



Community Board No. 5

Borough of Queens
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Vincent Arcuri, Jr.
Chairperson

Gary Giordano
District Manager

Minutes of Community Board 5 Public Meeting April 7, 2020

Board Members Present

Vincent Arcuri, Jr; Antonetta Binanti; Robert Cermeli; Walter E. Clayton, Jr.; Patricia Crowley; Brian Dooley; Patricia Grayson; Fred T. Haller; Richard Huber; Paul A. Kerzner; Maryann Lattanzio; Edward Lettau; John Maier; Patricia Maltezos; Edgar Mantel; Margaret O’Kane; Michael O’Kane; Donald Passantino; Michael Porcelli; Kenneth Rehberger; Theodore Renz; Lee S. Rottenberg; Dennis Stephan; Catherine Sumsky; Gyanal Thapa; Patrick J. Trinchese; Crystal Wolfe; Nan Zhang

Board Members Absent

Jerome Drake; Dmytro Fedkowskyj; Steven Fiedler; Fred Hoefflerle; Mike Liendo; Katherine Masi; Eileen Moloney; Kelvin Rodriguez; Luis Rodriguez; Walter H. Sanchez; Carmen Santana; Connie Santos; Megan Tadio; Barbara Toscano; Michaeline Von Drathen; Maryanna Zero

Elected Officials

Joseph Nocerino – Acting Queens Borough President Sharon Lee

GUESTS

Chae No, Queens Community Liaison – NYC Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene

Board Chairperson Vincent Arcuri called the monthly Board Meeting to order at 7:30pm, following the Salute to the Flag, led by Donald Passantino. He explained that due to Emergency Executive Orders issued by the Mayor and the Governor in relation to COVID-19, public attendance at this meeting will be limited to viewing the live-streamed event on Zoom, as well as on YouTube tonight. He welcomed Board members and staff members, District Manager Gary Giordano, Community Associate Laura Mulvihill, and the Queens Borough President’s Community Liaison Joseph Nocerino to participate in the meeting remotely via Zoom. He explained that statements from local elected officials be will read into the record during tonight’s meeting. He also explained that a link to the livestream video will be posted on the Community Board 5 website at www.nyc.gov/qnscb5 for anyone who’s not able to watch the livestream video of tonight’s meeting while it’s in progress.

The Board Chairperson introduced the first item on the Board Agenda as:

PRESENTATION Re: Update on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) by Chae No, NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene

Mr. Chae No, Queens Borough Liaison for the Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene, gave an update on the latest information about the Novel Coronavirus (COVID19) infection rate in NYC as a follow up to his power point presentation about the COVID19 pandemic that was given at last month’s Board Meeting.

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He said that a lot has happened since then. He said that as of today, 1.4 Million cases of COVID19 have been confirmed worldwide. Regarding New York State, he reported that there are currently 64,062 NY State residents, who live outside of NYC, with confirmed cases of COVID19, and there are another 74,601 NYC residents with active cases of COVID19, according to the NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene's records. He said that the City's Medical Examiner's Office reports that to-date, there have been 3,544 city residents who have died from this disease since early March.

Chae No cautioned that the City is experiencing widespread community transmission of the Coronavirus now. He said that this disease presents a serious health risk to everyone, particularly anyone with underlying health conditions, such as, heart ailments, diabetes and asthma. He said that because this virus is so contagious, there's an increasing number of healthcare workers, first responders and service workers who are coming down with COVID19 in the past two weeks. So, in addition to facing a severe shortage in the supply of N95 surgical masks, gowns and gloves (PPE) to protect their healthcare professionals, all local hospitals are now facing staff shortages as well, he said.

Mr. Chae urged everyone not to hoard surgical or medical masks. He advised that a cotton cloth covering over your nose and mouth, such as a scarf or bandana, is sufficient to protect you from casual exposure to this virus whenever you leave your home.

In response to the rapid spread of this virus, Governor Cuomo issued an Executive Order known as the NY State PAUSE Act, which stands for Policy Assuring Uniform Safety for Everyone, to mandate that all public and private schools and nonessential businesses and offices in the State remain closed until April 29th, 2020. He pointed out that all State parks will be closed as well, and all nonessential public gatherings are prohibited until the PAUSE is lifted. He said that certain businesses, including pharmacies, grocery stores, convenience stores, take-out only restaurants, banks, and gas stations, are permitted to remain open.

In addition, he said that the Governor has waived certain credential requirements so that this year's class of graduating medical students can begin working in local hospitals now, prior to their graduation ceremony, in an effort to relieve staffing shortages in local hospitals.

