on the property during that period is the spouse or co-owner. He advised everyone that you cannot receive both Senior Citizens Homeowner Exemption and the Disabled Homeowners' Exemption at the same time. If you qualify for both, only the Senior Citizens Homeowner Exemption will be granted.

- **School Tax Relief (STAR)** saves most New York homeowners hundreds of dollars each year, if you're eligible. You do **not** need to register for STAR if you are receiving a STAR exemption and purchased your current home prior to May 1, 2014. Beginning with the 2016/2017 tax year, New York State has changed the **STAR** application process. New STAR applicants must register with the New York State Tax Department to receive a STAR credit. You are considered a new applicant if you purchased your home after March 15, 2015 or you did not apply for the STAR exemption by March 15, 2015. New applicants who qualify will receive a STAR credit in the form of a check, instead of receiving a property tax exemption. If you had the STAR exemption on your property for tax year 2015/2016, and you wish to apply for Enhanced STAR, or want to restore a STAR exemption to your property, you need to apply before March 15th this year. You must have received the STAR exemption in tax year 2015/2016 to fill out the application.

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- **Veterans Benefits** provide a 10% property tax exemption on one and two family homes that are the primary residences of U.S. Veterans. Unmarried former spouses of veterans who have passed away remain eligible for Veterans benefits, but must reapply by March 15th on an annual basis.

Fred Haller, a Board member, asked if home improvements would increase the assessed value of your home. Mr. Rolandi said that home improvement permits that are issued by the Dept. of Buildings would automatically trigger an inspection by a tax assessor from the Dept. of Finance, and the cost of the home improvements would determine the amount of increase in the property's assessed value and subsequent real estate increase. He said that the Dept. of Finance also collects property data from aerial surveys every 4 months, in addition to inspecting areas of the city where large-scale development has occurred.

Mr. Rolandi said that over the past ten years, the real estate tax rate for Class One Properties, including one, two and three family homes, has doubled which explains why small homeowners are paying more in real estate taxes, even if the market value of their property and/or their tax assessment has decreased over the past decade. He said that Class One residential property owners are taxed at the highest real estate tax rate in the city.

In response to a question from Dmytro Fedkowskyj, Mr. Rolandi said that while real estate taxes have risen significantly in recent years, the increases have been somewhat offset by tax exemptions and tax abatements that are available to property owners who are eligible, based on the information they provide in their applications.

In response to a question from Board Chairman Arcuri, Mr. Rolandi said that Life Estate instruments might help to reduce real estate taxes of small homeowners, but this type of arrangement could increase the amount of capital gains tax that is due in the event of the homeowner's demise.

In response to a question from the floor, Mr. Rolandi replied that under New York State's J-51 tax abatement program, which has been in effect since the 1960's, large-scale housing developers are awarded tax abatements that are slated to decrease over 15 to 20 years, in an effort to encourage new housing construction throughout the city. In addition, under the 421-a program, developers receive tax incentives for building residential properties, many of which are condominiums located in Manhattan, in order to increase the housing stock in the city. He said that both of these programs are negotiated and approved by the State Legislature.

Gerard Frohnhoefer said that, to his knowledge, Governor Cuomo proposes to extend the tax benefits of the 421-a program over the course of 40 years, which would reward large-scale developers of luxury condominiums in Manhattan and Brooklyn.

In closing, Mr. Rolandi said that he would stay after the Board Meeting to answer questions from homeowners about their individual property taxes. Real estate tax brochures and flyers were distributed.

As there were no further questions or comments, the Board Chairman thanked Mr. Rolandi for his informative presentation.

PUBLIC FORUM

Gary Chin, Disaster Program Manager in Queens for the American Red Cross in Greater New York, said that over the past year, they have responded to 6 to 8 incidents per day in Queens, often caused by fires in private homes. He said that the disaster response team also responds to the scene when vacate orders are issued and residents are evicted from their homes.

Mr. Chin said that the Queens Disaster Response Team participates in an emergency preparedness program that distributes and installs home smoke alarms for low-income residents all year-round. He announced that in 2016, the city had the lowest number of fire fatalities in the past 100 years.

