



Chairperson, Martha Taylor

*The City of New York
Borough of Queens*

Community Board 8

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

Minutes of Community Board 8 Board Meeting held on Wednesday, January 10, 2018 at the Hillcrest Jewish Center, 183-02 Union Turnpike in Flushing, New York.

Attendance:

Board Members Present:

Dilafroz Ahmed, Jagir Singh Bains, Carolyn Baker-Brown, Robert H. Block, Susan D. Cleary, Monica Corbett, Maria DeInnocentiis, Florence Fisher, Carolann Foley, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., Joshua Glikman, Michael Hannibal, Robert Harris, Tami Hirsch, Fakrul “Delwar” Islam, Steven Konigsberg, Bright Dae-Jung Limm, Mark J. Lefkof, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Mary Maggio, Jennifer Martin, Tamara Osherov, Frances Peterson, Charlton Rhee, Jesse Rosenbaum, Douglas Sherman, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Jacob Weinberg and Albert Willingham.

Board Members Absent:

Dr. Allen J. Bennett, Edward Chung, Kenneth Cohen II, Allen Eisenstein, John Gebhard, Marc A. Haken, Paul S. Lazauskas, Frank Magri, Rabbi Shlomo Nisanov, Simon Pelman, Seymour Schwartz, Harbachan Singh, Rachele Van Arsdale and Stanley Weinblatt.

Others Present:

Jessica Douglas representing Mayor Bill de Blasio, Facia Class representing Congresswoman Grace Meng, Shurn Anderson representing Borough President Melinda Katz, Ari Gershman representing Councilman Barry Grodenchik, Henry Yam representing Councilman Rory Lancman, Andrew Taranto representing State Senator Leroy Comrie, Muhammad Rahman representing Assemblyman David Weprin, Honorable Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal, Daniel Blech representing Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal, Marilla Li representing Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, Marie Adam-Ovide, CB8 District Manager and Jatnna Reyes, CB8 staff member.

Call to Order:

Chairperson Martha Taylor called this Board Meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Public Participation:

Phyllis Maltese – Ms. Maltese is a resident of Community Board 8. She resides in Jamaica Hill off 164th Street in a 75 unit privately owned apartment building. Approximately 80% of the tenants are immigrants and the landlord is taking advantage of them. They only get hot water when the heat is on. The ventilation system is not working building wide. Many bathrooms have huge holes. Many apartment windows are broken. One tenant told her that he was charged \$200 to replace a broken window in his apartment. He was not supposed to be charged because that is supposed to be the responsibility of the landlord. She is trying to reach out to her neighbors but it is hard because of the language barrier and some are afraid. The Queens Chronicle and Times Ledger are going to write an article about our building. We need resources and answers to how we can get the proper repairs and the entire building inspected. We are part of the community and work hard to pay the rent, we are not getting the services. Thank you.

Chairperson Taylor asked Ms. Maltese to get in contact with the Community Board for assistance.

Salute to the Flag

Chairperson Martha Taylor led the salute to the flag.

Approval of Minutes:

Carolann Foley made a motion to approve the minutes of December 13, 2017, seconded by Kevin Forrestal.

Count in favor 35 **Opposed:** 0 **Abstained:** 0

Board Members who approved the minutes:

Dilafroz Ahmed, Jagir Singh Bains, Carolyn Baker-Brown, Robert H. Block, Susan D. Cleary, Monica Corbett, Maria DeInnocentiis, Florence Fisher, Carolann Foley, Kevin Forrestal, Howard A. Fried, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., Joshua Glikman, Michael Hannibal, Robert Harris, Tami Hirsch, Fakrul “Delwar” Islam, Steven Konigsberg, Bright Dae-Jung Limm, Mark J. Lefkof, Mitch Lisker, Elke Maerz, Mary Maggio, Jennifer Martin, Tamara Oshero, Frances Peterson, Charlton Rhee, Jesse Rosenbaum, Douglas Sherman, Dr. Penny M. Stern, Martha Taylor, Mohammed Tohin, Jacob Weinberg and Albert Willingham.

