

The City of New York
Queens Community Board 3
82-11 37th Avenue, Suite 606, Jackson Hts, New York 11372
Board Meeting Report
Thursday, March 17, 2005

at: I.S. 227, The Louis Armstrong School
32-02 Junction Boulevard
East Elmhurst, N.Y. 11369

PRESENT

Mizanoor Biswas
Cristina Borrero
Emma Brandt
Richard Cecere
Shiv Dass
Howard Dent
Vivian Dock
Margaret Dozier
Blanca Fonseca
Ann Hicks Gill
Judy Grubin
Darryl Hoss
Joyce Hucless-Julian
Norma Jimenez
Capers Johnson
Stephen Kulhanek
Grace Lawrence
Marta E. Lebreton
Ana Lopez
Martin Maier
Lisa Mesulam
Ralph Moreno
Mayo Peralta
Thomas Raffaele
Leoncio Romero
David Rosero
Jimmy Smith
Arthur Teiler
D.O.H.
Augusto Tionson
Park
Edwin Westley
Jorge Zamora

ABSENT

Patrick Beckles
Jose Bernal
Vasantrai Gandhi
Luis A. Gomez
Edward Kiernan
Lorraine Kresse
Ana Lopez
Thomas Lowenhaupt
Beryl Major
John Moran
Joseph Ricevuto
Arturo Ignacio-Sanchez
William Salgado
Stuart Sears
Patricia Thomas
Orlando Tobon
Hamlett Wallace
Beninnida Yagual

GUESTS

John Young, Director – Queens C.P.C.
Jessica Morris – N.Y.C. D.O.H.M.H.
Chris Jacques -- Bureau of HIV/AIDS,

Jeff Rosenstock – Queens Theatre in the

Alfonso Quiroz – Hon. Helen Sears
Yonel Letellier – Hon. Jose Peralta
Maurice Phillips -- Hon. Hiram Monserrate
Ellen Raffaele – Hon. Helen Marshall
Barbara Jackson – Hon. Joseph Crowley
Fior Rodriguez – Hon. Gary Ackerman

Walter Roundtree – Office of the Comptroller
Phil Glotzer -- ACQC
Liza Konnert – Jackson Heights resident
Charlene Turner – E. Elmhurst resident

Approximately 50 Residents

Richard Cecere, Chairman, opened the meeting at 7:40 p.m. and stated that Mr. Gandhi was not present to collect funds for a depleted “Sunshine Fund”. He requested that Mr. Dass make the rounds this evening.

Richard Cecere further updated the Board as follows:

- BSA Cal. #361-37 BZ – 91-11 Roosevelt Avenue Public Hearing was rescheduled due to technicalities. The matter will be reviewed at the April meeting.
- The February 17, 2005 Minutes will be reviewed at the April meeting.
- The Airport / Capital Projects Ad Hoc Committee Meeting, scheduled for Monday, March 21st, has been postponed.
- C.B. #3’s ninth annual Business Youth Convention will be held on March 24th at I.S. 227. Everyone is welcome.

Public Participation

Liza Konnert, a resident of 87-10 37th Avenue, stated that she recently read an article in the New York Times Real Estate section about “Manhattanites” moving to Jackson Heights. The article read, “all that Jackson Heights needed was to be put on the map with a Starbucks”, she said. She further stated that “there are many lovely places to get a cup of coffee on 37th Avenue -- Jackson Heights does not need a Starbucks chain”. Ms. Konnert added that if such a proposal should come up, she would gladly form a committee to oppose it.