Board Chairman Arcuri asked how many people in Queens are being placed in hotels, due to disasters. Mr. Chin said that he would look into it and inform the Board staff.

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Ryan D'Amico, co-owner of Laser Bounce, said that he plans to open a new interactive video game arcade, and bounce arena in Atlas Park on Cooper Avenue in Glendale. He explained that for the past 15 years, he has been working in his family-owned business of the same name in Levittown, and wants to open another family-friendly entertainment center at 80-28 Cooper Avenue in Glendale, which is currently under development. He said that they would be open 7 days a week, during the afternoon and evenings. He announced that he intends to apply for a beer and wine license in order to accommodate adult patrons who frequent this establishment. The Board Chairman explained that it is the policy of the Community Board to request that new applicants, as well as all those who are applying to renew their liquor license, please fill out and return a questionnaire about their business operations to the Board office. He directed staff to provide him with a copy of the questionnaire form.

Maria Thompson, a resident of 68-38 Forest Avenue in Ridgewood, spoke with the aid of a Spanish-speaking interpreter, Sonia Villamil, an Outreach Liaison for the NYC Dept. of Finance. Ms. Thompson said that there are many housing violations in her building, which have not been corrected in the past 15 years that she has been living there with her family. She said that the tenants in the other 3 apartments live on low incomes and have small children. She said that her landlord has been negligent in maintaining their living quarters, despite ongoing renovations on the ground floor where he plans to open a commercial business that sells alcoholic beverages. She said that her landlord is in the process of evicting all of the families who live in this building. She said that more funding is needed to provide free legal services for poor and disabled tenants who cannot afford to pay for an attorney. She thanked Council Member Reynoso for his help in this case.

Carmen Santana, a Board member, spoke about her work with the Ridgewood Housing Matters coalition, whose purpose is to prevent tenants from becoming homeless, particularly as a result of eviction from their apartments by unscrupulous landlords. She said that three of the four apartments in 68-38 Forest Avenue are occupied by people with disabilities. And, according to the Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development's records, there are 25 housing violations in this building, including hazardous for the presence of lead, which is a serious health hazard. She asked the Board to oppose issuing a new liquor license to Chicken Soup & Rice d/b/a Sundown Bar, at 68-38 Forest Avenue in Ridgewood, because the property owner has not been a good neighbor in the community. The Board Chairman said that he would take the request under advisement.

Katy Knight, a Board member, said that she is worried that overdevelopment in Ridgewood threatens the well-being of poor and disadvantaged families who are being displaced by real estate speculators. She said that she feels privileged to have had the opportunity to grow up in a family-centered environment in Ridgewood, in an apartment that she shared with several other siblings and her working mother, where she attended local public schools, and got an excellent education. She said that she hopes that the Board will work to preserve the housing stock in Ridgewood, and prevent land speculators from evicting senior citizens and working families with children from their homes and apartments.

Toby Sheppard Bloch, a Board member and member of CURES, said that he is demanding that the MTA-LIRR cancel their Transfer Agreement Renewal with NY & Atlantic Railway because of numerous problems with their operation of the freight rail line that intersects the Board 5 area, including a history of freight rail accidents. He cited the most recent accident which involved a tractor trailer that burst into flames when it was hit by a locomotive, while the driver was crossing the railroad tracks at the Maspeth Avenue RR crossing, last year. He said that at the time, the train engineer jumped out of the train and disappeared from the scene of the accident. The investigation of this accident is still on-going, he said.

Citlali Hernandez and Valeria Benitez, co-owners of Bamboo Tropical, located at 59-13 71 Avenue in Ridgewood, spoke about the major disruption to their business that is caused by the current plaza improvement project at the intersection of 71st Avenue and Myrtle Avenue in Ridgewood. They said that their customers are not able to

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see when they're open for business, because of all the construction barricades and equipment, orange mesh fencing and wooden timbers that block the sidewalk in front of their shop. They said that they are both worried that they'll be forced to close their business, if this project is not completed soon. They asked for the Board's assistance in expediting this work so that this project is completed this Spring.

