



The City of New York
Community Board 3, Queens
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Vasantraï Gandhi, Chairman

Giovanna Reid, DM

BOARD MEETING

Thursday, September 20, 2007

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

PRESENT

Khaleeq U. Arshed, M.D.
Patrick Beckles
Earline Berry
Mizanoor Biswas
Emma Brandt
Ann S. Brown
Shiv Dass
Howard Dent
Vasantraï Gandhi
Judy Grubin
Darryl Hoss
Joyce Hucless-Julian
Norma Jimenez
Stanley Kalathara
Stephen Kulhanek
Grace Lawrence
Marta Lebreton
Ana Lopez
Martin Maier
Lisa Mesulam
Ralph Moreno
Michael Anthony Nardiello, III
Alfonso Quiroz
Leoncio Romero
Edmund Rosenbaum
David Rosero
Dr. Arthur-Ignacio Sanchez
Mary Sarro
Jimmy Smith
Arthur Teiler
Patricia Thomas
Hamlett Wallace
Edwin Westley
William Young
Jorge Zamora

*Giovanna Reid, District Manager
Irene Voss, Recorder*

ABSENT

Cristina Borrero
Charles Castro
Vivian Dock
Margaret Dozier
Andrew S. Kim
Lorraine Kresse
Ortner-Vernon Murray
Joseph Ricevuto
Orlando Tobon

GUESTS

Kim Anderson, U.S. Department of
Homeland Security -- FEMA
Bonnie Reiff, S.B.A.
Jane Kennedy, FEMA
Jennifer Manley, Mayor's C.A.U.
Helen Asiago, Urban Health Clinic
Arif Ullah, Citizens Committee for N.Y.C.
Hon. Ivan Lafayette, Assemblyman, District 34
Dorothy Phelan, Representative,
Assemblyman Jose Peralta, District 39
Veta Brome, District Leader
Yvonne Garcia, Office of the Borough President
Fior Rodriquez, Rep., Hon. Gary Ackerman,
Congressman C.D. 5
Murlaina Tindall, Rep., Hon. Jeffrion Aubry,
Assemblyman, District 35

**PLEASE NOTE: THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2007 – 7:30 P.M.
I.S. 227, The Louis Armstrong School
32-02 Junction Boulevard, East Elmhurst, N.Y.**

Vasantrai Gandhi, Chairman, opened the meeting at 7:45 p.m. with a moment of silence for departed past Chair and Board Member Richard Cecere who after a brief illness passed away in June.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Disaster Assistance – U.S. Department of Homeland Security – FEMA – Kim Anderson, Public Information Officer

Kim Anderson advised that FEMA works hand-in-hand with the U.S Small Business Administration (S.B.A) to assist residents that were affected by the heavy rains on August 8, 2007 causing severe flooding conditions in our district. On August 31st President Bush declared Queens and Brooklyn as “federal disaster areas”. As a result of the flooding, all of the residents who have sustained damage have an opportunity to apply for disaster assistance. FEMA applies no income level applied, but by the degree of damage sustained. Registration is essential to begin the recovery process -- a FEMA application number will be assigned to all applicants that have registered. Within 7 to 10 days the property will be inspected -- if repairs have been made before the scheduled inspection, receipts and photos should be presented. She noted that when applying for disaster assistance it is important to apply for an FDA loan. It will aid in the process of disaster assistance. Lastly, Ms. Anderson advised that two mitigation centers are open to instruct residents on mold-proofing your house.

Bonnie Reiff, S.B.A., advised that residents who have sustained physical damage to homes, personal property or businesses may be eligible to apply for a long-term, low interest rate disaster loan. Three types of disaster loans are available: (1) Home disaster loans (homeowners and renters); (2) business physical disaster loans and (3) economic injury disaster loans. The filing deadline for home disaster loan applications is October 30, 2007. If your loan application is approved, a homeowner may be eligible for additional funds to cover costs of improvements that will protect your property against future damage. Mitigation loan money would be in addition to the amount of the approved loan, but may not exceed 20% of the approved loan amount. SBA approval of the mitigating measures will be required before any loan increase. There are two applicable interest-rates on home loans – “No Credit Available Elsewhere (3.125%) and “Credit Available Elsewhere” (6.25%).

A resident questioned FEMA’s lack of guidelines pertaining to flooded basements -- Jane Kennedy, of the Individual Assistance Unit at FEMA stated that the guidelines were not set by FEMA, but by Congress. She further stated that basements are covered, depending on the situation. For example, if a basement is used as an extra bedroom, has a furnace, a water heater, furnace, fuse box, etc. a homeowner has every right to ask for a second inspection and appeal FEMA’s decision.

Giovanna Reid stated that the Community Board recently met with FEMA and it was never stated that basements were not covered. All complaints received in this district only pertained to flooding and raw sewage backing up into legal basements. She added that the community was misled into thinking that FEMA would be able to assist.

