

Community Board 7 Monthly Meeting Report

March 19, 2025

Before the Meeting

First Public Comment on topics covered on the agenda

- Jennifer Spaulding, Principal of Sunset Park Prep School, spoke in support of the redesign for the Gonzalo Plascencia Playground.
- Gloria Espinal, a resident of Sunset Park, spoke in support of the street co-naming application for 61st Street between 4th and 5th Avenues in honor of Blas De Jesus Gonzalez.

These Elected Officials Reported:

- NY State Assemblymember Steven Chan – *represented by Ray Morales*
- NYC Councilmember Alexa Avilés – *represented by Edward Cerna*

Opening of Meeting

Roll Call

Adoption of Agenda

- Moved to adopt – *Damien Andrade*
Seconded – *Jerry Chan*
Passed by unanimous consent.

Approval of February 19, 2025 Minutes

- Moved to adopt – *Joan Botti*
Seconded – *Damien Andrade*
Passed by unanimous consent.

These Officials Reported:

- NY State Assemblymember Robert Carroll – *represented by Sean Gurl*
- NY State Senator Andrew Gounardes – *represented by Francesca Lando*
- NYC Civilian Complaint Review Board – *represented by Venus Scantlebury*
- NY State Senator Zellnor Myrie – *represented by Anthony Gay*
- NYC Councilmember Shahana Hanif – *represented by Iqra Shafiq*
- NY State Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes – *represented by Emmitt Mendoza-Gaspar*

Committee Reports

Parks & Environment – *Diana Aguilar*

- Aguilar reported that the Parks & Environment Committee met on 2/25/2025 to hear a presentation from the NYC Parks Department about the Green Thumb Community Garden Initiative and about the redesign of Gonzalo

Plascencia Playground.

- Aguilar moved to provide the Parks Department with a letter of support for the redesign of Gonzalo Plascencia Playground. Pat Ruiz seconded the motion.
 - There was discussion on the motion.
 - Members discussed at length what changes would be made to the playground, and topics such as funding, ADA accessibility, design proposals, and which organizations were involved in the previous Parks Committee meeting.
- NYC Parks Department representatives circulated a copy of the presentation to facilitate discussion.
 - Several members questioned the use of synthetic turf as opposed to natural grass.
 - Board and Parks members discussed the pros & cons of grass vs. turf.
- Damien Andrade moved to amend the motion on the floor to add language that the support letter should include provisions that Parks not use synthetic grass and should keep the handball court.
 - As sponsor of the motion on the floor, Diana Aguilar did not accept the amendment.
 - Jeremy Kaplan seconded the amendment.
 - A roll-call vote was conducted. The amendment did not pass with a total of 11 – Yes votes; 18 – Nos; and 0 – Abstentions.
- The motion to approve the NYC Parks design for Gonzalo Plascencia Playground was put to a vote. A roll call vote was conducted and the motion passed with 27 – Yes votes; 4 – Nos; and 0 – Abstentions.

Transportation Committee – *John DeLooper*

- DeLooper reported that the Transportation Committee met to discuss the street Co-Naming of 61st Street between 4th and 5th Avenue for Blas DeJesus Gonzalez.
- Over 50 residents attended the Committee’s meeting in support of the co-naming. DeLooper stated that the committee unanimously approved a motion to send a letter of support for the Co-Naming of 61st Street & 4th Avenue in honor of Blas DeJesus Gonzalez.
 - As the motion came out of Committee, a second was not needed, and the motion was presented to the Board for a vote.
 - The motion to support the Co-Naming of 61st Street between 4th and 5th Avenue for Blas DeJesus Gonzalez passed by unanimous consent.
- DeLooper stated that the Transportation Committee also discussed the Dining Out Application for Tacos El Bronco located at 4324 4th Avenue.
 - DeLooper provided a summary of the committee’s discussion on this application.
 - This Dining Out application under consideration was for a sidewalk café setup which includes two tables with 8-10 seats, though the business noted that they may occasionally break the long tables into smaller ones for smaller groups.
 - The Transportation Committee had voted unanimously to approve the Dining Out application for Tacos El Bronco.
 - As the motion came out of Committee, a second was not needed, and the motion was presented to the Board for a vote.

- The motion to approve the application for Tacos El Bronco passed by unanimous consent.
- DeLooper also reported on the Committee’s discussion of electric vehicle charging locations in CB7 proposed by the NYC Department of Transportation.
 - He encouraged Board and community members to send additional feedback about the proposed locations at 43rd St/5th Ave and 65th St/3rd Ave to the Board office. Suggestions are also welcome for locations that would work well, locations that would be problematic, and ideas for other factors that should be considered related to potential electric vehicle stations.

