

Brooklyn Community Board 7 Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2021

Meeting hosted over Zoom.

6:00pm- 7:50pm

Minutes submitted by Assistant Secretary Cynthia Gonzalez and Secretary Cindy VandenBosch

Beverly Klienman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Maria Gonzalez took the roll call.

- I. **Opening of the meeting** - Chairperson Cesar Zuñiga opened the meeting.
- II. **Adoption of the agenda for the meeting** - Julio Peña motioned to adopt the agenda. Pat Ruiz seconded. The agenda was adopted unanimously with no objections.
- III. **Adoption of the minutes of the Board Meeting of November 18, 2020** - Julio Peña motioned to accept. Pat Ruiz seconded. The minutes from the January board meeting were adopted by unanimous consent.
- IV. **Elected Officials**
 - A. **Assemblyman Robert Carroll**
 1. Budget Deficit – Carroll stated that NYS will see \$58 Billion if President Biden passes the \$1.9B stimulus package. NYS will get \$13B and NYC will receive \$5B. The rest will go to schools, the MTA, and other areas of need. The state will still have deficits for years. He expressed a debt of gratitude to President Biden and Senator Schumer.
 2. He spoke of the nursing home issues and the inaccurate number of deaths reported by Governor Cuomo. He spoke of the executive powers given to the governor during the pandemic on 3/6/20 by the legislature. Carroll voted against this because of his beliefs in checks and balances. He may vote to strip the governor of these executive powers when the vote comes up on 4/30/21.
 3. He informed that his office is assisting constituents to secure COVID 19 vaccinations, and he is excited about the one dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine. He encourages all to reach out if they need help with getting an appointment.
 4. Alexa Aviles inquired about the scheduled \$600M cut to the NYC school public schools. She mentioned the changes in the formula aid to cover the rent for NYC private charter schools. Carroll stated that NYS spends \$60B per year for education of which \$9B goes to NYC and does not anticipate a \$600M cut due to the needs and schools being underfunded. He said that we need to implement new curriculum and social and emotional interventions. He supports tax increases to increase income from the wealthiest and corporations.

5. Katherine Walsh spoke of the increase in anti-Asian attacks and asked how we can support this community. Carroll pointed to former President Trump's bigotry and blaming Asians for the pandemic. He is working with local precincts to address hate crimes and is working on hate crime legislation to combat these crimes.

B. Edward Cerna, Borough Director for the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs

1. Since the snowstorm was expected, Cerna advised everyone to take precautions when going outdoors and that all mobile testing and self-testing sites would be closed temporarily during the snowstorm.
2. He shared the current COVID vaccine numbers. The city has received 1,365,000 vaccines of which 156 doses have been given. The city has fewer than 30K first doses on hand now. He stated that the capacity to put vaccines in the arm is not the issue. It is a matter of supply.
3. Peña pointed out that he saw a tweet informing that alternate side of the street will be in effect. Edward Cerna confirmed that it will be suspended until 2/20/20 but parking meters remain in effect.
4. Katherine Walsh reported that sanitation pick up is not happening and when she calls 311 that it has been suspended because of the storm and they will not take complaints regarding this matter. Mr. Cerna will investigate this and requested the name of the most egregious blocks.
5. Beverly Kleinman asked for clarification of the suspension. Is it for testing or vaccines? Carroll reiterated that testing and self-testing mobile sites will be closed.

C. Dan Wiley representing the office of Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez

1. Velasquez has sent a letter to the Federal Bureau of Prisons about the first detainee COVID 19 death which occurred on 2/5/21. Congressman Jerold Nadler has participated in correspondence regarding the conditions for detainees to stem the tide of spread. The Metropolitan Detention Center presents a big challenge as in any congregate setting. There is a concern of how quarantined and isolation inmates are spreading the virus. As of last week, 80 of the 1120 have tested positive for COVID in the absence of inmate movement. Only 6% have been vaccinated.
2. In SW Brooklyn, Wiley reported that there are requests for expressions of interest in commercial waste zones. Velasquez's office hopes that the commercial waste zones can help reduce the number of waste transfer facilities in the district. Hoping that Metropolitan Paper Recycling will be able to consolidate and close some of the transfer stations on the waterfront and shift them more to rail and barge. That Request for Qualifications is due on 2/18 and then after four months, there will be a full RFP. The community board will be seeing more about commercial waste zones in the future.

3. A waste barge partially submerged in Bay Ridge, but did not overturn, and no waste was leaked. Nick Azadian asked whether there was any environmental impact to the community. Wiley stated that there was no evidence of any film on the surface indicating that it was contained. Better protocols have been put in place. He will send the full report to CB7.

D. Eli Slavin representing Congresswoman Yvette Clarke

1. Slavin announced that Congresswoman Clarke will be delivering her State of the City address via Zoom on 2/18/2021 from 6:00 – 7:30 pm. Interested parties need to register to participate. Those responding to his email poster will get a flyer with registration information.

E. Fawziyah Siddiqui of Councilmember Brad Lander's office

1. Reported that they are assisting constituents with securing COVID vaccine appointments. To date they have assisted 125 seniors. Please reach out to her if you need assistance with this matter.