Sarah Feldman, a Board member, spoke about the impact that the new immigration ban had on the Yemeni family of a local storeowner, the Deli and Grocery at 65-02 Fresh Pond Road, who has a green card and has lived in the United States for the past 27 years. She said that he was devastated when he received a phone call from his family who were prevented from boarding a flight from Yemen to JFK International Airport last weekend, despite their having obtained valid visas for permanent residency in the United States. She urged everyone to show their support for this local businessman and his family.

Crystal Wolfe, founder of Catering for the Homeless, said that she has been working to prevent food from going to waste while, at the same time, donating meals to local non-profit programs that are providing services for the homeless. She thanked the Board for their information and assistance in this effort.

Craig Bolton, Assistant Branch Manager of the Queens Public Library located at 72-31 Metropolitan Avenue in Middle Village, spoke about the NYC Neighborhood Library Award, and said that it would make an enormous difference in terms of materials and programs that would be available to the community. He welcomed everyone to visit the Middle Village branch of the Queens Public Library, and participate in this contest. He said that nominations will close on Monday, March 13th, 2017.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Vincent Arcuri, Jr.

Board Chairman Arcuri welcomed representatives of local elected officials to address the Board.

On behalf of Queens Borough President Melinda Katz, Joe Nocerino announced that she will present the Borough's FY 2018 Budget Priorities to the Queens Borough Board for discussion and recommendation at their next meeting at 5:30pm on February 15th in Queens Borough Hall, 120-55 Queens Boulevard, in Kew Gardens.

On behalf of Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, Evelyn Cruz reported that the Congresswoman recently introduced new legislation in Congress, including the Landlord Accountability Act to make sure that landlords and real estate developers who participate in the Section 8 Program cannot displace legal tenants, particularly seniors, by letting their apartment units fall into disrepair in order to force tenants out, jack up the rents and make more money.

Ms. Cruz said that the Congresswoman also introduced legislation that requires the House Financial Services Committee to investigate the inadequate investment in public housing facilities, such as, the New York City Housing Authority. She said that by repairing leaky windows, replacing roofs and making other upgrades, NYCHA would be able to provide safe, affordable housing for thousands of additional tenants.

Ms. Cruz also reported that after Superstorm Sandy, there were multiple incidents of fraud that were reported, and they found that the Flood Insurance Program lacks adequate internal controls and oversight. She said that the Congresswoman introduced new legislation in Congress to address the use of fraudulent deeds and other unscrupulous tactics to evict unwitting seniors and others from their homes.

She said that Congresswoman Velazquez strongly supports efforts to pass the proposed Transportation Bill in Congress this year which would address the nation's crumbling infrastructure, particularly bridges, airports and federal highways.

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State Senator Joseph Addabbo, Jr. reported that the legislature in Albany has been working on budget negotiations in the State Senate and Assembly for the past month. He said that both houses voted against the imposition of a 5 cent tax on plastic grocery bags. He welcomed constituents to attend a Town Hall Meeting regarding Property Tax Assessments, from 6 to 8pm, in Greater Ridgewood Youth Council, at 59-03 Summerfield Street in Ridgewood.

On behalf of State Assemblyman Brian Barnwell, Meredith Wittman welcomed calls from constituents at (718) 651-3185. She said that they plan to open their office on Saturday afternoons by appointment only in order to accommodate constituents who work full-time from Monday to Friday.

On behalf of Congresswoman Grace Meng, Don Capalbi announced that a representative from the Department of Veterans Affairs will be available once a month in their main district office at 40-13 159th Street, on the corner of Northern Boulevard, in Flushing, to meet with local veterans and/or their beneficiaries to address any issues or concerns that they may have such as questions about VA benefits and services, information on pending claims, and assistance with filing claims. He advised that appointments to meet with a VA representative in their office must be made at least four days ahead of time, and the office phone number is 718-358-6364.

On behalf of Assemblyman Mike Miller, Carmela Isabella said that their office is once again hosting their annual Valentines for Veterans Drive. She said that donations of toiletries, cards, candy (sugar-free snacks preferred) and new clothing items for men and women veterans will be collected at their office at 83-91 Woodhaven Blvd. until February 14th, 2017. For more information, please contact their office at (718) 805-0950. Flyers were distributed.