Ms. Kennedy stated that the legality of a basement would be a factor. When FEMA does an inspection the homeowner must present a Certificate of Occupancy and what is housed in the basement, i.e. extra living quarters, utilities that bring service into the house, etc.

Jennifer Manley, the Mayor’s new Queens Director for Community Affairs Unit (C.A.U.) – Tel #(212) 788-7448, advised that the Mayor’s office has been working closely with FEMA. FEMA has given out over one million dollars for disaster assistance. A primary cause of flooding in our communities is the growing housing market. Over-population has resulted in the city’s outdated infrastructure to break down. She urged residents to register with the Comptroller’s Office to begin the process of a major overhaul to the city’s infrastructure.

Urban Health Clinic – 108th Street and 37th Avenue

Helena Santiago, Director, advised that the clinic will be opening in the early part of 2008. The clinic is federally funded and it will not turn any patient away if they are in need of health care. Medical services offered are, ob/gyn, pediatrics, adult management, pulmonary, podiatry, endocrinology and more. Because Urban Health is the first of its kind in this community it is a major undertaking. Depending on an individual’s income fees range from \$15 up to a maximum of \$50.

Citizens Committee For New York City – Mr. Arif Ullah

Citizens Committee is a non-profit organization with a 30-year history. They invite community groups to apply for grants through their New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods (NYBN) Program. The grants are given to groups to work on projects that creatively address community issues, as well as stimulate community involvement, community building and improvement. To submit a grant proposal, describe a project to improve your community that can be carried out within a 6-month period. Grants generally begin at \$500 and do not exceed \$3,000. Applications are accepted twice a year. The deadlines are September 30th and March 31st.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

FY09 Capital & Expense Budget (Jimmy Smith, Chair)

Jimmy Smith, Committee Chair, invited the public to come forward with any issues that need to be addressed and make their recommendations for the FY 2009 Budget.

In that no recommendations were forthcoming from either the public or the Board, Mr. Smith advised that the Board will vote on the Capital /Expense Budget at its October meeting.

(Land Use – Hamlett Wallace, Chair)

T.L.C. – Renewal of Operating License

Central Car Service – 94-12 Astoria Boulevard, East Elmhurst

The owner, Francesca Pena advised that Central Car Service is applying for a two-year license renewal. They have serviced the community for a long time and they have never had any complaints.

Judy Grubin stated that the car service has been around for quite a while; the drivers are pleasant and they get you to where you want to go.

Lisa Mesulam stated that Central Car Service has never had a problem in all of these years. She has known the owner a long time and she knows how to run the business.

(Traffic Transportation, Stephen Kulhanek, Chair)

Parking Meter Proposal – A proposal by D.O.T. to install additional metered parking at 73rd Street between 37th Avenue and Broadway.

The Chairman read a letter from Council Member Helen Sears to the Community Board supporting the proposal. The following are excerpts from her letter: *“The issue of traffic and congestion in the Western portion of C.B. 3 is a complicated issue’ . . . ‘I have worked closely with the Board, local residents, merchants and the D.O.T. Commissioner’ . . . ‘I believe that instead of single space meters, Muni-Meters should be installed to allow more cars to park and eliminating the use of plastic bags on parking meters’ . . . ‘Because of the congestion of the area, I hope these meters will at least serve as an improvement to this complicated problem.”*

Stephen Kulhanek further advised that E-mails were received from two residents, Mr. Edward Sacrolongo and Yvonne Summers, both of whom vehemently oppose the parking meter proposal. They stated that this remedy will not alleviate the congestion and double parking, but only add to it.

Stephen Kulhanek pointed out that the meters will not be placed in front of the residential buildings.

Stanley Meises, Director of the Salem Co-op on 37th and 73rd Street, stated that the residents are fed-up with the daily traffic congestion, horn-honking, double parking and careless illegal street vendors. “Adding metered parking on an already chronically jammed-up street is a misguided notion, he said. Mr. Meises questioned the lack of permanent loading zones and specific delivery hours on a residential street. He requested that the Community Board reject this proposal and all future proposals until the findings of all traffic and zoning studies have been concluded.

Mr. Syed Mannan, President of the Bangladeshi Business Association, stated he has been a merchant of 73rd Street for 12 years. To alleviate congestion somewhat, the meters are very much needed at this location, he said.

Tom Lowenhaupt, a resident of 75th Street, stated that parking meters were replaced overnight where a bus stop once used to be. Meters will only bring more cars into the neighborhood, he said. He requested that the Community Board and D.O.T. look at the proposal in a comprehensive way – one that will benefit the merchants, the residents and the community as a whole.