Board Members who did not approve the minutes:

None

Chairperson Martha Taylor welcomed Honorable Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal and asked him to say a few words.

Honorable Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal – Assembly Member Rosenthal stated that he has four Community Boards in his assembly district and it feels good to be back home here at Community Board 8. He had his first week of legislative session this week. It is going to be an interesting year in Albany. It is being said that there will be a about a \$4 billion budget deficit. The budget deficit was about \$2 billion and somehow in January it jumped up to \$4 billion. The MTA prices are also on top of everyone’s mind as well. It is going to be an interesting session coming up in Albany.

He invited everyone to his swearing-in ceremony which will take place on Thursday, January 11, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. at P.S. 201 (*everyone applauded*). He hopes to see everyone there. Invitations were left on the table.

Chairperson Martha Taylor introduced Guest Speaker Thomas Bransky from Children’s Community Services (CCS) Homeless services at Par Central to address the Board.

Guest Speaker:

Thomas Bransky – Good Evening everyone! I am not sure if there was going to be an expectation. I am going to go ahead and introduce myself and introduce the program that we do, the community work that we are fortunate to do in New York City and the journey that we are on. Then I’ll open it up to any questions you may have.

Mr. Bransky was born and raised in Chicago. His family owned a big hotel in a country club. His father was old school so he worked since he was 10 years old at the country club. He used to caddy for the golfers and they treated him a certain way. Once they had dinner with his parents they treated him very nicely. He learned a little bit about hypocrisy and that there isn’t any correlation between how fine a person is with their monitored position in society. On the other hand, a lot of the young kids that he grew up with were incredible people. In Chicago, he was doing Big Brothers Big Sisters. He had a lot of positive experiences with that. He ran Chicago partnership programs. When he moved to NYC he wanted to

continue along those type of works and eventually went to the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). They had an informational session and he presented two programs to work with them. In November 2014, he started working with them. They had a hundred-room cluster program in the Bronx. Within six months, he was told that his agency ran the best the program in New York City. They reached all of their social service objectives and met their goals for maintenance and sustaining the units. They set the bar for the entire agency.

In August 2015, they [DHS] came to them for a temporary program. At the time, it was going to be a 10 day program - the commercial hotel program. He has the commercial hotel background and it was coming down the heels of Hurricane Sandy. Not too many hotels units were eager to work with us at that time. Subsequently, they literally moved thousands of families out of the hotels into permanent housing. The success was due to the agency's ability to monitor the family and the program requirements. The Children's Community Service (CCS) program has two foundation principles. One is that they have to love their clients and the other component is structure.

Mr. Bransky opened the floor for questions from the Board Members.

Monica Corbett – Is Par Central totally a stand-alone property just for the homeless or does it still have the homeless population and is accessible to others?

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – This hotel for the majority of its life has been partially for homeless people and partially for transient use. The hotel was divided by floors. The first and second floor were for families and the third floor was for transient guests. In the last two or three months, they actually turned the entire hotel to the program.

Douglas Sherman – What is the capacity for Par Central right now? What is the maximum number of families you can have there?

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – Thirty-three. I think it might be forty-two or fifty-two. I'll have to check and get back to you.

Mark Lefkof – We have security issues. People walking in the streets. The 107th Precinct is always being called by the community because of people out there. As you stated, you occupy the entire premises; therefore, you have total control of the building. Do you actually have total control of security of that building or is it only a wish that you could have it. Also, you talked about Brooklyn and the Bronx which is great. We are in Queens. Really hate to tell you, I don't care what happens in Brooklyn and the Bronx. I care about what happens in Queens and in our community. When do you feel that this X number of families will be moved out of this facility into a permanent housing facility?