On behalf of State Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan, Alison Cummings welcomed calls from constituents to their district office at 47-40 21 Street, in Long Island City, at (718) 784-3194.

On behalf of Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, Alexa Arrechi welcomed constituents in need of assistance to visit their office at 70-50 Austin Street in Forest Hills, and requested that they call the office at (718) 263-5595 to schedule an appointment.

On behalf of NYC Council Member Elizabeth Crowley, Maggie Hayes announced that they will hold a Town Hall Meeting to discuss the Calamus Avenue Sewer Project and Q47 Bus Detour at 7 PM on Thursday, February 23rd, 2017, in St. Mary's of Winfield gymnasium, located at 70-20 47th Avenue in Woodside. She welcomed constituents to attend. Flyers were distributed.

On behalf of NYC Council Member Antonio Reynoso, Boris Santos announced that unfortunately, the Council Member's State of the District has been postponed, due to storm warnings. He also announced that the contract was recently awarded for the construction of a pedestrian plaza on Wyckoff Avenue between Gates Avenue and Palmetto Street in Ridgewood. Copies of the Council Member's Newsletter were distributed.

MINUTES

The Board Chairman asked Board members to review the minutes of the January 11th, 2017 Board Meeting. The minutes were approved by acclamation, on a motion to accept them as written by Katherine Masi, seconded by Walter Clayton.

The Board Chairman introduced staff members present at the meeting: District Manager Gary Giordano, and Community Associates Catherine O'Leary and Laura Mulvihill. He recognized the press corps in attendance at the meeting, and thanked them for reporting on Community Board matters and events.

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LIQUOR, WINE and BEER LICENSE APPLICATIONS and RENEWALS

The Board Chairman read aloud the list of establishments in the Community Board 5 area that are in the process of applying for liquor, wine and beer licenses since the last monthly Board Meeting on January 11, 2017. Each Board member received a copy of the list.

New Liquor Licenses

- 1) Chicken Soup & Rice LLC d/b/a **Sundown Bar** 68-38 Forest Avenue, Ridgewood, NY 11385
- 2) Entity to be Formed in which **Nicholas Vasilopoulos** is a Principal 811 Seneca Avenue, Ridgewood, NY 11385
- 3) **El Gato Verde Bar Inc.** 10-19 Wyckoff Avenue, Ridgewood, NY 11385

Liquor License Renewals

- 1) Baha Lounge Corp. d/b/a **Baha Restaurant** 83-38 Woodhaven Blvd, Rego Park, NY 11374
- 2) * Gmina Polska Inc. d/b/a **Polish National Hall** 61-60 56th Road, Maspeth, NY 11378
- 3) **Mickey's Little Garden Inc.** 61-21 Fresh Pond Road, Maspeth, NY 11378
- 4) **Ridgewood Lodge 1642 Loyal Order of Moose** 72-15 Grand Avenue, Maspeth, NY 11378
- 5) Glendale Rest Group 2830 Inc. d/b/a **Edison Place** 71-28/71-30 Cooper Avenue, Glendale, NY 11385
- 6) **Assembly Bar & Grill** 73-02 Cooper Avenue, Glendale, NY 11385
- 7) * Giss Restaurant Corp. d/b/a **Paradise Bar Rest & Garden** 678 Woodward Avenue, Ridgewood, NY 11385

New Wine and/or Beer Licenses

- 1) **Jin Noodle Inc.** 66-41 Fresh Pond Road, Ridgewood, NY 11385
 - 2) Ryan D'Amico or Corp. to be formed d/b/a **Laser Bounce** 80-28 Cooper Avenue, Glendale, NY 11385
 - 3) **7306 Toyo Japanese Cuisine Inc.** 73-06 Metropolitan Ave, Middle Village, NY 11379
- * Outdoor Area

Corporate Changes

The Jungo Road LLC d/b/a The Deep End 10-80 Wyckoff Avenue in Ridgewood will be filing an alteration application "adding additional room with mezzanine storage."