S.L.A. Liquor License Applications – *(Bus. Eco. Develop. – Shiv Dass and Arthur. Teiler, Co-Chairs)*

Arthur Teiler, Co-Chair advised that only one of the seven applications scheduled will be reviewed this evening.

An On-Premise Liquor License Application was filed with the State Liquor Authority for the following establishment:

- Chocolate Café – 95-20 Astoria Blvd., East Elmhurst

Arthur Teiler advised that Committee met with the new owners. The owners are taking over an existing bar -- they appear to have good intentions to make a change for the better and improve the neighborhood. The establishment is in close proximity to the East Elmhurst Library. Mr. Teiler welcomed testimony from the public.

Sylvia Russillo, the new owner of the establishment, stated that she has worked in the neighborhood for 17 years. Although she realizes that the former premises did not have a good reputation, she wants to change that image and make it into an Italian-style restaurant. Some of the businesses in the community are helping her to make the transition. Correction officers, police officers and firemen are some of her customers.

Judy Grubin – What are the hours of business -- how many days in the week?

Ms. Russillo – 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 a.m. -- seven days a week.

A resident stated that she’s ready to move because of these bars -- the rowdiness and the groups that hang around in front of these establishments is appalling.

Ms. Russillo – Stated that she has not observed any problems – her customers park, they go into the establishment and they leave --it is the neighboring bar that is causing the problems. She further stated that she has been in business for one month and she has had no complaints from the community.

Judy Grubin stated that the vacant lot adjacent to the library will be developed into the expansion of the library, bringing it in closer proximity to the bar.

Francesca Pena stated that she also would not want her kids attending a library that is near an adult bar. However, she stated that she knows the owner and feels that she wants to change the reputation of the business.

A resident of Astoria Boulevard stated that her backyard neighbors Soluna Bar. At all hours of the morning blasting music emanates from the premises. Noisy patrons of the bar throw cigarette butts, garbage and beer bottles over the fence into her yard. The police have been called on numerous occasions and several meetings have been held, although nothing has changed. She requested that the Community Board work with the residents to clean up their neighborhood of these types of bars.

Judy Grubin stated that the Community Board propose a moratorium on new liquor license applications.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Vasantrai Gandhi opened up this portion of the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion #32 – 2007 – Adoption of the Agenda

Upon motion duly made by Grace Lawrence, seconded by Darryl Hoss and unanimously carried, the September 20, 2007 Agenda was adopted.

MOTIONS BY COMMITTEE

Business Economic Development – Arthur Teiler, Co-Chair

Chocolate Café – 95-20 Astoria Blvd., East Elmhurst (New Liquor License)

Arthur Teiler advised that the Committee recommended approval based on the owners commitment and experience to run the establishment.

Discussion ensued:

Edwin Westley inquired about the remainder of the establishments that were up for review and who did not show up?

Arthur Teiler advised that the owners have 3 chances to present themselves. If they fail to do so, the Board will not approve their application.

Ann Brown inquired how do we know who is actually operating the premises?

Arthur Teiler advised that the landlord of the building was formerly operating the bar and he is now renting the premises to the applicant who has been operating the bar for about one month. The applicants are now applying for a license under their ownership.

Giovanna Reid advised the Board to make its recommendation, even though ownership is in transition. The applicants are in the process of obtaining a license in their name. While the 200/500 foot rules are both applicable in this case, the Board should still make its recommendation. The State Liquor Authority regularly hold public hearings whenever there is a conflict with the rules. S.L.A. will factor in the Community Board’s recommendation when the final determination is made.

Judy Grubin stated that if they are running the bar properly, why are so many complaints forthcoming from residents about loud music and unruly behavior?

Arthur Teiler stated that the complaints were about the former management and not the applicant.

Alfonso Quiroz stated that their application should be denied based on the fact that they are breaking the 200 foot rule by operating an adult bar in proximity to a library. He further stated that he does not believe that a moratorium should be placed on every bar; we need to look at each individual location.

Norma Jimenez stated that the Board should at least give the owner the opportunity to make a change and bring a new crowd to the community.

Jimmy Smith suggested that that we look at the legal aspect. As long as the applicant has the necessary documentation, the Board should approve the application.

Hamlett Wallace stated that the previous owner had shady and boisterous clientele – he is somewhat hesitant about recommending approval of this license.

Motion #33 – 2007

Chocolate Café -- 95-20 Astoria Boulevard

Upon motion duly made by Mizanoor Biswas, seconded by Arthur Teiler , with a vote of 6 in favor, 24 opposed and 4 abstentions for a new liquor license. The Board recommended that the application be denied.

Abstentions:

- David Rosero stated that unless we can find something specifically wrong, the Board cannot deny the application. If there is substantial proof, then the Board can recommend disapproval.
- Martin Maier stated that the S.L.A. can override anything that the Board recommends.
- Mr. Young stated that he questioned the proximity of the library to this bar.