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – In terms of security, every single hotel does have 24 hour security. It is under a different agency/contract. They work cooperatively. In a stand-alone facility, we have control of the front door. In a hotel, you can't put a metal detector on the front door, you can't control the front door. There are differences. We don't have anyone that is posted at the front door.

Why? You have two security guards where are they?

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – The purpose of the security guards is to protect the families, not as an additional security for the hotel.

Chairperson Martha Taylor asked Amanda Nasner from DHS to answer any agency related questions to the Board Members.

Amanda Nasner – She stated that the clients do have a curfew. The curfew is 10:00 p.m. The individuals have to sign in.

Thomas Bransky – Mr. Bransky explained that when everybody comes into the building, no one has their own keys. They keep all the keys, they keep all the keys for the hotel rooms and everybody that comes in goes to their office and they get escorted to and from their room. There is a security login where they sign in and sign out all the time.

Carolann Foley – Is that security login only within the building not on the entrance to the building. There is a curfew for 10:00 p.m. but that curfew is not always kept. Two security guards for how many families is an outrageous ratio. It is ridiculous. You are leaving the responsibility when they are out on the street to the New York City Police Department. That is what's happening here. That is what Mark is talking about. Two security guards is like having nothing.

Amanda Nasner – Let's talk about what happens to individuals that do not make their curfew.

Mark Lefkof – to [Mr. Bransky] – You didn't answer the second part of my question.

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – As far as the overall, strategic objectives of DHS of whether or not closing the hotel is way above me. They ask him to go in and manage the facility and that is what his job is.

Susan Cleary – How many families and how many individuals are there in Par Central? What percentage of those families and individuals have jobs?

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – He believes there are 52 families and 0 individuals. The only time which there will be individuals is if there was an expecting mother and the expected one will qualify them to participate in a family facility. Out of the 52 families, 18 families were working. Some of those families work at night and have night passes, which is why you may see someone entering in and out of the hotel. Also, all families with children under 13 years old have a curfew of 9:00 p.m.

Maria DeInnocentiis – Ms. DeInnocentiis just wanted to re-state what she was hearing. There are 52 families in the building, two security guards and none at the front door.

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – No. Let me just correct. It is an operating hotel. The hotel has their regular staff. They have usually one to two people at the front door. The hotel also has security guards at the front door. Every hotel in the City of New York at night has a security guard. It happens that the way that they arranged it and set everything up with the hotels is that for the hotels security, the hotel is still going to provide that for the security of the families which is DHS's responsibility. DHS is going to provide that.

Didn't you say that the hotel is completely occupied by the families?

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – It is, but is still an operating hotel.

The second thing I was unclear about was, you said that when people come they have to report to your office to pick up the key.

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – When they come in they report to my office. We escort them to their door and we open the door and let them in and then we take the keys with us.

How do you make sure that when they come to the hotel that the staff make sure that they come to your office? I am thinking. You have families. For example, if I go out, my 10 year old is in the apartment in the room. I come back and go up to my room and my kid opens the door and lets me in. That never happens?

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – It happens all the time. This system is not a perfect system.

Dr. Penny Stern – You said there are 52 families and 18 approximately are working. What is done to the ones that are not working to occupy them during the day or night? Are there vocational services, education, or they are just wandering around?

Answer: *[Mr. Bransky]* – One of the main components of the hotel program is that every family who enters into the hotel program is given a voucher depending on what their family make up is. Most of these families' goals are getting their family settled and doing the responsible thing to get proper housing.

Amanda Nasner – Each client has a case worker. We don't just put individuals in hotels hoping that they can figure it out on their own. Yes, we are giving them vouchers but that's why CCS is on site to provide social services.

