

## **Brooklyn Community Board 7 Meeting Minutes**

March 17, 2021

Meeting hosted over Zoom

6:00pm- 7:55pm

Minutes submitted by Secretary Cindy VandenBosch

- I. **Opening of the meeting** - Chairperson Cesar Zuñiga opened the meeting.
- II. **Adoption of the agenda for the meeting** - Pat Ruiz motioned to adopt the agenda. Julio Peña seconded. The agenda was adopted unanimously with no objections.
- III. **Adoption of the minutes of the Board Meeting of February 17, 2021** - Pat Ruiz motioned to adopt the agenda. Julio Peña seconded. The minutes from the February board meeting were adopted by unanimous consent.
- IV. **Public Comment** - There were no people who signed up to speak for public comment for issues that were on the agenda.
- V. **Committee Reports**

### **A. Transportation**

1. Joan Botti reported that DOT gave a presentation regarding the asphalt plant on Hamilton Avenue that is in decay. They're going to replace the roof, doors, and other essential features. They're not demolishing the building but they're going to rehabilitate it. Joan Botti noted that the committee voted unanimously in favor of sending a letter of support.
2. **The following motion was presented** and was passed unanimously (7-0) through committee:

“Whereas Community Board 7 received a presentation on the replacement of the roof on the Hamilton Avenue Asphalt Plant from DOT and DDC on March 15, 2021; and

Whereas, the community board and the community at large have felt ignored by the DOT, with a multitude of requests that have gone unanswered by DOT. However, when the DOT requires action from the board we have always responded in quick fashion; and

Whereas, for years we have been waiting for a comprehensive transportation study of the entire district. We have repeatedly asked for traffic studies and safety measures around our schools, especially the ones currently under construction. DOT has failed to conduct a pedestrian and traffic study on Third Avenue, despite several requests over many years; and

Whereas, despite these actions, we do not wish our grievances with the agency to negatively affect our City workforce and an important municipal facility; and

Therefore, be it resolved, that Community Board 7 gives its support to the project to replacing the roof of the Hamilton Avenue Asphalt Plant as presented.”

**a) Discussion on the motion:**

- (1) Katherine Walsh asked why CB7 would support this if the project is going to move forward anyway. Zachary responded that those from CB7 in attendance felt that the renovation to this important facility to the city's infrastructure was necessary despite our grievances with DOT about their lack of responsiveness to our requests for a comprehensive transportation study.
- (2) Barbara Lee asked about the impact of debris and material from this construction project on the health and safety of nearby residents, especially when the wind blows towards residential areas. Joan asked about asbestos in the meeting and the roof was built in 1998. As such, they said no asbestos should have been used. Joan noted that they are testing the insulation as a precaution because they have to remove that as well.
- (3) Pat Ruiz said the presenters at the meeting were not aware of other DOT-related projects and concerns relevant to the community. Jeremy Laufer said that he reached out to the liaison to the DOT borough commissioner's office and informed them of the discussion that had taken place at the meeting.
- (4) Joan Botti asked the presenters to send the presentation to the board office. CB7 staff followed up but they didn't get back to staff. Jeremy Laufer said that it is available in the YouTube recording.
- (5) David Estrada added that the discussion in committee also encompassed the need for safety plans on Hamilton Ave and at the construction site itself, and a request for them to coordinate with the Brooklyn Greenway project within the same zone. The time span of this project is long. Two themes came up around long standing wants: 1) general safety on places like 3rd avenue and responsiveness to that emergency; and 2) arriving about explicit safety plans around these construction zones where it always seems like an after-thought or after we ask several times. The logic here was that we don't want it raining on DOT

workers in their offices, but opportunities like this one should be used to convey that our needs as a community aren't being met.

- (6) Nick Azadian - As clarification, they are required to produce a site plan which dictates safety measures, which includes dust mitigation. For Barbara's concerns, they have to file something with the city which will be in public domain. To state very clearly what they're doing, the building is not falling in on itself. They are repointing brick, which is done on buildings where there's degradation on the mortar. Azadian is in full agreement that it should get done, but it's not as if this is an imminent collapse risk.
- (7) Marilyn Melman wanted to know why a building from 1998 needs to have its roof replaced. Nick Azadian responded that car pollutants eat mortar rapidly, which is why they're doing repointing. The run-off from the highway, such as road salt, destroys the roof membrane. In the meeting, it was discussed about what they'll do to protect the brick and the roof in the long term.
- (8) John Johnston expressed concern that this was a waste of money.

b) **Katherine Walsh made a separate motion to table the vote** until the DOT and DDC provide the presentation materials for the board to review. Julio Peña seconded.