Katy Knight made a motion recommending that the Board object to issuing a new liquor license for La Oficina Bar at 859 Wyckoff Avenue, which was submitted to the State Liquor Authority in January. She explained that it is the Community Board's policy to request that all bars in our Board area close by 2am at least 5 days a week, and in this case, the owner is not willing to close this bar before 4am every day. The motion was seconded by Peter Comber.

After a general discussion of the motion on the floor, the Board Chairman requested a Roll Call vote on the motion on the floor which carried unanimously by a vote of - 32 - in favor; - 0 - opposed; - 0 - abstentions; and - 0 - not voting.

Demolition and Construction Notices

The Board Chairman reported that the Board received 1 demolition notice and 3 construction notifications since last month's Board Meeting for the demolition of a residential garage at 52-28 73 Street in Maspeth; and construction of a 17-story mixed-use residential tower located at 336 & 350 St. Nicholas Avenue and 54-27 Myrtle Avenue, where three lots have been merged into one large zoning lot. Each Board member received a copy of the list. The Board Chairman asked Board members to remain vigilant and to advise the Board 5 staff about any questionable construction work in the Board area, so they can investigate further.

The Board Chairman reported that on Monday, February 6th, the Executive Committee met with several Street Fair applicants in the Board 5 office, who plan to hold Street Fairs in the Board 5 area this year, including:

- 1) **Ridgewood Local Development Corp. Myrtle Avenue Festival**
MYRTLE AVE btw Wyckoff Ave & Fresh Pond Road – Ridgewood - 11 blocks
SUNDAY – APRIL 9th - 12 Noon to 6pm (Street closing 10am to 7pm)
SPONSOR: RIDGEWOOD LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORP.

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Board Chairman Arcuri reported that the committee met with the applicant's representative, Board member Theodore Renz, and recommends in favor of granting this application. As there was no further discussion, he requested a vote by acclamation which carried, with one Board member opposed, and with 3 Board members not voting as they are members of the RLDC Board of Directors.

2) Metropolitan Avenue Street Festival

METROPOLITAN AVENUE btw 73 Place & 79 Street, Middle Village - 5 blocks

SUNDAY – **APRIL 24th** - 12 Noon to 6pm (Street closing 10am to 7pm)

SPONSOR: KIWANIS CLUB OF GLENDALE

The Board Chairman informed everyone that at the committee meeting, Joe Aiello, president of the Kiwanis Club of Glendale, said that their organization may decide to withdraw this application. Fred Haller asked if this application could be tabled for further consideration at next month's Board Meeting. The Board Chairman said that the applicant could request the Board's reconsideration.

3) Maspeth Chamber Of Commerce-Lions-Kiwanis Grand Avenue Festival

GRAND AVENUE btw 65 Street to 72 Street - Maspeth - 7 blocks

SUNDAY - **OCTOBER 8th** - 12 Noon to 6pm (Street closing 10am to 7pm)

SPONSOR: MASPETH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE-LIONS-KIWANIS CLUB

Board Chairman Arcuri reported that the committee met with the applicant's representative, David Daraio, and recommends in favor of granting this application. As there was no further discussion, he requested a vote by acclamation which carried, with one Board member opposed.

4) Myrtle Avenue Festival in Ridgewood

MYRTLE AVENUE btw Fresh Pond Road & Forest Avenue in Ridgewood - 4 blocks

SUNDAY - **JULY 23rd** - 12 Noon to 6pm (Street closing 10am to 7pm)

SPONSOR: KIWANIS CLUB OF GLENDALE

Board Chairman Arcuri reported that the committee met with the applicant's representative, Joe Aiello, and recommends in favor of granting this application. As there was no further discussion, he requested a vote by acclamation which carried, with one Board member opposed, and 4 Board members not voting as they are members of the Club.