Thomas Bransky – Every single hotel has two security guards; two residential aides who make sure that the doors are locked, and that people are where they are supposed to be. They are constantly monitoring as well. We provide three meals a day because there aren't cooking facilities. The residential aides give out the food and escort them to their doors. Each facility will have two case managers/supervisors. It will have a shift supervisor to make sure operationally and everything is going as it is. It will have an assistant program director who actually oversee the housing component. The program director, housing specialists and assistant director are floating positions. In some cases they are stationed at the hotel but in other cases they are not. In the case of Par Central, he believes that they actually visit on a daily basis.

Mitch Lisker – Out of the 52 families, do anyone of them have criminal records?

Answer: *[Mr. Bransky]* – Out of the top of his head no. It is a pretty diverse group. Even in their own program, they promote a second chance program for employees that we know for sure that have criminal records. Also drug tests are performed for people that work for them. He is certain many have minor criminal records. There is nothing major that he is aware of.

Tami Hirsch – **What is the longest duration that an individual has stayed in Par Central.**

Answer: *[Mr. Bransky]* – Typically, it is 90 days. We have had families there for about one year.

Jesse Rosenbaum – **The first concern that was mentioned has not been addressed. If you go on the Service Road from Par Central during daytime you'll find most of your residents are out panhandling. This is something that you should be in control of. I would like to know if DHS or the City has any possible plans or is considering taking over the portion of the property and making a permanent homeless shelter. I would also like to know if currently the Par Central is in compliance with all the existing hotel rules and regulations.**

Answer: *[Mr. Bransky]* – In terms of compliance, my understanding is that they are in compliance. There are no plans on transitioning this hotel into a permanent homeless shelter. In regards to the panhandling, he will work to find a solution. He left business cards on the table for people to contact him.

I would like a commitment from you or your people to go out in front and side of the building and make sure these individuals are not soliciting funds from all the drivers that stop at the red light.

Answer: *[Mr. Bransky]* – I will commit to that.

Kevin Forrestal – **He agrees with Mr. Bransky that these individuals are human beings and the nature of homelessness has changed a lot and it needs to be addressed. The economics of it, Par Central actually was an illustration on CBS - Channel 2 a while back. They talked about the various rates that are being paid. There are hourly rates and then a substantially higher rate for these individuals.**

Answer: *[Chairperson Martha Taylor]* – This is certainly not a question he should answer.

Answer: *[Amanda Nasner]* – I get this question a lot because a lot of hotels. A lot of papers have reported. I would say don't believe everything you read. We don't pay more than the market rate

price, which I believe is \$197.00. We are not paying more than the regular price. If anything we are paying less because we are using more hotels. We are not paying more than the average person rate. She reiterated what Mr. Bransky said before about Par Central not being turned into a homeless shelter permanently. They will be getting out of the Par Central very soon. They do not have a date yet. As soon as they do; they will share it with the Community Board.

Monica Corbett – Ms. Corbett stated that it just feels that one day there was like a small amount of displaced families at the Par Central and then all of a sudden it became full. There was no communication saying that this was going to be done. That is not right. There are panhandlers at 5:15 a.m. when I leave my house. You should have a relationship with our local precinct; communicate with them to address these issues.

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – I think is a good idea and it is important that we coordinate with the police effort.

Susan Cleary – Ms. Cleary stated that at the CAB meeting last week, community involvement was discussed. This is being discussed to find a solution to the problem.

Answer: [Mr. Bransky] – I will leave my business card here. Anyone can contact me. He is willing to work with the community.

Chairperson Martha Taylor thanked Mr. Bransky for his presentation. She understands that this was a very hard thing to do tonight here and he did it very well (everyone applauded).

Chairperson's Report – Martha Taylor:

- Chairperson Martha Taylor read a greeting card received from former Chairman Alvin Warshaviak (card was left on the table for Board Members to see).
- Chairperson Martha Taylor gave a report on the T-Building on behalf of Seymour Schwartz who is away on vacation:

Building Report - The City Council fully approved the plans for the T-Building as-is and it includes the 8,000 square feet of rent free community space that CB8 lobbied for. In addition, there is an agreement that DHS will completely move-out of the Par Central Hotel; however, there is no time table yet for this to occur.