- (1) **Discussion:** Antoinette Martinez - Is this vote more for building a relationship with DOT? Zachary Jasie: No, it's an opportunity to vote on a presentation that they made asking us for approval and it gives us leverage to voice our broader concerns.
- (2) **This motion did not pass.** The roll call vote was 16 yes, 21 no, 1 abstention

c) **VOTE ON MOTION FROM THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (see V.2 above):** The original motion under consideration from the Transportation Committee was voted on and passed with a vote of 38 yes, 0 nos, 0 abstentions

## **B. Public Safety & Homelessness Issues (no vote required)**

1. Update on situation:

- a) Homelessness Issues Committee Chair Karen Rolnick made a report that there has been a huge rise in complaints from local residents about crime, threats, safety, and quality of life issues since the start of the pandemic and they have come from all across our community. The complaints keep coming.

- b) Held a joint committee on 2/24 to hear about the issues. There were documents that were provided to all board members for this meeting, including a Q&A response from DHS to CB7's questions ahead of time. There's a code of conduct agreement that all shelter residents sign. There's a document about the Gowanus shelter.
- c) Hotel shelters update: There are now 7 hotel shelters between 39th and 22nd Streets on or near 4th Avenue. The 72nd Precinct reported 39 calls about one of those shelters between January 25 and February 24. We don't know the capacity of the hotels, but the L Hotel has a capacity of 90. So if the capacity is similar at other hotels, we now have 630 people who are homeless living in hotels within less than a one-mile stretch along 4th Ave.
- d) Homeless shelters: The Win shelter on 4th Avenue and 16th Street has 105 shelter units and 25 apartments. If each unit has two people, that brings the total within the mile stretch, between Win and the hotel shelters, to at least 898 and that's probably a low number. There's also another Win shelter that is scheduled to open next door.
- e) The area is a mixed use area, both residential and commercial, and most are small 1-2 family homes. The ratio of homeless to not homeless is way out of whack and a small community is being asked to absorb the overwhelming needs.
- f) 3 of the 7 hotel shelters are de-density shelters, meaning that they were opened because of the pandemic and should be closed when the congregate shelters are deemed safe.
- g) DHS would only give 2023 as a general goal of closing all the hotel shelters and they did not provide information about what happens to residents if they refuse vaccinations.
- h) The hotel shelters provide referrals for social services but not on-site.
- i) We are going to have another homelessness issues committee meeting because there is a lot to unravel here. It's a complex problem that crosses over into public safety, housing, and health and mental health. Too small for my committee to handle alone and that everyone attends.

2. Questions about meeting:

- a) Antoinette Martinez asked for clarification on the 911 call complaints. Karen Rolnick indicated that Capt. Castro from 72nd Precinct did not provide granular data but said it ran the gamut from drinking on the sidewalk to assaults. They are concerned but don't have the manpower to address the situation.
- b) Antoinette Martinez also asked about concrete numbers from DHS. Karen indicated that DHS has not provided this information despite requests.

- c) Cynthia Gonzalez said that people and dogs, etc. were threatened. Is there anything being done about these threats? If someone threatened my life, my dog, my children, what is the police doing about this? Karen Rolnick indicated that DHS removed that specific perpetrator from the shelter.
  - d) Cynthia Felix asked for more data regarding the 911 and 311 complaints so we can approach this in an informed way. The shelters and DHS were not transparent. There were a lot of questions that they didn't have answers for and they haven't gotten back to the board.
  - e) Cesar Zuñiga underscored that there was a general sentiment that we should support our neighbors
  - f) Antoinette Martinez asked about whether there are other communities that have a similar amount of homeless shelters. Karen Rolnick stated that DHS often points to the example of 34th Street in Manhattan as a place where there are more homeless people, as well as some other communities, but most are higher density residential areas. Karen Rolnick is going to put on the agenda an item to connect with other community boards facing similar challenges.
  - g) Karen Rolnick stated that DHS has its own police force. She asked about the status of it, and it's hard to say what's going on with that police force or do we want to respond with social workers instead of police? It's very complicated.
3. There were no changes in the budget. It is the same as last month. \$12,009.00 in the account available.