Chae No said that the Mayor's Office is currently working with manufacturers in the Brooklyn Navy Yard to produce much needed personal protection equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers in NYC. In addition, local corporations and individuals have begun donating equipment and supplies to local hospitals. He reported that the US Naval Hospital Ship Comfort is now docked in NY Harbor and accepting patients from local hospitals that are overwhelmed with patients who have been diagnosed with Coronavirus. Chae No said that the Army Corps of Engineers has just completed construction on new hospital facilities in the Jacob Javits Convention Center in Manhattan, where the overflow of patients from local hospitals can be transferred.

Mr. No said that, without a known cure or vaccine for this disease, public health officials must rely on everyone's help to end any further transmission of this disease, by following the Dept. of Health's basic guidelines for personal hygiene:

- 1) Wash your hands frequently throughout the day;
- 2) Don't touch your face with your hands.
- 3) Cover your nose and mouth when outside your home.
- 4) Practice social distancing, by staying at least 6 feet away from anyone outside your home, and staying home as much as possible.

He also advised everyone that, if you feel sick, you should stay home. If after 2 or 3 days, you still feel sick or your symptoms worsen, call your doctor or an urgent care center for medical advice, not 911.

In closing, Mr. No informed everyone that for the duration of the PAUSE, the Dept. of Education will provide free meals for children and families between the hours of 7:30am and 11:30am on school days in 400 meal hubs, mostly public schools throughout the city, where adults will be welcomed to pick up

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free meals for themselves between the hours of 11:30am and 1pm. He said to contact 311 to find out what schools will provide free meals to go.

Mr. No also alerted everyone that the deadline has been extended to apply for NY State of Health Insurance until May 15th, so there's still time for anyone who needs health insurance coverage to apply. He urged everyone to stay safe.

The Board Chairperson thanked him for his presentation.

Ken Rehberger, a Board member, asked for an update on recent reports of an incident inside Forest Park that involved a large crowd gathering there last night. The Board Chairperson replied that our office had not received any update on that situation.

The Board Chairperson announced the next item on the Board Agenda as:

Public Forum

Richard Huber, a Board member, said that he realizes that it's very important to maintain regular monthly Board Meetings, and asked the Board to resume convening all of its meetings in person, once this public health crisis subsides.

Chairperson's Report

Vincent Arcuri

The Board Chairperson introduced the Board's staff members present: Gary Giordano, the District Manager, and Laura Mulvihill, Community Associate.

He welcomed Joseph Nocerino to give his report on behalf of the Acting Queens Borough President Sharon Lee.

Joseph Nocerino urged all everyone to fill out the 2020 CENSUS, if they haven't already done so. He said that the Census can be filled out at www.my2020census.gov and it takes just minutes to complete the handful of questions that are asked. He explained that the Census determines how much federal funding and federal representation Queens will get for the next 10 years. And, as Borough President Lee says, an undercount in the 2020 Census is something Queens simply cannot afford because the future of our borough, city, state and country depends on a fair and accurate count.

Regarding new Board Member appointments and extensions of current Board members' terms, Mr. Nocerino reported that the Acting Borough President announced on March 30th that the term for 2020 Queens Community Board appointees will now begin on May 31, 2020, instead of April 1, and last through March 31, 2022. He said that the 2020 community board appointments will be made in the coming weeks. He explained that all current Community Board members, whose terms expired on March 31, 2020, will continue serving for an additional 60 days, pursuant to Chapter 70, Section 2800(a) of the New York City Charter.

Mr. Nocerino also reported that the Acting Borough President Sharon Lee has partnered with FreshDirect on its citywide initiative, dubbed "Operation 5-Borough Food Drive," to provide Queens residents and families with groceries during the public health and economic emergency caused by the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that beginning on March 24 and running through mid-April, 400 grocery boxes prepared by FreshDirect will be delivered each day to the borough, to be split among participating Queens community-based organizations. He said that in the CB5Q area, their office is partnering with the Peter Cardella Senior Center in Ridgewood, to distribute food to their clients, including seniors, low-income families and other vulnerable populations.

Mr. Nocerino also reported that the Acting Borough President has partnered with the Queens Economic Development Corporation and the Queens Night Market in a joint initiative, called "Fuel the Frontlines." Starting last Sunday, March 29th, this initiative provided thousands of ready-to-go "home-cooked"

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meals for workers in the borough's acute-care hospitals who are on the frontlines of battling the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that this project has so far been fully funded by Borough President Lee. He said that 250 meals are packaged in individual containers for each hospital, and can be kept refrigerated to be heated and eaten at the workers' convenience. "Fuel the Frontlines" hopes to inspire subsequent funding commitments from corporate and individual sponsors in order to extend or expand the initiative. He said that potential sponsors can either call the office at 718-286-3000 or email info@queensbp.org, with the subject line "Fuel the Frontlines."