F. Taeka Haraguchi of Comptroller Scott Stringer's office

1. Announced that they have applications for paid internships with the Comptroller's office. The deadline is 3/5/21 and she has put the link in the Q & A.
2. The Comptroller has unveiled a food security program to close the \$25M gap for the undocumented left out of state and federal safety net programs. This will combat hunger in NYC and expands staff outreach and purchasing power. It will offer halal and kosher options.
3. The Comptroller had developed a public safety plan. The detailed report proposes to transform public safety, protect NYers from violence and invest in communities. The report takes a 5-point approach.

I. Public comment

John Santore expressed concerns regarding the Made in New York Parks Department project. He intends to bring his concerns to the Waterfront and Economic Development Committee. Santore feels that it will be good to have more public input. He wants the community to ask the Mayor to stop the \$200M development of the North Campus project because the community was not included in crafting Made in New York and little is known of the Steiner Studios. Santore stated that Steiner Studios is funding work on the park and the Sunset Park Task force was not involved in decision-making. He demands a public process before the RFP is passed. The number of jobs was crafted by Steiner, not EDC. The study for the number of jobs was not made public.

II. Committee Reports

A. Ability and Access Committee

1. Cindy VandenBosch reported on a presentation made to the committee by Maeve Flaherty of NYC Restrooms 4 All. This student-led initiative proposes a public private partnership model to increase public restroom access in NYC. This need addresses equity and affects a wide range of people. It addresses issues that include health and sanitation problems

(public urination, access to hand washing, etc.). Private businesses are relied upon for their facilities and the public is expected to spend money to use their facilities. This problem affects parents of small children, the incontinent, elderly, pregnant women and the homeless. The initiative seeks to identify ADA accessible restaurants and other establishments that will accept a small city government fee to participate. Ms. Flaherty pointed to cities and countries in Europe with successful initiatives. The group is seeking a letter of support for a pilot which will require a vote. This was unanimously passed in committee.

2. **Motion:** Community Board 7 will provide a letter of support to pilot the NYC Restrooms 4 All concept with assurances that the pilot will be ADA compliant and will not place undue burden on small businesses including, but not limited to, legal, security and financial burdens, and would not pull financial resources from the maintenance budget that is needed for already existing public restroom facilities.
 - a) **Discussion:** Marilyn Melman asked who will maintain the bathrooms since this may have to be done every two hours. Karen Rolnick stated that the participating businesses will.
 - b) David Estrada added that no agency has approved this. The letter states that we support this concept. NYC should be more creative in addressing this problem. The details of this project will be determined in the future.
 - c) John Fontillas remarked that the slideshow attachment was not in the packet. Ms. VandenBosch said that the committee minutes included most of what were in the slides. Jeremy Laufer informs that the slideshow is in the Facebook presentation.

3. **Vote:** The motion carried with unanimous consent.

B. Parks Committee - Victor Swinson stated that no vote is required and to refer to the committee report.

C. By-Laws Committee - Julio Peña stated that no vote is required and to refer to the committee report.

D. Joint Transportation and Education Committees

1. Zachary Jasie reported that the committees met pertaining to the School Construction Authority plans regarding the new K557 school being built on 43rd Street and Fourth Avenue. A resolution on the plan will require a vote. The school needs interior steel bracing to buttress the façade until they can attach the permanent structure to it. This will require closing one traffic lane on Fourth Avenue for 12 to 18 months. The resolution passed unanimously in both committees.
2. **Resolution:** Brooklyn Community Board 7 is aware of the changes and has no objection to the School Construction Authority's plan for the temporary reduction of traffic on Fourth Avenue between 43rd and 44th Streets, from two lanes to one lane. The board asks the following: 1. Providing street signage with coordination from the city alerting drivers of

the impending and eventually current changes. 2. Provide ADA accessibility and make clear paths of travel for pedestrians and the bike lane. 3. Be in touch with St. Michael's beforehand and 4. Information should be provided in multiple languages whenever possible.

- a. **Discussion:** Joan Botti stated that the building is remarkable, and the rendering should be shared. Samuel Sierra and the board office have it. Gladys Bruno will send the blueprints and District Manager Laufer will send both to all. Katherine Walsh asked for a friendly amendment to include the bike lane in the resolution. This amendment was accepted.
- b. **Vote:** The resolution passed unanimously.

III. Chairperson's Report

A. Addressing digital divide and Wi-Fi access in CB7 - Mr. Zuñiga has held meetings with a cross section of stakeholders across the district (teachers, principals, elected officials, advocates, and board members) to address the problem of the digital divide affecting the underserved, primarily families of color. Many families cannot afford to pay for an internet plan and have problems with Wi-Fi dead zones. Together with another organization, Voces Ciudadanos, they are engaged in seeking funding solutions. They have met with NYC Mesh, a company that installs pods on tall buildings that amplify Wi-Fi activity. Mesh and Voces Ciudadanos have developed a proposal to identify tall upland properties in Sunset Park whose landlords are amenable to installing this technology on their roofs. A description of the project will be circulated to the board. Zuñiga wants the board to join this call to action. The pilot funding is being considered by elected officials.