### **C. Health & Mental Health Committee (no vote required)**

## **VI. Elected Officials**

### **A. John Watkins from the Brooklyn District Attorney Gonzalez's Office**

- 1. Brooklyn DA is concerned about Anti-Asian violence and acts of violence. He is working with the Attorney General and other law enforcement agencies.
- 2. Encouraged everyone to visit the DA's website for more information. Click on "communities" so that you can see the latest press releases from the DA's office. Most weeks the DA releases press releases announcing results of the prosecutions that the DA has been taking against offenders in our community.
- 3. Women's history virtual event hosted by the DA - Plans not complete but will forward details to CB7.
- 4. Questions:
  - a) Jimmy Li asked a question about action plans in response to rising violence against Asian communities. Will DA Gonzalez and the

state attorney's office devote more resources to the hate crime unit? More language support and manpower is needed. Few acts of violence have been classified or charged as hate crimes. Do you have any plans to move forward and bring perpetrators to justice and give more confidence to victims to hold criminals accountable for their actions? Response - There is a dedicated hate crimes unit. There have been more resources dedicated to our Asian community this past year due to increased violence since January. The DA's office is committed to ensuring the safety of our Asian community. He also has tasked more resources and works in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies in the city and state, and there is a team devoted to addressing these issues and better protection of Asian and other communities against hate crimes and other acts of violence.

- b) Christina Lem asked about resources. Access to translation services is one of the biggest problems. Is the DA's office actually putting resources towards that? If so, what are the resources? There is a dedicated Hate Crimes Unit in the DA's office, especially in recent times against the Asian communities and Hasidic community. The resources are focused on addressing these hate crimes. They are used to investigate the crimes. It's important the community report crimes to the NYPD who will find the bad actors and the DA and ADAs will prosecute those offenders appropriately. There are multiple agencies. Overall, with this severe uptick against the Asian community, there were resources from the NYPD that were committed to various areas to protect Asian communities against violence that might happen afterwards. Christina was asking about language resources. He responded that they do have translators and they do have office hours and encourage people to meet with their ADAs.
- c) John Watkins shared his contact info for board or community members to follow up: [watkinsj@brooklynda.org](mailto:watkinsj@brooklynda.org) / 718-250-2785

## **B. Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams' Office - Sherman Jackson**

- 1. Borough President recently committed \$10K to Operation Safe Shopper** to deploy security cameras outside local businesses to help NYPD with investigations of local crimes and to protect small businesses and to help individuals in Asian communities
- 2. New Agrarian Economy (2/21/21)** - New report issued by the Borough President's office outlining how the City can work with local leaders to expand agricultural opportunities
- 3. You Marched, Now What? (2/24/21)** - Borough Hall held a virtual event moderated by Michael Muir, a fellow of My Brother's Keeper, about how people can safely take their next steps in their civic engagement journey

4. **Wellness Wednesdays** - There will be a workshop later this month focused on dementia.
5. **Know Your Rights Workshop (3/3/21)** - Hosted a Know Your Rights Spanish language forum on knowing your rights with ICE, drivers' license issues, and COVID vaccines.
6. There is an upcoming meeting of the Renewable Sustainable Task force
7. All information about these workshops will be sent to CB7 office to distribute to community board members.
8. Borough President Adams has sought data on the racial and ethnic data on vaccine statistics. A recent report in the Washington Post indicated that young Latino men ages 20-30 are particularly susceptible to COVID, which is something they are looking into. African-Americans and Latinos are suffering disproportionately.
9. Question:
  - a) Jimmy Li asked Sherman Jackson to elaborate on how and where and to whom the \$10,000 for Operation Safe Shopper is being deployed to support the Asian community. Sherman Jackson did not have details but encouraged him to contact him directly so he could follow up: [Sherman.Jackson@Brooklynbp.nyc.com](mailto:Sherman.Jackson@Brooklynbp.nyc.com) / 917-751-7839
  - b) The Borough President also called on City Council to add additional funding to this initiative