Charlene Turner, a resident of 108th Street, between Northern Boulevard and 32nd Avenue stated that there are two schools on this block (St. Catherine’s School and A Child’s Place) causing awful traffic problems. The traffic occurs daily between 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. School busses double-park during daytime hours and park in the street overnight. Cars continuously double park and block driveways, sometimes 20 minutes or more, while parents drop off and pick up their kids. She further advised that A Child’s Place has been renting out its premises for private parties on weekend nights. In February two Saturday night teenage parties were held until 2:00 a.m. -- one teenager was stabbed on the premises and taken to the hospital in serious condition. About 400 undisciplined kids were hanging out in the street at 2:00 in the morning, she said. She requested the Board’s help in looking into both matters.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Richard Cecere introduced John Young, Director of Queens Office of City Planning Commission.

John Young stated that he will brief the Board on an overview of the proposed projects, rezoning initiatives and the administration’s effort to diversify the city’s economy borough-wide. Further, to ensure that neighborhoods throughout the city are enhanced with an improved quality of life. He added that a good resource for a wide scope of information is City Planning’s website address at www.nyc.gov/planning. The website provides a full overview of zoning resolutions,

zoning maps and a strategic plan. It outlines the objectives that the Department is trying to achieve, namely, a city that is rebounding from the economic slump, post 9/11. Mr. Young stated that New York, like other large cities, has problems of overdevelopment and too much activity which requires channeling into the right locations. New York City Planners face a tremendous challenge to ensure that all activities are encompassed into a broader range of business opportunities and a broader range of economic strength. Immigration is a healthy dynamic for the City, he said. It expands the work force, develops skills, establishes communities and gives immigrants the opportunity to pursue the “American Dream”.

Mr. Young advised that earlier this year, the Mayor announced the establishment of a new office – “Industrial Management and Business” throughout the five Boroughs. It will focus on areas where there is a strong concentration of industrial and manufacturing jobs. It was established through the major efforts of City Planning, N.Y.C. Economic Development Corporation and the Department of Small Business Services. The initiative is to help protect industrial jobs, consolidate numerous programs that serve these businesses and how they can obtain the resources available, i.e. tax credits and other financial incentives.

The Borough of Queens leads the way in population growth of all the five boroughs. John Young presented an overview of the Queens Borough “City Planning Vision’s” objective -- A major transformation of downtown Flushing:

- To provide appropriate locations with the right infrastructure to accommodate new housing by sustaining the quality of life throughout the borough. It is important that it is channeled in the right locations;
- To target and direct growth toward the infrastructure hubs in the development of the 3 regional business centers in the Borough of Queens – downtown Flushing, downtown Jamaica and Long Island City.
- A downtown Flushing Task Force that will create a consolidated body of participating agencies. The three initiatives for downtown Flushing is (1) to enhance and consolidate connections in the downtown Flushing area; (2) to expand and enhance connections to the waterfront and (3) to expand and enhance the regional recreation centers that are part of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Willets Point / Shea Stadium and eventually over to Corona.
- The redevelopment of a 6 ½ acre municipal parking lot could be redeveloped to provide for community facilities and public open space to meet existing and projected needs. The parking lot would not be visible from any of the streets bordering the site.
- Cultural – a minimum of 500 new housing units will create a new dynamic heart in the center of downtown Flushing.
- Transportation – To hire consultants to explore traffic congestion in the central retail area, i.e. rerouting bus lines, implement new traffic signals and modify existing signals, changing three two-way streets to one-way.
- The 37th and 39th Avenues Improvement Project will upgrade the pedestrian environment using traffic management techniques and urban design from 37th and 39th Avenues and at Lippmann Arcade to the #7 train and Roosevelt Avenue. It will facilitate a pedestrian link from the retail/transit hub to the adjacent, emerging mixed-use area to the redeveloping waterfront area.
- The Waterfront -- The project is well under way to clean up the waterfront and is to be completed in the next two years. Once the river is cleaned up, the area will be ideal for mixed commercial and residential development. On the east side of the river a new esplanade will be developed to construct five apartment buildings with 5000 units.

- **Upgrade** -- The 50-acre site between the river and Shea Stadium/Willets Point (“The Iron Triangle”) presently has no infrastructure and a very low job density. This area has a wealth of opportunities and is being looked at by credible development teams as to how it can be utilized.

