



The City of New York
Borough of Queens

Community Board 8

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Chairperson, Martha Taylor

District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

Minutes of Community Board 8 Meeting held on Wednesday, November 15, at the Hillcrest Jewish Center at 183-02 Union Turnpike, Queens, NY 11366.

Attendance:

Board Members Present:

Dilafroz Ahmed, Heather Bennett-Idels, Robert H. Block, Edward Chung, Kenneth Cohen II, Maria DeInnocentiis, Allen Eisenstein, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., John Gebhard, Wendy Gennaro, Ashan Habib, Mohammed “Delwar” Islam, Neeta Jain Steven Konigsberg, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Rabbi Yaniv Meirov, David Mordukhaev, Dilip Nath, Alan Ong, Tammy Osheroov, Simon Pelman, Frances Peterson, Mohammad Rahman, Tobias Paris, Simon Pelman, Jesse Rosenbaum, Seymour Schwartz, Deepti Sharma, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Douglas Sherman, Mohammed Tohin, Amy Tse, Rabbi Mayer Waxman, Harbachan Singh and Jacob Weinberg.

Board Members Absent:

Susan D. Cleary, Solomon Davydov, Michael Hannibal, Mary Maggio, Jennifer Martin, Rabbi Shilomo Nisanov, Hersh Parekh, Charlton Rhee, Jenna Citron Schwab, and Martha Taylor.

Others Present:

Shubhra Datta representing Borough President Donovan Richards, Kelly Sextan representing James Gennaro, Rokeya Akhter representing District Attorney Melinda Katz, Ari Inniss representing Senator Leroy Comrie, Lois Marbach representing Councilwoman Linda Lee, Scott Sieber representing State Senator John Liu, Josh Simanowitz representing Assembly Member Samuel Berger, Lya Rothmann representing Senator Toby Stavisky, Susan Liu representing Congresswoman Grace Meng, Sam Verstandig representing Assembly Member David Weprin, Nora Daniel representing MOCJ, Chate Lee representing Department of City Planning, P.O Gorman, D.M. Marie Adam-Ovide [CB8 Staff Soleil Griffin, and Nettie Norris].

Call to Order:

Second Vice Chair Seymour Schwartz called the Board Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.. He announced that Chairperson, Martha Taylor, is unable to attend.

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Public Participation:

Bradley Jacques

Requested that the community support NYS bill S04890/A06529, which is sponsored by Senator Gustavo Rivera and Assembly Member Karines Reyes, to require chain restaurants to label menu items that have a high content of sodium.

Ariana Naraine

Requested that the community support NYS bill S06396/A00395, which is sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker and Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal, to include instruction on food, agriculture, and nutrition in the statewide health curriculum to promote healthy eating behavior in students.

Neeta Jain

Announced that NYS Governor, Kathy Hochul, signed legislation, S7574/A7769, that makes Diwali a holiday for New York City public schools. The legislation was sponsored by Senator Joseph Addabbo and Assembly Member Jenifer Rajkumar. There will be a Diwali event at City Hall, hosted by Council Member James Gennaro on Thursday, November 16th at 5:00 p.m..

Elected Officials' Announcements:

Kelly Sexton, representing Council Member James Gennaro

The Queens Valley Playground swings have been replaced. The incident is still being investigated by the 107th Precinct and the Fire Marshalls.

Joshua Simanowitz, representing Assembly Member Sam Berger

Assembly Member Berger's office is available to his constituents. The office is hosting a Monthly Giving event and is requesting donations of toys, toiletries and nonperishables.

Rokeya Akhter, representing District Attorney Melinda Katz

District Attorney Melinda Katz and the 105th Precinct indicted a man who used an abandoned home, on 88th Road in Bellerose, to manufacture drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and fentanyl. To learn more about cases being investigated by the office, visit our website and view our press release.

Scott Siebert, representing Senator John Liu

Senator John Liu is on a Solidarity Mission regarding the issues happening abroad. The office is giving away leaf bags. There will also be an office holiday party on Thursday, December 7th, please RSVP.

Lois Marbach, representing Council Member Linda Lee

Council Member Linda Lee is hosting a Medicare Rights event in which there will be full open enrollment located at SNAP Queens Village on Friday, November 17th. There will be an E-Waste event on Sunday, December 3rd. The office also giving out leaf bags and COVID-19 tests.