The Board Chairperson read into the record the report prepared by Police Officer Michael Berish in the 104th Precinct's Community Affairs Unit for tonight's meeting. He said that Officer Berish gave an update on the most recent crime statistics that were reported over the past 28 days, indicating that the number of robberies had decreased by 2, Felony Assaults increased by 3, burglaries were up by 12, but Grand Larcenies decreased by 9, and Grand Larceny Auto crimes were up by 4, as compared to the prior 28 day period. Officer Berish reported that tire rims and wheels are being stolen, mostly from Honda Accords and Civics all over the precinct.

Officer Berish asked everyone to remember to always lock your vehicles, and don't leave any valuables or electronics in your vehicle whenever it's parked on the street, because these crimes could be prevented if everyone's a little more careful.

Regarding an assault that took place at the homeless shelter at 78-16 Cooper Avenue over the past weekend, the Chairperson said that Officer Berish reported that one male was stabbed and transported to the hospital, and the assailant was arrested on site.

Fred Haller, a Board member, thanked the Police Officers of the 104th Precinct who met with school authorities in Sacred Heart School, in response to a recent incident that took place outside the school. He said that their meeting was very productive and helpful to the community.

Maryann Lattanzio asked if anyone had disclosed the type of weapon that was used in the assault inside the homeless shelter on Cooper Avenue. The Board Chairperson said there were no further details in Officer Berish's report.

Edward Lettau asked if there were any plans to install metal detectors inside this facility. The Board Chairperson replied that when Council Member Holden visited the facility last month, he reported seeing metal detectors installed at the entrance and on each of the floors above.

Mr. Lettau also asked if people released from prison due to COVID-19 are required to wear electronic ankle monitors or another tracking device. The Chairperson replied that he wasn't aware of any, but according to what he's been told, when detainees are released from jail on Rikers Island, they're given carfare and a list of shelters where they can find accommodations.

The Board Chairperson asked the District Manager to read the statements of local elected officials into the record.

District Manager Gary Giordano read aloud the first paragraph of NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer's statement, as follows:

"Today, New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer sent a letter to Mayor Bill De Blasio and New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot calling on the City to release demographic data that tracks the race, ethnicity, and occupation of New Yorkers who have been impacted by COVID-19. The letter stresses the need for critical information to identify and address systemic inequalities, protect frontline workers who may be more at risk because of their occupation, and measure where the gaps exist in order to develop policies to address them." He said that copies of the entire letter could be emailed to everyone, upon request.

The District Manager read aloud the statement submitted by Congresswoman Grace Meng:

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“Dear Community Board members and staff, Congresswoman Meng and her team hope you and your families are all healthy and well. We want to remind you that while we are working remotely, we continue to be accessible to all of our constituents in need of assistance. Please do not hesitate to reach out by calling our district office number and leaving a voicemail at 718-358-6364, or sending an email to NY06Casework@mail.house.gov.

The Congresswoman is aware of issues regarding mail delivery in the CB5 area and is working to ensure that mail delivery resumes while keeping in mind the health and well-being of our postal workers. Finally, if you haven't received our flyers about Unemployment Insurance, Tax Rebates, Resource Guide, or Small Business Administration loans, please email us so we can get that out to you as soon as possible. We are stronger when we work together and help each other, and we will get through this. We look forward to seeing you all again very soon.”

Next, the District Manager read aloud NYC Council Member Robert Holden's statement:

“Hello neighbors, Community Board 5 members, and fellow elected officials. I hope that you are all staying safe and healthy, and I thank you for your continued work and volunteerism as we navigate this unprecedented crisis together. It's important to continue protecting ourselves and our neighbors through good hygiene and social distancing, but we will get through this one day at a time. My office has been closed since March 17, but my staff and I gladly continue to serve our constituents every day while working from home. Please do not hesitate to call (718-366-3900) or email (district30@council.nyc.gov) my office any time when you need assistance.

First and foremost, I proposed legislation last week that would require New Yorkers to wear a face covering in public during this Coronavirus emergency. I believe it is time for our city to take bold steps to stop the spread of the virus, and the recommendation from Mayor de Blasio to wear a mask or face coverings is not enough. Countries around the world that have mandated the use of masks in public have been very successful at slowing the spread, and I think we should follow suit. I encourage all of you to wear a mask if you must go outside for essential reasons, and there are many easy ways to make your own homemade mask from simple household materials.