In the past Seymour Schwartz met with Queens Community House (QCC) and a couple of other organizations that were interested in using the space. If approved QCC would use the space for programs for all ages. It is understood now that any organization would have to go through the City's RFP process. No support letter is needed at this time. Seymour Schwartz will continue to monitor the progress closely on behalf of the Board.

- She wished Dr. Allen Bennett a speedy recovery who is recuperating from surgery.
- Susie Tanenbaum is doing better and is back to work from her surgery on a limited schedule. We wish her well. Shurn Anderson will be representing Borough President Katz tonight.
- As you know, Community Board 8 has a Sunshine Fund which is administered by Board Member Jim Gallagher. This fund is used to send care packages to bring sunshine to members who may be recuperating from health issues, who had a death in the family and for those who had happy events as well. The funds have been depleted and we are asking for a small donation. For those who are not prepared to give a donation tonight, Jim will accept donations again at the February 21st meeting.

DHS – Whenever the temperature falls below 32 degrees Fahrenheit, New York City is under Code Blue. Drop in centers are open 24 hours a day to receive homeless individuals. They can go to any City hospital or to the homeless intake center in Queens at 100-32 Atlantic Avenue. If anyone notices someone who appears to be homeless, please call 311 and report it. The City will send someone to help.

There was an issue with the limited variety of meals available at the Par Central for the homeless families. We were informed that CCS will issue a new RFP this month to ensure that meals are available for the different dietary needs of the clients.

DEP – The Department of Environmental Protection does not conduct water main work when the temperature falls below 29 degrees Fahrenheit. Any such work will resume when there are at least 5 consecutive days above 29 degrees.

The \$183 water bill credit will be given to Class One homeowners starting in February. There are about 664,000 homeowners scheduled to receive this credit. This credit is separate from the additional \$115 credit given to the low income homeowners who qualify for SCHE, DHE or HEAP.

DOB – We had about 2,300 enforcement complaints for CB8 last year. As far as development, many of the Alteration 1 and 2 applications involved energy efficiency. Many residents are adding solar panels to save on their electrical bills. Please note that the solar company doing the work must file an Alteration 2 application and secure all necessary permits.

DOH & MH – The agency announced that the number of teen pregnancies has gone down by 60% between 2000 and 2015. They found that the teen pregnancy rates declined across all ethnic groups. The prevalence of high school students decreased from 51% to 27% for males and females.

The New York Teens Connections program created as an expansion of the Bronx Teens Connection to educate and provide teen-friendly clinical services has reached 7,000 at risk youths. The goal is to reach 15,000 by June.

The agency believes that progress may be hindered by the federal government cuts to the teen pregnancy prevention programs.

DFTA – The agency informed us that there will be a Medicare training at 2 Lafayette in Manhattan on January 17th from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. If interested, they are willing to come and give a presentation to the Board one evening.

Parks – Good news! Gabe Echevarria is the Parks Manager for District 8 and 9.

He informed us that there are some issues with the heating systems at three of our parks: Cunningham Park, Playground 75 and Vleigh Playground. He will keep us posted regarding the repairs. MulchFest is this weekend; however, Christmas trees can be dropped off until the end of January at Cunningham Park.

NYPD – The 107th Precinct had a 3% decrease in major crime at the 107th Precinct. Stolen cars are down by 41%. The NCO program will be in place at the 107th Precinct starting January 22nd. The Precinct will be divided into quadrants and the same officers will be assigned to each quadrant. An

additional 7 officers have been assigned to our precinct for this program. All seven officers were given a 6-month training.