5) Myrtle Avenue BID Myrtle Avenue Festival

MYRTLE AVENUE btw Wyckoff Ave & Fresh Pond Rd – Ridgewood - 11 blocks

SUNDAY – **SEPT. 17th** - 12 Noon to 6pm (Street closing 10am to 7pm)

SPONSOR: MYRTLE AVENUE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Board Chairman Arcuri reported that the committee met with the applicant's representative, Theodore Renz, and recommends in favor of granting this application. As there was no further discussion, he requested a vote by acclamation which carried, with one Board member opposed, and 3 Board members not voting as they are affiliated with the organization.

6) Fresh Pond Road Street Festival

FRESH POND ROAD btw Woodbine Street & Menahan Street – Ridgewood – 5 blocks

THURSDAY - **SEPT. 7th** - 5:30pm to 10pm

FRIDAY - **SEPT. 8th** - 5pm to 12am

SATURDAY - **SEPT. 9th** - 2pm to 12am

SUNDAY - **SEPT. 10th** - 2pm to 10pm

SPONSOR: FEDERAZIONE ITALO-AMERICANA di BROOKLYN and QUEENS

Board Chairman Arcuri reported that the committee met with the applicant's representatives, Lucy Dolce and Michael Conigliaro, to discuss their proposed plans to hold a 4-day Festival on Fresh Pond Road this year. He said that the committee voted to recommend denial of this event, due to the increased traffic congestion that results from this event, the risk that emergency vehicle response may be delayed, the difficulties in businesses receiving

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truck deliveries and the fact that bus passengers have to walk to Forest Avenue. Another issue is the current emergency bridge deck replacement project over the LIRR on Metropolitan Avenue at Fresh Pond Road, in Ridgewood.

After a general discussion of the matter, the Board Chairman requested a Roll Call vote on the Executive Committee's recommendation to the Mayor's Office that this application be denied, which carried by a vote of - 24 – in favor; - 6 – opposed; - 0 – abstentions; and – 0 – not voting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Special Committee on Homeless Issues

Dmytro Fedkowskyj

Dmytro Fedkowskyj reported that the Committee met on February 1st in the CNL Room of Christ the King High School with Joann King, the Director of Communications and External Affairs at the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH), and staff member Amanda Shaw, who gave a power point presentation. He reminded everyone that the committee was basically formed to: 1) Capitalize on an opportunity to help fix a broken system that helps members being serviced by the Department of Homeless services in NYC and to work with all elected officials to mediate the current situation in hopes of reaching effective solutions. 2) Better understand the process of what homeless people have to go through to obtain lodging and services and to better understand what services the Dept. of Homeless Services is mandated to provide, and the time-line on which they are supposed to be provided, so that homeless people can get the help and support they need. Mr. Fedkowskyj explained that the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness examines quantifiable data and seeks to inform and enhance public policy related to homeless families, with an emphasis on the impact on children. The data that was presented took a closer look at family homelessness in NYC and the reasons behind homelessness, i.e. – Eviction 27%, Domestic Abuse 28%, Overcrowding (doubling up) 19%, in addition to other reasons equaling 26%. As the data reflects, far too many of these families are from unstable situations. The total homeless population, as of January 26, 2017 was 60,424. Families with children made up 69% of the homeless population. He said that a glaring statistic reflects that in NYC - 1 in 5 people in a homeless shelter is a child, age 5 or younger.

Mr. Fedkowskyj said that ICPH gathered data specific for the Board 5-Queens area, which indicated that:

- 51 families with children under the age of 18 entered a shelter in FY 2014. This was up 38% from the previous year.
- 173 families with children under the age of 18 entered a shelter over a 3.5 year period (from July 2012 – December 2014).
- Our statistics ranked 7th of all 14 Queens Community Boardss and 39th out of 59 Community Boards on a citywide basis.
- The reasons for shelter entry in CB5Q were – Eviction 37%, Domestic Abuse 31%, Overcrowding (doubling up) 14%, along with other reasons 18%.
- 12% of families living in CB5 could only afford rent of \$600 a month to avoid becoming severely rent burdened back in FY 2014.
- Based on median household income and rent, the average family in CB5 spends 29% of their income on rent.

He also cited statistics regarding student homelessness for public schools during school year 2013-2014: 1,030 homeless students attended school in Community School District 24. The majority of these students were living doubled up, a group that almost doubled in size since the school year 2010 – 2011.