Land Use -- (Hamlett Wallace, Co-Chair)

Hamlett Wallace advised that Committee recommended approval.

Motion #34 -- 2007**Central Car Service – 94-12 Astoria Boulevard**

Upon motion duly made by Hamlett Wallace, seconded by Judy Grubin and unanimously carried, to grant the renewal of an operating license.

Traffic Transportation -- (Stephen Kulhanek, Chair)**Parking Meter Proposal -- 73rd Street between 37th Avenue and Broadway**

The Committee realizes that parking meters are not a solution, however, we do believe that meters are appropriate in front of the commercial strip. The Committee recommends that the City install muni-meters in front of the commercial strip at the above location.

Discussion ensued:

- Alfonso Quiroz stated that D.O.T.'s proposal is still under study – the Board can make its recommendation when the study is complete, instead of doing it by piece meal.
- Edwin Westley stated that Mr. Gandhi has a business in the area and should have recused himself.
- Mizanoor Biswas stated that what the area needs is enforcement .

Motion #44 -- 2007

Upon motion duly made by Mizanoor Biswas, seconded by Darryl Hoss, with a vote of 22 in favor, 11 opposed and 1 abstention, to approve the proposal for the installation of muni-meters.

Abstentions:

Lisa Mesulam stated that she needed more information.

Chariman's Report

Vasantrai Gandhi announced that Board Member Michael Nardiello and wife are the proud new parents of a boy. Congratulations and the best of luck to Mr. & Mrs. Nardiello.

Mr. Gandhi requested that Board Members take nominations from the floor for the member-at-large vacancy -- Lisa Mesulam nominated Mizanoor Biswas -- Mizanoor Biswas nominated Mary Sarro, seconded by Jimmy Smith. Mr. Gandhi advised that because of the late hour, the election will be held at the October meeting.

District Manager's Report

Giovanna Reid reported that the Department of Homeless Services is planning to establish a shelter located at 38-01 112th Street. She stated that she will be meeting with the Borough President and D.H.S. next week to discuss the proposal. She will keep the Board updated.

She further advised that at the October Board Meeting City Planning will make a presentation on the proposed Text Amendments regarding yards and street tree plantings.

Committee Reports**Traffic/Transportation**

Stephen Kulhanek reported that the State of New York has created N.Y.C. Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission to review Mayor Bloomberg's Congestion Pricing Plan. The Borough President has requested recommendations from Community Boards throughout Queens with respect to improving transportation problems. Please submit your suggestions, in writing, to the C.B. 3 office A.S.A.P. The deadline to submit them to the Borough President's Office is September 30, 2007.

Lastly, Council Member Helen Sears is sponsoring two initiatives in the City Council -- Intro 35 and 36 of 2006. She believes that these two pieces of legislation will have a positive impact on the quality of life for residents in this district.

- Int. 35 would curtail the number of general and food vendors from 72nd St. to 82nd St. between 35th Ave. and Roosevelt Ave.
- Int. 36 would allow for the reactivation of parking meters in certain commercial areas and business improvement districts – 82nd St., Roosevelt Ave., Junction Blvd., Northern Blvd. and Astoria Blvd.

Council Member Sears has requested a letter of support to Council Speaker Christine Quinn to hold public hearings on these two important pieces of legislation.

Stephen Kulhanek offered a resolution, seconded and unanimously carried by a hand count, to write a letter to Council Speaker Quinn in support of Intro 35 and 36 of 2006.

Legislators Report

Assemblyman Ivan Lafayette reported that for the third consecutive year the budget adopted the necessary investments in health care and education while also reducing taxes. He briefed the Board as follows:

- Traffic conditions can be reduced 25% by eliminating some of the taxi/limousines that circle the blocks in our community. He suggested several specific areas (livery stands) where passengers can be picked up, including Roosevelt Avenue at 74th / 75th Streets. The concept of livery stands deserves a trial run, he said.

- The City is sitting on \$300 million for reducing class sizes and the mayor is talking about building 200 new schools. Every school that is presently in the process of being built, goes back to the days of our former administration. There is lots of unused space that is readily available (i.e., Northern Boulevard), on which to build new schools. Unfortunately, the City does not want to commit to a contract.

Assemblyman Lafayette stated that while there were many accomplishments and disappointments this year, he knows there is much work to be done and he is looking forward to continuing his efforts.

Dorothy Phelan, representing Assemblyman Jose Peralta, reported that the Assemblyman will present the “Hispanic & Latino Book Fair of N.Y.”, in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, on Friday, September 21, 2007 at the Renaissance Charter School.

Ms. Phelan further reported that “A Day For Peru” is a concerted effort by the community to raise funds for the victims of the Peruvian earthquake that occurred on August 8, 2007. Please contact Yonel Letellier at (718) 458-5367 or (718) 710-6154.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Irene Voss