Susan Liu, representing Congresswoman Grace Meng

Congresswoman Grace Meng wanted to inform the community that the house passed the Stopgap bill to prevent a government shutdown. If anyone needs any assistance, feel free to contact our office.

Second Vice Chair Schwartz called for a roll call.

Second Vice Chair Schwartz led the salute to the flag.

Second Vice Chair Schwartz called for a motion to approve the minutes.

Approval of Minutes: Harbachan Singh made a motion to approve the minutes of Wednesday, September 11, 2023, seconded by Neeta Jain. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairperson Report

In the spring newsletter, District Manager Marie Adam-Ovide, announced that the Community Board

applied to have a Neighborhood Support Team from the Mayor's office for a joint beautification project. The project was for Hillside Avenue along with Community Board 12. Regrettably, our project was not chosen.

On Monday, November 13, 2023, Chairperson Matha Taylor kicked off our own beautification project by sprucing up the Midland Mall along with the Department of Parks and Recreation, CB8 staff, members, and volunteers from the Jamaica Estates Civic Association. We planted daffodil bulbs, trimmed hedges, turned over the grass and added mulch. We also arranged to have Kingsford Triangle's shrubs pruned, bulbs planted and are waiting for mulch to be laid.

We are also looking to partner with Community Board 12 to spruce up Major Marks Park that is only across from our district.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving!

District Manager's Report

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOH & MH)

The agency informed us of the NYC Vaccine Finder that has a list of places for the insured and uninsured where one can receive both the flu and COVID vaccines. The NYS Health Profile is now available online and not via hardcopy. This allows them to update the online version as they receive new information. The federal government has announced free test kits giveaway again:

<https://www.covid.gov/testshhttps://www.covid.gov/tests>

Narcan, which is used to treat drug overdoses is available at select pharmacies. Here are some helpful links:

<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/basas/naloxone-list-of-prevention-programs.pdf>

<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/basas/naloxone-list-of-pharmacy.pdf>

New York City Well has changed its name to 988, which is also the number to dial if you are in a mental health crisis. Please go to this link to find out more:

<https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/press/pr2023/health-department-launches-988-campaign.page>

The agency started to place bait for raccoons in wooded areas throughout New York City. The exact locations were not given to us. *[Mayor's CAU asked that the CBs, where this is being done, be notified to alert their residents.]*

The agency representative stated that if a dog eats one, it should be alright. If they eat more than one, they may have some symptoms like vomiting. The number to call Poison Control is 800-222-1222. They are asking residents not to try to take the bait from the dog's snout to prevent getting bitten.

The agency is also working on the Healthy NYC Initiative to increase life expectancy to 83 years old. This is focused on healthy eating and avoidance of drug use. To find out more, please go to:

<https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/about-doh/healthynyc.page>

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

The agency is asking residents to file complaints of sewer back-ups as they are happening. This will enable them to send an inspector to see the problem. Please do not wait until a few days or a week later. When you do, the complaints are often closed with condition not found.

There were 280 complaints for the month of October. The top three complaints were:

- 25 sewer complaints
- 24 air/smoke from vehicles
- 16 hydrant needing repairs.

Department of Design and Construction (DDC)

DDC Project I.D: SEQ200558 - In Jamaica Estates, they had mostly successful trial water shut-off. Some locations had valves that needed to be repaired. They are in contact with DEP for the repairs. Somerset Street and Henley Road as well as Wexford Terrace between Dalny Road and Avon Road had issues. They expect to do the trench layout and saw-cutting this week.

DDC Project ID: HWPR21QX - Pedestrian ramps have been installed at all corners of 73rd Avenue between 184th Street and 199th Street so far. The contractor is currently working at 73rd Avenue and Kissena Blvd.

Department of Buildings (DOB)

The agency’s “DOB After-Hours” aka Homeowner’s Night that used to meet every Tuesday from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. has been scaled back due to budget cuts. They now meet every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. The remaining dates for this year are November 21st, December 5th and December 19th. Many homeowners are being hit for failure to have required boiler and elevator inspections. Waivers are available for change of ownership or for bankruptcies. Those with handicap lifts are not usually required to have a yearly elevator inspection.

Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit (CAU)

The City Family Homelessness & Eviction Prevention Supplement Program (FHEPS) that assists residents with their rent has been expanded. NYC residents can now use these funds for available apartments throughout NYS.

Regrettably, CB8’s joint application with CB12 for the beautification project for Hillside Avenue was not approved by the Mayor’s Neighborhood Support Team (NST).

Our office, under the leadership of Martha Taylor, will be working to improve the appearance of Hillside Avenue. I have already attended two meetings with Council Member Nantasha Williams and Reverend Carlene Thorbs, CB12 Chair. We discussed issues with the park on the south side of Hillside Avenue, Major Marks Park, that affect our residents on the north side (Jamaica Estates).

Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)

As requested, the shrubs at Kingsford Triangle have been trimmed and weeds removed. We were scheduled to plant bulbs on Monday, November 13, 2023, at 10 a.m. with the assistance of volunteers from Jamaica Estates; however, we planted the Midland Parkway/Hillside Avenue Mall instead. Bulbs were planted at Kingsford Triangle by DPR’s staff.

The NYPD Trunk or Treat event went very well at Cunningham Park. Parks Manager Nelson Fung anticipates that this event will continue to grow every year.



Robert Block, Douglas Sherman, James Gallagher, Jr., and Solomon Davydov.

Marie Adam-Ovide

Second Vice Chair Seymour Schwartz informs the community that Paul Graziano is running behind schedule.

Guest Speakers:

Shubhra Datta – representing Borough President Donovan Richards

Queens Borough President Donovan Richards is hosting Transgender Day of Remember Ceremony on Thursday, November 21st at Queens Borough Hall. The Community Board Applications will be available on our website at the beginning of the year.

The Queens Borough President is working with the Jewish and Muslim community by listening to both sides. The Queens Tech and Innovation Challenge is relaunching. Applications for the challenge is open through

Marie Adam-Ovide – When will the community board applications be available online?

Shubhra Datta – There’s no exact date. Applications are typically open the 2nd week of January through sometime in February.

Marie Adam-Ovide – Do you know when/if the Borough President will send letters to board members who are up for renewal? Will it be by mail or email?

Shubhra Datta – I will get back to you.

Committee Report:

Health Minute with Dr. Stern

Dr. Penny Stern gave a moment to recognize Veterans Day and acknowledged Second Vice Chair Schwartz for being a World War II veteran. The audience applauded for Second Vice Chair Schwartz.

Dr. Stern spoke about World Diabetes Day as being the world’s largest diabetes awareness campaign. The campaign was created in 1991 by the International Diabetes Federation and the World Health Organization due to the growing concerns about the escalating health threat posed by diabetes.

World Diabetes Day became an official United Nations Day in 2006 in which we recognize the day on November 14th. You should pay attention to your diet, eat fiber-rich grain products and vegetables. Omit saturated fats from your diet and choose vegetable fats.

Guest Speakers:

Deputy Inspector Kevin Chan, 107th Precinct

The community is up thirty percent (30%) in crime. The factor driving up crime is Domestic Violence and Social Media Robberies. Whenever you are selling an item to someone you met online, meet them at the precinct. People with high end watches have gotten robbed.

The next Precinct Council meeting is Tuesday, November 28th which is the last Tuesday of the month.

Second Vice Chair Schwartz invited Kevin Forrestal to speak on the City of Yes, while we wait for the speaker.

Kevin Forrestal – The City of Yes was introduced by the mayor a year ago. Our community has turned down some of the sanctions included in the proposal related to the environment. Some examples within

the proposal related to zoning would allow any of the main roads such as Midland Parkway, Utopia Parkway or areas with a corner property to receive a waiver to build an apartment.

The proposal also mentions a conversion of accessory dwelling units to be legal. These are typically basement or cellar apartments.

Second Vice Chair Seymour Schwartz invites Maria DeInnocentiis to speak on the City of Yes.

Maria DeInnocentiis – The issue that was brought up with the City of Yes is that there is no proper infrastructure. They are not putting in new sewers, repaving road, and not building new schools. Any wide street is susceptible for an apartment building conversion. In Jamaica Estates, any property that is five thousand square feet could be converted into an apartment building.