Mr. Fedkowskyj said that our Board area's statistics ranked 5th of all 14 Queens Community Boards and 33rd of all 59 Community Boards in the city. He described the educational impact of instability and homelessness on students: they transfer from schools more often; they are more likely to be chronically absent; they have lower

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graduation rates and higher drop-out rates from school; they are twice as likely to be suspended from school; and they receive support later for special education needs.

He pointed out that close to 90% of homeless students who did not experience instability factors graduated from high school. He said that these students were homeless, but didn't have to deal with common instability factors that can burden a student. He said that the committee found that stability, irrespective of the setting, is the key to improving homeless students' educational success and school graduation rates.

Mr. Fedkowskyj reported that, in addition to the guest speaker from the Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness, Amanda Nasner, the Queens Borough Manager of the NYC Department of Homeless Services attended the committee meeting. He said she was hired recently to fill a new position, and explained that from now on, each borough will have a manager for government relations. He said that it represents one step closer toward bridging the current administration's gap in communication with local community residents, but without additional staff, it will likely cause greater frustration.

In closing, he said that the committee is scheduled to meet again on March 1st in the CNL Room of Christ the King High School, and the next guest speaker will be a representative from Homeless Services United, which is a coalition of non-profit agencies serving homeless and at-risk adults and families in New York City.

Transportation and Public Transit Services Committee

Vincent Arcuri

Toby Sheppard Bloch reported that on Tuesday, January 17th, the committee met in the Board 5 office with Emily Waelder, along with students who are enrolled in the Greater Ridgewood Youth's Council After-School Program, to review a number of their requests for traffic safety improvements at several intersections in Ridgewood. He said that the committee is currently working on the list of requests that were presented during the meeting.

Regarding the Emergency Bridge Deck Replacement project over the LIRR on Metropolitan Avenue at Fresh Pond Road in Ridgewood, Mr. Block said that traffic flow problems have been increasing in the vicinity of this intersection, since the contractor commenced work at this site. He said that the committee will continue to monitor this situation and try to resolve these problems.

The Board Chairman reported that Phase I of the Kosciuszko Bridge replacement project was completed, on time and under budget. He said that Phase II of this project is fully funded, and the State Dept. of Transportation plans to go out to bid with a request for proposals to design and build the Phase II portion of this cable-stayed bridge project as soon as possible. He said that representatives of the State DOT plan to invite stakeholders on this project to a walk through on the new bridge span very soon. He said that the plans include the installation of LED lighting on the cables and towers of the new Kosciuszko Bridge, with color changes in the LED lights to commemorate holidays and special events in the city.

Paul Kerzner said that the last stop for the Q55 Bus in Ridgewood is located on Palmetto Street and St. Nicholas Avenue. He said that NYC Transit should provide a better location, closer to the Dispatch Booth under the elevated M train tracks.

Kathy Masi asked why the Q47 Bus still stops inside Atlas Park, because she never sees any passengers either getting on or off the bus there. The Board Chairman said that the committee would look into it.

Library Services Committee

Sarah Feldman

Sarah Feldman announced that she was recently appointed to chair the Board's Library Services Committee and plans to hold a committee meeting in the coming month. In addition, she encouraged everyone to support their local libraries by nominating one of their favorite branch libraries for the NYC Neighborhood Library Award by going on-line to: www.nyclibraryawards.org/nominate, or by visiting a local branch library and submitting the form in person. Winners will be awarded grants of \$20,000 to use at the discretion of the library.

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Parks Services Committee

Steven Fiedler

Steven Fiedler reported that the non-profit organization, NYC H2O, has prepared a proposal to nominate the Ridgewood Reservoir to both the State and Federal Historic Registers, in recognition of the importance of the three basins that were constructed in the 19th Century to the city's water system. He said that the committee plans to meet in the coming month to discuss the nomination process and make a recommendation to the full Board at next month's Board Meeting.

As there was no further business to come before the Board, Board Chairman Arcuri adjourned the public meeting of Community Board 5, Queens on a motion from the floor at 10:25pm.