Secondly, the Cooper Avenue shelter had a violent incident on April 3 between two residents inside. According to the 104th Precinct, the two residents had a dispute that ended in the stabbing of one individual and the arrest of the other. I have reached out to DHS Commissioner Steven Banks to ask how the administration plans to handle this situation, and I will continue to provide updates as I receive them.

Going back to the Coronavirus, I have proposed several other pieces of legislation related to the city's response to this pandemic and how it can be more prepared to face similar crises in the future. I have been writing letters to city agencies urging them to prioritize resources for our first responders and correction officers, and I have expressed my frustration with Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Barbot and Mayor de Blasio for their response to the virus. I have also been in touch with the Postal Service about mail delivery issues and covering the shifts of sick employees so the offices can continue to function normally.

Thank you again for your dedication to our communities, especially during this time. I look forward to seeing all of you again soon.”

The District Manager read aloud the following statement from State Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi: "Assemblyman Hevesi hopes everyone is well. Our office is continuing to monitor phones and emails while working remotely. If anyone has any questions or concerns related to the state response to the COVID-19 outbreak, issues with unemployment, suspended services, or any other matter in which we may assist, please call us at (718) 263-5595 or email the Assemblyman at hevesia@nyassembly.gov. Our office thanks the board and staff for its leadership in this difficult time. Stay safe everyone."

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The District Manager read aloud the following statement from State Assemblyman Barnwell's office: "I hope everyone in Community Board 5 is safe and healthy. Although our office is currently closed, we are forwarding phone calls, so you can continue to call our office number (718-651-3185) with any questions or concerns. As we have limited staff available, if you are not able to get in touch with us, please leave a message with your name and number, and we will call you back. Our office is working to purchase personal protective equipment, PPE (masks, gloves, etc.), to distribute to hospital workers and first responders.

If you're unsure what relief benefits you may be qualified for, or how to access those benefits, please call our office so we can connect you to those resources.

Lastly, attached are a few of our guides that we've been circulating with constituents to help better explain programs and resources available for those experiencing hardship due to COVID-19: COVID-19 Resource List; Senior Meals; NYC DOE Grab & Go Meal Service; Food Assistance; Small Businesses and Employee Resources; and Property Tax Payment Plans. Stay safe and healthy!"

The District Manager said that the attached lists of resources will be available for distribution in the Board 5 office.

LIQUOR, WINE and BEER LICENSE APPLICATIONS and RENEWALS

The Board Chairperson said that the Community Board 5 received one notification from a restaurant located in the Board 5 area that is currently applying to renew their liquor, wine and beer license, since the last monthly Board Meeting on March 11, 2020.

Liquor License Renewal

1) *Villa Erasmo 69-61 Juniper Boulevard South, Middle Village, NY 11379

* *Indicates Outdoor Area*

Demolition Notices

The Board Chairperson informed everyone that the Board did not receive any demolition notifications since last month's Board Meeting. He asked that anyone who has questions or comments about possible illegal construction in our Board area to please contact our Board 5 Office at (718) 366-1834.

Minutes

The Board Chairperson asked Board members to review the minutes from last month's Board Meeting. On a motion from Walter Clayton, seconded by Maryann Lattanzio, the minutes were approved by acclamation.

District Manager's Report

Gary Giordano

The District Manager reported that he spoke with the new Postmaster who has been assigned to supervise the Ridgewood Post Office about the problems with mail delivery during the last two weeks. He said that many mail carriers have been out sick since last month, so they had to cut back on mail delivery in certain neighborhoods, mainly Ridgewood and Glendale.

The Board Chairperson commented that there was no mail delivery in Glendale yesterday.

The District Manager asked for God's blessings on all of the dedicated healthcare workers in hospitals all for working long shifts in very difficult conditions to meet the needs of so many COVID19 patients who have been hospitalized. Regarding the shortages in PPE for medical staff and first responders, he said that, unfortunately, Americans rely to heavily on foreign suppliers for essential goods and services, when we have the capacity to produce whatever we need here in our own country.

The Board Chairperson, who serves on the Board of Wyckoff Heights Medical Center, commented that the hospital has had difficulty staffing the additional wards that they've opened recently to care for the overflow of COVID19 patients from other local hospitals. He said that on one day, the nurse to patient

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ratio had dropped from a ratio of 1:4 to 1:10, before they managed to transfer 10 patients over to the new hospital facility in the Jacob Javits Convention Center, while they were setting up 50 additional hospital beds, with enough equipment and staff, on 3 separate wings on the upper floors of their hospital. He said that, at the time, 38 patients in the Emergency Room were waiting to be transported to beds upstairs. He said that the hospital is operating at 62% capacity right now, but it's difficult to expand their services given the present staff shortages.