**C. Brad Lander's Office - Fawziyah Siddiqui**

1. **Vaccine eligibility** - 80% of adult NYers are eligible. Check the City's website.
2. **Vaccine outreach and booking appointments** - In partnership with the Neighbor Network, we held a phone banking to reach out to seniors in the neighborhood. We made about 1,000 calls last night to help people get vaccine appointments in the coming weeks. If you need help making an appointment, please reach out to our office - [fsiddiqui@council.nyc.gov](mailto:fsiddiqui@council.nyc.gov)

**D. Congresswoman Yvette Clarke - Eli Slavin**

1. Participated in the March on Sunday, March 14th organized by Jimmy Li
2. **Immigration issues and Federal Stimulus**
3. H.R.1 bill was passed in Congress which expands automatic voter registration, strengthens voting by mail, early voting, combats voter intimidation or voter suppression.
4. **H.R.1280 - The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act** - This bill addresses a wide range of policies and issues regarding policing practices and law enforcement accountability. It increases accountability for law enforcement misconduct, restricts the use of certain policing practices, enhances transparency and data collection, and establishes best practices and training requirements.

**E. Councilmember Carlos Menchaca's Office - Nancy Corona**

1. **Participatory Budgeting process** - The projects will be shared with CB7 and voting will take place April 5th-14th
2. **The People's Market, which is run by South Brooklyn Mutual Aid, takes place in the council member's office from 11am to 2pm on Sundays.** What they do is they provide clothing, books, toys, and small household essentials. Appointments are not required. Constituents and neighbors can walk in but they are practicing health and safety measures due to COVID.
3. **Appointments** - Drop-in appointments are not currently available at the council member's office, but remote appointments are available Monday-Friday from 10am-6pm.
4. **New Staff Member** - Lisha Luo Cai - [llucoai@council.nyc.gov](mailto:llucoai@council.nyc.gov)

## VII. District Manager's Report

- A. **Zoning Application for 737 Fourth Avenue** - On March 16, the City Council zoning committee voted to approve the rezoning of 737 Fourth Avenue. Now it's moving to the full council for a vote. There was an invitation to our board members to attend a meeting about the community benefits agreements and it was posted to social media.
- B. **Met with Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce's Business Recovery Specialist Fransini Alberto-Vazquez** - They are focusing their efforts on small businesses in Sunset Park in their recovery. They're reaching out to the businesses.
- C. **Met with NYU Study Group that is meeting with District Managers to create a subterranean infrastructure map that doesn't exist for NYC**, a tool for developers and city agencies. District Manager Jeremy Laufer requested that they show the age of the subsurface infrastructure, such as the sewer lines, to improve decision-making about upgrades.
- D. **Met with Kathy Hopkins from the NYU Family Health Center** - They are seeking to respond to a City RFP to provide additional daycare services. They are looking for sites in the community for additional daycare programming.
- E. **Met with NYSERDA** - Same presentation that Equinor gave to us about the wind farm proposed for South Brooklyn Marine Terminal.
- F. **Liquor licenses** - There have been 13 new and renewal licenses
- G. Police dept. Stats are available upon request

## VIII. Chairperson's Report

- A. **Flag replacement at CB7 office building.** We will be replacing the tattered flag at the CB7 office with a new one. We will give everyone notice so we can take place in that flag replacement ceremony. Will meet with staff to figure out something in the next several weeks. Stay tuned.
- B. **Continue to meet with a working group at NYU about technological infrastructure in the community** - If you know of any landlords or if you are a landlord and are willing to allow access to your roof to install wifi expander technology, that would be helpful. NYC Mesh is a company that continues to look



for available locations throughout the district, preferably tall buildings or homes on the hill (5th-8th Avenue would be ideal).