1. Nick Azadian is familiar with NY Mesh. The pods act as a relay that allows it to connect with the NYC Mesh site in Manhattan. He recommends starting early because of their dependence on volunteers to identify properties.
2. Samuel Sierra asked if the pods can be installed on other tall structures such as flag poles. Mr. Azadian stated that they need to run power to the pods and the structures need to be stable in high wind conditions.

IV. Old Business

- A. South Brooklyn Marine Terminal - Nick Azadian expressed concern of the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal deal. He reports that they are planning to sell power for 8 cents per KWT hour when Con Edison charges 2 cents per KWT hour. That roughly comes to a 30-35% increase in energy costs for an average residence. Schools will be electrifying their HVAC and other services. He expressed concern for low-income residents having to choose between food and heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer.
- B. Joint committee meeting announcement - Karen Rolnick announced a joint meeting of the Safety and Homeless Committees on 2/22/21. The Department of

Homeless Services and the 72nd Pct will be in attendance to address resident complaints regarding the shelter on 22nd Street. The nuisance complaints involve behaviors and petty crimes affecting the quality of life of Sunset Park homeowners and residents. She recognizes that the homeless are often blamed for things that are not their fault. However, with the increase of shelter residents during the pandemic, there has been an increase in unpleasant behaviors (drug use, public urination harassment, etc.). She wonders if there is a ratio of homeless populations to the ratio of the homeowners living where the shelters are placed. Residents are feeling outnumbered by the homeless. The complaints of the residents need to be addressed.

- C. ULURP updates - Marilyn Melman inquired about the status of the new building sites along Ocean Parkway. She reports that the streets have not been cleaned after the snowstorm and ice has developed on this main thoroughfare. John Fontillas reported that the 757 Caton Place site received City Council approval for their ULURP application, but the developer sold the site to another developer. He reported that 112 Coney Island Avenue was also approved against our recommendation and will probably be a 14-story building. Mr. Laufer will investigate this complaint.
- D. Local Law 152 - David Estrada reports that our district will be affected by a Department of Buildings program, local law 152, that will require every zoned residential building (except R3) to have certification for gas from a Master Plumber stating that your natural gas lines are safe. You even must get an engineer or architect to sign off even if your building has no gas service. There is a \$10K penalty if you do not comply. There is a 6-month suspension due to the pandemic but that might not be the case for us. CB 1, 3 and 10 got the extension. We need to take this up again to ensure we are complying. The community needs to be cognizant because they will make inspections whether you need them or not. This will impact small non-corporate families and business owners. There may also be a shortage of plumbers in the fall. Joan Botti asked whether this includes condos. Mr. Estrada clarified that it pertains to the building and not individual units.
- E. Paul Mak announced that his organization has secured 150 reservations for COVID vaccinations and wants to share this with community board members and with seniors of the United Senior Center. He requested names from USC. These appointments will begin on 2/22/21 and he asks that you contact him for a reservation. He has sent the information to the board.
- F. Cynthia Gonzalez announced that the Health and Mental Health Committee will be meeting on 2/22/21 at 6:00 pm to bring attention to COVID 19 vaccinations. She stated that she will bring up the possibility of getting a mobile unit (like the US Postal mobile unit) to come to vaccinate seniors who have problems with getting appointments, are fearful of going out of the community or health conditions that prevent them from traveling outside of the community. Many have home health aides that come daily to care for them.

V. Public Comment

- A.** Roxanna Benavides, Branch Manager of the Sunset Park Library, announced that the library is open for limited services and wishes everyone a happy Lunar New Year.
1. The library is open for limited lobby service where you can return and pick up materials you have reserved.
 2. Virtual programming continues for children and teen programming. Advance reservations are needed for Black heritage programming, Facebook, and live broadcasting meetings.
 3. Another service of BPL is called Brain Fuse Job Now. This online resource supports every step in the job search process. Online coaches assist in resume and cover letter preparation and job interviews. They are available from 2:00 – 11:00 m EST.
 4. BPL is also working on the digital divide. The project is called Brooklyn Reach. Branches are selected to extend wireless internet up to 300 ft in all directions 24 hours per day, whether you are in the library or not. You do not need a password. The Brooklyn Reach branches can be found online.
- B.** Samuel Sierra brought a complaint from a neighbor, Violeta Maya, who resides on 56th Street between Second and Third Avenue. There is a business on the block called Foreign and Domestic Auto Shop. There are complaints involving double parked cars and cars parked on the sidewalk from this auto shop. Also, this is a main ambulance corridor, and often, they cannot get through. The traffic backs up to Second Avenue. This poses a risk to anyone needing urgent care. Sierra supports business success if it does not jeopardize the safety or inconvenience of residents. District Manager Laufer will file the complaint.

VI. Meeting adjourned - A motion to adjourn was made by Pat Ruiz and seconded by David Estrada. The motion passed unanimously.