The District Manager said that Emergency Medical Services workers are also working under a lot of stress lately, responding to so many calls per day. He also thanked Sanitation workers for removing all of the garbage and trash in our district, food service workers, Police Officers and Firefighters.

He reported that Lucille Songhai, the representative of the MTA-NYC Transit, told him that all work on painting the structure of the elevated M Train line has been halted, due to the Governor's mandatory PAUSE on nonessential projects. He informed everyone that she agreed to meet remotely with members of the Transportation and Public Transit Committee on either Tuesday, April 21st or 28th.

Regarding the sewer project in the vicinity of 74 Street and Penelope Avenue in Middle Village, he said that the contractor is nearing completion of concrete work on sidewalks, driveways and curbs before the final restoration of local roadways.

Regarding another major sewer installation project on Calamus Avenue in the vicinity of 70 Street, in Maspeth, he said that the contractor has begun working on this project, which will extend south along 71 Street to the Long Island Expressway.

Regarding the Rehabilitation of the Soccer/Football Field and Running Track in Juniper Valley Park, he said that this project has been delayed and he's not sure when the contractor will proceed.

Robert Cermeli, Chair of the Health Committee, reminded everyone that when five local hospitals in Queens were closed over the past decade, he cautioned that it could have a serious impact on the delivery of healthcare for local residents. He said that it would have been better to work to improve services in local hospitals than to shut their doors.

Theodore Renz, Executive Director of the Myrtle Avenue Business Improvement District, encouraged everyone to patronize their local businesses, particularly those who remain open during this emergency and all those who will reopen, once the current PAUSE is lifted and local residents resume their regular routines.

He agreed with the District Manager's statement, that we, as a country, should not only maintain our existing manufacturing capacity, but incentivize the manufacture of essential products and services in our own country.

Richard Huber said that, as one of the few remaining manufacturers in this Board, he agreed with Mr. Renz' statement, and said that he also discourages anyone from buying any new products with 5G technology from China.

He said that he always recommends buying American-made products instead.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Patricia Crowley

Patricia Crowley reported that the District 24 Community Education Council held a Town Hall Meeting last month, with Schools Chancellor Richard Caranza, in IS 5 Queens, in Elmhurst, which was very well attended by local residents and parents. She said that in response to questions from the floor about proposed changes to the admission process and funding for the City's Specialized Public High Schools, he answered that no changes will be made. She reported that representatives from local Charter Schools

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were requesting additional classroom space in School District 24, but none of the proposed sites are located in the Board 5 area.

NEW BUSINESS

Lee Rottenberg asked if it's safe to eat take-out food during this health emergency. The Board Chairperson replied that it's all he's been eating lately. He said that many local restaurants on Myrtle Avenue in Glendale remain open for business, but only have take-out meals. He encouraged everyone to support their local grocers, butchers, delicatessens, and restaurants during this state of emergency.

Crystal Wolfe said that, to her knowledge, the COVID virus is spread through the air, not food products.

Ken Rehberger cautioned everyone against eating soft ice cream that's sold from a mobile truck because the driver serves you ice cream in a cone, but also handles money, and drives the truck. He said that they often don't follow good hygiene practices.

Edward Lettau asked about the possibility that many local stores that have closed during this PAUSE will not reopen. The Board Chairperson replied that Congress just passed new legislation that includes extensive funding for small businesses to help them to recover from this shutdown. He said that there's another federal allocation of loans that will be forgiven if the business remains open through next year.

Richard Huber pointed out that there are 10 million Americans who've filed for unemployment recently. He said in the midst of this Coronavirus shutdown, there's been no discussion of the City deferring any real estate taxes this year. Brian Dooley agreed with his suggestion that the City and State should allow small businesses forbearance on paying local sales and real estate taxes, at least until they're permitted to reopen. He wished everyone a Blessed Passover, and Happy Easter.

Crystal Wolfe pointed out that there's been an increase in the incidence of domestic violence in homes all over the City during this shutdown. She said that support groups have stopped holding meetings, as well, and homeless people have been shut out of local food pantries.

As there was no further business to come before the Board, the Board Chairperson adjourned the public meeting of Community Board 5, Queens on a motion from the floor at 8:35pm.