- C. Identify space for pre-K classrooms** - Trying to help NYU find suitable locations. Get in touch with Jeremy and myself because there are specific requirements for early childhood classrooms, particularly the 11220 zip code.
- D. Addressing Anti-Asian violence and hate** - Requests from stakeholders, specifically our Asian neighbors and community members, around what we can do as a board to stand in solidarity and address some of the violence and hate that we're seeing across the country. I know Paul Mak is interested in convening the Asian Affairs committee. We are hoping to hold that soon. Hoping we can host this in conjunction with the Public Safety Committee.
- E. Homelessness Issues** - We will be engaging other committees to support the complex issues that the Homelessness Issues Committee is seeking to address, including the Housing Committee and Public Safety Committee to help figure out some of the solutions going forward.
- F. Comment from Jimmy Li** - One way to show solidarity is to make a sticker or sign for your window that demonstrates a unity message, such as "Stop Asian Hate." Li also encouraged everyone to participate in this campaign and to participate in the Asian Affairs meeting that will be taking place.

I. **Old Business** - No old business was brought to the floor.

II. **New Business**

- A. Job opportunities at NYC Vaccine for All** - Justin Collins shared a resource related to vaccination efforts around COVID. The City's NYC Vaccine for All is hiring up to 2,000 people. They're hiring for clinical jobs and for operations, facilities, customer service, and I know a lot of people are looking for work. Not sure how long-term the positions are, but they are jobs now. Go to SBS' career's page for online screening. Reach out to Justin Collins on LinkedIn if you have questions.
- B. Grisel Amador from the United Senior Center of Sunset Park thanked Paul Mak and the Brooklyn Chinese-American Association** for providing vaccines to seniors. She also thanked CB7 and the NY Dept. for the Aging for their support and everyone for helping her seniors get access to the vaccine.
- C. Subcommittee on last-mile trucking facilities** - Chair Katherine Walsh announced that the first meeting would take place on April 26 at 6pm and that the agenda would be forthcoming.

III. **Public Comment**

- A. Teresa Colon** - I would like to know when this meeting will occur regarding the homelessness situation. 4th Avenue is overwhelming with the situation. We want to speak up with DHS and the Mayor.
- B. John Santore** - Thanked members of the board who did so much work on so many different issues. Santore spoke on the following issues:

1. **737 Fourth Avenue rezoning** - Santore's concerns about that were surrounding what information was shared, when it was shared, and what might have been left out of the conversation. Santore would be eager to learn more about how that deal came together and how the public was engaged. The City Council member called for a more public conversation about how the deal came together, and John expressed interest in helping to document that, including the timeline of how Totem engaged the public and when, and potentially how that could potentially serve as a model going forward.
  2. **Housing questions** - The bigger question is how can Sunset Park build more housing and preserve existing housing? Where can housing go? How much does it cost? How can it be financed? The more information we have like that in the public domain, the better.
  3. **NYCEDC-related projects** - Santore encouraged continued scrutiny of other projects, including the Made in NY Campus. It's important to ask questions about transparency and accountability. Who is most likely to benefit? What is the track record of stakeholders involved? Santore expressed the opinion that the RFP should not go forward on the North Campus. It's a \$218M project and he thinks the community should have a say in a project of that size and scale. Santore would like to see CB7 follow up on the Sunset Park Task Force, as well as regular reports on job statistics for Brooklyn Army Terminal. There are also questions around South Brooklyn Marine Terminal.
- C. Samantha Adler** - What is the process of installing Citibikes? Samantha Adler was shocked to discover that there was a 30-bike Citibike installation on their block and they didn't know it was coming and lost five valuable parking spaces. They asked for clarification on the process, especially during the pandemic when Citibike usage has gone down while car ownership has risen. They asked about the process since they were not notified. District Manager Jeremy Laufer invited Samantha Adler to contact the Community Board the next day to discuss this issue and he stated that community boards are not part of the approval process. However, he will talk to her about what's going on with her particular block. The best way to reach the board is via email: [BK07@cb.nyc.gov](mailto:BK07@cb.nyc.gov) and put in the subject line, "Citibike" and the block you're on.
- D. Juan Romero of the Workers' Justice Project** - They have been in the neighborhood at 4112 Fourth Avenue in Sunset Park for the past year and they are offering free OSHA and SST (Site Safety Training) classes to community members. If anyone is interested in working in the construction industry, these courses are required in NYC. These classes are free to the community and they have a food pantry for people in need on Mondays 4-6pm. They also run a community hiring hall to help connect workers and employers for jobs in the construction industry. Their phone number is 718-600-0425.

**IV. Meeting Adjourned** - Cesar Zuñiga motioned to adjourn and Nick Azadian seconded. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:55pm.