John Young stated that a full environmental impact study will be done on the socio-economic factors and traffic/air quality issues before it is implemented. Feedback would come from the Flushing community, as well as the Jackson Heights/Corona/East Elmhurst community. The overall projection is to implement a strategy and consolidate – to improve traffic flow from Flushing to Corona before and after baseball / tennis games at Shea and Arthur Ashe Stadiums.

In reply to a query about overdeveloped areas such as 108th Street and Roosevelt Avenue, i.e. affordable housing, sanitation, schools, sewer lines and a further a query about where the allocated money is to cover concerns on Northern Boulevard and Astoria Boulevard? -- John Young stated that 108th Street was, in fact, down-zoned because it was over-scaled and out of character. It is beyond City Planning’s responsibility to implement the infrastructure needs of a community. He advised that it is each operating agency’s responsibility to work with the Community Board to get the issues addressed. Housing Preservation and Development would be the agency to address affordable housing opportunities along Astoria Boulevard and Northern Boulevard.

N.Y.C. Department of Health & Mental Hygiene

Jessica Morris, Director, Community Relations, Tel. No. (212) 788-4735, stated that many services are available at D.O.H.M.H. -- i.e. a rat problem, a birth certificate issue, a death certificate issue, or getting help for an individual with an AIDS or a mental health problem.

She noted that the “Syringe Exchange Program” saves lives – Ms. Morris commended C.B. #3 for reaching out to the Health Department to receive further information about the program and for their interest and concerns. She advised that C.B. #3’s Health and Social Services Committee is planning to tour an existing syringe exchange location. They will be given the opportunity to observe how the program works in a community and to ask questions. She invited the public as well. Ms. Morris introduced Chris Jacques, Bureau of HIV/AIDS, Prevention and Control, N.Y.C. Dept. of Health.

Chris Jacques, advised that for over a year the Bureau of HIV/AIDS has been working very hard to expand the Syringe Exchange Program. New York City has the largest AIDS epidemic in the United States, (90,000 people living with AIDS). Injection drug use is the leading cause of the AIDS epidemic. HIV/AIDS is rising among women of Hispanic and African American Heritage mainly because they are the life-partners of men who use intravenous drugs. The Syringe Exchange Program (S.E.P.) has been proven to stop the infection of injection drug-users by providing clean needles to people who are not ready to stop using drugs, he said. In areas where it is used, the infection rate went from 65% down to approximately 12%. Mr. Jacques stated that The Bureau of HIV / AIDS is willing to do the outreach work to set up an S.E.P. site but, the process calls for strong support from the Community Board, he said. Power-point brochures were distributed for statistics and other information on the S.E.P.

Queens Theatre in the Park

Jeff Rosenstock introduced Andrew Ronan, Director of Audience Development at the Theatre -- Andrew is doing a lot of work in Community Board #3, he said. The Queens Theatre is featuring Jack Klugman in a play entitled, “The Value of Names” – the play runs from March 18th through

March 27th. A special offer for this show was passed around. A beautiful dance event for the Caribbean community and the non-Caribbean community will be coming in May. It will be an elegant event and will be held at the Queens Museum in the Unisphere Gallery. Jeff Rosenstock further advised that Community Board members will be receiving complimentary invitations to attend a cabaret / reception on April 17th, at the Queens Theatre with cabaret entertainer, Steve Ross.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Chairman opened Executive Session with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Richard Cecere advised that the scheduled BSA Public Hearing was withdrawn. The matter will be reviewed at the April 2005 meeting.

Motion #9 – 2005 Adoption of the Agenda

Upon motion duly made by Grace Lawrence, seconded by Emma Brandt and unanimously carried, the March 17, 2005 Agenda was adopted.