DOF – The Department of Finance announced that the deadline to file for property tax exemptions for homeowners has changed. The new date is **Tuesday, January 16, 2018** for the 2017-2018 Tax Year. In August 2017 New York City and New York State increased the income threshold to qualify for the Senior Citizen Homeowners Exemption (**SCHE**) and the Disabled Homeowner’s Exemption (**DHE**) to **\$58,399** or less. On January 16th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. elected officials and NYC Department of Finance will host events in all five boroughs to enroll those who qualify. The locations are as follows:

- **DOF Manhattan Walk-In Center** - 66 John Street, 3rd floor, New York NY 10038
- **Bronx Borough Hall** - 851 Grand Concourse, Room 915, Bronx, NY 10451
- **Brooklyn Borough Hall** - 209 Joralemon Street, Courtroom Brooklyn, NY 11201
- **Queens Borough Hall** - 120-55 Queens Blvd, Room 200, Kew Gardens, NY 11424
- **Queens Majority Family Life Center** - 115-15 Farmers Blvd, Saint Albans, NY 11412
- **Staten Island Borough Hall** - 10 Richmond Terrace, Room 125, Staten Island, NY 10301
- **Staten Island Mount Loretto CYO**, 6541 Highland Blvd, Staten Island, NY 10309

Please bring your 2016 Income Tax Return and photo identification. For those who did not file a 2016 Income Tax Return, please bring proof of income.

The Borough President also has many events to assist senior citizens and disabled renters to freeze their rents. If you are a senior citizen or disabled renter with a household income of up to \$50,000 and resides in a rent controlled or rent stabilized apartment, you can apply for the Senior Citizen rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and/or the Disable Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) at one of these events. They will be on: January 16th, February 20th, March 20th, April 17th, May 22nd and June 19th from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Borough Hall - Room 200. Please call 718-286-2661 to RSVP.

Happy Birthday to: Jagir Singh Bains, Kenneth Cohen II, Maria DeInnocentiis, Frank Magri, and Martha Taylor.



Marie Adam-Ovide

DM Adam-Ovide reminded everyone that our meetings are open to the public. Anyone who wishes to speak may do so during the Public Participation part of the meeting, provided that he/she signed up for speaking time (preferably by calling the Community Board at 718-264-7895 no later than 4:45 p.m. the day of the meeting). The speaker will be granted up to 3 minutes of speaking time. If you are not present when your name is called, you will not be allowed to speak.

Chairperson Martha Taylor announced that former Assemblywoman Nettie Mayersohn has been nationally recognized for her Baby Aids bill in Congress (*everyone applauded*).

Borough President’s Representative – Shurn Anderson

- Ms. Anderson mentioned that Susie Tanenbaum is doing well but is back to work on a limited basis. She also mentioned that Borough President Katz had a re-constructed knee surgery and she is on the mend. She apologizes for any of the events she may have missed over the past few weeks.

- Borough President Katz is grateful and happy for the role you all played in the success of her first term. She is looking forward to her second term.
- Borough President Katz is hosting her State of the Borough Address on Friday, January 26th at 10:00 a.m. at the Frank Sinatra High School in Astoria. Seating is very limited, you can RSVP by visiting: www.queensbp.org/RSVP or by calling: 718-286-2661.
- Friday, January 12th is the deadline for Community Board applications and reappointment forms to be received at the Borough President's Office.
- Harbachan Singh and Marc A. Haken were not present. Ms. Anderson mentioned that they both worked with her on the African American Heritage Committee. She thanked them in their absence.
- This Saturday, January 13th, the African American Committee along with Borough President Katz and the Queens Library are co-sponsoring the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration at the Queens Central Library [89-11 Merrick Boulevard] at 1:00 p.m. everyone is invited!
- Wednesday, January 17th at 5:00 p.m. is the deadline for the annual Black History month scholarship program. The Borough President and the African American Heritage Committee solicits and raises funds. Monetary funds will be given to students to cover expenses related to their post-secondary studies. Anyone can apply. For more information please visit: www.queensbp.org.

Adjournment

Carolann Foley made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 8:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jatna Reyes, CB8 staff
January 23, 2018*