Chairperson’s Report

- Julio Peña III noted the efforts to secure space for the United Senior Center and the progress being made by local groups to address the issue.
- Peña thanked Katie Walsh and Cynthia Jeffers for handing out Know Your Rights flyers at subway stations that morning as part of a Community Day of Action.
- Peña announced that the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) has informed the Board that they plan to open a 200-bed shelter for men at 225 25th Street. The Board plans to host a meeting in the near future with DHS and the provider regarding this site.
- Peña also announced that Councilmember Avilés will host an informal meeting with Land Use and Housing Committee members about the St. Rocco’s site on 27th Street.
- The New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) will soon announce who will be awarded the contract for their Economic Mobility RFP.

District Manager’s Report

- The District Manager stated that DOT informed him that they will not do their promised safety enhancements to 3rd Avenue in 2025, and we should not expect to hear from them about the project this year.
 - DOT claims to want to do additional outreach.
 - The District Manager told them there is a lengthy list of half-finished projects and ignored needs that they should get to in the meantime.
- DOT also informed the district manager that safety improvements will be made to 10th Avenue and 19th Street.
- National Grid plans to do a drone inspection of the 2nd Avenue gas pipe in early April.
- The Comptroller has officially cancelled the 2024 Community Board Quadrennial Audit, which never took place.
- The Board Chairperson and District Manager met with the EDC to discuss ongoing projects, including a delay in the Steiner Studios project in Bush Terminal Park.
 - There is currently no starting date for the Steiner project and Laufer told EDC there needs to be a contingency plan in the meantime.
 - The EDC expects no delay for the Equinor project.
 - The Pier 6 groundbreaking will be late April or May.
- The Borough President (BP) has appointed Community Board 6 District Manager Mike Raccioppo to the 2026 Charter Revision Commission panel.
 - The BP has a proposal to create a central staff for Community Boards.
- District Manager Laufer was one of several District Managers citywide to testify in favor of giving community

boards their first non-salary-based budget increase in more than two decades.

- There have been 28 liquor license applications, 6 Dining Out applications and 1 cannabis application since the January board meeting.

Old Business

- Antoinette Martinez announced a meeting of the Housing Committee with Councilmember Hanif and the Fifth Avenue Committee to discuss the Community Benefits Agreement with Arrow Linen.

New Business

- Joan Botti stated that with the closure of Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, the Board should restart the Site Selection Committee and discuss the possibility of using this location for a public school.
- Grisel Amador spoke about an upcoming press conference at United Senior Center of Sunset Park related to their rent increase situation. She also highlighted the Center's St. Patrick's Day celebration.
- Damien Andrade spoke about the upcoming NYPIRG March in March event.
- Jerry Chan spoke about a proposed 26-story building at 8th Avenue and 63rd Street which is being built without affordable housing.
 - Chan stated that although this site is in Community Board 10, its construction will impact CB7 and urged board and community members to pay attention to developments at and around this site.

Public Comment

- Nathan Wasserbauer with the Greenwood Heights Association stated they found out about a shelter project a year ago. The Association has gathered petitions with hundreds of signatures and sent hundreds of letters to elected officials and is unsatisfied with the responses of local officials.
- Adrienne Medina expressed concern about the way the two schools on the 43rd St. block handle their garbage. Medina stated that the schools also have two mobile offices which are not being used and should be removed and returned to parking. Medina also expressed concerns about a lot on 43rd Street that she stated is being improperly used as a private parking lot.
- Inniss Layne from the Bricklayers and Craftworkers Union spoke about a project taking place at NYU Brooklyn Hospital that is not using union labor. Layne called on NYU to hire union construction workers.
- Mark Bayala from Insulators Local 12 spoke on the same issue and concurred with Layne in urging the use of union labor on that site.
- Marvin Tavarez from Sheet Metal Workers Local 28 spoke on the same issue and also urged the use of union labor on that site.
- Allison Wong from the Sunset Park Library gave an update on upcoming library programs and activities.
- Melissa del Valle Ortiz stated support for the union laborers and mentioned their cousin was killed on a construction site. Del Valle Ortiz also discussed several upcoming veterans' events.
- Joe Torre from Electricians Local 3 spoke about the NYU construction issue and urged NYU to hire union labor.
- Sam Sierra spoke in favor of using union labor and the need for safety at construction job sites.
- Samuel Robinson and Biana Varga spoke about a piece of land on Prospect Avenue and local interest in improving the greenspace there.

Adjournment