District Manager's Report

Giovanna Reid advised that the New York State Department of Environmental Control held a public meeting on March 16, 2005 regarding an upcoming investigation at the Bulova site and the homes located at 77th Street and 24th Avenue for contaminants. Bulova stored various chemical products in underground tanks on the property. In the 1980(s) the tanks were removed – it is suspected that contaminants may have been released in the soil. The D.E.C. will hold another public meeting in about six to eight weeks to report their findings and plans for remediation. The D.E.C. will be working closely with the district office and the Health and Social Services Committee. The Board and the community at-large will be kept apprised.

Tom Raffaele stated that thirty million dollars was set aside for such projects; however, the government is not using this money on the Bulova site.

Committee Reports

Youth Services

Norma Jimenez advised that the Business Youth Convention will be held on Thursday, March 24, 2005, at I.S. 227, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. She stated that volunteers are needed to set up tables; help is also needed with the security at the doors.

Airport

Mizanoor Biswas, Co-Chair, advised that both C.B. #3's committee meeting, as well as City Council's Public Hearing regarding economic development projects have been cancelled. C.B. #3's Advisory Committee will meet with the Borough President next week to discuss our priorities. The C.B. #3 community organizations and businesses will play an important role in defining this community's needs and priorities. It is also a good thing that Helen Marshall, Borough President knows the needs of our district and is one of the people who will vote.

Committee Referrals

Martin Maier, Landmarks Committee Chair

A Town Hall Meeting held on March 2, 2005 at the Jackson Heights Jewish Center. Commissioner Robert Tierney, Chair of the Landmarks Commission, was present to hear the objections regarding fence regulations and other community concerns related to Landmarks. There was a tremendous turnout -- it is hopeful that this is the beginning of open communication with L.P.C. to get our story and concerns across. L.P.C. needs to recognize that 1993 is not 2005 -- the needs and problems are different today and L.P.C. must be made aware of this. One of the problems is the lack of communication of residents in the Landmarks district -- many people are foreign born and they do not understand that permits are needed. Notices and flyers were recently given out to every property owner, stuffed into mailboxes and placed under doors. If it is stated in the deed, realtors and attorneys should be required to give out a book of Landmarks' rules and regulations at the time of closing. Unscrupulous contractors are also at fault.

Legislators Report

Alfonso Quiroz, Councilmember Helen Sears' Chief of Staff, wished everyone a Happy Saint Patrick's Day. He stated that Helen Sears initiated the Town Hall meeting because her office met with a number of the residents with Landmark issues. She wanted to address it in a constructive way -- over 150 people were present. It was an open meeting where everyone had a chance to voice their concerns to the Commissioner in a constructive way. Many of the issues that needed to be addressed were, he said. Mr. Quiroz stated that the Councilwoman will continue to work with the Commissioner. He added that the community's input and ideas are needed on the issues.

Alfonso Quiroz noted that C.M. Helen Sears is in support of the "Syringe Exchange Program" and she has been in contact with them. If anyone has concerns about this program, call his office and it will be brought to the councilwoman's attention, he said.

Yonel Letellier, Assemblyman Jose Peralta's Chief of Staff, advised that recently "pedestrian crossing signs" have gone up at all schools in the area. The Assemblyman is also arduously working with the D.O.T. Commissioner to get safety barriers up. He further advised that the Assemblyman is working to have speed bumps installed on school blocks.

Maurice Phillips, representing Councilmember Hiram Monserrate, updated the Board on the "Pay to Pray" Parking Meter Tax on Sundays:

- For 50 years there was no feeding the meters on Sunday;
- Since 9/11 the Mayor pushed legislation to make N.Y.C. fiscally solvent again;
- This year the City has a multi-billion dollar surplus -- The Councilman, along with other colleagues, introduced a bill repelling the feeding of meters on Sunday.

Hard working New Yorkers feel that they have done their share, he stated! -- Mr. Phillips urged the public to sign petitions and distribute flyers to help in the Councilman's efforts to have the Sunday parking meter tax repealed.

Richard Cecere, Chairman, thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Irene Voss, Recorder