The mayor's office is blaming one- and two-family homeowners for the housing crisis. We need to stick together and let the mayor know we are not going to stand for this proposal.

Second Vice Chair Schwartz introduced Paul Graziano, an urban planner who is leading the campaign against the City of Yes.

City of Yes – For Economic Opportunity

Paul Graziano – There are two components of the City of Yes that we will focus on while using Jamaica Estates as a case study. The components are housing and economic. The economic piece is currently under review.

The proposal for the housing section is based on a single statement, “Low density neighborhoods in the city of New York are responsible for the housing crisis”. Prior to 1961, apartment buildings were allowed to be built-in low-density communities. The Mayor's goal is to get rid of the zoning regulations to allow apartments in every zone.

There are five main components to the housing section:

1. The authorization of **accessory dwelling units**. Accessory Dwelling Units would be allowed on all one- or two-family properties in the city. This would allow a basement, cellar, rooms, attic, garage conversion, or a new two-story house behind a house.
2. Imposed **transit-oriented development**. This would allow apartment buildings on every single property that has wide streets. On narrow streets, apartment building could be built on every corner.
3. Establish **town center zoning**. This would cover every commercial overlay in R1 through R5 zones to allow up to four stories of residential on top of ground floor retail/commercial.
4. **Dismantle the zoning resolution** by changing the basic size of your lot. The massive changes would encourage bigger, denser development on smaller lots in all R1-R5 zones.
5. **Eliminate parking requirements for all new residential development**. Any development that takes place, will not have a parking lot.

If a homeowner has a five thousand square foot property, a developer can build a five thousand square foot building. The proposal imposes a Dwelling Unit Factor which allows developers to build ten unit on every five thousand square foot property.

The economic opportunity has eighteen components. The following were mentioned:

1. Corner stores – This creates a process to allow for small new bodegas and other locally-serving storefronts in residential areas.
 - a. This would allow commercial retail store fronts or office within one hundred feet of every corner/residential block to go up to twenty-five hundred square feet.
2. Home occupations – Allow New Yorkers more flexibility to have businesses in their homes.

- a. Home offices currently take up a maximum of twenty-five percent of a primary residence and up to five hundred square feet. The proposal would make it forty-nine percent of the residence, no maximum floor area and up to three employees working in your home.
3. Adapting spaces for industries like film – Give businesses, like film studios, a rational process to allow them to adapt and expand.
 - a. This would allow the BSA to give a regular permit to anyone that would like to grow their business. If the property has ten thousand square feet, the BSA would give them a permit for twenty thousand square feet.

Paul Graziano requested that the community boards vote no on the proposal and opened the floor for questions.

Jesse Rosenbaum – If all the community boards voted this down, would there still be a way for the proposal to go through?

Paul Graziano – Yes. The community board is advisory only. If all the community boards vote it down, it would send a strong message to the administration.

Maria DeInnocentiis – How does the housing and economic proposals impact the residential areas in Manhattan?

Paul Graziano – The economic piece covers a lot of the city. The housing piece is geared towards lower density communities.

Kenneth Cohen II – Is there an alternative plan to this proposal? Why would someone vote no for this proposal when this provides more access to housing opportunities?

Paul Graziano – This isn't affordable housing. Developers plan to tear down homes, create a twenty to thirty unit apartment building and sell it at market rate.

Kenneth Cohen II – We do that now by tearing down housing and changing zoning. Are you suggesting that we vote no on something that could potentially benefit a majority of people? More people are renting than are homeowners.

Paul Graziano – There are fifty percent homeowners and renters in this district. Homeownership has gone up in the city. Eastern Queens is majority homeowner occupied. We've lost over a million rent stabilized apartments in the last twenty-five years.

Announcement:

Marie Adam-Ovide – There will be a zoning committee meeting on Wednesday, November 29th on the City of Yes. Chante Lee, from City Planning will give the presentation. If anyone is missing a pair of prescription glasses, it will be at our office. We also have leaf bags.

Second Vice Chair Seymour Schwartz informed the community that we will have more opportunities to discuss the proposal. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Soleil Griffin, CB8 Staff
November 17, 2023*